

Understanding Influencer Marketing: The Role of Congruence between Influencers, Products and Consumers

Farhana Foysal Satata Md. Kawsar Mahafuza Islam Elma Noorain Momo
Department of Management, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

* E-mail of the corresponding author: farhanafoyalsatata@gmail.com

Abstract

Influencer marketing has become a powerful tool for connecting brands with their target audience in the age of digital marketing. This study examines the dynamics of influencer marketing through an analysis of 120 respondents' survey responses. The results offer a sophisticated understanding of how influencers affect the attitudes and actions of consumers. According to the study, most respondents rely their purchasing decisions on the recommendations of influencers, demonstrating the persuasive power of these individuals. The most engaging content category is found to be product reviews, highlighting the significance of authenticity in influencer marketing. The study also highlights how important it is for morals and interests to line up as well as how influencer endorsements must be genuine and transparent. The practical ramifications of these insights guide the tactics and decisions of marketers, influencers, regulatory agencies, and consumers in the always changing field of influencer marketing. This study provides a useful road map for stakeholders in this rapidly evolving industry and advances our understanding of the reach, efficacy, and ability to change consumer behavior of influencer marketing.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing; Consumer Behavior; Perception; Product Reviews; Values Alignment; Authenticity; Digital Marketing

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1. Introduction

Influencer marketing is now a successful tactic used by businesses to reach their target customers in the digital age (Campbell and Farrell, 2020, Islam et al., 2023, Mishra et al., 2023a, Sakib et al., 2022). "Congruence," or the degree to which influencers, products, and customers all work well together, is the secret to the success of this growing strategy (Argyris et al., 2020). The success of influencer marketing activities depends on this congruence or alignment (Marôpo et al., 2020). In the era of digital transformation, influencer marketing emerges as a powerful catalyst, seamlessly integrating authentic brand narratives with online experiences to engage and captivate diverse audiences (Mishra et al., 2023b)

Influencer marketing is a technique for advertising that makes use of the notoriety and reliability of individuals who have amassed sizable online fan bases through social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok (Gillespie, 2018). These individuals have a great deal of influence over the general public discourse, cultural norms, and individual purchase choices (Childers and Rao, 1992). However, their ability to successfully merge their personal identity with the products they support as well as the desires and needs of their audience is crucial to their success (Armstrong and Hagel, 2009). The first element of consistency is the influencer (Jun and Yi, 2020). It is essential that they come off as sincere and personable because they serve as the intermediary between brands and consumers (Fournier, 1998). If an influencer's personal values and interests align with the things they're pushing, it will be much simpler for them to connect with their audience and gain their trust (Pophal, 2016). Second, the product needs to be appropriate for the influencer's audience and cohesive with their writing style (Jacobson et al., 2022). A compelling promotional story that is more likely to captivate viewers and generate sales is created when these components work together (Kemp et al., 2021, Sahabuddin et al., 2023, Jabber et al., 2023). Consumers should also be consistent, but that's not the only thing (Killian and McManus, 2015). The product must seem to the influencer's audience to be a real solution to their issues, goals, or desires (Audrezet et al., 2020). In the end, what drives clients to make purchases from you is their perception of your sincere interest in them (Vivek et al., 2012, Sakib, 2019, Sakib et al., 2023). This overview offers the foundation for learning more about influencer marketing and the crucial role that congruence plays in creating an effective campaign (Vrontis et al., 2021).

The primary aims are to investigate how the three-way congruence in influencer marketing affects consumers' attitudes and behavioral intentions towards endorsed products, such as purchase intent, brand loyalty, and word-of-mouth recommending, and to assess how alignment between influencers, products, and consumers affects factors like product credibility and authenticity.

Consisting of influencer attributes, product characteristics, and consumer demographics, as well as the interplay between these elements, the research aims to identify and analyses the multifaceted factors that contribute to enhancing or undermining congruence within the influencer marketing context (Srinivasan et al., 2012). In conclusion, this study aspires to Examine how consumers' perceptions of influencers' congruence with their own

values affect the formation and maintenance of trusting connections with those influencers, and identify the elements that either foster or stifle the growth of trust between influencers and their audiences. These study goals seek to fill a vacuum in the literature by exploring the significance of congruence in influencer marketing and the myriad ways in which it affects consumers' views, actions, beliefs, and faith in influencers.

This study significantly advances the science in a number of ways. First off, by concentrating on the qualitative elements of influencer marketing, the research brings a new viewpoint to the conversation, which is usually driven by numbers. Second, by examining the three-way congruence between customers, products, and influencers, the study closes a significant gap in the body of knowledge. Thirdly, the study offers useful advice for companies and influencers looking to improve their marketing efforts by taking into account the effect of congruence on consumers' attitudes and behavioral intentions. Finally, this study helps regulatory agencies as they create regulations to control the fast changing field of influencer marketing.

This paper is divided into five sections: 1) Introduction, 2) Literature Review and Theoretical Framework, 3) Methodology, 4) Findings and Discussion, and 5) Conclusion, Implications, and Future Research Directions. Each section offers an essential piece of the study's comprehensive exploration of the role of congruence in influencer marketing.

2. Literature Review

In order to fit the dynamic character of contemporary communication, marketing strategies have undergone a significant transformation since the dawn of the information era (Firat et al., 1995). These changes have made influencer marketing a powerful tool for connecting businesses with their target audiences. "Influencers" are used in cooperative marketing initiatives because to their enormous internet followings and great influence over the purchasing decisions of their audiences (Gustavsson et al., 2018, Khanam and Sakib, 2020). These influencers frequently connect with their fans on social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok and contribute their own distinctive content, opinion, and advice (Nouri, 2018). Venciute et al. (2023) claimed that influencers have a stronger bond with their followers than conventional celebrities do. Their writing is sincere, approachable, and credible, which encourages a feeling of intimacy with their audience (Evans et al., 2021, Sakib, 2022). As a result, companies that wish to interact with their clients on a more personal level frequently use influencer marketing (Ye et al., 2021). Argyris et al. (2020) claim that businesses that use influencers can connect with customers in a more direct, relatable, and trustworthy manner than is feasible through conventional advertising channels (Wielki, 2020). When it comes to influencer marketing, "congruence" refers to how well the influencer, the advertised product, and the intended buyers all mesh together (Belanche et al., 2021). Because consumers' perceptions of the credibility and relevance of an influencer's endorsement may have such a profound effect on their own beliefs and actions, this idea is crucial to the success of influencer marketing efforts (Vrontis et al., 2021). According to Vrontis et al. (2021), customers view an influencer's endorsement as more genuine when the influencer's aesthetic, values, and personal narrative are in sync with the advertised product. However, research found that if the influencer isn't a good fit for the product, consumers are less likely to trust the endorsement (Farivar and Wang, 2022).

According to Chetioui et al. (2020), influencer-consumer congruence refers to the degree to which an influencer and their intended audience share comparable beliefs, interests, and lifestyles. Customers are more likely to relate to and trust an influencer's product recommendations if they perceive a reflection of themselves in the influencer (Chetioui et al., 2020, Shu et al., 2017). Consumer-product congruence, as defined by Argyris et al. (2020), refers to a feeling of harmony between the product and the buyer's sense of identity. Consumers are more likely to form a positive impression of a product and act favorably towards it if they see similarities between the product and their own sense of identity. By transferring their good traits to the product, an influencer's endorsement can increase consumer-product congruence in the context of influencer marketing (Kim and Kim, 2021, Sakib, 2020).

