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IMPACT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON PURCHASE DECISIONS AMONG SOCIAL MEDIA USERS

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ABSTRACT
The rapid expansion of social media has shifted marketing influence away from traditional, high-production advertising and toward individual content creators who cultivate parasocial, trust-based relationships with their audiences. This study examines the impact of influencer marketing on purchase decisions among social media users, with particular attention to the gap between purchase intention and actual purchase conversion, the role of short-form content (such as Reels and Facebook Shop-style features) in driving impulse buying, and the growing "authenticity crisis" associated with influencer fatigue, de-influencing, and AI-generated influencers. Adopting a descriptive and analytical research design, primary data were collected through a structured online questionnaire administered on a Likert-scale basis to 102 active social media users selected through convenience sampling, supplemented by secondary analysis of recent academic literature and industry market reports. Responses were examined using percentage analysis and frequency distribution. The findings indicate that trust and perceived authenticity, rather than follower count alone, are central to whether influencer content translates into an actual purchase, that a substantial share of users engage in impulse buying after exposure to influencer content, and that consumers increasingly discount generic sponsorship disclosures while still valuing transparency, genuine reviews, and relatable, niche-level creators over mega-celebrities. The study contributes a locally grounded "trust blueprint" for marketers and adds to the growing academic literature on digital consumer psychology in the short-form content era.

KEYWORDS: *Influencer marketing; purchase decision; parasocial relationship; consumer trust; authenticity; micro-influencers; impulse buying; social media.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution has steadily shifted marketing power away from corporate advertisements and toward individual content creators. On platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, influencer marketing has emerged as a dominant promotional force, one that leverages what communication scholars term parasocial relationships — the one-sided psychological bond of familiarity and trust that a follower develops with a creator over repeated exposure to their content (Chitraju, 2025; Yi, 2023). Unlike traditional media, where persuasion rests on production value and repetition, influencers drive purchase decisions primarily through perceived authenticity and niche expertise, allowing their recommendations to bypass the scepticism, or "ad-fatigue," that audiences have developed toward conventional advertising.

This study examines how these personal, parasocial connections translate into actual consumer buying behaviour in the current digital economy, with specific attention to how short-form video formats and evolving disclosure norms are reshaping the relationship between influencer content and purchase decisions.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

As social media feeds have become saturated with sponsored posts, a phenomenon increasingly described in both academic and industry literature as "influencer fatigue" has set in (Quid, 2026). Brands continue to increase influencer marketing spend, yet it remains unclear whether consumers still perceive these recommendations as authentic endorsements or merely as paid scripts. This research seeks to determine whether influencer marketing still possesses the power to trigger an actual purchase, or whether rising consumer scepticism — fuelled by trends such as de-influencing and the emergence of AI-generated "virtual" influencers — has rendered it markedly less effective than in previous years.

1.2 Research Gap

While existing literature extensively covers how influencers build brand awareness, three specific gaps remain underexplored and are directly addressed by this study:

- The Intent vs. Action Gap: Most existing studies measure purchase intention (the stated likelihood of buying) rather than actual reported purchase behaviour, leaving a shortage of recent data on real conversion in the current digital economy.
- Impulse Buying via Short-Form Content: There is limited research directly comparing how short-form formats such as Instagram Reels and Facebook Shop-style features trigger spontaneous, impulse purchases relative to longer-form YouTube-style reviews.
- The Authenticity Crisis: With the rise of de-influencing and AI-generated influencers, there is a gap in understanding whether consumers still trust human influencers to the same degree they did in previous years.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- To evaluate the direct impact of influencer credibility on actual purchase decisions.
- To identify the specific influencer traits (expertise versus relatability) that drive the highest levels of consumer trust.
- To analyse the role of social media platforms and content formats in encouraging impulse-buying behaviour.
- To compare the relative effectiveness of micro-influencers versus mega-celebrities in shaping purchase decisions.

1.4 Hypotheses

H_0 (Null Hypothesis): Influencer marketing does not significantly affect the purchase decisions of social media users.
H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): The perceived authenticity of influencers significantly and positively affects the purchase decisions of social media users.

1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study

Scope

- Demographic: The study focuses on active social media users, primarily drawn from Gen Z and Millennial cohorts.
- Platforms: The research is limited to major platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube.
- Variables: The study measures trust, relatability, and frequency of use against purchase-related behaviour.

Limitations

- Sample Size: The study is limited to approximately 100–150 respondents (102 valid responses were obtained), which may not represent the global population of social media users.
- Subjectivity: Responses are based on self-reported data, which can be prone to social-desirability bias.
- Geographical Reach: The study may be weighted toward a specific urban region or demographic circle based on the reach of the online survey.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study provides businesses with a practical “trust blueprint” for allocating influencer marketing spend, and contributes to the academic field of digital consumer psychology by examining how short-form, commerce-integrated platforms are reshaping consumer buying habits.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews recent academic and industry research relevant to influencer marketing and consumer purchase behaviour, organised around the theoretical foundation of parasocial relationships and the specific research gaps identified in Section 1.2: the intent-versus-action gap, impulse buying through short-form content, and the emerging authenticity crisis surrounding influencer fatigue, de-influencing, and AI-generated influencers.

2.1 Parasocial Relationship Theory and Influencer Marketing

The theoretical foundation for most contemporary influencer-marketing research is parasocial relationship (PSR) theory, which describes the one-sided sense of intimacy and familiarity that audiences develop with media figures through repeated, personal-feeling exposure. Chitraju (2025) argues that influencers function as trusted intermediaries precisely because they blend personal narrative with product endorsement, and that perceived authenticity, credibility, and emotional connection are the primary mechanisms through which parasocial bonds translate into purchase intention. A systematic review by Yi (2023) similarly concluded that parasocial relationships exert a consistently positive influence on consumer trust, purchase intentions, and brand evaluation, identifying interpersonal attraction, self-disclosure, and empathy as the strongest predictors of relationship strength. More recent work extends this model with Social Cognitive Theory, framing influencers as observed social models whose repeated, semi-interactive content intensifies relational perceptions and lowers followers' resistance to persuasion (Frontiers in Communication, 2026).

