Moms and micro-influencers: A new profile for brands on Instagram*

Dra. Erika Fernández-Gómez
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7088-1814
Universidad Internacional de La Rioja, España
erika.fernandez@unir.net

Dra. Miriam Morante-Bonet
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1709-6814
Universitat Politècnica de València (UPV), España
mmorante@dib.upv.es

Dra. Romina Caluori
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4128-7306
Universidad Internacional de La Rioja, España
romina.caluori@unir.net

Dra. Beatriz Feijoo
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5287-3813
Universidad Villanueva, España
beatriz.feijoo@villanueva.edu

ABSTRACT. Influencer marketing has become a fundamental tool in advertising. At the same time, the presence of minors on social media has become widespread, especially on their parents' channels, as seen with micro-influencer mothers (those with less than 100 000 followers). This study aims to understand their communication and engagement strategies through an exploratory data analysis of the Instagram activity of five micro-influencers during five months (August to December 2022), analyzing 276 posts. The research shows that, like instamoms, the profiles studied feature several brands employing different advertising techniques, often lacking transparency regarding their commercial relationships. Most posts that showcase brands do not include any disclosure about a commercial collaboration. Fashion brands appear more

frequently, but the food sector is particularly concerning, as many promote unhealthy products. Minors play an essential role by appearing in the most-liked and commercial posts. The results highlight the involvement of minors in profiles that fail to comply with key industry regulations, despite a great deal of advertising activity occurs, along with a lack of transparency from both micro-influencers and brands.

KEYWORDS: micro-influencers / advertising / brands / Instagram / moms

MADRES Y MICRO-INFLUENCERS: UN NUEVO PERFIL PARA LAS MARCAS EN INSTAGRAM

RESUMEN. El marketing de influencers se ha convertido en una herramienta fundamental en la actividad publicitaria. Al mismo tiempo, se ha generalizado la aparición de menores en redes sociales debido a su presencia en los canales de sus padres, como es el caso de las madres micro-influencers (aquellas con menos de 100.000 seguidores). El estudio se centra en comprender sus estrategias de comunicación y engagement a partir de un análisis exploratorio de la actividad en Instagram de cinco micro-influencers durante cinco meses (de agosto a diciembre de 2022), con 276 posts analizados. La investigación muestra que, al igual que las instamoms, los perfiles estudiados cuentan con la presencia de varias marcas que emplean diferentes técnicas publicitarias, careciendo de transparencia en sus relaciones comerciales con ellas. La mayoría de las publicaciones que incluyen presencia de marcas no muestran ninguna advertencia relacionada con una colaboración comercial. Las marcas de moda están presentes en un mayor número de ocasiones, pero el sector de la alimentación es el más preocupante, ya que promociona productos poco saludables. En cuanto a la presencia de menores, juegan un papel esencial al aparecer en las publicaciones que más gustan y en las comerciales. Los resultados ponen de manifiesto el uso de menores en perfiles que incumplen las principales normativas del sector pero donde también existe una gran actividad publicitaria y falta de transparencia por parte de los micro-influencers y las marcas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: micro-influencers / publicidad / marcas / Instagram / mMadres

MÃES E MICRO-INFLUENCIADORES: UM NOVO PERFIL PARA AS MARCAS NO INSTAGRAM

RESUMO. O marketing de influência tornou-se uma ferramenta fundamental na atividade publicitária. Ao mesmo tempo, o aparecimento de menores nas redes sociais generalizou-se devido à sua presença nos canais dos pais, como no caso das mães micro-influenciadoras (aquelas com menos de 100.000 seguidores). O estudo centra-se na compreensão das suas estratégias de comunicação e envolvimento com base numa

análise exploratória da atividade no Instagram de cinco microinfluenciadores durante cinco meses (agosto a dezembro de 2022), com 276 publicações analisadas. A pesquisa mostra que, assim como as instamoms, os perfis estudados contam com a presença de diversas marcas que empregam diferentes técnicas de publicidade, faltando transparência em suas relações comerciais com elas. A maioria das publicações que incluem a presença de marcas não apresenta nenhum aviso relacionado a uma colaboração comercial. As marcas de moda estão presentes num número mais significativo de ocasiões, mas o sector alimentar é o mais preocupante, uma vez que promove produtos pouco saudáveis. Relativamente à presença de menores, estes desempenham um papel fundamental, aparecendo nas publicações mais apreciadas e nas publicações comerciais. Os resultados destacam a utilização de menores em perfis que não cumprem os principais regulamentos do sector, mas onde também existe uma grande atividade publicitária e uma falta de transparência por parte dos micro-influenciadores e das marcas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: micro-influenciadores / publicidade / marcas / Instagram / mães

INTRODUCTION

Influencer marketing has become a fundamental tool in advertising. In Spain, investment in influencer marketing has steadily increased (Infoadex, 2023). This activity combines social media platforms as advertising spaces with individuals—such as opinion leaders or well-known personalities like endorsers or influencers—to whom brands target their communication efforts to reach more potential consumers. The key benefit highlighted by brands is the ability to create authentic content related to them (Linqia, 2017). Recently, advertisers have shown growing interest in micro-influencers, individuals with a small but highly engaged community of followers, typically ranging from 10 000 to 100 000, who can exert significant influence over their audience (Tarifa & Cárdaba, 2022).

On the other hand, the presence of minors on social media has become widespread due to their participation as content creators (Feijoo & Fernández Gómez, 2021; Fernández-Gómez et al., 2021a, 2021b; Tur-Viñes et al., 2019) —in roles such as youtubers, instagrammers, or tiktokers—as well as their appearance on their parents' channels (Jiménez Iglesias et al., 2022).

Despite the age restrictions—usually starting at 13 years—to access social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, or Facebook, minors not only consume these digital contents but also actively create them (López Bolás et al., 2022; Tur Viñes et al., 2018), becoming influencers themselves. An influencer is someone who has many followers and the ability to make an impact within the digital community (Riccio et al., 2022).

Both in academic circles and society in general, concerns have emerged regarding potential violations of minors' privacy (Holiday et al., 2022; Ranzini et al., 2020). This has given rise to the term "sharenting," which describes the trend of parents sharing photos and videos of their underage children on social media (Elorriaga Illera et al., 2022). Also concerning is the use of minors to generate financial gain, especially through commercial relationships with brands, which are not always clearly disclosed (Núñez-Cansado et al., 2021). These issues are further complicated by the absence of a robust regulatory framework and the resulting consumer distrust.