According to Farivar and Wang (2022), there is a substantial impact of congruence in influencer marketing on consumer perceptions and actions. Research shows that customers are more likely to trust an influencer's recommendation when there is a high degree of congruence between the influencer, the product, and the consumer. Customers are more likely to make a purchase after being exposed to an authentic brand and product. According to Belanche et al. (2021), this is because customers view an influencer's endorsement as an extension of the influencer's personal narrative when the influencer's lifestyle, values, and persona are congruent with the product being promoted. This genuine recommendation causes buyers to feel more strongly about the goods, which in turn affects their opinions and actions. Because of the subtlety with which such congruence occurs, it is able to overcome the natural skepticism people have towards overtly commercial communications.

Vrontis et al. (2021) argue that the perceived similarity between the influencer and the customer also has a substantial effect on the latter's beliefs and actions. When an influencer's lifestyle and values are consistent with those of the target audience, the audience is more likely to follow the influencer's advice (Nadanyiova et al., 2020). Because of this established rapport, consumers are more likely to consider making a purchase of the endorsed

goods (Schouten et al., 2021). Customers are more likely to like a product if they feel that their own sense of identity is reflected in it (MacInnis and Folkes, 2017). The more the product reflects the consumer's sense of identity, the more likely they are to buy it and spread the word.

The degree of harmony in marketing with influential people depends on a number of elements. The first factor in establishing whether or not an influencer and a product are a good fit is the influencer's character and way of life. A clear and consistent image helps influencers develop stronger congruence with items that fit their profile, as stated by Belanche et al. (2021). Second, the influencer-consumer correlation is affected by the demographics and psychographics of the influencer's audience. Higher congruence is more likely to be achieved by influencers whose followers closely fit the target population of the company in terms of age, gender, lifestyle, and hobbies (Chetioui et al., 2020). Last but not least, consumer-product congruence can also be influenced by the product's nature and placement. Consumers are more likely to have a positive reaction to a product if it is consistent with their own sense of identity and goals.

Congruence plays an important role in influencer marketing, and the extant literature sheds light on its effects on customer perception and action (Belanche et al., 2021). A more sophisticated comprehension of the factors that affect congruence and the techniques that can be used to maximize it in influencer marketing efforts is, however, required (Leung et al., 2022). In addition, not enough studies have investigated the potential drawbacks of incongruence and ways to lessen them. The existence of these discrepancies calls for additional research into the dynamics of congruence in influencer marketing. The long-term benefits and durability of congruence on consumer-brand connections are not addressed in the existing literature on congruence in influencer marketing. Existing studies highlight the immediate effect of congruence on customer views and behaviors, but there hasn't been enough investigation into the longer-term consequences of congruence. It is crucial to have an understanding of the dynamics of the evolving relationship between influencers, consumers, and products, and the lasting impact this has on brand loyalty and customer retention. In an ever-evolving digital marketing ecosystem, this line of enquiry could illuminate the permanency of congruence and its function in fostering everlasting ties between consumers and businesses.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

This study employs a quantitative research approach (Islam, Jabber, & Sakib, 2023). This design was chosen because of its suitability for the research topic and its potential to understand influencer marketing: The role of congruence between influencers, products and consumers. This study used an online survey as part of its technique to gather data (Sakib et al., 2022). Both primary and secondary data have been used in this study (Islam & Jabber, 2018). The purpose of the study was to gather information about the mechanics of influencer marketing and how it affects the attitudes and behaviours of customers. There were 120 responses in all to the poll, which produced a sizable dataset for study.

3.2 Sample Selection

Purposive sampling was the method used to choose the study's sample. People who have knowledge and experience with influencer marketing—both followers and influential people—were the main focus of the study. This strategy made sure that the attendees have the background knowledge needed to offer insightful comments on the topic (Islam & Jabber, 2018).

3.3 Demographic Characteristics

The study's methodology was determined by analysing and interpreting data obtained from a sample of 120 respondents via an online survey. Approximately 74% of the respondents were students, and the largest age group was those between the ages of 18 and 25 (almost 79%). Our study focused on students and the 18–25 age group to ensure that the insights and behaviours observed are directly applicable to the context of influencer marketing, which frequently caters to younger and digitally active audiences, just as the selected journal limited the sample to female respondents to avoid potential bias. The sample characteristics' alignment with the research's specialized focus improves the validity and applicability of the findings to the influencer marketing context, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of the influencers' impact on the behaviour and perceptions of these demographics' consumers.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

A Survey was conducted online to gather information about respondents' attitudes and actions about influencer marketing. Both closed-ended and open-ended questions were included in the structured questionnaire that made up the survey (Islam, Jabber, & Sakib, 2023). The survey was thoughtfully designed to investigate a number of topics related to influencer marketing, such as its impact on buying decisions, the social media channels that influencers prefer, how often people interact with their content, what kinds of content are engaging, and how

transparent influencer marketing is perceived to be. Secondary data is collected from different published sources such as books, journals, articles, reports etc. On the other hand, the primary data has been collected through a questionnaire survey.

3.5 Data Analysis

Through the application of statistical methods, quantitative analysis was able to extract numerical insights from the closed-ended survey questions. Mainly descriptive analysis was done. The open-ended survey results were subjected to a thematic analysis as part of the qualitative analysis process, which aimed to find narratives, patterns, and themes pertaining to influencer marketing. This mixed-method approach made it possible to thoroughly explore the topic.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Throughout the whole data collection process, the research complied with ethical guidelines. Every participant gave their informed consent after being made aware of the study's goal. Pseudonyms were used in transcriptions and reporting to replace participant names and identifiable information, preserving participant confidentiality and anonymity. After the study was finished and published, the audio recordings were destroyed and the data was safely archived.

4. Analysis and Findings

The survey data from 120 respondents is thoroughly analyzed in the part that follows, and the results shed light on the fascinating dynamics of influencer marketing, customer behavior, and views.

Demographic Analysis

This research has categorized its respondents on the basis of age, sex, and occupation.

