

Pre-schooler as brand extension: a tale of Pixie's bows and birthdays, Beauty and the Beast

The phenomenon of Instagram influencer babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers, or micro-micro celebrities as they have been labelled (see Abidin 2015), has been noted in Singapore and Malaysia, to name some countries. These babies and young children (generally children of social media influencers) are building up social capital, amassing large followers and demanding (and receiving) sponsorship and brand partnership deals with organisations, products and service brands. This paper investigates, through a case study approach, Instagram influencer Pixie Curtis, the five-year-old daughter of Australian public relations business owner and celebrity Roxy Jacenko. Jacenko founded and owns Sweaty Betty PR and more recently has started The Ministry of Talent, an agency for bloggers, creatives and other social media influencers. The case study of the Australian Pixie's 'career' from 0-5, managed by her mother, is examined, using the lens of marketing theories and concepts, including branding, brand equity, personal and product branding. Through an analysis of Instagram posts by Pixie Curtis and online news reports, it is argued that Jacenko has employed the marketing concept of 'brand extension' to her daughter, effectively treating her child as a (personal) brand extension of herself. Pixie, who has her own line of hair bows which sells through her online site, is also a brand ambassador/paid promoter for many local and international brands. Brand extension is described in marketing as follows: "Leveraging the brand equity of a successful brand promises to make introduction of a new entry less costly by trading on an established name. In essence, companies can be tantalized by the prospect of reaping a second dividend from their initial investment in advertising, research, and product development costs (Pitta & Katsanis, 1995, p. 51)." It is argued that, though some would view the process as chilling, some celebrity bloggers and influencers are 'leveraging' their own brand equity and offsetting the 'research and product development costs' of producing and raising a child, and trading on their own established name and followers but with a bright, new extension 'product' – their own child/ren. The ethics, including issues of privacy and exploitation, of 'brand extension', when the brand extension is a child, are discussed.

Abidin, C. (2015). Micromicrocelebrity: Branding babies on the internet. *M/C Journal*, 18(5).

Pitta, D. A., & Prevel Katsanis, L. (1995). Understanding brand equity for successful brand extension. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 12(4), 51-64.