A study by Asociación de Usuarios de la Comunicación (AUC – Association of Communication Users) and Comisión Nacional de los Mercados y la Competencia (CNMC – Spanish National Markets and Competition Commission) found that 84.6 % of advertising and promotional videos posted by influencers are covert commercial communications (Unión de Televisiones Comerciales en Abierto, 2022). Although the Asociación Española de Anunciantes (AEA – the Spanish association of advertisers) and the Asociación para la Autorregulación de la Comunicación Comercial - Autocontrol (the association for the self-regulation of commercial communication) introduced a code of conduct for the use of influencers in advertising in 2020, it remains insufficient, as it only applies to influencers who have signed the code (Asociación Española de Anunciantes & Autocontrol, 2022).

Despite the proposal to use labels such as "#ads" to identify advertising content, many posts contain highly persuasive elements that are difficult to manage by more vulnerable audiences (Núñez-Cansado et al., 2021; Tur-Viñes et al., 2019).

In Spain, Law 13/2022, dated July 7 and entitled "General Law on Audiovisual Communication," includes provisions that apply exclusively to the most prominent influencers, requiring them to comply with basic obligations concerning the general principles of audiovisual communication, protection of minors and users, and registration in the State Registry of Audiovisual Communication Service Providers. Additionally, influencers must adhere to Law 34/1988, dated November 11 and entitled "General Law on Advertising," and Law 34/2002, dated July 11 and entitled "Law on Information Society Services and Electronic Commerce."

Additionally, efforts have been made to regulate content aimed at more vulnerable audiences. For example, well-known personalities, including influencers, are prohibited from advertising food and beverages to audiences under 16, according to the Draft Royal Decree on the Regulation of Food and Beverage Advertising Targeted at Children (Ministerio de Derechos Sociales, Consumo y Agenda 2030, 2022). This decree defines these personalities as individuals with a high level of influence due to their large number of followers. It also prohibits any form of promotion aimed at children—such as prizes, gifts, contests, sweepstakes, or sponsorships—to support advertising of foods and beverages high in sodium, sugars, sweeteners, fats, and saturated fatty acids.

For the toy sector, the new Self-Regulation Code for Children's Toy Advertising —signed by Ministerio de Derechos Sociales, Consumo y Agenda 2030, the Asociación Española de Fabricantes de Juguetes (AEFJ – the Spanish association of toy manufacturers) and Autocontrol— which came into effect on December 1, 2022, seeks to promote and fostering a plural, egalitarian, and stereotype-free image of children. The code discourages associating toys with specific gender roles and emphasizes the importance of influencers adhering to legislation and the correct identification of advertising content, following the code on the use of influencers in advertising established by AEA and Autocontrol (Asociación Española de Fabricantes de Juguetes, 2022).

One prominent example of an influencer in this space is Verdeliss, perhaps one of the most studied Spanish "instamoms," i.e., influential mothers on Instagram (Zozaya-Durazo, L. & Sádaba-Chalezquer, 2022). Increasingly, more mothers have gained recognition by sharing their children's images, videos, and stories on digital platforms (Jorge et al., 2022). These influencers earn income through collaborations with advertisers interested in reaching a key sector: motherhood or parenthood (Abidin, 2015). However, these relationships are not always transparent, and posts featuring minors generate the highest level of engagement, measured in interactions, likes, and comments (Jiménez Iglesias et al., 2022).

As a result, more anonymous individuals have followed in the footsteps of these major influencers and, even with a smaller community, they have managed to generate interest of brands due to their relevance to a particular group of followers.

Micro-influencers, also referred to as "micros" (Alampi, 2019), are individuals with fewer than 100 000 followers who are becoming increasingly effective (Kayser, 2022). Despite their smaller communities, they have a strong capacity to influence their audience. Their messages tend to be more targeted and personal, fostering a deeper sense of loyalty among their followers. The Top Digital Trends 2023 report highlights micro-communities as a key trend in brand communication, emphasizing the need for brands to engage with smaller, more diverse audiences by focusing on shared interests that create a strong sense of belonging (Iab Spain, 2023).

However, there is currently a lack of specific regulations addressing this type of influencers from an academic perspective (Marques et al., 2021). Their interest is evidenced by the fact that, even with modest followings, they often reflect their audience and maintain high levels of trust, authority, and authenticity, making them "the perfect formula for powerful influence" (Alampi, 2019, p. 203). According to Dinesh (2019), "the engagement levels drop as the social media follow numbers increase. Micro-influencers with 1 000 followers get about 4 % more engagement than influencers with 10 000 followers" (Challenges of Working with Influencers and the Benefits of Working with Micro-influencers section, para. 1).

The originality and uniqueness of micro-influencers' posts are key factors for effective content marketing (Silalahi, 2021). One of their advantages is having a "real" relationship with their audience. Since followers identify with micro-influencers, they are more likely to follow their advice (Marques et al., 2021).

From an academic perspective, studies on micro-influencers remain limited, with existing research focusing on specific sectors, such as the hospitality industry in Portugal (Peres & Silva, 2021) and local brands in Indonesia (Silalahi, 2021). Peres and Silva (2021) further note that many of these micro-influencers are women with graduate degrees who have other jobs and do not collaborate with influencer agencies, highlighting a lack of professionalism in their activities.

According to 2btube —an agency specializing in reaching online audiences with audiovisual content creation and influencer representation— when a content creator surpasses 100 000 followers on any of their social media profiles, they achieve influencer status and can pursue this activity professionally by monetizing through advertising revenue ("En España hay más de 7500 influencers", 2021). Some micro-influencers, who are already content creators with fewer than 100 000 followers, are fully dedicated to managing their social media.

Therefore, the novelty of this research lies in studying these small opinion leaders within a sector that, while concerning from the point of view of minors, is highly lucrative for brands, specifically influential mothers (Garrido et al., 2023).

This work demonstrates how advertisers, both large and small, are turning to a new type of content creator (Fernández-Gómez et al., 2024; Marchán Sanz et al., 2024)—micro-influencers in their role as mothers—to promote their products in a sector where main regulations apply to large opinion leaders. Micro-influencers, with their smaller audiences, enjoy greater freedom when communicating. However, we argue that both brands and content creators, whether macro or micro, should prioritize responsible and ethical communication with their audiences.