Gender

- Male: 42 respondents (35%)
- Female: 78 respondents (65%)

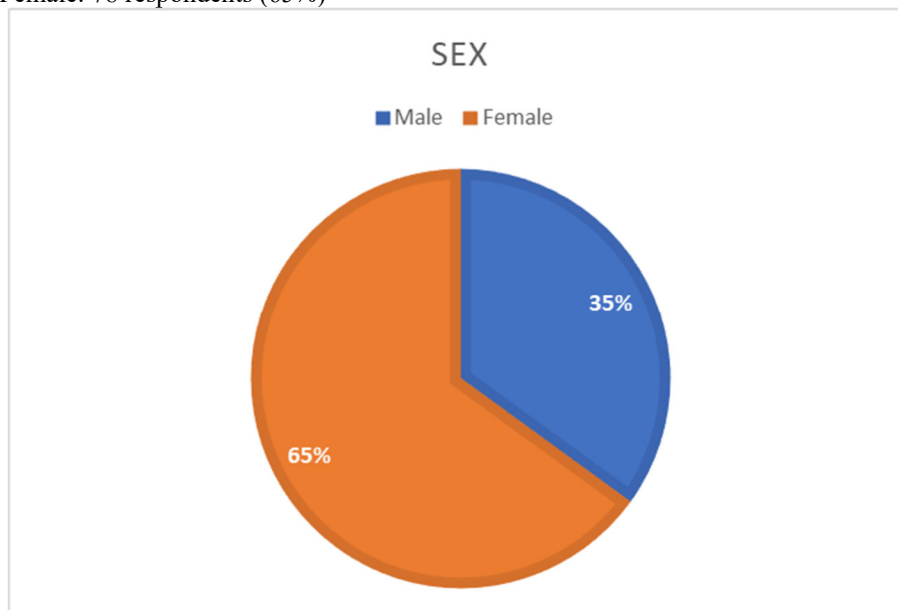


Figure 1: Gender Analysis

The pie chart shows the gender distribution of the 120 respondents. It's evident that the majority of the respondents are female, comprising 65% of the total, while males make up 35%. This gender distribution provides insight into the demographics of the survey participants.

Age

- 18-25: 95 respondents (79%)
- 26-35: 12 respondents (10%)
- 36-45: 13 respondents (11%)

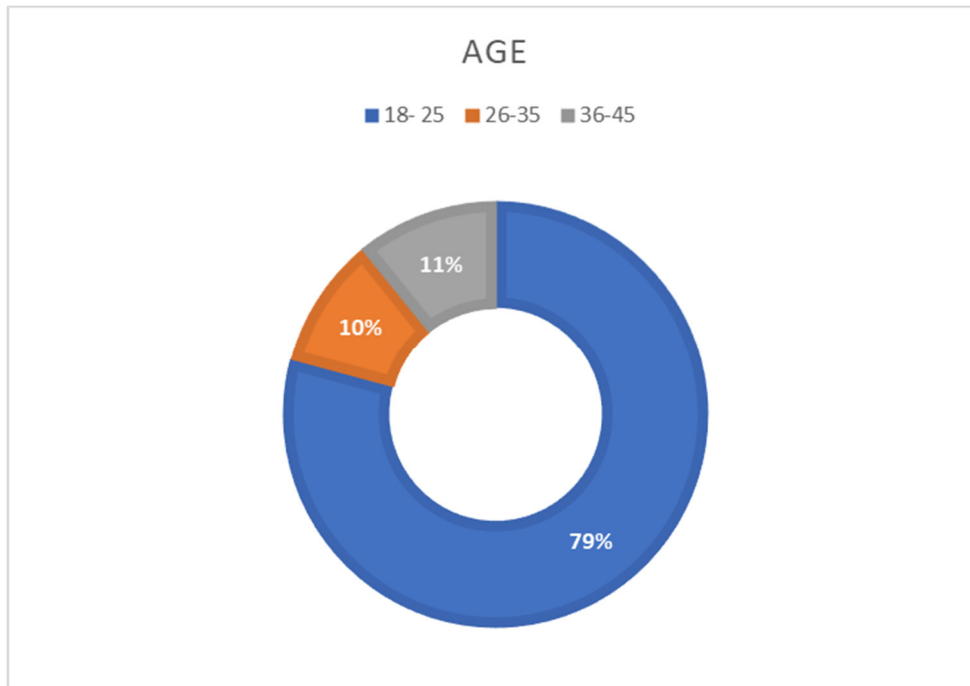


Figure 2: Age group analysis

The pie chart illustrates the age distribution of the respondents. It's clear that the majority, 79%, fall in the 18-25 age range, while 10% are aged 26-35, and 11% are aged 36-45. This information highlights the age groups most represented in the survey.

Occupation

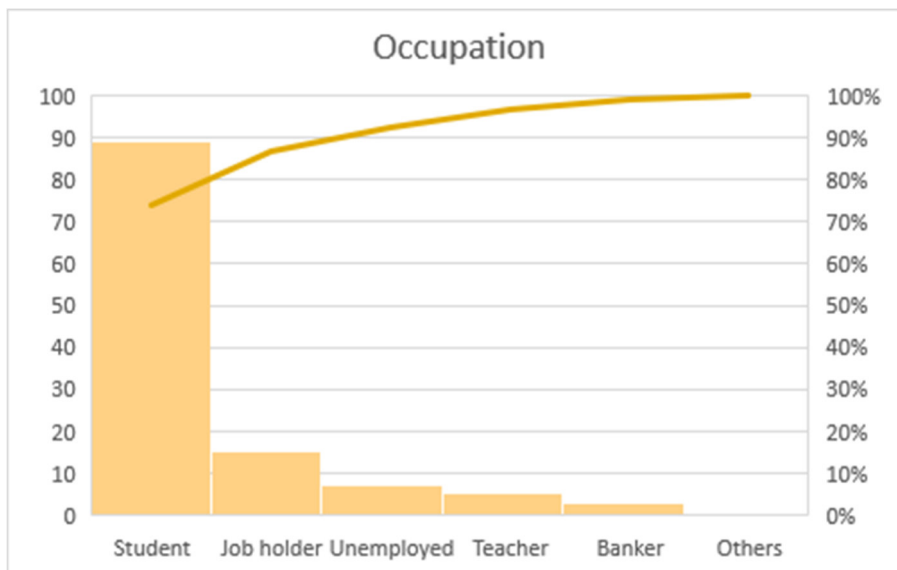


Figure 3: Occupation analysis

A Pareto chart, also known as the 80-20 rule, is a powerful visual tool used to prioritize and highlight the most significant factors within a dataset. It's based on the Pareto Principle, which suggests that roughly 80% of the effects result from 20% of the causes. The above Pareto chart identifies the priority of various occupational categories based on their frequency. Here, The Pareto chart shows that the most common occupation among respondents is students, with 89 individuals representing this category. This is followed by job holders (15), unemployed (7), teachers (5), and bankers (3). Only one respondent falls into the "Others" category. Students make up a substantial 74% of the total respondents, aligning with the Pareto Principle, as the majority falls within this category. This signifies that students are a primary focus in the dataset, and understanding their perspectives on influencer marketing is paramount. Rest of the categories collectively represents the remaining 26%. The Pareto chart's emphasis on student respondents indicates the need for tailored influencer marketing strategies to engage this predominant group effectively while considering the needs of the smaller occupational categories, albeit with less priority in this context.