2.2 Trust, Credibility, and the Intent–Action Gap

A recurring limitation identified across the literature is that most studies measure purchase intention rather than completed purchase behaviour — precisely the gap this study aims to address. Nonetheless, the mechanisms linking trust to intention are well established. You, Hu, Yang, and Cao (2022), applying commitment-and-trust theory, found that online trust significantly predicted consumer commitment, and that both trust and commitment were positively associated with purchase decisions. Within an explicitly influencer-marketing context, credibility — encompassing perceived expertise and trustworthiness — has been shown to mediate the relationship between parasocial connection and actual buying behaviour, with authenticity attributes such as sincerity and truthful endorsement mediating purchase behaviour more strongly than expertise or follower-count-driven uniqueness.

2.3 Micro-Influencers versus Mega-Celebrities

Comparative research consistently finds that smaller, niche creators outperform mega-celebrities on trust and engagement, even where celebrities retain an advantage in raw reach. Chiu and Ho (2023), studying Chinese Gen Z consumers, found that the trustworthiness of micro-celebrity influencers had the strongest effect on purchase decisions for high-involvement product categories, while traditional celebrities retained an edge only for lower-involvement products. Industry-level data reinforces this pattern at scale: analyses of short-form platform campaigns report that brands allocating a larger share of budget to micro-influencer partnerships (in the 10,000–100,000 follower range) have recorded substantially higher returns on ad spend than comparable mega-influencer campaigns, with micro- and nano-creators achieving markedly higher engagement rates per post than macro-scale creators (Stack Influence, 2025). This is consistent with the study's fourth objective, which directly compares micro-influencer and mega-celebrity effectiveness.

2.4 The Authenticity Crisis: Influencer Fatigue, De-influencing, and AI Influencers

The literature increasingly documents a shift in the terms of consumer trust rather than a simple decline in it. Social-listening research from 2026 indicates that generic, boilerplate disclosure tags (e.g., a bare "#ad") are now read by audiences as the minimum-effort version of transparency and do little to build trust on their own; genuine, unscripted-sounding content and early, plain-language disclosure remain the strongest drivers of trust, while de-influencing content — creators actively discouraging a purchase — has emerged as a direct signal that audiences have grown fatigued with over-promotional branded content (Quid, 2026). Broader consumer-trust surveys support this: while overall trust in influencer recommendations has risen year-on-year, that trust is increasingly conditional on authenticity rather than exposure, with consumers actively verifying claims across multiple sources before acting on them (BBB National Programs, 2025).

The rise of AI-generated "virtual influencers" adds a further dimension to this authenticity crisis. A systematic review of 51 studies found that while virtual influencers can enhance brand engagement, concerns about authenticity, transparency, and an "uncanny valley" discomfort continue to shape consumer perceptions, with trust acting as the key mediating factor between disclosure and engagement across cultural contexts (ScienceDirect, 2025). Related experimental work on AI-disclosure in reviews reports mixed findings — disclosure does not automatically damage perceived authenticity, but its effect depends heavily on whether the AI is framed as a supporting tool or a full replacement for human judgement, suggesting the authenticity crisis facing human influencers is not resolved simply by shifting to synthetic ones.

2.5 Short-Form Content and Impulse Buying

The integration of commerce features directly into short-form video — most visibly through Facebook Shop — has been shown to collapse the traditional gap between product discovery and purchase. Industry data indicates that a large majority of Facebook Shop users discover new products on nearly every visit, and that livestream shopping formats convert at markedly higher rates than standard short-form product videos, an effect attributed to urgency, social proof, and the platform's frictionless in-app checkout (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2025). Academic research on Facebook Shop users similarly finds that platform affordances — short-form video, real-time livestreams, and algorithmic personalisation — intensify emotional arousal, which in turn fosters impulsive purchasing, with time pressure and social-proof cues (e.g., visible purchase counts) strengthening this effect (ScienceDirect, 2025). This body of work directly informs the second research objective, which examines how platform and content format shape impulse-buying behaviour.

2.6 Synthesis and Positioning of the Present Study

Taken together, the literature supports three conclusions that this study builds on directly: first, that parasocial relationships and perceived authenticity — not follower count — are the primary mechanism linking influencer content to consumer trust; second, that short-form, commerce-integrated content formats meaningfully increase impulse-buying behaviour relative to longer-form content; and third, that consumer trust is becoming more conditional and disclosure-literate even as overall engagement with influencer content remains high. However, most existing studies isolate these mechanisms individually and rely on purchase-intention measures rather than reported purchase behaviour. This study addresses that integration gap by measuring reported actual purchase behaviour alongside trust, disclosure sensitivity, and influencer-type preference within a single respondent sample.

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3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design. The descriptive component summarises the current attitudes, behaviours, and platform habits of active social media users, while the analytical component interprets these patterns against the study's hypotheses and objectives.

3.2 Sample Size

The target sample size, as defined in the study's scope, was approximately 100–150 active social media users. A total of 102 valid responses were obtained through the online questionnaire (101 responses for one item where a respondent skipped a single question), which falls within the intended range and is treated as the effective sample size (N = 102) for this study. Respondents were selected using convenience sampling, based on accessibility and willingness to participate, given the practical time and resource constraints typical of a student research project.

3.3 Method of Collection

Primary data were collected through a structured online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, using a combination of multiple-choice items and five-point Likert-scale statements (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree). The questionnaire was organised into four sections:

- Section A – Basic Information: age, gender, occupation, and average daily social media use.
- Section B – Social Media Usage: platforms used, whether respondents follow influencers, types of influencers followed, and frequency of viewing influencer content.
- Section C – Opinion on Influencers: eight Likert-scale statements covering trust, relatability, authenticity, disclosure fatigue, review-checking behaviour, discount responsiveness, and perceptions of micro-influencers versus celebrities.
- Section D – Buying Behaviour: whether respondents had purchased a product on an influencer's recommendation, frequency of such purchases, product categories purchased, impulsive buying tendency, satisfaction, and willingness to recommend.

Secondary data were drawn from peer-reviewed journal articles, systematic literature reviews, and recent (2025–2026) industry market reports, as reviewed in Chapter 2, to contextualise and support the interpretation of the primary data.