METHODOLOGY

This research analyzed the content types, brand presence, advertising techniques, and their association with the presence of minors among five Spanish-speaking micro-influencers in the motherhood sector.

The aim is to understand the communication and engagement strategies employed by these micro-influencers in the motherhood sector through an exploratory study of their social media activity. Specifically, the research seeks to identify content types and styles, the presence of minors and brands, and how they are disclosed on the platform.

Given the limited academic literature on micro-influencers, especially in Spain, this study proposes a first approach to this phenomenon through content analysis to understand their communication strategies (content types, posting frequency, brand presence, and transparency) and engagement levels (likes or views), as micro-influencers are often recognized for their high levels of audience engagement.

A content analysis was carried out, with a stronger emphasis on interpretation than quantitative measurement (Andréu, 2002). The study variables are shown in Table 2. This analysis sheet was developed based on previous studies (Farivar et al., 2022; Feijoo & Fernández-Gómez, 2021; Fernández-Gómez et al., 2021a, 2021b; Jiménez Iglesias et al., 2022; Kim & Kim, 2023; Perez Curiel & Luque Ortiz, 2018; Pérez-Curiel & Sanz-Marcos, 2019). Therefore, the reliability of the content analysis is ensured by the use of an analysis framework that has been tested in previously published research articles (Feijoo & Fernández-Gómez, 2021; Fernández-Gómez et al., 2021a, 2021b). Additionally, a pretest was conducted to adapt the framework to the specific object of study.

The following research questions guided this analysis:

1) What content types do micro-influencers in the motherhood sector post? Does their style seem to be amateurish?

2) Are minors featured in the content they share?

3) Which brands are promoted? What advertising techniques are employed? Do they transparently disclose brand promotions to their audience?

Table 2 classifies the techniques used (Feijoo & Fernández-Gómez, 2021; Tur Viñes et al., 2018; Tur-Viñes et al., 2019) and provides descriptions of each (self-promotion, promotion, passive location, active site, unboxing, raffle, discounts, and others).

As shown in Table 2, transparency refers to whether the posts involving brands include some form of disclosure, such as hashtags, direct brand mentions, or formulas like "ad," "promo," "collaboration," or "gifted product" (Feijoo & Fernández-Gómez, 2021; Fernández Blanco & Ramos Gutiérrez, 2024).

4)   What characteristics do posts with higher engagement possess?

As defined in Table 2, engagement refers to audience interaction, measured by likes, views, and comments from followers, as well as whether the influencer replies to followers' comments (Feijoo & Fernández-Gómez, 2021; Fernández Gómez & Martín Quevedo, 2018; Tur Viñes et al., 2018; Tur-Viñes et al., 2019).

According to Iab Spain and Elogia (2022), Instagram is the most widely used social media platform in Spain for following influencers, with 74 % of the population using it. The second most used platform, YouTube, is used by 54 %. In addition, the typical follower of digital influencers are women aged 25 to 40.

Therefore, this study focuses on micro-influencers on Instagram, specifically those with 3 000 to 80 000 followers, as defined by micro-influencer marketing platforms such as FuelYouBrands[1]. We propose analyzing the content of five influencers (Table 1) ranked by the influencer marketing platform Affable[2]. The analysis of the posted content covers five months, from August to December 2022, a sufficient timeframe to obtain results that yield exciting conclusions about these content creators. Previous studies have considered smaller samples, with one month of analysis (Feijoo & Fernández-Gómez, 2021; Fernández-Gómez et al., 2021a, 2021b), while others have also studied five profiles to approach vegan influencers on Instagram (Romero-Cantero et al., 2022).

Table 1

Analyzed Profiles and Number of Followers

Profile	Number of Followers (October 20, 2022)	Number of Posts (August–December 2022)
e	23 800	64
https://www.instagram.com/loretogordomoreno/	37 300	50
https://www.instagram.com/recoolez/	20 900	64
https://www.instagram.com/rayasymanchas/	44 300	69
https://www.instagram.com/locosxlosviajes/	14 100	29
TOTAL		276

1   https://fuelyourbrands.com/
2   https://www.affable.ai/ranking/microinfluencers-influencers-spain-instagram

Sample

Below is a brief description of the profiles of the micro-influencers analyzed:

- *misprincipesjuanymartin*: This profile belongs to a mother with two young children who describes herself as a blogger with two children focused on cosmetics and food. Her email is included in her profile for collaboration inquiries. Her posts feature her children, herself, or all three of them together. Most of her content is associated with food, home, or children's brand. She mainly shares amateur photos with no postproduction and with many linguistic errors.

- *loretogordomoreno*: The account of this 32-year-old woman centers on motherhood, family, travel, and lifestyle. Her photos and reels feature her three daughters (without showing their faces) and her husband. She is part of the PronoKal program (similar to Herbalife) and shares content related to fashion and beauty. In addition, she posts messages about her faith and love for God. The profile is aesthetically curated, with a link to her website (http://www. madeinstyle.es/) included in her Instagram bio.

- *recoolez*: Creator of The Atypical Project, a handbag and luggage store that combines values, ethics, and aesthetics. Her Instagram bio includes her contact information and highlights her interests in motherhood, vintage fashion, fair trade, and sustainability. She is a mother of one and serves as a brand ambassador for Darphin Paris, with her posts focusing on second-hand fashion and how to make the most of it.

- *rayasymanchas*: She introduces herself as Alba SF, a mother of three princesses, dentist, as well as travel, fashion, and party enthusiast. Professionally a dentist, she uses her account to share stories and photos of her family, travels, and lifestyle. Her posts feature her three daughters (aged 7, 5, and 3), highlighting the brands and clothes she promotes, especially Primark, for which she serves as an ambassador.

- *locosxlosviajes*: This profile is a blog dedicated to travelling with children. Mari Carmen shares her travels with her partner and two daughters. The account is nourished by detailed stories, while her young children are typically featured from behind, avoiding direct exposure.

Method

The following variables, previously used in research on Instagram influencers, have been adapted for this study (Table 2).

