

Consumer Perception of Influencer-Endorsed Products: A Study of Social Media Marketing Utility

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KEYWORDS

Influencer Marketing, Consumer Perception, Social Media, Purchase Behavior, Product Endorsement, Brand Trust.

ABSTRACT

Social media influencers have emerged as a pivotal force in contemporary digital marketing, reshaping how consumers perceive, evaluate, and purchase products. This study investigates consumer perceptions regarding the utility and authenticity of products promoted by social media influencers. Through a quantitative research design using a structured questionnaire, data was collected from 210 respondents via snowball sampling. The findings reveal a high level of engagement and trust in influencers, particularly those active on platforms like Instagram and YouTube. Consumers primarily value influence credibility, content relevance, and product authenticity in shaping their purchase decisions. The analysis also differentiates the perceived effectiveness of micro vs. macro influencers, highlighting the nuanced role of follower engagement and content quality. Despite concerns about sponsored content, consumers report generally high levels of satisfaction with their influence-driven purchases. These results underscore the importance of authenticity and strategic platform selection in influenced marketing campaigns. The study offers actionable insights for brands seeking to optimize influencer collaborations and enhance consumer trust.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving landscape of digital communication, social media has transitioned from a mere social networking platform to a dynamic ecosystem of consumer engagement, marketing, and influence. Consumers today are increasingly reliant on digital channels, not only for entertainment and communication but also for making informed purchasing decisions (Lim et al., 2017). Among the most significant developments in this realm is the rise of social media influencers—individuals who leverage their online presence to impact on the perceptions, preferences, and behaviors of their followers.

Influencer marketing, a subset of social media marketing, has gained momentum for its ability to humanize brand communication. Influencers are often perceived as more relatable and trustworthy than traditional celebrities or corporate advertisements (Hudders, De Jans, & De Veirman, 2020). As consumers seek authenticity and personal connection, influencers play a crucial role in bridging the gap between brands and audiences. Their product endorsements, ranging from unboxing videos to lifestyle integrations, often carry persuasive weight that surpasses conventional advertising formats (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).



The utility of products promoted by social media influencers hinges on multiple variables, including perceived authenticity, influencer credibility, content quality, and platform engagement. Despite the commercial nature of such endorsements, many consumers report trust in the influencer's judgment, leading to increased product trial and purchase intent (Daniel, 2020). However, the growing commercialization of influencer content has also raised concerns about transparency, misleading promotions, and the ethical boundaries of influence.

This study explores how consumers perceive the utility of products endorsed by social media influencers. It examines the impact of influencer credibility, platform trust, and engagement metrics (likes, shares, comments) on purchase decisions. The research also distinguishes between the effectiveness of macro- and micro-influencers in shaping consumer behavior. In doing so, the study aims to provide nuanced insights into the evolving relationship between influencer marketing and consumer trust in the digital economy.

### 1.1 Objectives of the Study

- To examine the extent to which influencer marketing impacts brand trust and loyalty.
- To investigate how influencer engagement metrics (likes, shares, comments) affect consumer-decision-making.
- To compare the influence of micro- and macro-level influencers on consumer behavior.
- To assess the role of perceived authenticity in shaping consumer trust and product adoption.
- To evaluate how different social media platforms influence consumer trust in influencer endorsements.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The rise of influencer marketing has prompted an expanding body of literature examining how consumers perceive and respond to product endorsements by social media figures. This section reviews key theoretical and empirical studies that provide insight into the mechanisms of influence, consumer trust, and perceived utility of influencer-endorsed products.

Hudders, De Jans, and De Veirman (2020) emphasize that the effectiveness of social media influencers (SMIs) is a function of both message content and the credibility of the source. Using Stern's Revised Communication Model, they argue that the narrative quality and authenticity of influencer content play a crucial role in consumer engagement. Their study found that storytelling—not mere exposure—was the key to establishing emotional connections with audiences.

Campbell and Farrell (2020) extend this idea by defining influencers through three interdependent components: their role as endorsers, their follower base, and the strategic curation of their digital presence. The convergence of these elements, they argue, determines an influencer's marketing value and potential to affect consumer attitudes and behaviors.

Consumer trust is a critical factor in influencer marketing. Daniel (2020), in a study conducted in Finland, found that influencer competence—especially the ability to maintain a positive and approachable online persona—directly contributes to the perceived credibility of endorsements. Similarly, Kalu (2019) discovered that perceived authenticity significantly shapes the attitudes of Irish male millennials towards influencer content, especially on visual platforms like Instagram.

Digital engagement metrics such as likes, shares, and comments serve as social proof and can significantly impact consumer behavior. As noted by Lim et al. (2017), these metrics reinforce the credibility of the influencer and validate the promoted product, particularly among young consumers.

Dogra (2019), in a comparative study between Millennials and Gen Z, found that while macro-influencers offer broader reach, micro-influencers often generate higher engagement and trust due to their niche expertise and closer relationship with followers. This aligns with the findings of Vinoth and Kuma (2019), who reported that rural consumers were more responsive to influencers perceived as relatable and trustworthy.

