

ANALYSIS

Is your next rival paid to wear your clothes?

As more and more celebrities and influencers shun corporate endorsements to create their own brands, where does this leave fashion retailers? **Rosie Shepard** reports

In the age of social media, celebrities and influencers are more important than ever for brands looking to market their wares.

Being seen on or endorsed by the right influencers can get your product noticed by millions, which is why brands from Marks & Spencer to Missguided are investing more time and money in influencer marketing, and the 'paid partnership' tag is seen on an increasing number of celebrity posts.

Some retailers are even developing collaborations with influencers. Warehouse has just launched a collection "curated" by fashion blogger Lucy Williams, while just about every *Love Island* star has signed up for their own collection with the likes of Pretty Little Thing, Boohoo and Quiz.

However, times are changing and rather than promoting other people's products, celebrities – from A to Z-list – are cutting out the retail middleman and setting up their own brands.

Kylie Jenner's Kylie Cosmetics, Kim Kardashian's KKW Beauty and Rihanna's Fenty Beauty are now some of the biggest beauty brands in the world. Each of these global stars could have partnered with cosmetics giants such as L'Oréal or Estée Lauder, but instead they went it alone.

And it's not just the A-listers. YouTube vloggers such as Zoella, Jeffree Star and Huda Kattan have created beauty empires off the backs of their social media stardom, while reality TV stars such as *Made in Chelsea*'s Louise Thompson and *Geordie Shore*'s Chloe

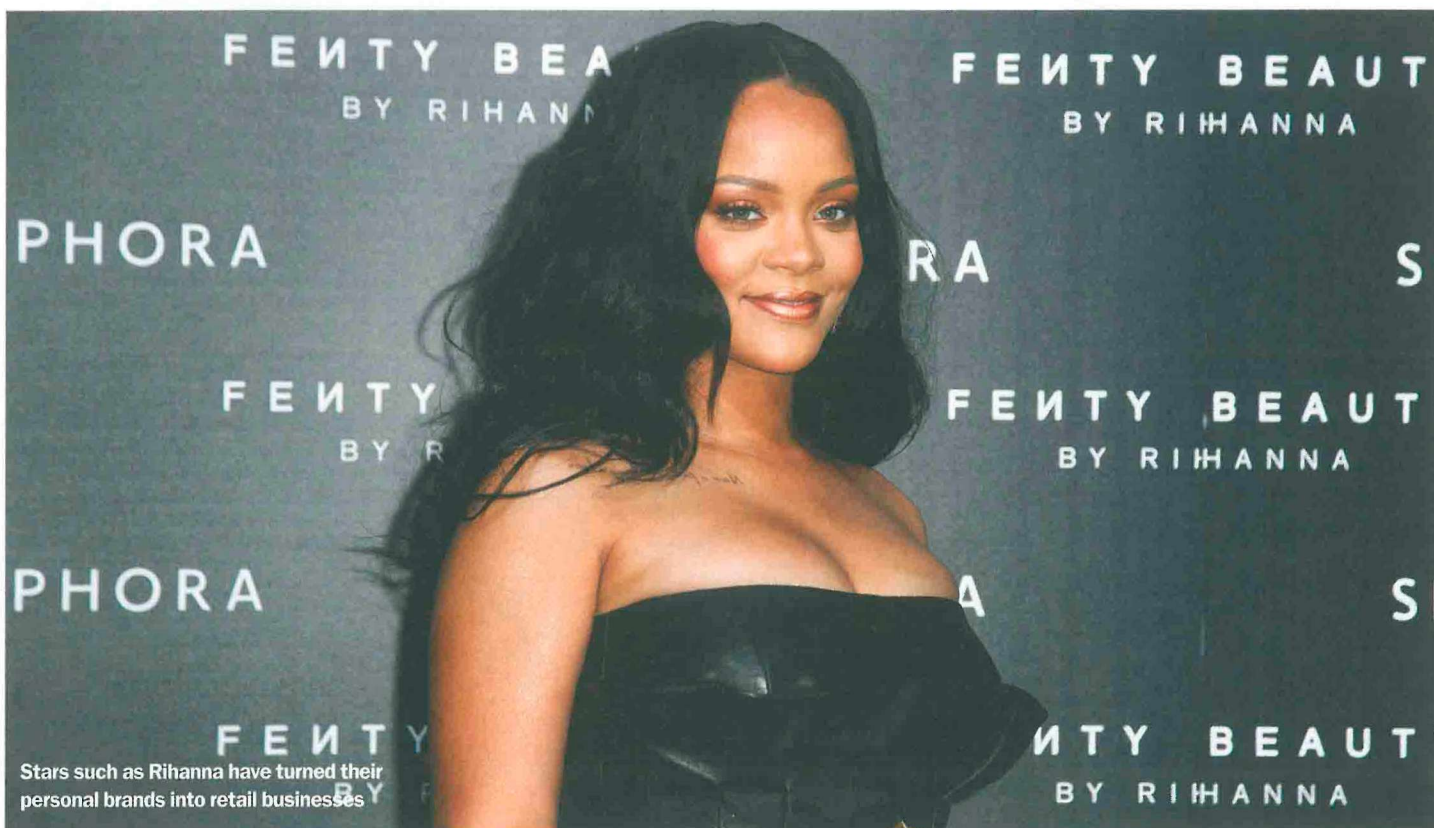
Ferry and Vicky Pattison have put their personal brands on everything from fashion to cosmetics to sunglasses.

Jovana Rajacic, senior account director at marketing agency M&C Saatchi, says the proliferation of social media has made influencers brands in their own right.

"The brand equity that celebrities derived from being associated with brands of a certain standing, they can now achieve themselves. Celebrities have become their own built-in advertising machines," she says.

Building brands made easy

Going it alone is an appealing route for influencers, says WGSN senior retail editor Petah Marian, as it allows them to retain creative control and maintain a long-term



Stars such as Rihanna have turned their personal brands into retail businesses