Table 2

Proposed Content Analysis Form

Profile information	Profile
	Profile tags
	Followers
	Number of posts
	Promotion of collaborations
	E-mail
Post data	Date
	URL
Engagement	Likes
	Views
	Comments
	Influencer's interaction with comments (yes/no)
Description of each video/ post	Content format:
	Photo (indicate the number)
	Reel/video
	Content type:
	Game
	Challenge
	Tutorial/demonstration
	Vlog (routine)
	Scripted story
	Comment/reflection/testimony
	Other (e.g., posing, dancing, raffles)
	Quality:
	Amateur
	Professional
	Postproduction (yes/no)
	Formal errors:
	None
	Yes, linguistic
	Yes, technical
	Both
	Presence of minors in the post:
	Yes/no

(*continues*)

(*continued*)

Brand presence in each video/post	Number of identifiable brands
	Brand centrality:
	Is the post focused on or created for the brand? (yes/no)
	Brand information:
	Is product or brand information provided? (yes/no)
	Emotional attachment:
	Does the influencer express judgments or opinion on the brand or product? (yes/no)
	Brand categorization:
	Food
	Childcare
	Audiovisual
	Cosmetics/beauty
	Toys
	Reading
	School supplies
	Channel-related products
	Clothing/fashion
	Technology
	Video games
	Miscellaneous
	Advertising technique:
	Self-promotion (e.g., influencer's own products, brands, books, website, other channels, merchandising)
	Promotion (explicit mention of third-party products/brands, similar to a testimonial)
	Passive or active product placement (active if the product/brand is interacted with; passive if only appears in the background)
	Unboxing (presentation of products/brands)
	Raffle
	Discounts
	Other
	Promotional disclosure:
	None
	No, but includes hashtags
	No, but includes direct brand mentions
	Yes (e.g., ad, promo, collaboration, gifted product)

Note. Adapted from Farivar et al., 2022; Feijoo & Fernández Gómez, 2021; Fernández-Gómez et al. 2021 a, 2021b; Jiménez Iglesias et al., 2022 ; Kim & Kim, 2023; López Bolás et al., 2022; Perez Curiel & Luque Ortiz, 2018; and Pérez-Curiel & Sanz-Marcos, 2019).

RESULTS

Content and Presence of Minors in the Posts of Micro-Influencers

During the analyzed period, in which five profiles were studied, 276 posts were collected. As shown in Table 1, all micro-influencers—except for the profile with the fewest followers (*locosxlosviajes*)—posted a similar number of entries, with an average of 55.2 posts per account and 11 monthly posts over the five months analyzed. This suggests that these profiles use social media occasionally.

Overall, as illustrated in Table 3, the posts generated by these influencers are primarily comments (109 posts; 40 %) and other content, such as posing, dancing, or sweepstakes (105 posts; 38 %), mostly shared through photographs (270 photos vs. 179 reels). It should be noted that only the videos posted on the wall were collected, as it was impossible to retrieve stories due to their 24-hour availability before disappearing.

In terms of content quality, most posts (272; 99 %) were of amateur quality. Although more than half of the photos and videos involved some postproduction (166 posts, 51 %), a significant portion (110 posts, 49 %) showed no management of audiovisual material. Postproduction was mainly applied to reels, where music, text, and video cuts were added.

Given the non-professional nature of the posts, linguistic errors were prevalent (124 posts; 45 %), with the most common mistakes being accentuation errors or misspellings.

Finally, minors appeared in slightly more than half of the posts made by these influencers (142 posts; 51 %).

Table 3

Content and Presence of Minors in Micro-Influencers' Posts

Content Type	Number (Percentage)	Content Format	Number	Postproduction	Number (Percentage)
Comment/reflection/testimony	109 (40 %)	Photographs³	270	Yes	166 (51 %)
Other (posing, dancing)	105 (38 %)	Reels	179	No	110 (49 %)
Vlog	30 (11 %)	Quality	Number (Percentage)	Formal Errors	Number (Percentage)
Tutorial/demonstration	28 (10 %)	Amateur	272 (99 %)	No	150 (54 %)
Scripted story	4 (1 %)	Professional	4 (1 %)	Yes, linguistic	124 (45 %)
Presence of minors	Number (Percentage)			Yes, technical	2 (1 %)
Yes	142 (51 %)			Both	0
No	134 (49 %)				

TOTAL: 276

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3 As many images and videos were collected as were published. This means that there are more audiovisual resources than posts, since multiple images can be shared within a single post.

Although the five profiles analyzed share a common focus on motherhood, each approaches it from a different perspective, which leads to variations in the content produced by each micro-influencer (Figure 1). For example, *misprincipesjuanymartin* and *loretogordomoreno* frequently post content centered around comments or reflections, while *recoolez* and *locosxlosviajes* often share vlogs, and *rayasymanchas* tend to post posed images.

Regarding the presence of minors, their representation varies depending on the micro-influencer. For example, in the case of *misprincipesjuanymartin*, minors appear in a significant number of posts (42 out of 64), with their faces clearly visible. In contrast, on profiles such as *loretogordomoreno*, although minors are also featured regularly (21 out of 50), they are usually only partially identifiable in the content.

The amateur quality of content is widespread across the profiles. As for postproduction, it is more common in accounts that share a higher volume of video content, such as *rayasymanchas* or *locosxlosviajes*. On the other hand, *misprincipesjuanymartin* and *recoolez* are the accounts with the highest frequency of linguistic errors.

Figure 1

Content Types and Presence of Minors on Each Analyzed Micro-Influencer Profile
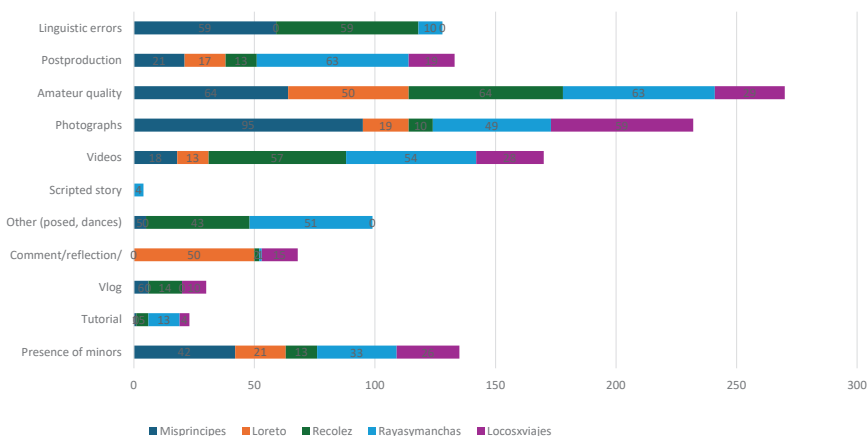
Brand Presence, Transparency, Engagement, and Advertising Techniques