Different platforms influence consumer perception in distinct ways. Instagram and YouTube are especially effective for influencer marketing due to their visual and narrative nature (Isosuo, 2016). Platform-specific norms also determine how consumers interpret authenticity and credibility.

Yadav and Rahman (2017) developed a scale to measure consumer perception of social media marketing, finding that perceived usefulness, ease of use, and satisfaction are significant predictors of continued engagement and purchase behavior.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research design to assess consumer perception toward products promoted by social media influencers. The methodology was designed to ensure a systematic collection and analysis of data, allowing for objective



conclusions regarding influencer marketing's utility and impact.

### 3.1 Research Design

The research employed a descriptive and exploratory design, focusing on capturing consumer attitudes, behaviors, and levels of satisfaction toward influencer-endorsed products. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, while exploratory analysis provided insight into patterns of consumer trust, platform usage, and purchasing behavior.

### 3.2 Data Collection Methods

- Primary Data: Collected via a structured, self-administered questionnaire distributed through Google Forms.
- Secondary Data: Derived from peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and white papers on influencer marketing.

### 3.3 Sampling Technique

A non-probability snowball sampling method was employed to recruit participants, encouraging referrals to extend the sample through personal networks.

### 3.4 Sample Size and Population

The sample comprised 210 respondents aged 18–45, ensuring coverage of the digitally active demographic.

### 3.5 Instrumentation

The survey included 21 questions across demographic, usage, awareness, product evaluation, and behavioral intention sections. The instrument was pilot-tested for clarity and consistency.

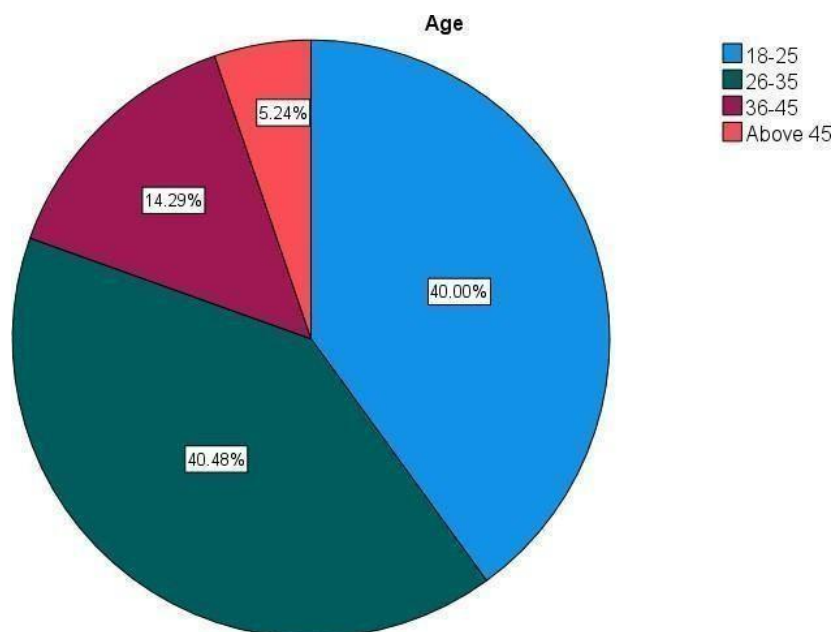
### 3.6 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS, employing descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, and graphical representations to interpret findings.

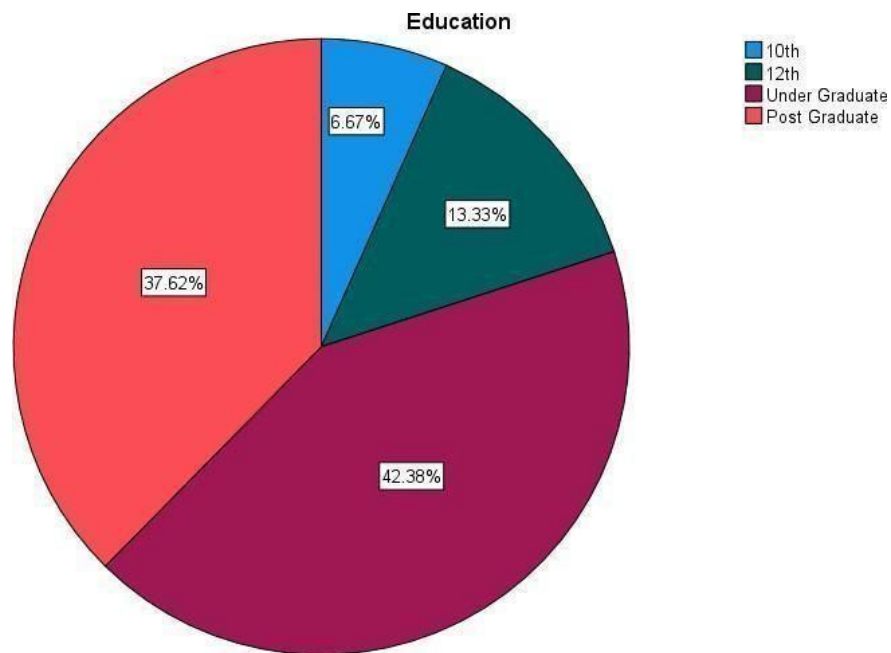
## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Gender