3.4 Statistical Method

The primary statistical method applied in this study is percentage analysis and frequency distribution, used to summarise categorical and Likert-scale responses across all four sections of the questionnaire. Where response categories were logically equivalent but recorded separately due to case-sensitive duplicate entries in the survey platform (for example, "Strongly Agree" and "strongly agree" appearing as distinct options), these were combined into a single category prior to analysis to allow for a clean five-point interpretation of each Likert item.

3.5 Tools for Analysis (Results)

Descriptive analysis — percentage distribution, frequency counts, and cross-question interpretation — was carried out using the response summary exported from Google Forms. SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) is the intended tool for any further inferential analysis, specifically cross-tabulation, the chi-square test of independence (for testing association between categorical variables such as age or occupation and purchase behaviour), and correlation analysis (for testing the strength of the relationship between trust/credibility and purchase behaviour), which are the appropriate tests for directly evaluating the study's H_0/H_1 hypotheses at the level of individual respondents.

3.6 Variables of the Study

The independent variable of this study is influencer marketing, operationalised through trust, relatability, influencer type, and disclosure sensitivity (Section C). The dependent variable is consumer purchase decision, operationalised through actual and reported purchase behaviour, product category, impulsivity, satisfaction, and recommendation intent (Section D).

3.7 Limitations of the Methodology

In addition to the scope-level limitations set out in Section 1.5, three further methodological limitations should be noted. First, the reliance on convenience sampling produced a respondent pool skewed toward the 18–25 age group (64.7 percent) and students (44.1 percent), which may limit generalisability to older or non-student populations. Second, a small number of Likert-scale items contained duplicate, case-variant response options (see Section 3.4), which were merged for analysis but indicate a minor data-collection inconsistency. Third, as noted in Section 3.5, the absence of row-level data restricts this study to descriptive percentage analysis; the inferential tests appropriate for formally accepting or rejecting H_0 could not be performed on the data currently available.

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4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

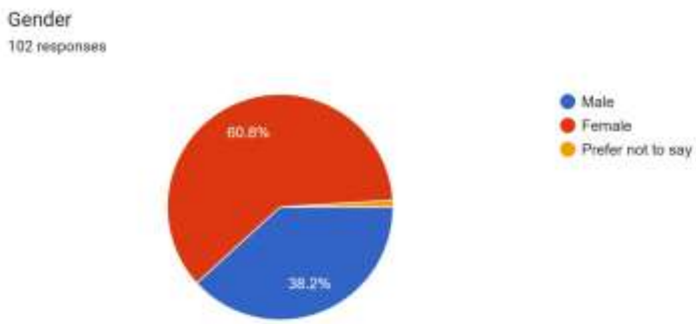
This chapter presents the percentage analysis and frequency distribution of the 102 valid responses collected through the structured questionnaire, organised by section. Where a small number of Likert-scale response categories were duplicated due to case-sensitive entry (see Section 3.4), they have been combined into a single category, labelled accordingly in the tables below.

Section A: Basic Information

1. Gender

Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Male	39	38.2%
Female	62	60.8%
Prefer not to say	1	1.0%

Analysis



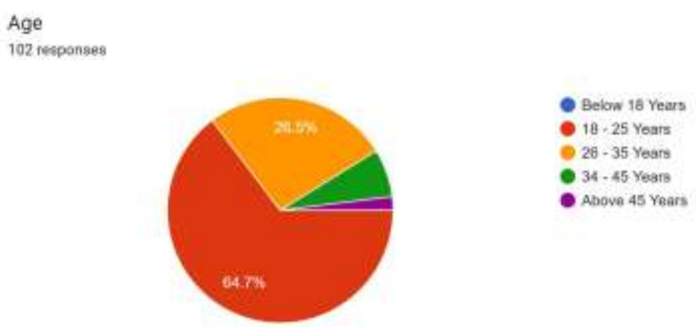
Interpretation: A majority of respondents (60.8%) identified as female, with male respondents making up 38.2% of the sample and a single respondent preferring not to disclose their gender. The sample therefore leans moderately toward female perspectives on influencer marketing.

2. Age

Note: The Google Forms summary chart does not display individual percentage labels for very small pie slices; the three smallest age categories (Under 18, 36–45, and 46 and above) have therefore been combined into a single row, as their exact individual split could not be determined from the available summary data.

Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
18–25 years	66	64.7%
26–35 years	27	26.5%
Under 18 / 36–45 / 46 and above (combined)	9	8.8%

Analysis



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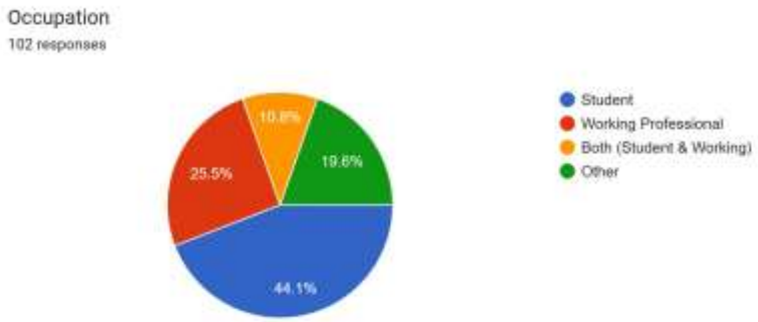
Interpretation: Almost two-thirds of respondents (64.7%) fall into the 18–25 age bracket, with a further 26.5% aged 26–35. Fewer than one in ten respondents were under 18 or above 35. This confirms the study's stated demographic focus on Gen Z and younger Millennial users (Section 1.5) and should be borne in mind when generalising the findings to older cohorts.