Brand Presence

During the analyzed period, a total of 177 brands were identified across the five micro-influencer profiles: 59 in *misprincipesjuanymartin*, 39 in *recoolez*, 32 in *loretogordomoreno*, 31 in *rayasymanchas*, and 16 in *locosxlosviajes*. This indicates that a brand was present in 54.71 % of the analyzed posts (151 out of 276). As shown in Table 4, a high number of

these posts are dedicated to brand promotion, accounting for 43 % of the total analy-zed (118 posts with these characteristics). Additionally, 39 % provide information about the brand (108 posts) and 38 % show a sense of attachment to the brand (105 posts). Regarding the advertising techniques employed, active placement was utilized in 87 instances, and promotion occurred 84 times, making these the most frequently used advertising formats. Influencers typically appear either using the products they promo-te or alongside their children, accompanying their posts with positive information and feelings toward the advertiser. Self-promotion is also evident, especially when *recoolez* promotes her own company.

Table 4

Brand Presence, Transparency, Engagement, and Advertising Techniques

Sector	Number of Brands[4]	Advertising Technique	Frequency[5]
Fashion	80	Active placement	87
Leisure, hospitality, travel	23	Promotion	84
Food	15	Self-promotion	53
Cosmetics/beauty	11	Unboxing	15
Toys	10	Passive placement	11
Home	10	Others	11
Childcare	9	Discounts	5
Technology	5	Raffles	1
Miscellaneous (e.g., flowers, calendars, contact lenses, Disney)	5	Linkage with the brand	Frequency (Percent-age)[6]
Reading	4	Brand centrality	118 (43 %)
Diets	3	Brand information	108 (39 %)
School supplies	2	Brand awareness	105 (38 %)

As illustrated in Table 4, the fashion sector is represented by a significant number of brands, totaling 80. This is especially noticeable in the *recoolez* profile, where most featured brands fall within this category due to the account's focus on promoting her handbag company, The Atypical Project (Figure 2). In addition to this self-promotion, several other adult brands, such as Rosa Delgado, Castañer, and Bobo's, are also highlighted. Similarly, the *loretogordomoreno* profile (Figure 3) showcases both adult fashion brands, including Slowlove or Alawa Swimwear, and children's brands like Hipercor or Petite Coppelia.

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4   It should be noted that each post may feature several brands; therefore, the total number of brands mentioned does not align with the 276 posts analyzed.

5   Each publication may use several advertising techniques, so that the number of techniques repor-ted does not correspond to the number of posts, but rather to the frequency of their use

6   The posts exhibiting these characteristics are counted within the total number of analyzed posts.

Furthermore, the *rayasymanchas* account includes multinational companies such as Primark (Figure 4), where the influencer promotes various categories of the company, including clothing, home goods, and beauty products. This micro-influencer also includes brands from the Inditex group, such as Pull&Bear and Zara, in her social media content.
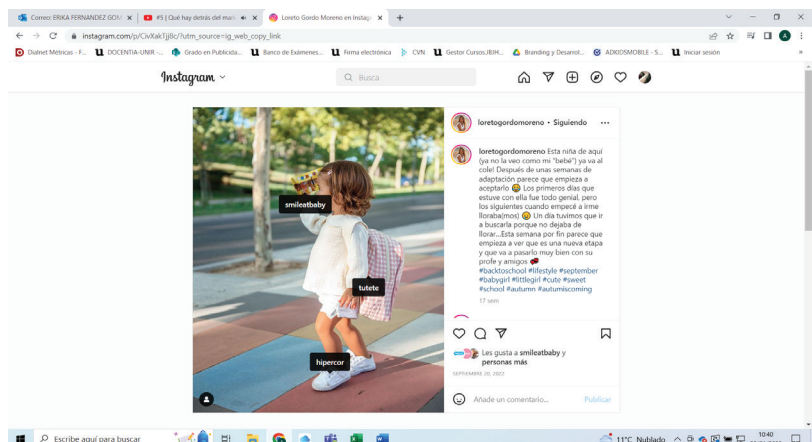
Figure 2

Passive Placement of The Atypical Project on the Recoolez Profile
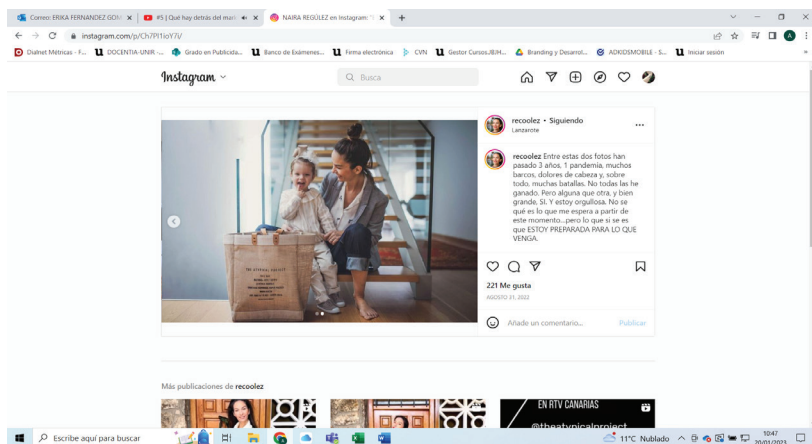
Note. From "Entre estas dos fotos han pasado 3 años, 1 pandemia, muchos barcos, dolores de cabeza y, sobre todo, muchas batallas", by Recoolez, 2022, Instagram (ttps://www.instagram.com/p/Ch7Pl1ioY7i/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link).
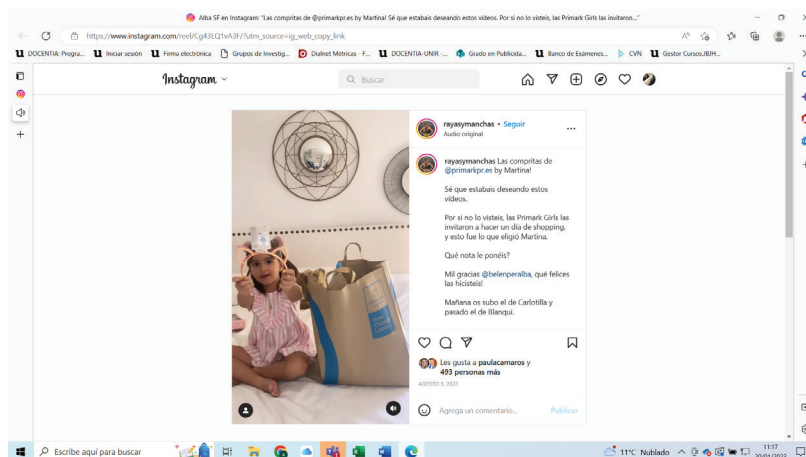
Figure 3

Active Placement of Three Brands from Different Sectors (Smileat, Tutete, and Hipercor) on the Loretogordomoreno Profile

Note. From "Esta niña de aqui (ya no la veo como mi "bebé") ya va al cole!", by Loreto Gordo Moreno, 2022b, Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/p/CivXakTjj8c/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link).