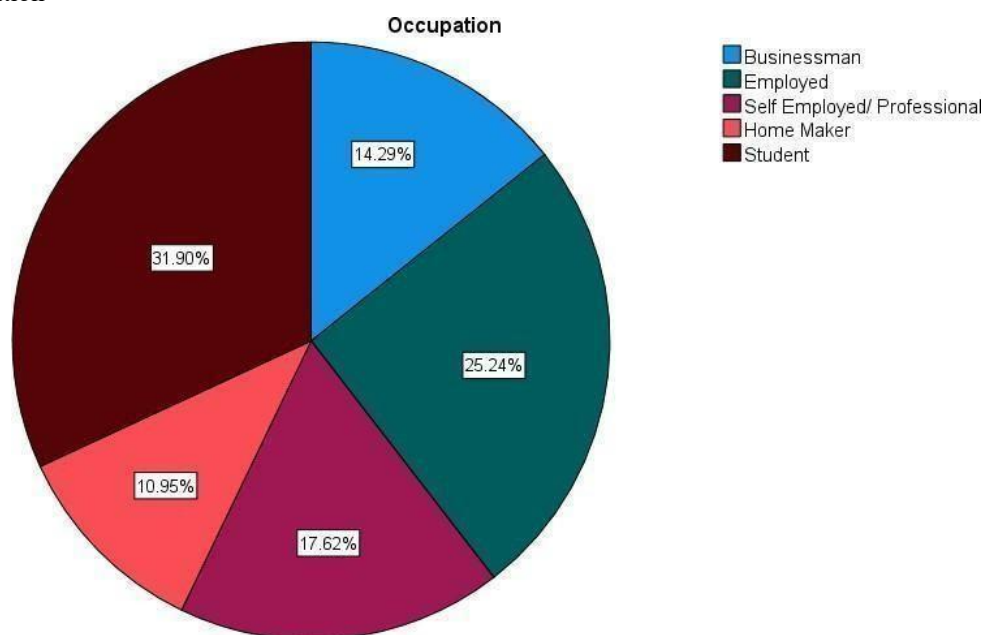
### 2. Age



### 3. Education



#### 4. Occupation



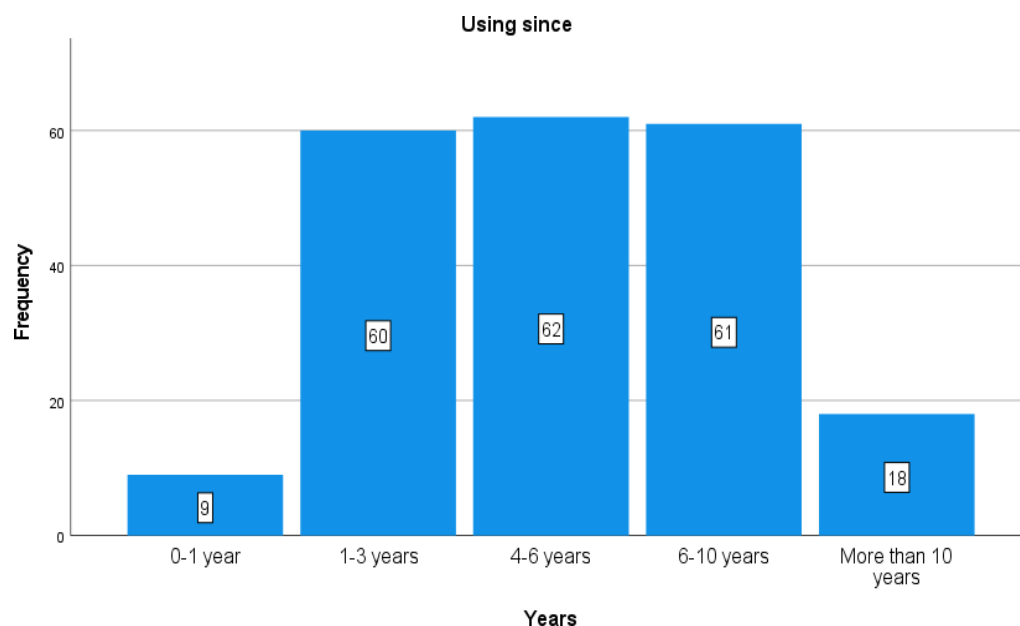
#### 5. Do you have social networking apps/sites?

Table 5. Users				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	210	100	100	100