3. Occupation

Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Student	45	44.1%
Working Professional	26	25.5%
Both (Student & Working)	11	10.8%
Other	20	19.6%

Analysis

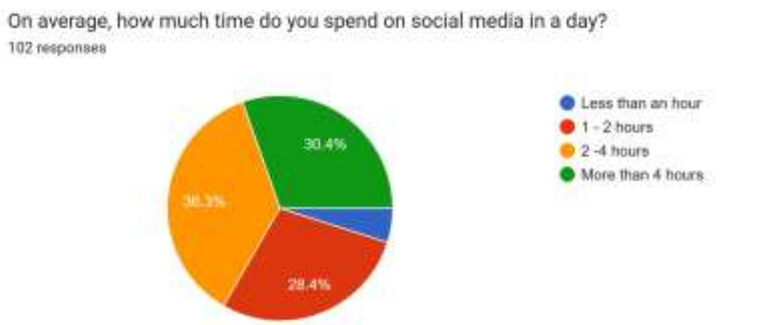


Interpretation: Students form the largest single group (44.1%), followed by working professionals (25.5%) and respondents who identified as “Other” (19.6%), with a further 10.8% balancing both study and work. As with age, this indicates a sample weighted toward students, consistent with the convenience-sampling method used.

4. Average time spent on social media per day

Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	5	4.9%
1–2 hours	29	28.4%
2–4 hours	37	36.3%
More than 4 hours	31	30.4%

Analysis



Interpretation: The overwhelming majority of respondents (95.1%) spend at least an hour on social media daily, and nearly a third (30.4%) spend more than four hours. This high level of platform engagement is consistent with the study's premise that social media users are regularly and repeatedly exposed to influencer content.

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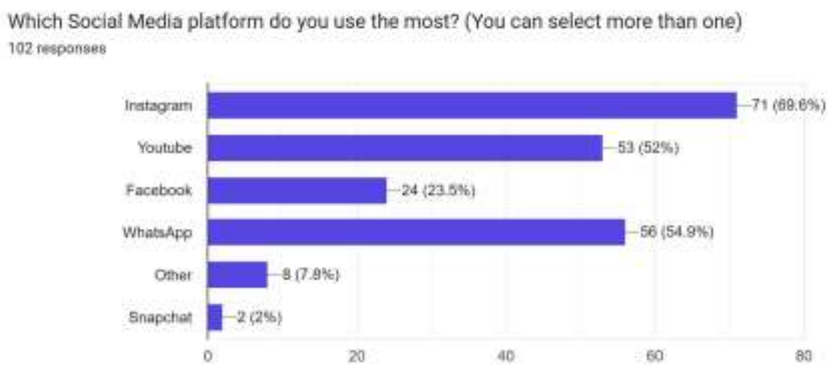
Section B: Social Media Usage

5. Platforms used most (multiple selection permitted)

Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Instagram	71	69.6%
WhatsApp	56	54.9%
YouTube	53	52.0%
Facebook	24	23.5%
Other	8	7.8%
Snapchat	2	2.0%

Analysis

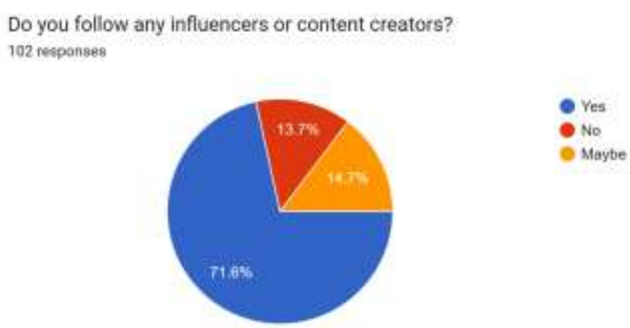


Interpretation: Instagram is the dominant platform, used by nearly seven in ten respondents, followed closely by WhatsApp and YouTube. This aligns with the study's scope (Section 1.5), which restricts analysis to Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube as the primary platforms of interest, and supports Instagram's continued position as the leading platform for influencer discovery noted in the literature (Section 2.5).

6. Do you follow any influencers or content creators?

Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	73	71.6%
Maybe	15	14.7%
No	14	13.7%

Analysis



Interpretation: More than seven in ten respondents (71.6%) actively follow influencers, and a further 14.7% are uncertain rather than firmly opposed. Only 13.7% report not following any influencers at all, confirming that influencer content reaches the large majority of this sample.

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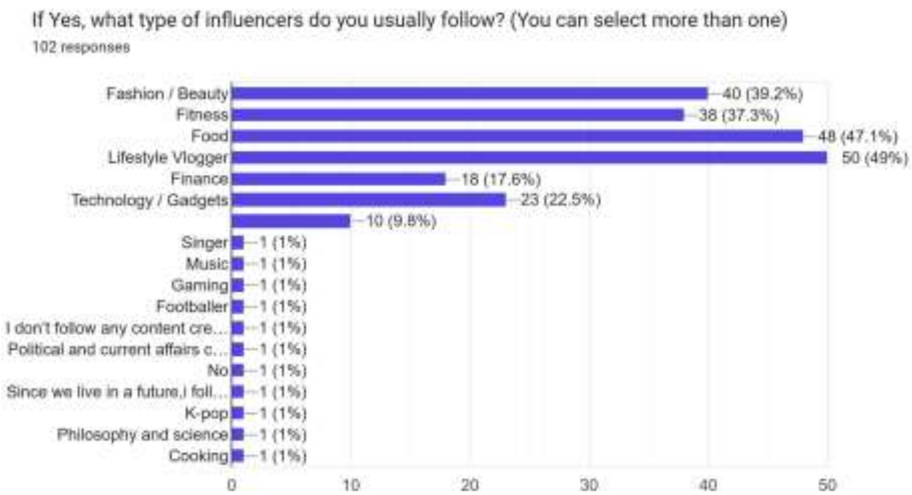
7. Types of influencers followed (multiple selection permitted)

Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Lifestyle Vlogger	50	49.0%
Food	48	47.1%
Fashion / Beauty	40	39.2%
Fitness	38	37.3%
Technology / Gadgets	23	22.5%
Finance	18	17.6%
Meme pages	10	9.8%
Other individual write-ins (e.g., singer, gaming, K-pop, cooking, current affairs)	11	10.8%

Analysis

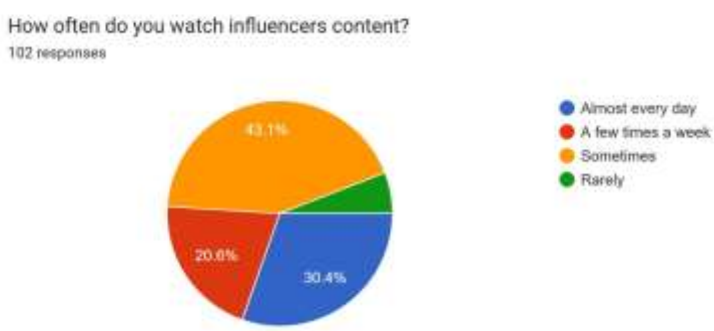


Interpretation: Lifestyle and food content are the most-followed categories, ahead of fashion/beauty and fitness, with finance and meme-page content followed by a smaller minority. The wide range of one-off write-in responses (singer, gaming, K-pop, cooking, and others) suggests that influencer following is not confined to conventional commercial niches but extends into personal interest areas that may still carry indirect purchase influence.