Figure 4

*Unboxing of Primark on the Rayasymanchas Profile*

Note. From "Las compritas de @primarkpr.es by Martina", by Rayas y manchas, 2022a, Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cg43LQ1vA3F/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link).

Other sectors with a notable presence in the analyzed accounts include leisure, hospitality, and travel (23 brands); food (15 brands); cosmetics/beauty (11 brands); toys and home (10 brands); and childcare (9 brands). In the leisure, hospitality, and travel sectors, the *locosxlosviajes* profile stands out. Given the account's focus, it features travel-related brands such as Heymondo, a travel insurance company, themed attractions like Aventurico Madrid Escape Room, and Micropolix, a children's leisure center.

The food sector is especially prominent in the *misprincipesjuanymartin* profile, where most posts are created to promote various brands. Well-known companies such as Facundo (Figure 5), Trapa, and Dulcesol are frequently showcased, sometimes in strange contexts where children appear posing with the products. Additionally, several local brands of sweets and candies, such as Golosinas Superbelén and La Palmería, are featured. Advertisers face significant restrictions in traditional advertising due to the global problem of childhood obesity. This challenge is expected to intensify with the forthcoming draft regulation on food advertising aimed at children in Spain, which will impose further limitations on promotional activities.

Figure 5

*Active Placement of the Facundo Brand on the Misprincipesjuanymartin Profile*
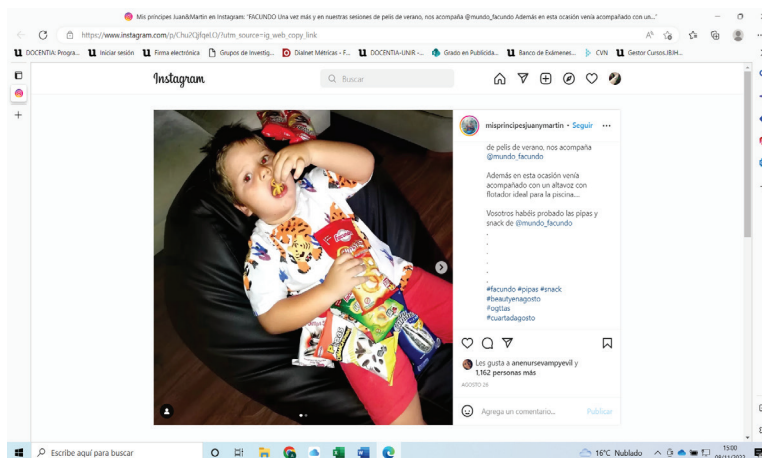
Note. From "de pelis de verano, nos acompanha @mundo_facundo", by Mis príncipes Juan y Martín, 2022a, Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/p/Chu2QjfqeLO/?utm_source=ig_ web_copy_link).

In the cosmetics/beauty sector, the Darphin Paris brand is prominently featured by the micro-influencer *recoolez*, who serves as an ambassador for the company. Approximately once a month, she shares a post showing how she uses some of its products. Another well-known brand is Nelly's, which is promoted in two posts by *misprincipesjuanymartin*. It is evident that these advertisers are targeting an adult audience.

The home sector is represented across all profiles except for *locosxlosviajes*. It is more common in accounts like *misprincipesjuanymartin* or *loretogordomoreno*, where they often showcase their homes through images or room tour videos. Featured brands include Don Algodón (home textiles), Domydom (home textiles), and Del Arco Hogar (furniture), among others, which enhance both the influencers' beds and those of their children (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Passive Placement and Promotional Draw of the Don Algodón Brand on the Loretogordomoreno Profile
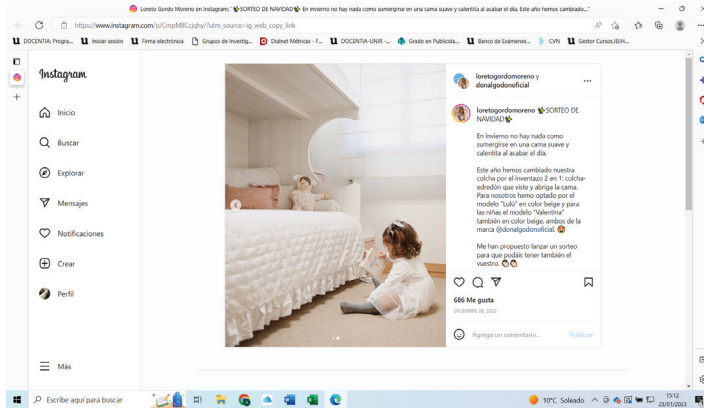

Note. From "En invierno no hay nada como sumergirse en una cama suave y calentita al acabar el día", by Loreto Gordo Moreno, 2022a, Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/p/CmpM8Ccjqhy/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link).