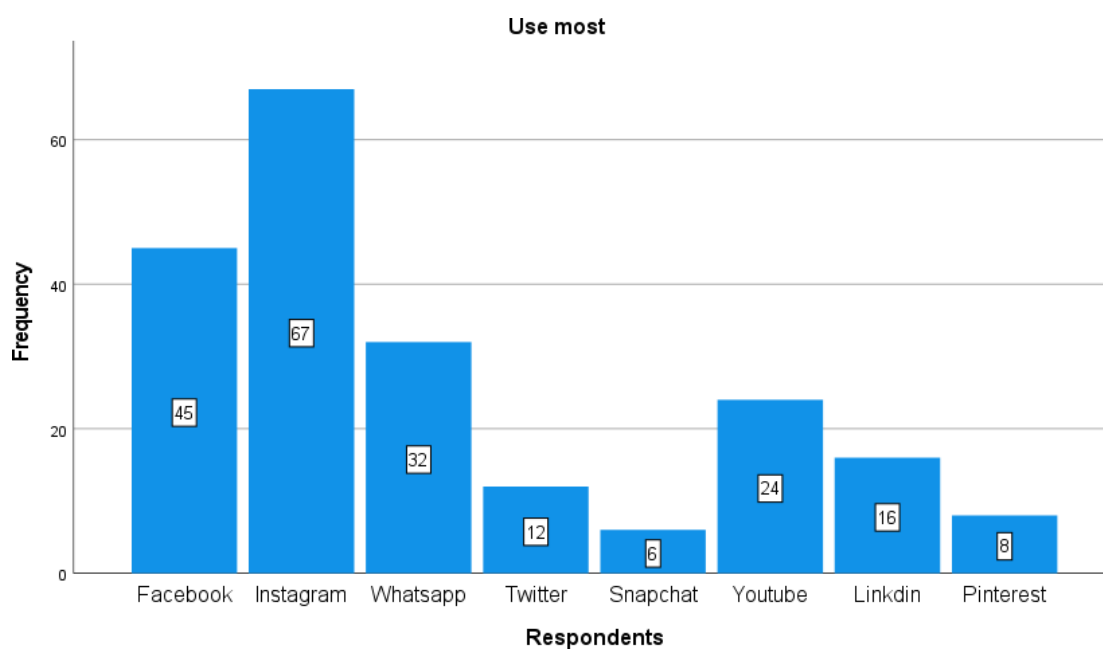


No	0	0	0	100.0
Total	210	100.0	100.0	

6. For how long have you used social media sites/applications?

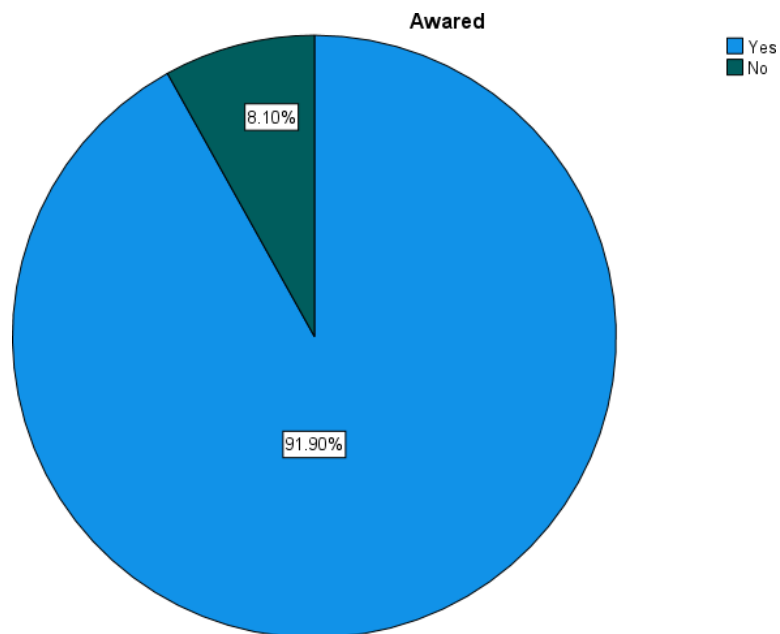


7. Which social media websites/applications you use the most?

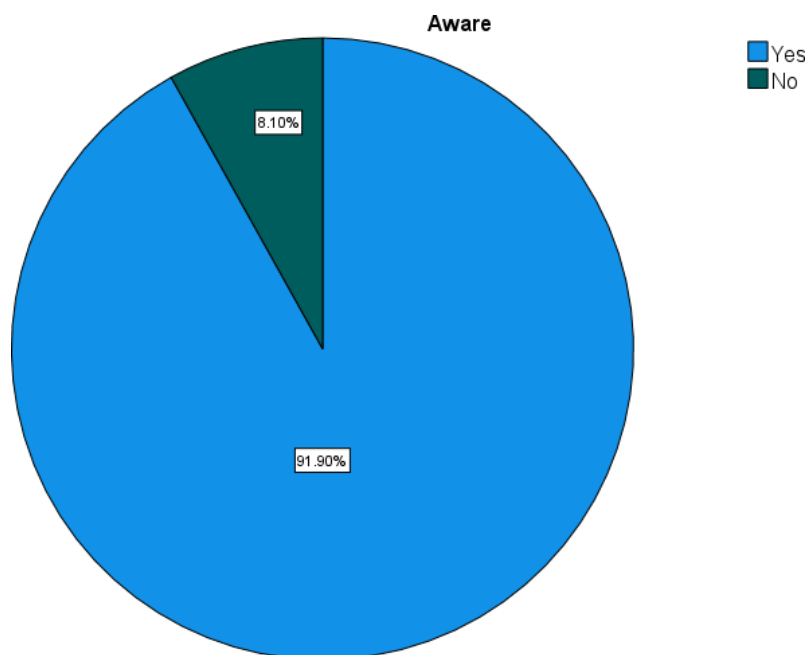




8. Do you know about social media influencers?