Influence on Purchase Decisions

- Made purchase based on influencers' recommendation: 83 respondents (69%)
- Did not make a purchase: 37 respondents (31%)

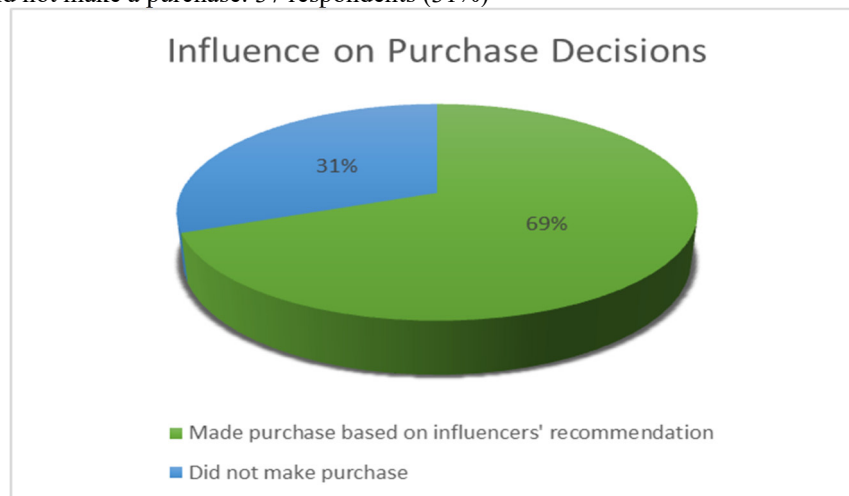


Figure 4: Influence on Purchase decision

The pie chart demonstrates the impact of influencer marketing on purchase decisions. It's evident that a substantial 69% of respondents have made a purchase based on influencers' recommendations, while 31% have not.

Familiarity with Influencer Marketing

- Familiar: 97 respondents
- Not Familiar: 23 respondents

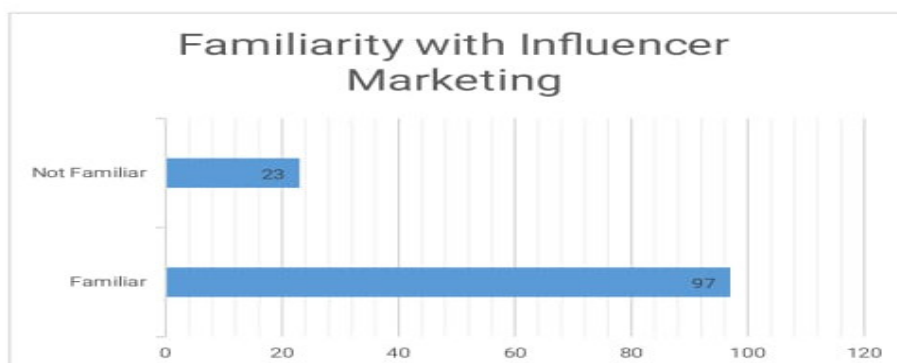


Figure 5: Family with influencer marketing

The bar chart depicts the respondents' familiarity with influencer marketing. A significant majority of respondents, 97 of them, are familiar with influencer marketing, while 23 respondents are not. This suggests that influencer marketing is a well-recognized concept among the surveyed group.

Preferred Social Media Platforms

- Facebook: 78 respondents (65%)
- Twitter: 1 respondent (1%)
- Instagram: 15 respondents (13%)
- YouTube: 21 respondents (18%)
- Others: 5 respondents (4%)

PREFERRED SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

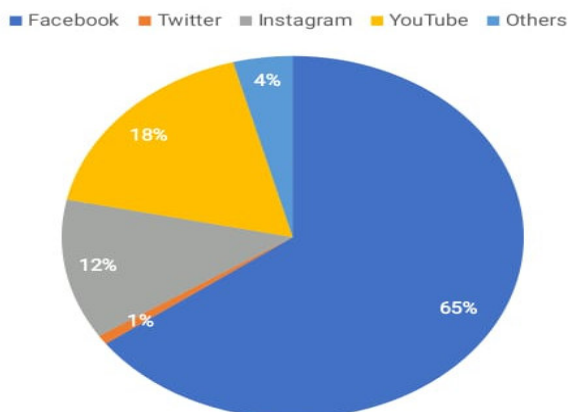


Figure 6: Preferred Social Media Platforms

The pie chart reveals the preferred social media platforms of the respondents. Facebook is the most favored platform, with 65% of respondents using it, followed by YouTube (18%), Instagram (13%), Twitter (1%), and other platforms (4%). This information provides insights into the platforms where influencer marketing is likely to have the most impact.

Frequency of Engagement with Influencer Content

- Daily: 63 respondents
- Weekly: 19 respondents
- Monthly: 9 respondents
- Rarely: 26 respondents
- Never: 3 respondents

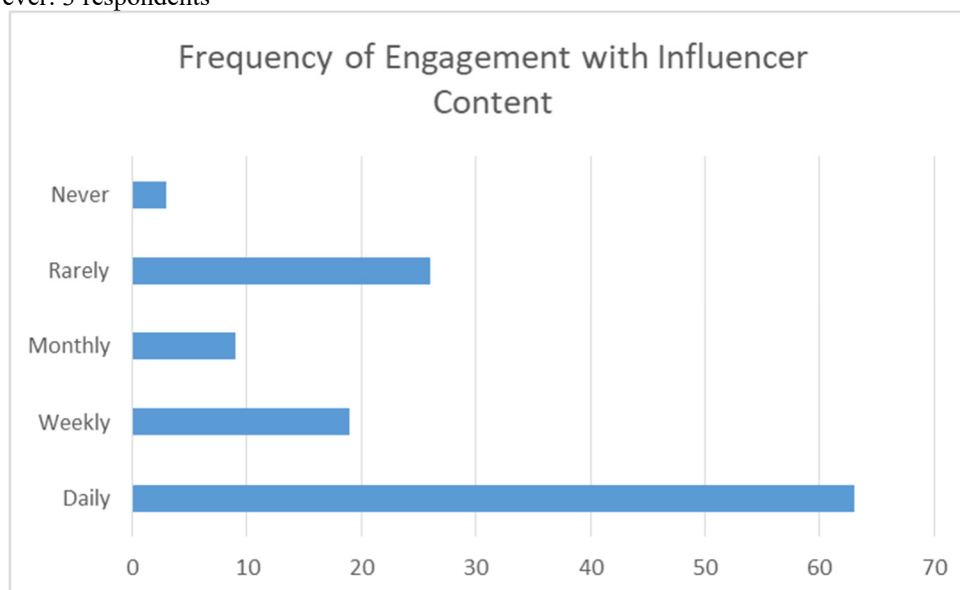


Figure 7: Frequency of Engagement with influencer content

The bar chart illustrates the frequency of engagement with influencer content among the respondents. The majority (53%) engage with influencer content daily, followed by weekly (16%), rarely (22%), monthly (8%), and very few (3%) respondents who never engage with influencer content. This data sheds light on the regularity of exposure to influencer marketing among the surveyed group.