In these two accounts, toys are prominently featured, with 80 % of the brands promoted during November and December, aligning with the Christmas campaign. Furthermore, eight out of the 10 posts related to this sector belong to the *misprincipes-juanymartin* profile. Consequently, significant advertisers such as Playmobil, Bizak, El Corte Inglés, and Aldi are represented (Figures 7 and 8).
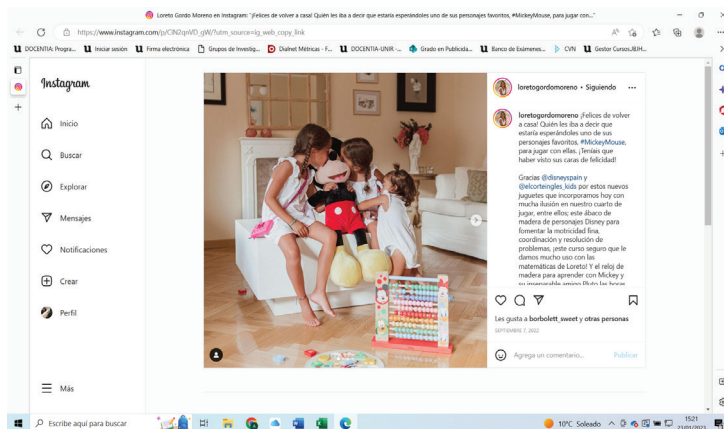
Figure 7

Active Placement of Triciclo Editores Toy-Selling Publishing House on the Misprincipesjuanymartin Profile
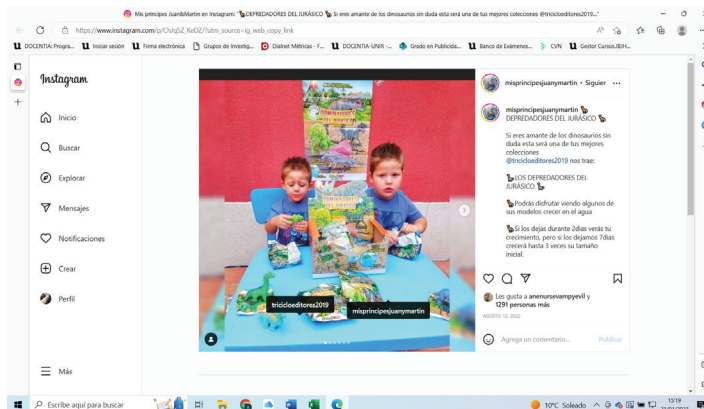
Note. From "Depredadores del jurásico", by Mis príncipes Juan y Martín, 2022b, Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/p/ChJq5Z_KeDZ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link).

Figure 8

Active Placement of El Corte Inglés and Disney on the Loretogordomoreno Profile

Note. "¡Felices de volver a casa! Quién les iba a decir que estaría esperándoles uno de sus personajes favoritos, #MickeyMouse, para jugar con ellas. ¡Teníais que haber visto sus caras de felicidad!", by Loreto Gordo Moreno, 2022c, Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/p/CiN2qnVD_gW/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link).

Transparency

As illustrated in the previous section, brands are prominently featured in the profiles of the analyzed micro-influencers without any disclosure of commercial collaboration. Although brands are mentioned or tagged for quick identification, there is often no clear disclosure that the post is paid for or sponsored by a brand or that the product was gifted by the brand. The commercial relationship has been explicitly clarified in only eight posts featuring brand mentions (Figure 9).

Figure 9

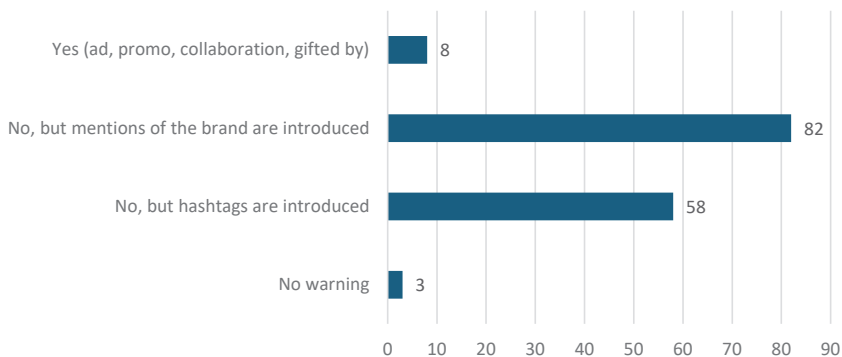*Disclosure of Brand Presence and Promotion*

Figure 10

Paid Collaboration Featuring the J'hayber Brand in the Rayasymanchas Profile

Note. From "Ya sabéis lo que me gusta llevar a mis niñas a juego, y una de las cosas que más me cuesta encontrar iguales son las zapatillas", by Rayas y manchas, 2022b, Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/p/Ch5RGPsMuCT/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link).

Engagement

The 10 most-commented posts are all associated with sweepstakes, which makes sense as participants are encouraged to comment and mention a follower to increase the post's reach. Notably, nine out of these 10 posts are from the *misprincipesjuanymartin* profile, which has the highest presence of brands. The remaining post is from *loretogordomoreno*, a sweepstakes for the Don Algodón brand. This highlights how user participation is driven by the chance of winning the advertised product or service.

As shown in Table 5, only two brands—Playmobil and Siberian Wellness—target children, and the rest appeal to the adult audience. In these cases, minors just appear twice, while the other posts feature images of the products themselves.

Table 5

Top 10 Most-Commented Posts

Post	Number of Comments	Brand	Sector	Presence of Minors
https://www.instagram.com/p/ChlTz6lrBk6/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link	3 093	La Casa de los Aromas	Home	No
https://www.instagram.com/p/CivRE_9L1l1/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link	2 474	Domydom	Home textiles	No

(*continues*)

(*continued*)

Post	Number of Comments	Brand	Sector	Presence of Minors
https://www.instagram.com/p/ CmpM8Ccjqhy/?utm_source=ig_ web_copy_link	1 941	Don Algodón	Home tex-tiles	Yes
https://www.instagram.com/p/ CjgN2ymD_kZ/?utm_source=ig_ web_copy_link	1 912	JerseySoc-cer18	Clothing/ fashion	No
https://www.instagram.com/p/ Cl0aunkqf-X/?utm_source=ig_ web_copy_link	1 809	Playmobil	Toys	No
https://www.instagram.com/p/ ClCZ_CrLc6W/?utm_source=ig_ web_copy_link	1 676	Lámpara de Techo Led	Home	No
https://www.instagram.com/p/ CkOrCjEOKlT/?utm_source=ig_ web_copy_link	1 262	Bonaok	Technology	No
https://www.instagram.com/p/ ChnX2T6LHHY/?utm_source=ig_ web_copy_link	1 148	Interflora España	Flowers	No
https://www.instagram.com/p/ CkWdn4SL94M/?utm_source=ig_ web_copy_link	1 063	Siberian Wellness	Childcare	Yes
https://www.instagram.com/p/ ClZYyuxulFc/?utm_source=ig_ web_copy_link	483	–	–	No

When examining the number of likes, the most popular posts show greater diversity. While sweepstakes are included among the 10 most-commented posts (three of which are among the most-commented posts in Table 6), other messages encouraged user engagement through comments. Notably, the two most popular posts do not feature any brand presence. The most-liked post belongs to *recoolez*, showcasing a vlog of her daughter's daily routine with her dogs. The second most-liked post is from *rayasymanchas*, featuring a reel in which her daughters welcome a kitten, also without any commercial collaboration. Furthermore, the most-liked posts exhibit a higher presence of minors compared to the most commented ones.