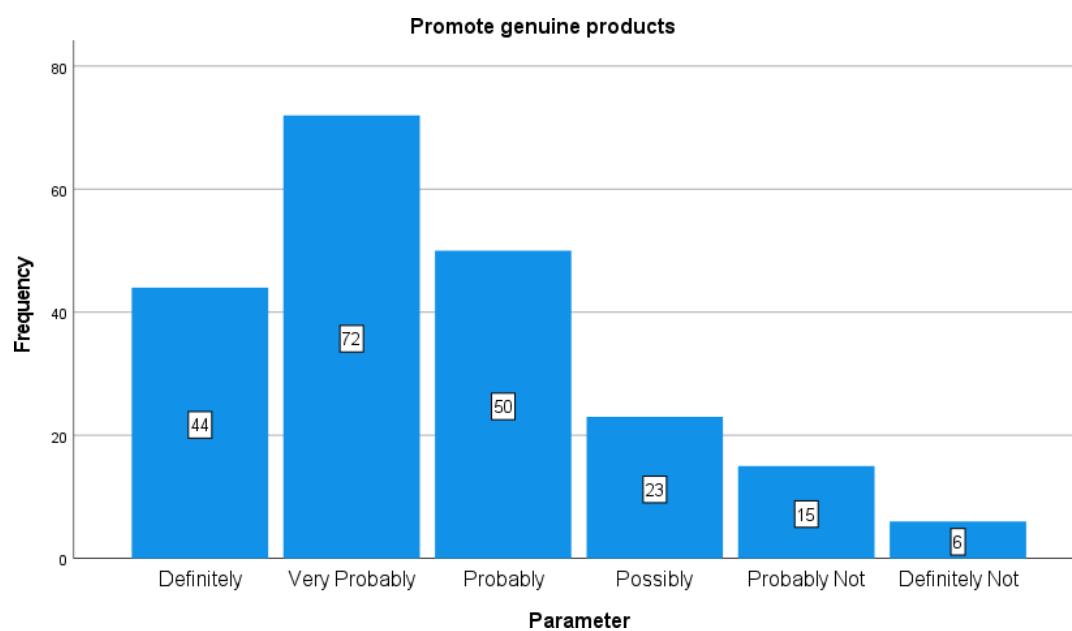


9. Do you know about the social media influencer products?

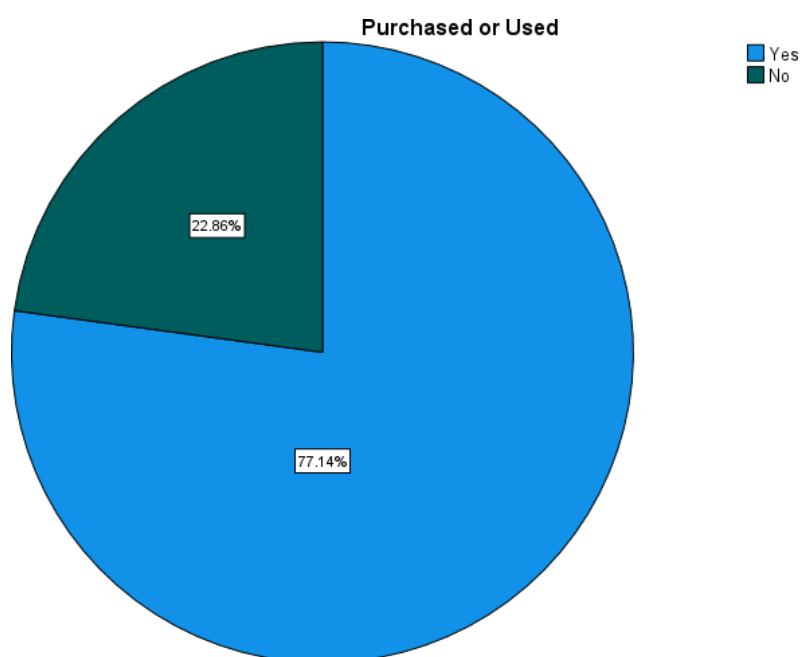




10. How likely is it that social media influencers will endorse genuine products

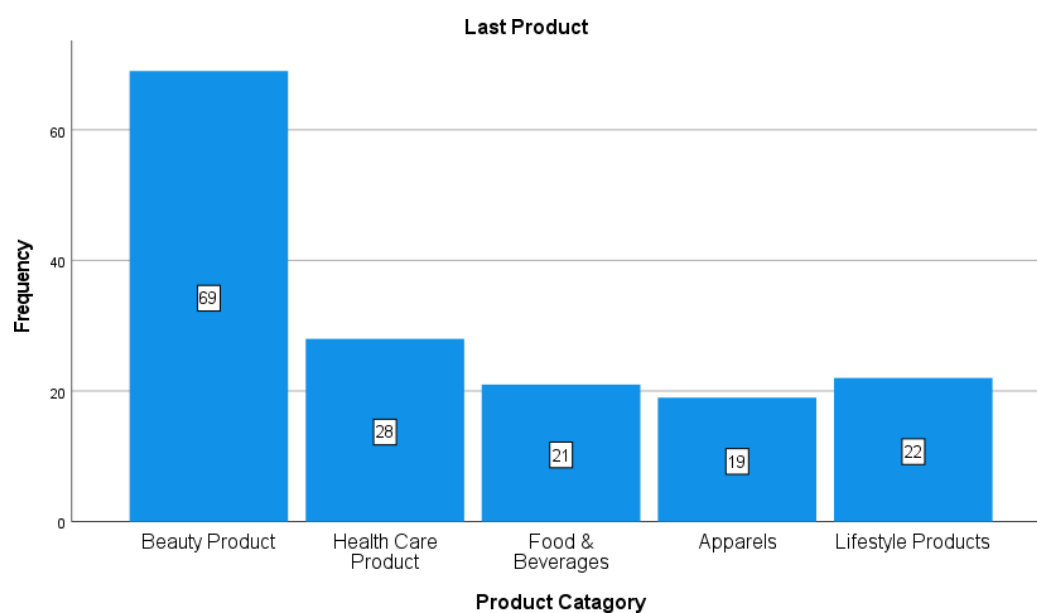


11. Did you ever buy or consume any products endorsed by social media influencers ?