Engaging Content Types

- Lifestyle updates: 19 respondents
- Product reviews: 88 respondents
- Sponsored posts: 6 respondents
- Tutorials: 7 respondents

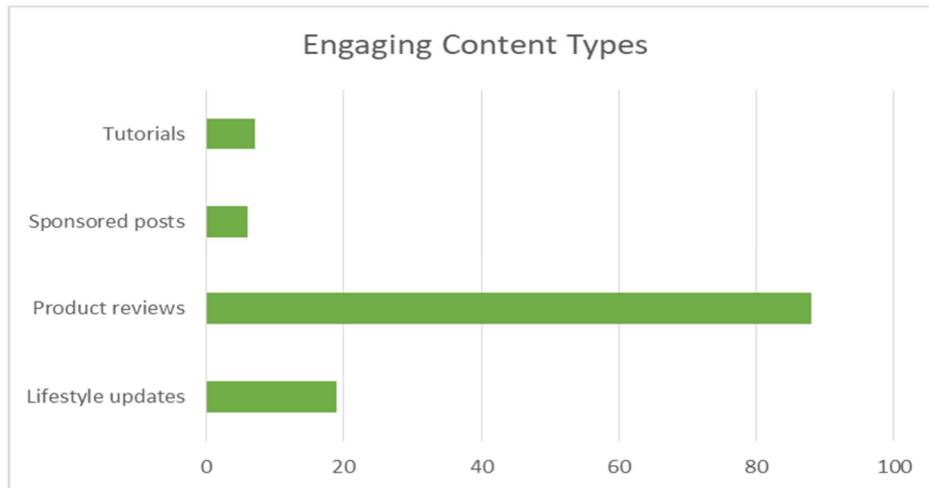


Figure 8: Engaging Content Types

The bar chart illustrates the preferences of the respondents for various types of engaging content created by influencers. Product reviews are the most popular content type, with 73% of the respondents showing a strong inclination toward this category. This indicates that when influencers review products, they have a higher likelihood of engaging their audience effectively. Lifestyle updates, tutorials, and sponsored posts also have their audience but to a lesser extent. This data informs marketers that product reviews tend to be more effective in capturing the audience's attention and can be a priority in influencer marketing campaigns.

Effectiveness across Product Categories

The Pareto chart demonstrates the effectiveness of influencer marketing across different product categories, prioritized based on the number of respondents:

- Fashion and beauty products: 54 respondents
- Electronics and gadgets: 32 respondents
- Food and beverages: 7 respondents
- Fitness and health supplements: 8 respondents
- Travel and tourism packages: 10 respondents
- Others: 9 respondents

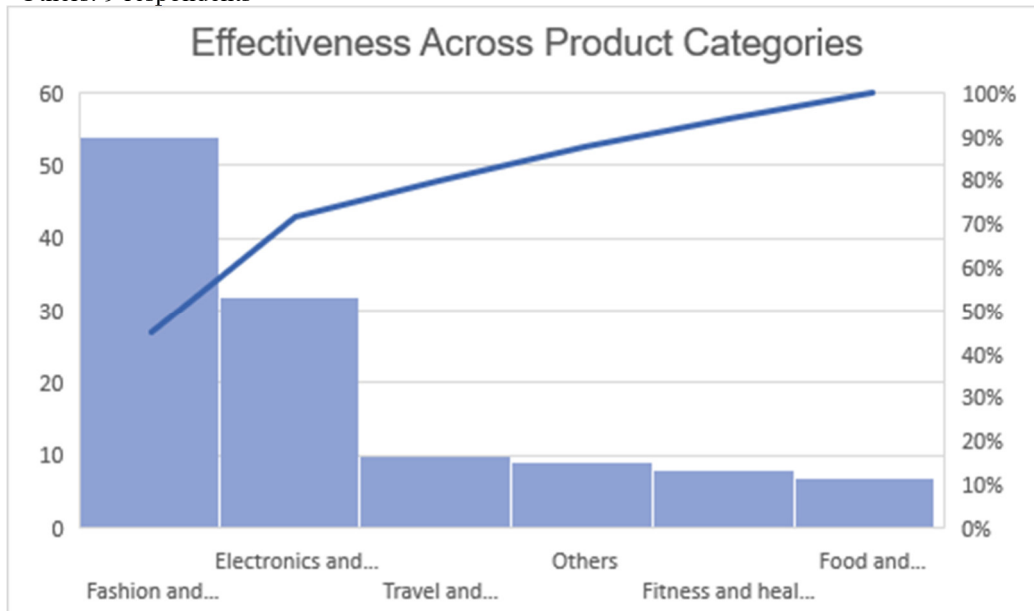


Figure 9: Effectiveness Across Product Categories

The Pareto chart showcases that fashion and beauty products have the highest representation, with 45% of the total, indicating that influencer marketing is particularly effective in this category. Electronics and gadgets follow, representing 27% of the total. These findings suggest that influencer marketing can be prioritized and optimized for fashion and beauty products and electronics and gadgets, while still considering other categories where it might also be effective.

Growing Interest in Influencer Marketing

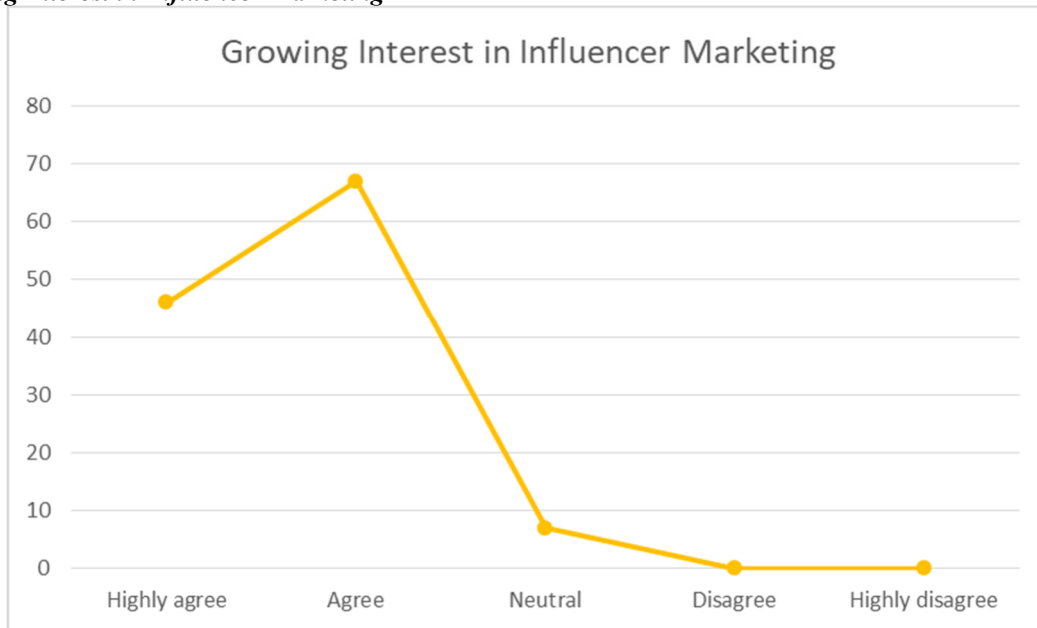


Figure 10: Growing Interest in Influencer Marketing

The line graph reflects the respondents' level of agreement with the statement about growing interest in influencer marketing. It's notable that a significant 77% of respondents either highly agree (38%) or agree (39%) that there is a growing interest in influencer marketing. This indicates that influencer marketing is a trending and promising strategy. With no respondents in the "disagree" categories, it's evident that the interest in influencer marketing is widespread and increasing, suggesting a favorable environment for businesses to invest in influencer marketing campaigns.