8. Frequency of viewing influencer content

Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Sometimes	44	43.1%
Almost every day	31	30.4%
A few times a week	21	20.6%
Rarely	6	5.9%

Analysis



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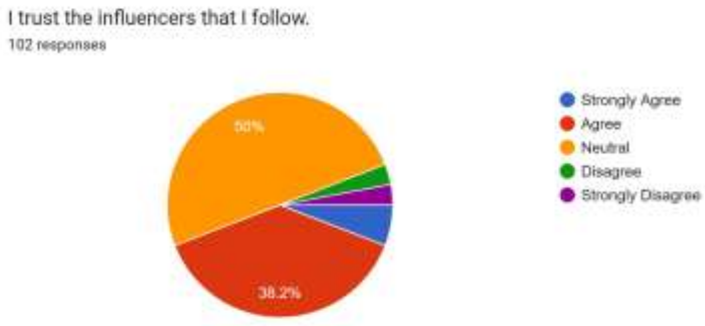
Interpretation: Combining "almost every day" and "a few times a week," just over half of respondents (51.0%) engage with influencer content on a near-daily to multi-weekly basis, indicating frequent, repeated exposure of the kind that parasocial relationship theory (Section 2.1) identifies as necessary for trust to develop.

Section C: Opinion on Influencers

9. "I trust the influencers that I follow."

Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Neutral	51	50.0%
Agree	39	38.2%
Strongly Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree (combined)	12	11.8%

Analysis

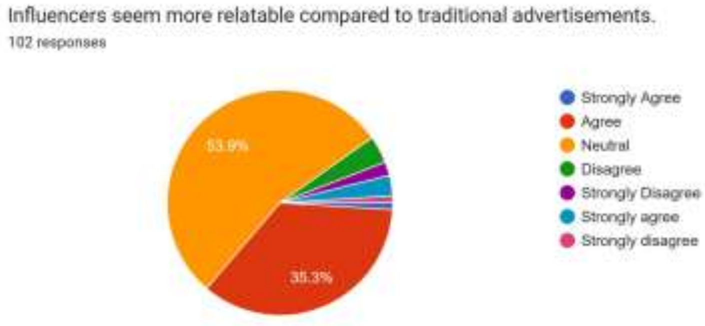


Interpretation: Half of all respondents are neutral on trusting the influencers they follow, while a further 38.2% actively agree; only a small minority express clear distrust. This split — far more "cautiously accepting" than "enthusiastically trusting" — is consistent with the literature's description of increasingly conditional, rather than blanket, consumer trust (Section 2.4).

10. "Influencers seem more relatable compared to traditional advertisements."

Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Neutral	55	53.9%
Agree	36	35.3%
Strongly Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree (combined)	11	10.8%

Analysis



Interpretation: Over half of respondents remain neutral on whether influencers are more relatable than traditional advertising, with a further third agreeing. Relatability is acknowledged but not overwhelmingly endorsed, suggesting this sample does not automatically view influencer content as inherently superior to traditional ads.

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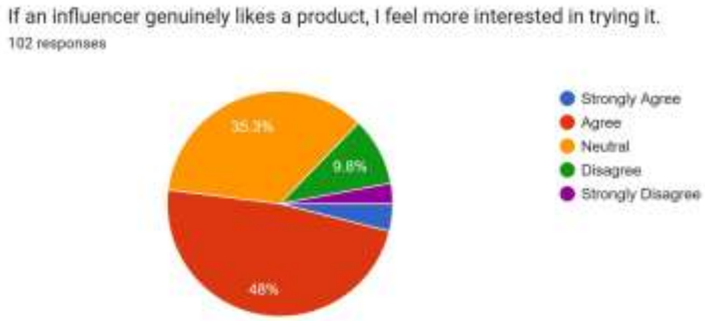
11. "If an influencer genuinely likes a product, I feel more interested in trying it."

Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Agree	49	48.0%
Neutral	36	35.3%
Disagree	10	9.8%
Strongly Agree / Strongly Disagree (combined)	7	6.9%

Analysis

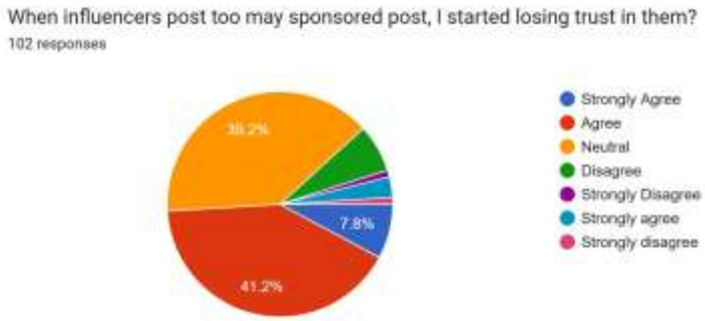


Interpretation: Nearly half of respondents agree that a genuine-seeming endorsement increases their interest in a product, the strongest agreement rate among the trust-related items so far. This directly supports the study's emphasis on perceived authenticity, rather than credentials or reach, as the key persuasive mechanism (Section 2.1–2.2).

12. "When influencers post too many sponsored posts, I start losing trust in them."

Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Agree	42	41.2%
Neutral	40	39.2%
Strongly Agree	8	7.8%
Disagree / Strongly Disagree (combined)	12	11.8%

Analysis

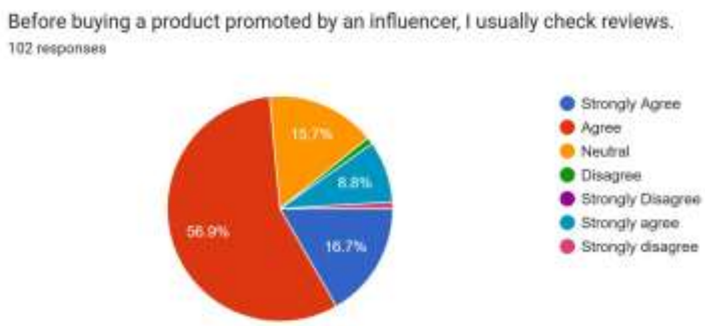


Interpretation: Combining Agree and Strongly Agree, exactly half of respondents (49.0%) report losing trust when sponsored content becomes excessive, directly evidencing the "influencer fatigue" phenomenon discussed in Section 2.4. Only 11.8% disagree, indicating that oversaturation of paid content is a genuine and fairly widespread concern within this sample.

13. "Before buying a product promoted by an influencer, I usually check reviews."

Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Agree	58	56.9%
Strongly Agree	26	25.5%
Neutral	16	15.7%
Disagree / Strongly Disagree (combined)	2	2.0%

Analysis

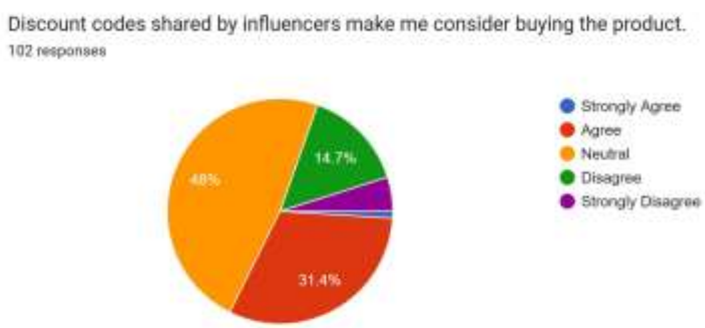


Interpretation: This item shows the strongest agreement of any Likert statement in the survey: 82.4% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they check reviews before buying an influencer-promoted product, with almost no outright disagreement. This suggests that, whatever their view of the influencer, most respondents still apply an independent verification step before converting interest into a purchase — directly relevant to the intent-versus-action gap identified in Section 1.2.

14. "Discount codes shared by influencers make me consider buying the product."

Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Neutral	49	48.0%
Agree	32	31.4%
Disagree	15	14.7%
Strongly Agree / Strongly Disagree (combined)	6	5.9%

Analysis



Interpretation: Discount codes are a meaningful but not dominant purchase trigger: just under a third of respondents agree they are persuaded by influencer discount codes, while almost half remain neutral. This indicates that price incentives supplement, rather than replace, the trust- and authenticity-based mechanisms discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

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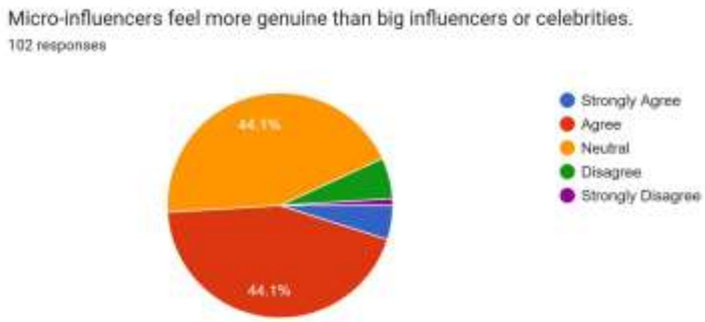
15. "Micro-influencers feel more genuine than celebrities."

Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Agree	45	44.1%
Neutral	45	44.1%
Strongly Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree (combined)	12	11.8%

Analysis

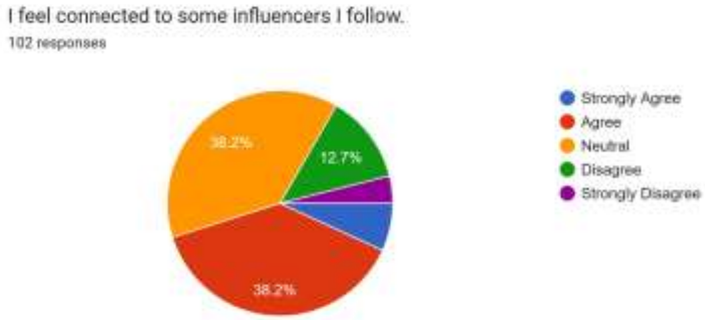


Interpretation: Agreement and neutrality are exactly tied at 44.1% each, with very little outright disagreement. While this does not show overwhelming endorsement of micro-influencers over celebrities, the near-total absence of disagreement indicates that this sample does not favour celebrity endorsers over micro-influencers on genuineness — lending qualified support to the literature reviewed in Section 2.3.

16. "I feel connected to some influencers I follow."

Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Agree	39	38.2%
Neutral	39	38.2%
Disagree	13	12.7%
Strongly Agree / Strongly Disagree (combined)	11	10.8%

Analysis



Interpretation: Agreement and neutrality are again evenly split (38.2% each), with roughly one in eight respondents disagreeing. This moderate but real sense of connection is consistent with parasocial relationship theory (Section 2.1), though the size of the neutral group suggests such bonds are not universal even among frequent followers.