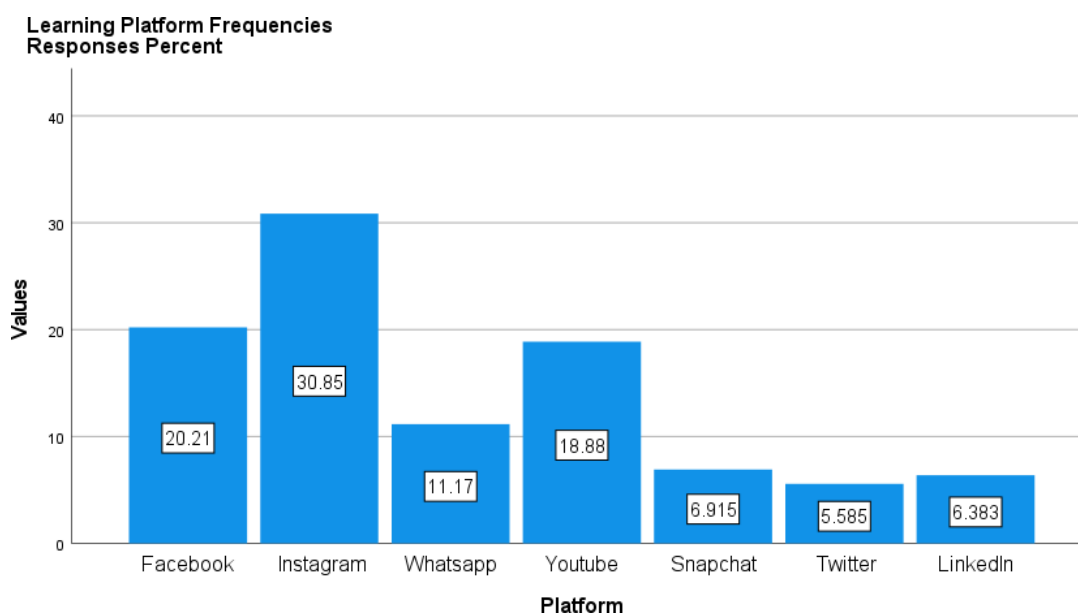




12. What was your most recent purchase or use of product recommended by social media influencers ?



13. Where did you learn about the products?

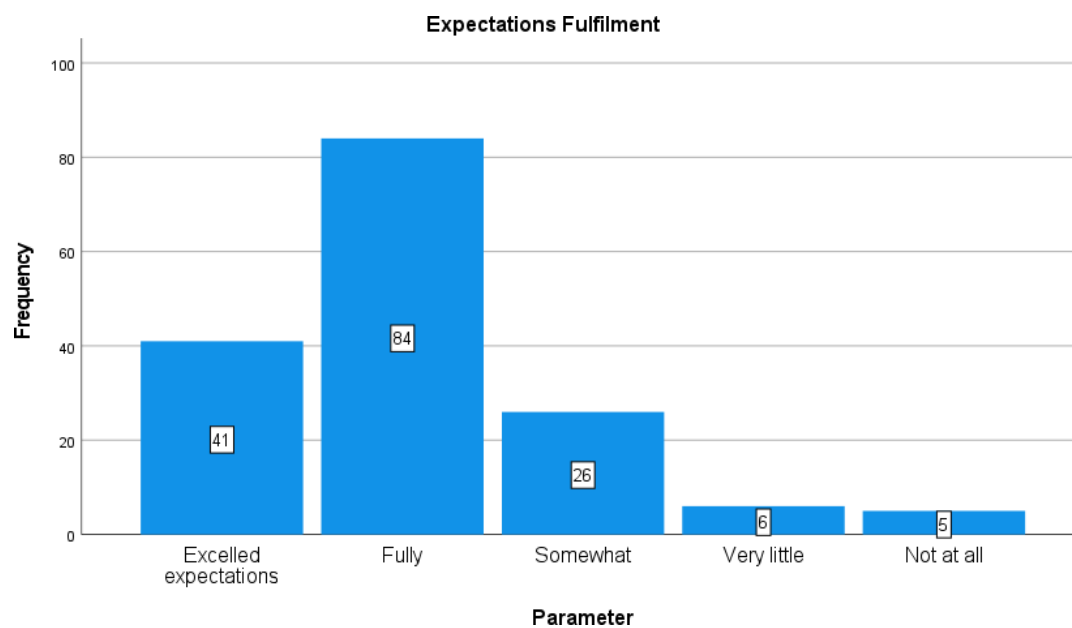


14. what made you purchase or utilize the product?