Audience Perception on Influencer-Target Audience Connection

- Agree: 107 respondents
- Disagree: 13 respondents

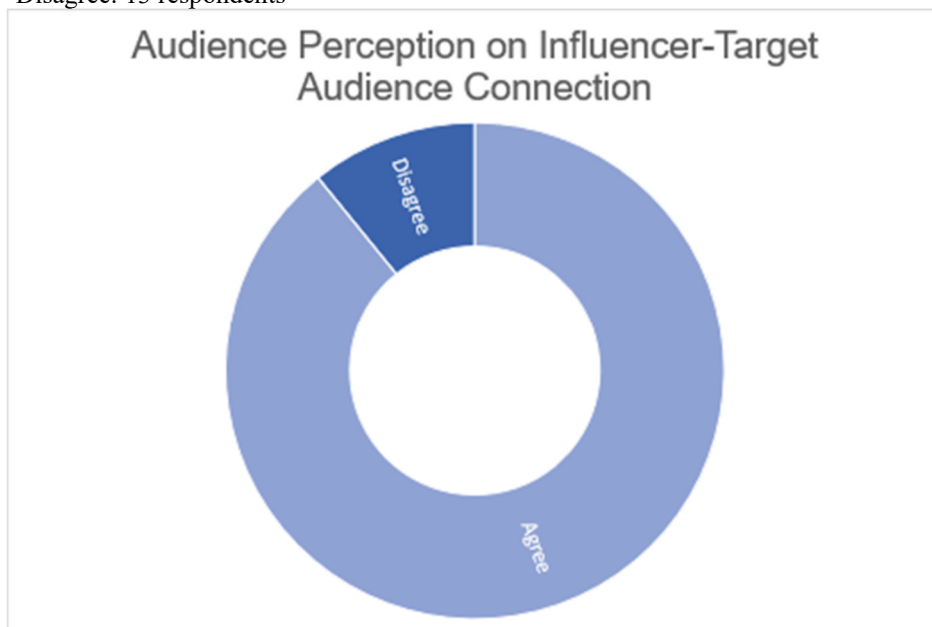


Figure 11: Audience Perception on Influencer- Target Audience Connection

The pie chart shows that a vast majority (89%) of the respondents agree that influencers have a strong connection with their target audience. This high level of agreement indicates that the audience perceives influencers as relatable figures who can effectively engage with their followers. This alignment is a key factor in influencer marketing's success, as it fosters trust and credibility.

Audience Perception on Trustworthiness of Influencers

- Strongly agree: 2 respondents

- Agree: 22 respondents
- Neutral: 62 respondents
- Disagree: 25 respondents
- Strongly disagree: 6 respondents

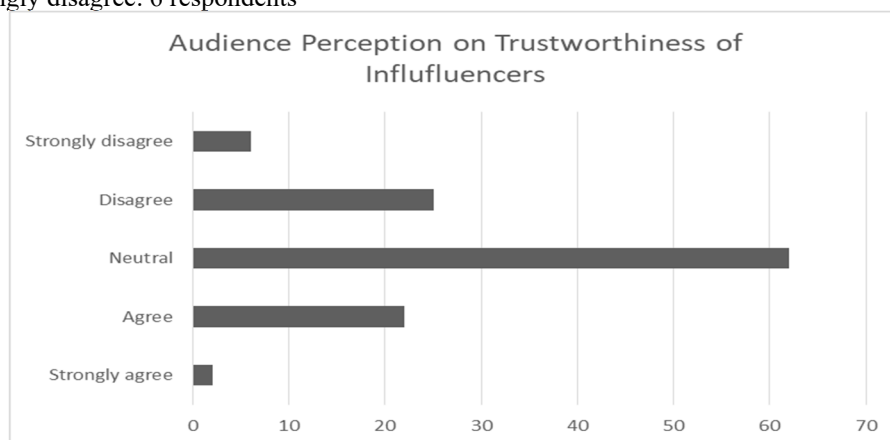


Figure 12: Audience Perception on Trustworthiness of Influencers

The bar chart demonstrates that while a considerable number of respondents (24%) either strongly agree or agree with the trustworthiness of influencers, the majority (64%) are in the neutral category. A notable portion (18%) either disagrees or strongly disagrees. This data indicates that there is room for improvement in building trust in influencer marketing. Marketers should focus on strategies that enhance influencer credibility and trustworthiness.

Perceptions of Transparency

- Agree: 65 respondents
- Disagree: 55 respondents

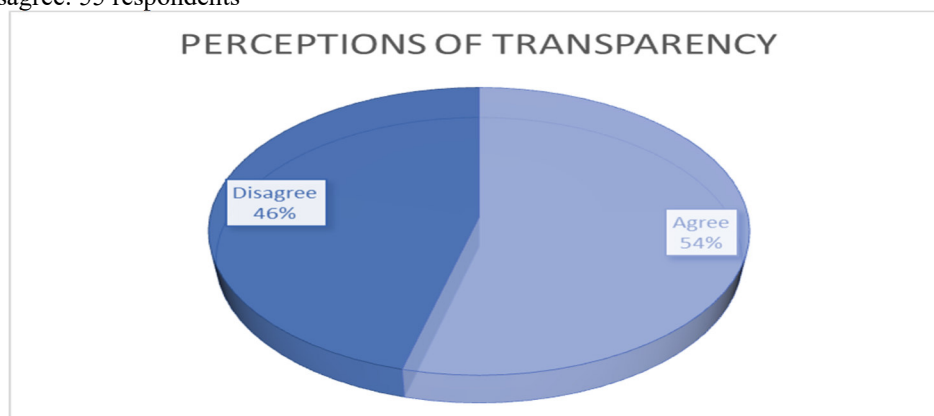


Figure 13: Perceptions of Transparency

The pie chart displays a nearly balanced perception of transparency among the respondents. While 53% agree that influencer marketing is transparent, 47% disagree. This suggests that there is some ambiguity regarding transparency in influencer marketing, highlighting the need for clearer and more transparent practices in influencer collaborations to win over those who are currently skeptical.

Influencer-Promoted Products Alignment

- Related: 91 respondents
- Unrelated: 29 respondents

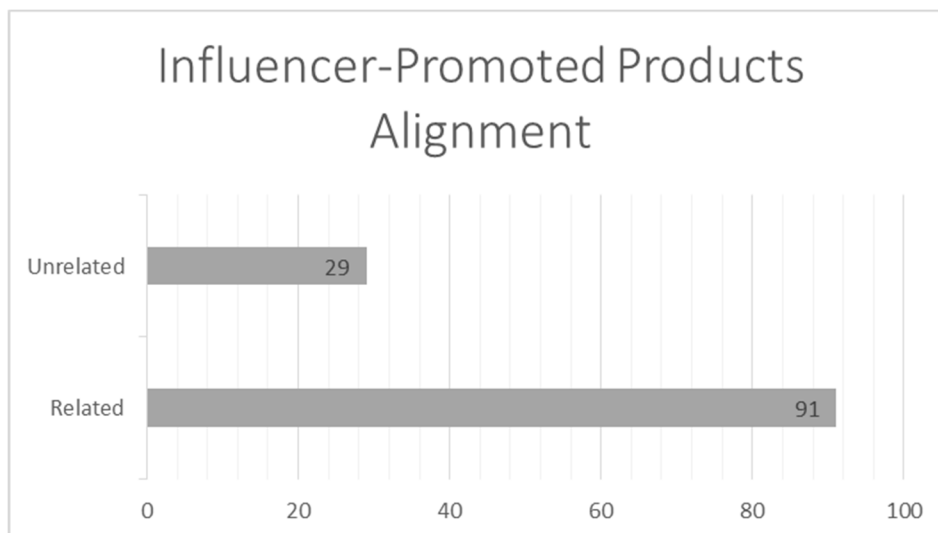


Figure 14: Influencer- Promoted Products Alignment

The bar chart illustrates the alignment of influencer-promoted products with the respondents' interests and needs. The majority of respondents (76%) find that influencer-promoted products are related to their interests and needs, which suggests that influencers are doing a good job in aligning their endorsements with their audience's preferences. However, a significant portion (24%) still perceives a misalignment, which indicates a need for influencers and brands to be more strategic in their product selections.