The remaining top posts primarily come from the *misprincipesjuanymartin* profile, highlighting products for adults (hospitality, home textiles, and technology) as well as items for children (toys and childcare). Among the top 10 most-liked posts, a set of three photographs of *misprincipesjuanymartin* with her eldest son, in which she poses while pregnant, stands out and does not feature any brand presence.

Table 6

Top 10 Most-Liked Posts

Post	Number of Likes	Brand	Sector	Presence of Minors
	21 653	-	-	Yes
	1 754	-	-	Yes
	1 580	Popeye	Hospitality	Yes
https://www.instagram.com/p/ChkV8e2DHoa/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link	1 324	Mifold	Childcare	Yes
	1 296	Triciclo Editores	Toys	Yes
https://www.instagram.com/p/Cl0aunkqf-X/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link	1 287	Playmobil	Toys	No
https://www.instagram.com/p/Ci-9OIvLrco/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link	1 275	-	-	Yes
https://www.instagram.com/p/CivRE_9L1l1/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link	1 268	Domydom	Home textiles	No
https://www.instagram.com/p/CkOrCjEOKlT/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link	1 268	Bonaok	Technology	No
https://www.instagram.com/p/Cj072j9LkUY/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link	1 264	Dana Creacions	Clothing/fashion	Yes

CONCLUSIONS

This research addresses a well-known and extensively studied topic: the significance of influencer marketing within the motherhood sector and the Instagram social media platform. However, it focuses on a figure yet to be fully explored by both the sector and academia: micro-influencers, i.e., influencers with less than 100 000 followers who have highly engaged communities and attract the interest of brands.

We have examined profiles that share characteristics with other well-known instamoms with over 100 000 followers (e.g., *verdeliss*, *ohmamiblue*, *trimadrede-princesas*). These influencers share content related to their family life on Instagram, frequently featuring their young children, and regularly collaborate with brands (Jiménez Iglesias et al., 2022). A distinguishing feature of micro-influencers is their amateur content, with postproduction limited to videos and many linguistic errors—such as *misprincipesjuanymartin* and *recoolez*— which create a sense of closeness and

reveals the lack of professionalization of these profiles. Like larger instamoms, the profiles analyzed include brand collaborations through different types of advertising techniques (sweepstakes, promotions, placements), but they share a common lack of transparency regarding the nature of their commercial relationship. This ambiguity leaves it unclear what the influencer gains, while the brand seeks notoriety either through direct mentions (e.g., @jhayber_es) or the creation of branded hashtags (e.g., #vueltaalcoleconjhayber).

The commercial interest of these influencers is twofold, as they can engage both adult and child audiences, although parents ultimately decide what products their children consume. The studied profiles featured brands from sectors such as fashion, leisure, hospitality, food, cosmetics/beauty, and toys. Particularly concerning is the presence of brands promoting unhealthy food products, which could be restricted with the forthcoming draft regulation on food advertising aimed at children. Posts featuring brands usually include product information alongside the influencer's feelings or opinions about the product or service being promoted.

Minors play an essential role, often appearing in posts that receive the most likes and branded content. Some profiles, such as *loretogordomoreno* or *locosxlosviajes*, show a more moderate exposure of minors, avoiding direct identification, while others, like *misprincipes-juanymartin*, display higher levels of child exposure, particularly in connection with brands.

The profile with the highest follower count, *misprincipesjuanymartin*, has the strongest engagement, with the most-commented posts (sweepstakes) and likes. Its most popular posts are daily updates that do not feature brand presence. This is surprising given the account's numerous linguistic errors—as previously mentioned—yet it has significant brand relationships and high level of child involvement, highlighting the sense of authenticity and closeness to the community that advertisers seek.

The involvement of minors in advertising raises ethical concerns, particularly when mothers promote products that are subject to regulation in children's advertising, such as product placement, undisclosed promotions, and advertising of unhealthy products. Although parents may be the immediate recipients of these messages, the products are ultimately consumed by their children.

LIMITATIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Micro-influencers are ordinary individuals who use social media to get followers and attract advertisers. Their profiles often feature promotions like those of larger influencers, making it crucial to be aware of advertising disclosure. Despite a scarcity of information in the literature on micro-influencers, this exploratory analysis provides an initial understanding of these opinion leaders. Various topics were addressed to deepen our understanding of this topic, indicating a need for further study in this area.

This research focuses on analyzing the relationship between micro-influencers and brands, as well as the involvement of minors. Although the methodology used was appropriate and yielded satisfactory results, it is important to note that this is a preliminary approach to a nationally addressed phenomenon. The study was conducted over a specific period and with a limited sample. Therefore, it is recommended to extend this research by including micro-influencers from other nationalities and analyzing data over a longer timeframe.

It would also be interesting to enhance the descriptive analysis with interviews from the perspective of micro-influencers. Understanding the sphere of influence of these personalities enables brands and marketers to effectively broaden their audience. The study of smaller communities on social media should continue, given their commercial interest and the need to ensure ethical and transparent communication with their audiences.

To foster responsible industry practices, advertisers should prioritize ethical conduct and avoid making formal errors in their posts. In the interest of transparency, influencers should always disclose advertising collaborations. Regarding Instagram, the platform should prohibit the systematic involvement of minors and the promotion of unhealthy products, similar to regulations in traditional media. These considerations are important for future research, particularly concerning micro-influencers.

Additionally, Fernández Blanco and Ramos Gutiérrez (2024) already argue that mega-influencers tend to involve minors less frequently than micro- and macro-influencers. This is largely due to the need for legal compliance faced by mega-influencers, whose huge follower count and heightened public visibility place them under greater social and regulatory scrutiny.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: E.F.G.; project design: E.F.G.; methodology: E.F.G. and B.F.; data collection and formal analysis: E.F.G., M.M.B., R.C., and B.F.; discussion and conclusions: E.F.G., M.M.B., R.C., and B.F.; original draft: E.F.G.; revision and editing: E.F.G.

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