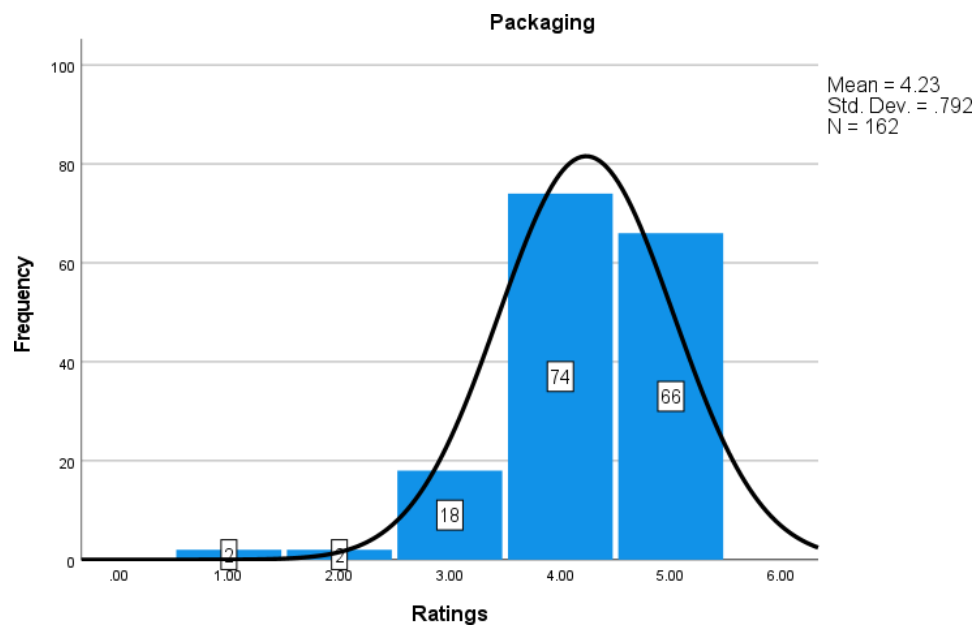
15. How likely did the product fulfilled your expectations?



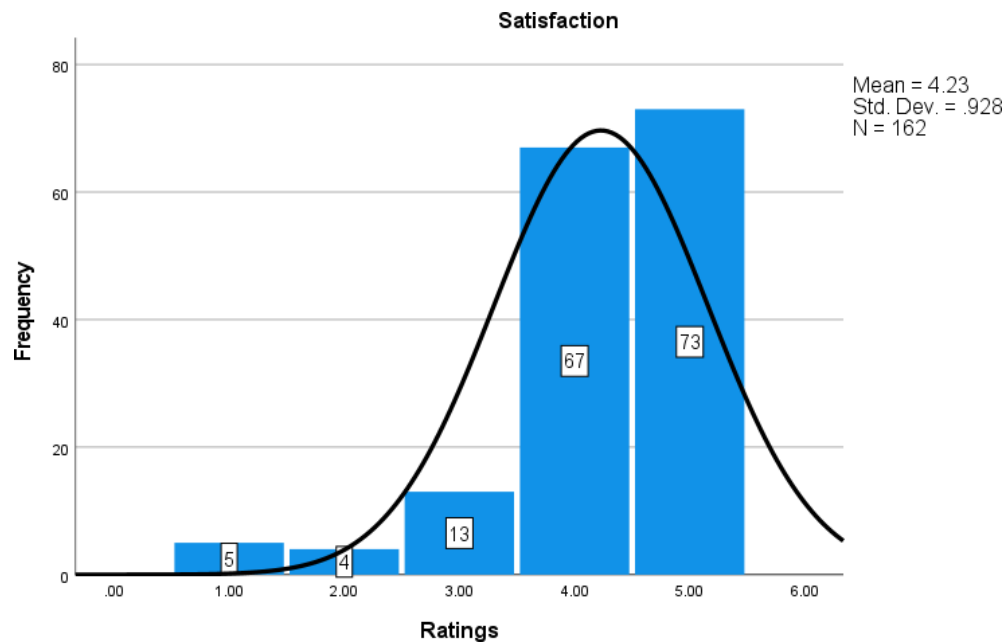
16. How likely did the product justified its price