Importance of Values and Interests Alignment

- Extremely important: 19 respondents
- Important: 69 respondents
- Neutral: 25 respondents
- Not so important: 4 respondents
- Not important at all: 3 respondents

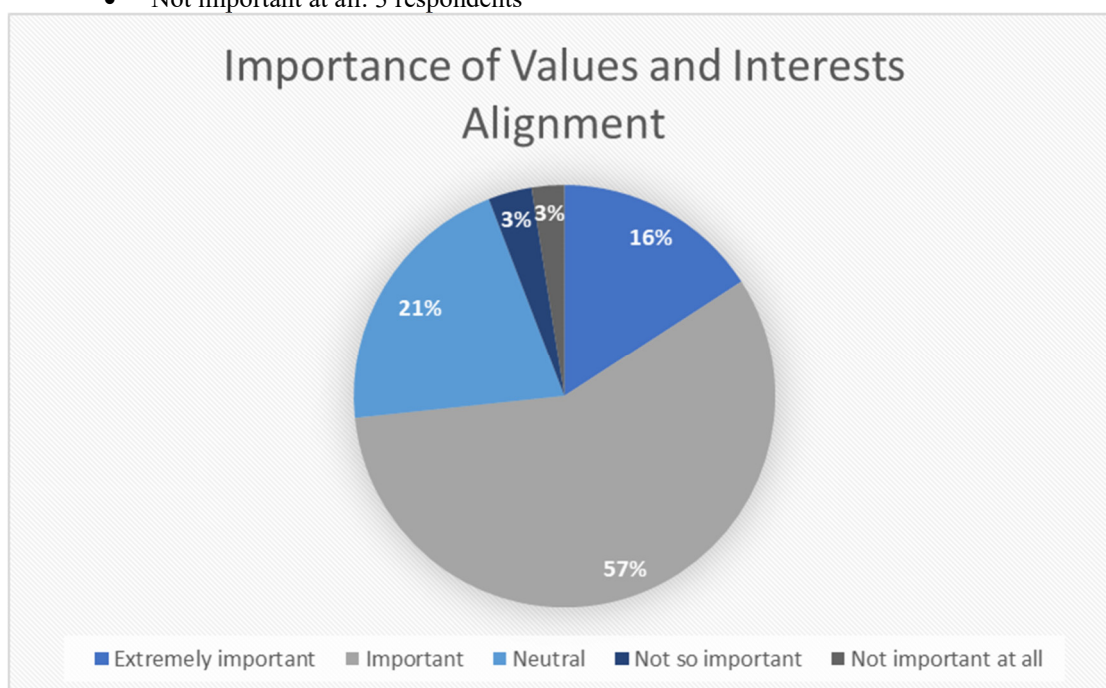


Figure 15: Importance of Values and Interests Alignment

The pie chart demonstrates the varying degrees of importance that respondents attach to values and interests alignment in influencer marketing. A significant majority (82%) consider values and interests alignment important, with 19% rating it as extremely important and 63% as important. Only a small proportion (7%) considers it not important to some degree, emphasizing the significance of ensuring that influencer endorsements align with the values and interests of their audience.

Post-Purchase Audience Engagement after Negative Experience

- Very Likely: 7 respondents
- Likely: 14 respondents
- Neutral: 39 respondents
- Unlikely: 38 respondents
- Very unlikely: 22 respondents

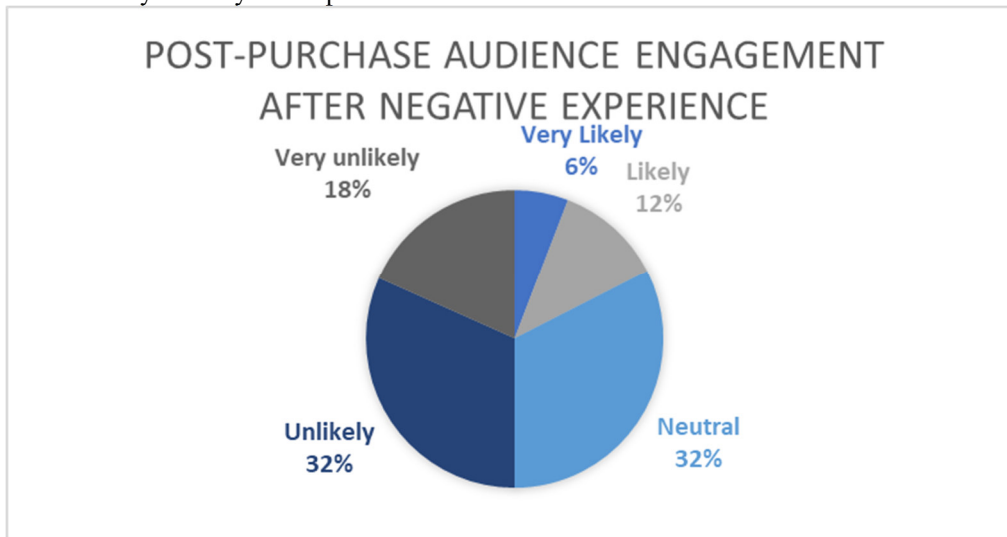


Figure 16: Post-Purchase Audience Engagement after Negative Experience

The pie chart reflects respondents' intentions for post-purchase audience engagement after a negative experience with a product recommended by an influencer. A substantial portion (49%) expresses a likelihood of engaging with the influencer, with 14% likely and 7% very likely. However, a significant 60% are either neutral (33%) or unlikely (27%) to engage further after a negative experience. This underlines the need for influencers to manage their reputation and address any issues promptly to maintain audience trust and loyalty.

Disappointment and Misleading Recommendations

- Yes: 64 respondents
- No: 56 respondents



Figure 17: Disappointment and Misleading Recommendations

The pie chart shows that 53% of respondents have experienced disappointment or perceived misleading recommendations from influencers, while 47% have not. This suggests that there is room for improvement in ensuring that influencer endorsements provide accurate and genuine information to avoid disappointing or misleading their audience.

Influencer's Connection with Product – Trustworthy or not?