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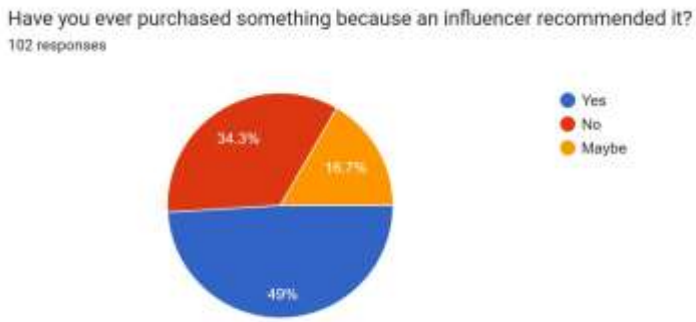
Section D: Buying Behaviour

17. Have you ever purchased something because an influencer recommended it?

Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	50	49.0%
No	35	34.3%
Maybe	17	16.7%

Analysis

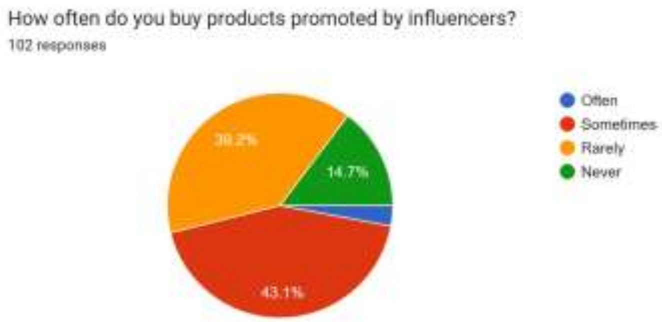


Interpretation: Just under half of all respondents (49.0%) confirm they have made an actual purchase on an influencer's recommendation, with a further 16.7% unsure. Combined, 65.7% of respondents report at least some direct behavioural influence — the clearest evidence in this dataset that influencer marketing extends beyond stated intention into reported real-world purchase behaviour, addressing the intent-versus-action gap identified in Section 1.2.

18. How often do you buy products promoted by influencers?

Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Sometimes	44	43.1%
Rarely	40	39.2%
Never	15	14.7%
Often	3	2.9%

Analysis



Interpretation: Purchases driven by influencer promotion are typically occasional rather than habitual: only 2.9% buy such products often, while the large majority buy "sometimes" or "rarely." This suggests influencer marketing functions more as an intermittent nudge than a primary, continuous driver of purchasing for most respondents.

19. Product types purchased due to influencer recommendation (multiple selection permitted)

Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Skincare / Haircare / Bodycare	48	47.1%
Clothes / Beauty Products	30	29.4%
Food items	24	23.5%

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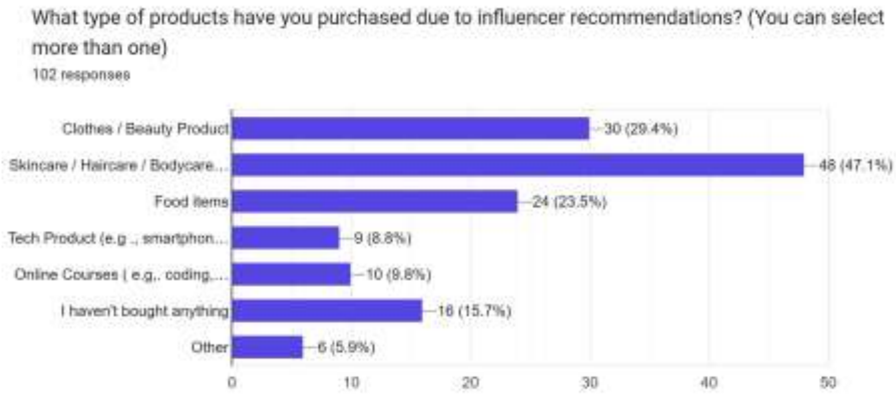
Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Haven't bought anything	16	15.7%
Online Courses	10	9.8%
Tech Products	9	8.8%
Other	6	5.9%

Analysis

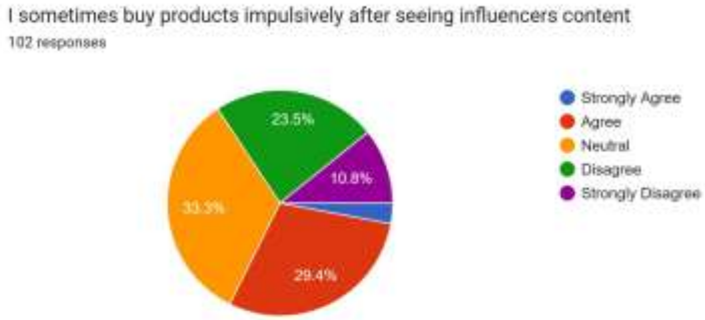


Interpretation: Personal-care products (skincare, haircare, and bodycare) are by far the most common influencer-driven purchase category, well ahead of clothing/beauty and food items. Tech products and online courses — typically higher-consideration purchases — are the least commonly bought this way, consistent with the literature's finding that influencer effectiveness varies by product involvement level (Section 2.3).

20. "I sometimes buy products impulsively after seeing influencer content."

Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Neutral	34	33.3%
Agree	30	29.4%
Disagree	24	23.5%
Strongly Disagree	11	10.8%
Strongly Agree	3	2.9%

Analysis



Interpretation: Combining Agree and Strongly Agree, 32.3% of respondents admit to impulsive buying after exposure to influencer content, against 34.3% who disagree or strongly disagree. This meaningful minority of self-reported impulse buyers directly supports the study's second objective regarding impulse-buying behaviour (Section 1.3), though it indicates impulse buying is a real but not dominant pattern within this specific sample.

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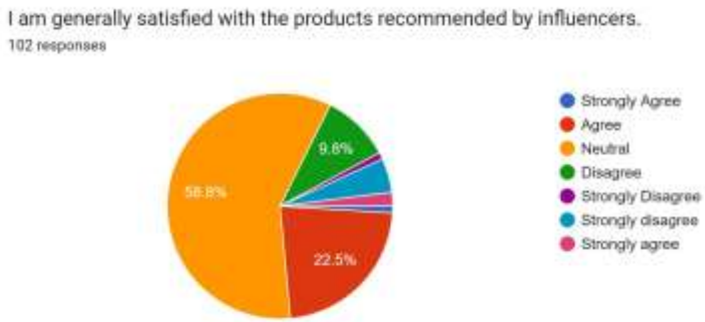
21. "I am generally satisfied with products recommended by influencers."

Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Neutral	60	58.8%
Agree	23	22.5%
Disagree	10	9.8%
Strongly Agree / Strongly Disagree (combined)	9	8.8%

Analysis

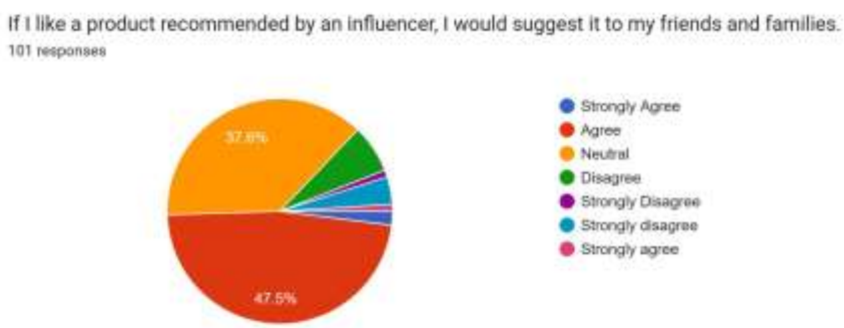


Interpretation: Satisfaction is heavily concentrated in the neutral category (58.8%), with agreement (22.5%) outweighing disagreement. This cautious, "it's fine" pattern — rather than strong enthusiasm — mirrors the conditional trust pattern seen in Question 9 and suggests influencer-recommended purchases meet, but rarely exceed, expectations for most buyers.

22. "If I like a product recommended by an influencer, I would suggest it to my friends and family."
Note: n = 101 for this item, as one respondent did not answer.

Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Agree	48	47.5%
Neutral	38	37.6%
Strongly Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree (combined)	15	14.9%

Analysis



Interpretation: Almost half of respondents (47.5%) would recommend a liked, influencer-promoted product onward to friends and family, indicating that positive experiences with influencer-driven purchases do generate a secondary word-of-mouth effect beyond the original recommendation.

5. DISCUSSION AND HYPOTHESIS TESTING

5.1 Discussion of Findings by Objective

- Objective 1 — the direct impact of influencer credibility on actual purchase decisions — is supported by the data: 49.0% of respondents confirmed an actual purchase driven by an influencer's recommendation, rising to 65.7% when "maybe" responses are included (Question 17), while credibility-adjacent items such as checking reviews before buying (82.4% agreement, Question 13) show that this conversion is filtered through an independent trust check rather than blind acceptance.

- Objective 2 — identifying whether expertise or relatability drives the highest trust — is addressed indirectly through Questions 9–11 and 15–16. Relatability-adjacent items (feeling "connected," finding micro-influencers "more genuine") drew similar or slightly higher combined agreement than pure trust statements, suggesting relatability and perceived genuineness, rather than formal expertise, are the more salient trust drivers for this sample — consistent with the parasocial relationship literature reviewed in Section 2.1.
- Objective 3 — the role of platforms and content format in impulse buying — is only partially testable with the available data, since the questionnaire did not separately measure short-form (Reels/TikTok-style) versus long-form (YouTube-style) exposure. However, Question 20 shows that 32.3% of respondents report impulsive buying after influencer content generally, which combined with the literature on short-form, commerce-integrated formats (Section 2.5) suggests this figure would likely be higher if isolated to short-form-only exposure — a hypothesis this dataset cannot directly confirm without an additional question distinguishing content format.
- Objective 4 — comparing micro-influencers and mega-celebrities — is supported by Question 15, where agreement (44.1%) and neutrality (44.1%) toward micro-influencer genuineness were tied, with negligible disagreement. This indicates no evidence in this sample favouring celebrities over micro-influencers, cautiously aligning with the industry and academic literature reviewed in Section 2.3 showing a micro-influencer advantage in trust and engagement.

5.2 Hypothesis Testing

The study's hypotheses were: H_0 — influencer marketing does not significantly affect the purchase decisions of social media users; and H_1 — the perceived authenticity of influencers significantly and positively affects purchase decisions.

The percentage-analysis evidence gathered in Chapter 4 is directionally consistent with H_1 rather than H_0: a majority of respondents (65.7%) report an actual or possible purchase driven by influencer recommendation (Question 17); authenticity-linked items (genuine-seeming endorsement, Question 11; loss of trust from over-sponsorship, Question 12) drew some of the strongest agreement rates in the survey; and impulse buying tied to influencer exposure was reported by a substantial minority (32.3%, Question 20).

6. CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the impact of influencer marketing on purchase decisions among social media users, with particular attention to the gap between purchase intention and actual conversion, the role of short-form content in driving impulse buying, and the authenticity crisis surrounding influencer fatigue, de-influencing, and AI-generated influencers. Analysis of 102 responses shows that influencer marketing measurably reaches beyond stated intention into actual reported purchase behaviour: a majority of respondents have purchased, or would consider purchasing, a product on an influencer's recommendation, and a meaningful minority report genuinely impulsive buying after exposure to influencer content.

At the same time, the data paints a picture of conditional rather than unconditional trust. Neutral responses outnumbered strong agreement on nearly every trust- and satisfaction-related statement, and exactly half of respondents reported losing trust when sponsored content became excessive — direct evidence of the influencer-fatigue dynamic documented in recent literature. Reviewing behaviour before purchase was almost universal, indicating that today's social media users layer independent verification on top of influencer recommendations rather than accepting them uncritically. Micro-influencers were, at minimum, not disadvantaged relative to celebrities on perceived genuineness, lending support to the view that authenticity and relatability — not follower count — are what convert exposure into trust, and trust into a purchase.

Taken together, these findings are directionally consistent with the study's alternative hypothesis (H_1) that perceived authenticity significantly and positively affects purchase decisions, though a formal statistical test of this hypothesis awaits row-level data, as detailed in Section 5.2. For marketers, the practical implication is that investment in demonstrably authentic, trust-building creator relationships — particularly at the micro-influencer level — is likely to outperform investment based on reach or follower count alone. For future researchers, the clearest next step is to replicate this survey with an added content-format variable (short-form versus long-form) and a larger, less convenience-based sample, so that the platform-specific impulse-buying effects suggested by the literature (Section 2.5) can be tested directly against local respondent data.

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