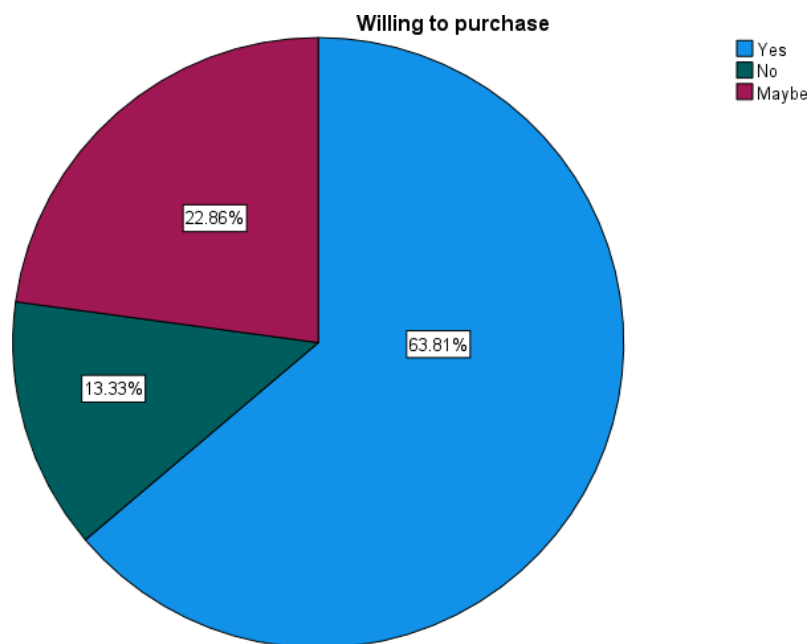
17. Grade the packaging of the product.



18. How pleased are you with the product usage?.



19. Will you purchase / purchase more goods sponsored by social media influencers



### Findings

- The poll saw a 58.1% female/41.9% male split in response.
- Most of the participants, i.e., 80.5%, were in the age group 18-35 years (18-25 years: 40%; 26-35 years: 40.5%).
- The highest percentage of the respondents were undergraduate degree holders, with a percentage of 42.4%.
- 31.9% of the respondents were the highest among the students, with homemakers constituting 11%.



- All the participants were social media users, as part of the requirement for them to be included in the study.
- The study showed that the majority of the respondents were using social media for a span of 4 to 10 years.
- Instagram was used most frequently among social networking sites (31.9%), followed by Facebook (21.4%).
- A whopping 91.9% of the respondents indicated familiarity with social media influencers and product reviews.
- Most (55.3%) of the participants felt that social media influencers place real products in the content.
- Among the 210 respondents, 162 said that they had bought and used social media influencer- supported products.
- Beauty products were the most commonly purchased and used items (43.4%), followed by healthcare (17.6%), lifestyle (13.8%), and apparel (11.9%).
- Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube were the foremost platforms on which customers discovered the products they purchased.
- Product description, price, and influencer credibility ranked as the most significant drivers of purchases.
- On a 5-point scale, the following average rating was given by the customers: Quality (4.04), Usability (2.74), Value for Money (3.86), Performance (3.95), Originality (4.00), and Longevity (3.99)
- The majority of the participants (51.9%) perceived that the products entirely met their expectations.
- A large number of users (45.7%) rated the product prices as very reasonable.
- The packaging of the product received an average rating of 4.23 from the customers.
- Most consumers indicated very high satisfaction with both the use and purchase of the products, with an average satisfaction rating of 4.23 out of 5.
- Most of the respondents (63.8%) stated that they would buy more social media influencer- endorsed products in the future.

This section presents the empirical findings from 210 consumer responses, organized by key themes aligned with the research objectives.

#### ***4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents***

Participants were 58.1% female and 41.9% male, with 80.5% aged 18–35. Undergraduates comprised 42.4%, and students were 31.9% of the sample.

#### ***4.2 Social Media Usage Patterns***

All respondents were active social media users, primarily on Instagram (31.9%) and Facebook (21.4%), with over four years of usage.

#### ***4.3 Awareness of Influencer Marketing***

A significant 91.9% were familiar with influencers, and 55.3% believed they promote genuine products.

#### ***4.4 Consumer Engagement with Influencer-Endorsed Products***

77.1% purchased influencer-promoted products, chiefly beauty (43.4%), healthcare (17.6%), lifestyle (13.8%), and apparel (11.9%).

#### ***4.5 Key Drivers of Purchase Decision***

Top motivators: influencer credibility, product specifications, and price.

#### ***4.6 Satisfaction and Perceived Utility of Endorsed Products***

Mean ratings (out of 5): Quality 4.04, Ease of Use 2.74, Value for Money 3.86, Performance 3.95, Genuineness 4.00, Durability 3.99.

#### ***4.7 Future Purchase Intentions***

63.8% indicated future purchases of influencer-promoted products.

#### ***4.8 Micro vs. Macro Influencers***



Qualitative feedback favored micro-influencers for their relatability and trust, aligning with previous research.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusion

The study confirms that influencer marketing significantly shapes consumer perceptions and purchase intentions, especially among 18–35-year-olds. Influencer credibility, authenticity, and platform engagement are critical to perceived product utility.

### 5.2 Recommendations

1. Prioritize collaborations with micro-influencers to enhance trust and engagement.
2. Ensure transparency in sponsorship disclosures.
3. Tailor content strategies to platform strengths (e.g., visual vs. long-form).
4. Monitor meaningful engagement metrics (comments, shares) for campaign evaluation.

Integrate user testimonials alongside influencer content to reinforce authenticity

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