- Trustworthy: 79 respondents
- Not trustworthy: 41 respondents

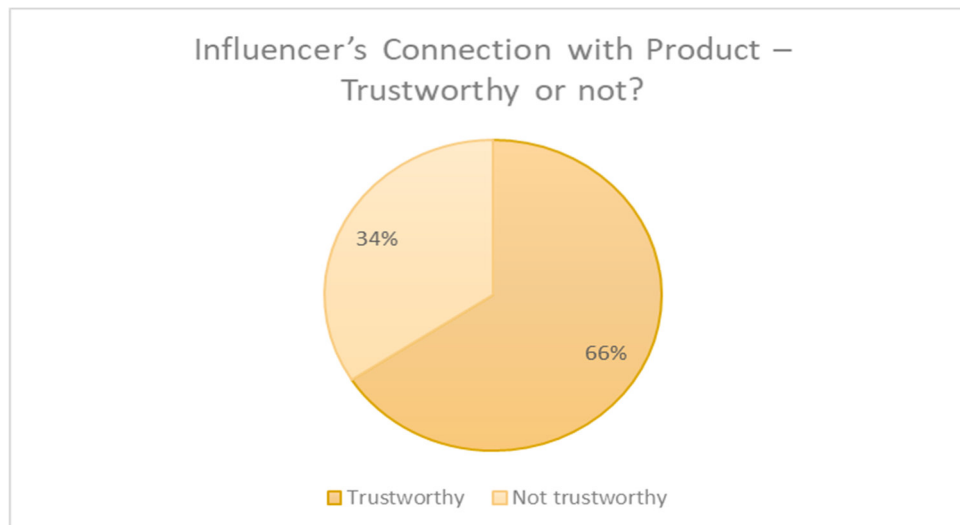


Figure 18: Influencer's Connection with Product – Trustworthy or not?

The pie chart reveals that a majority (66%) of respondents perceive influencers as trustworthy in their connection with the products they endorse. However, 34% of respondents view influencers as not trustworthy in this context. This indicates that while many find influencers credible, there's a substantial portion that have reservations, emphasizing the importance of maintaining transparency and authenticity in influencer marketing practices.

5. Discussion

The findings from this research provide valuable insights into the world of influencer marketing and its impact on consumer behavior and perceptions. It is evident from the demographic profile that the majority of the respondents are females, aged between 18 to 25, and primarily students. This demographic alignment emphasizes the significance of targeting this age group and occupation in influencer marketing strategies. Furthermore, the high level of familiarity with influencer marketing among respondents indicates the widespread presence and influence of influencers in the digital landscape.

One of the most striking revelations is the significant influence of influencers on purchase decisions, with 83% of respondents admitting to making purchases based on influencers' recommendations. This underscores the persuasive power of influencers and the potential for businesses to leverage influencer marketing to drive sales. Additionally, product reviews emerged as the most engaging content type, reinforcing the importance of authentic and informative reviews in influencer marketing campaigns. The Pareto chart on effectiveness across product categories reveals that fashion and beauty products are particularly well-suited for influencer marketing, reflecting the congruence between influencers and these products.

The data also highlights areas that require attention. The bar chart on the importance of values and interests alignment underscores that most respondents find alignment important. This signifies the need for influencers and brands to ensure that their endorsements resonate with their audience's values and interests to maintain credibility. While the majority of respondents perceive influencers as trustworthy, a significant portion is neutral or views them as not trustworthy in connection with products. This implies a potential trust gap that can be addressed by enhancing transparency in influencer marketing practices. Overall, the findings of this research provide a comprehensive understanding of influencer marketing's reach, effectiveness, and its potential to shape consumer behavior and opinions, offering valuable insights for businesses and marketers seeking to harness the power of influencers in their marketing strategies.

6. Practical Implications

The findings of this research offer several practical implications for different stakeholders involved in influencer marketing like for marketers and brands, influencers, regulatory bodies, consumers and educational institutions. Marketers should recognize the strong influence that influencers hold over their target audience's purchase decisions. This underscores the importance of partnering with influencers whose values align with the brand's identity and target demographic. Product reviews have been identified as the most engaging content type. Brands should leverage this insight to create informative and trustworthy reviews as part of their influencer marketing campaigns. The research suggests that influencer marketing is particularly effective for fashion and beauty products. Brands in these categories should prioritize influencer partnerships and craft campaigns that resonate with the audience's lifestyle and interests.

Influencers should focus on maintaining transparency and authenticity in their endorsements. While the

majority perceives influencers as trustworthy, there's room for improvement, and influencers should consistently deliver on the expectations of their audience. Recognizing the significance of values and interests alignment, influencers should carefully select the products they promote to ensure congruence with their followers' preferences.

Regulatory bodies should continue to develop guidelines and regulations for influencer marketing to maintain ethical practices and protect consumers from misleading endorsements.

Consumers should remain discerning when engaging with influencer content, considering the alignment between the influencer's values and interests and their own. In cases of disappointment or misleading recommendations, consumers should feel empowered to provide constructive feedback to influencers and brands, encouraging transparency and authenticity.

Educational institutions can integrate influencer marketing into marketing and business courses to equip future professionals with the skills and knowledge needed in this evolving field.

These practical implications provide a roadmap for stakeholders to navigate the dynamic landscape of influencer marketing effectively, fostering trust, authenticity, and engagement between influencers, brands, and their target audience.

7. Limitations and Future Directions

7.1 Limitations

While this research provides valuable insights into the world of influencer marketing, there are certain limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the data collection was based on a self-reporting survey, which can introduce response bias and rely on the accuracy of respondents' recollection. Second, the research primarily focused on the perception and behavior of consumers but did not delve into the perspectives of influencers and brands, which could have provided a more comprehensive understanding of the influencer marketing ecosystem. Additionally, the study had a specific demographic profile, primarily young students, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. Furthermore, the research did not explore the long-term impact and sustainability (Islam et al., 2023) of influencer marketing on brand loyalty and consumer retention, an area that warrants future investigation.

7.2 Future Directions

To build on the findings and address the limitations of this research, several potential avenues for future studies can be considered. First, a qualitative approach, such as in-depth interviews with influencers and brands, can provide a deeper understanding of their strategies, challenges, and goals in influencer marketing. Second, future research can diversify the demographic profile of the respondents to obtain a more comprehensive view of influencer marketing's impact across different age groups and occupations. Additionally, longitudinal studies can explore the long-term effects of influencer marketing on brand loyalty and consumer retention. Finally, as influencer marketing continues to evolve, it is essential to investigate emerging trends, such as the use of micro-influencers and the impact of various social media platforms on influencer effectiveness. These future directions can contribute to a more holistic understanding of influencer marketing's role in the digital marketing landscape.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has unveiled the substantial impact of influencer marketing on consumer behavior and perceptions. The study underscores the persuasive power of influencers, with the majority of respondents making purchases based on their recommendations, highlighting the potential for businesses to harness this strategy for sales growth. The significance of product reviews as the most engaging content type and the congruence between influencers and fashion and beauty products suggest actionable insights for marketers. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of values and interests alignment and the need for influencers to maintain transparency and authenticity in their endorsements. As influencer marketing continues to shape the digital landscape, these findings provide a foundation for stakeholders, including brands, influencers, regulatory bodies, and consumers, to navigate this evolving field effectively while fostering trust and credibility.

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