



Impact of Social Media Influencers on Student's Decision Making A project report

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Abstract

This research focuses on the extent of influence that social media personalities – influencers, traditionally referred to as – have in campus students' decision making at Lovely Professional University (LPU). The study seeks to understand the ways in which these digital bodies have come to influence life style preferences, academic pursuits and consumer behaviour. This research examines the mechanisms through which influencers wield influence, such as in the context of psychological and socio-cultural factors, to help policymakers, marketers, educators, and students alike achieve understanding of its potential harmful consequences, and how educational interventions can mitigate its undesirable effects. A mixed methods approach under review of the literature, content qual anal of influence content and case study. With LPU's large and diverse student body, there will be a large and representative sample targeted to generalize and make the findings robust.

Keywords: Social Media Influencers, Student Decision-Making, Influencer Marketing, Digital Media Literacy, Para social Relationships

1. Introduction

Human interaction, communication and dissemination of information has become irreversibly altered by the advent of social media. These digital platforms have not only connected individuals across geographical boundaries but have also fostered the emergence of a new form of social influence: the social media influencer. Having built a meaningful web presence of themselves while carving out an engaging social media persona utilizing all their wits and effort, these individuals have also managed to shape public discourse, influence behavioural patterns and consumer choices. Of particular importance in this phenomenon is the fact that student populations are very engaged with social media while undergoing critical developmental transitions for important decisions making processes.

Influencers also, represent a notable departure from traditional models of influence. In contrast, social media has democratized access to audiences in ways that influence used to be, well, confined to the walls of established institutions, the credentialed experts within particular fields, and legacy outlets. It has been a catalyst for people to grow enormous online communities that hold a lot of clout and often directly disrupts what traditional gatekeepers of information used to do. However, this democratization comes out as a doubled money. As with influencers should be able to positively promote social messages, spread valuable educational content, and advocate for important causes, they also have the ability to help spread misinformation, magnify unrealistic and damaging beauty 'standards' and exacerbate existing mental health vulnerabilities. While the carefully constructed and often idealized representations of life offered by influencer content can create social comparison and negative feelings of inadequacy with students, which then can affect their overall well-being and academic success.

This research takes a focused look into how myriad structures of social media influence affect students' decisions. Basically, students of higher education are at a very sensitive juncture in their life, at a juncture which is critical to how they move through academically, into their future career path which their personal lives are increasingly being shaped by. Influencers generate such a vast amount of fresh content, exposing us to an endless stream of different content 24 hours a day, so it's only natural that this kind of constant flow of information has a major impact when we have to make such crucial decisions. The aim of this study is to explore more deeply the complicated and often nuanced relationship between formal education and the role it traditionally plays in influencing student behaviour, and how social media begins to influence this dynamic.

First, it argues that social media platforms provide a useful site for teaching and learning, networking, self-expression, but with the persuasive power inherent in social media influencers, it is important both to elevate educationally media literacy skills, critical thinking, and responsible digital citizenship in the context of contemporary education. This research seeks to inform actionable insights to help students, educators, policymakers, and marketing professionals alike understand the workings of influencers and the ways in which they can influence students to translate that understanding into better means of navigating the complexities of the digital sphere more responsibly. While drawing upon Benjamin Franklin's admonition to "an investment in knowledge pays the best interest," this research demonstrates that education remains a key antidote for shaping intellectually sophisticated and judiciously deliberate decision making, especially in the face of the overwhelming imprint of social media.

1.1 Background of study

Social media has clearly undergone a transformative effect on communication, information sharing and social influence dynamics. Traditional gatekeepers of information, including established media organizations and institutional authorities, now share the digital stage with a new cohort of influential figures: social media influencers. Ironically, these people have built up outstanding followings and wield considerable sway over their audience's opinion and urges, especially purchasing desires. The student demographic is particularly significant in this phenomenon, not only are they high active users of social media, but they are also at the most crucial, decision-making points in life.

However, insulating us from the distractions of our everyday lives and providing us with news in bite size pieces has come with various key shifts since we moved from traditional media to social media as the primary source of information and influence. In its traditional form, media functioned within one of the more obvious unidirectional, one-to-many communication models. In contrast to social media, social media operates on more diffuse, many to many basis where interactions are peer to peer, and user generated content spreads rapidly, and with direct participation often piece natured, and personalized between influencers and followers. The social media is interactive and participatory, which has allowed for a heightened community and connection which has lead to greatly elevated effectiveness of influencer marketing.

Several key trends have fuelled the expanding sphere of influence wielded by social media personalities:

- **Sustained growth in social media engagement:** Although there has been a lot of talk in the past couple of years about too much screen time being bad for you, according to a host of studies showing that too much screen time can negatively affect your mental health, usage of social media remains rampant around the world, and platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Short are growing rapidly in user activity and engagement metrics.
- **A Growing emphasis on genuineness and the ascendancy of micro-influencers:** Consumer demand for authenticity, and relatability rather than follower numbers has become discernibly not just detectable, but widely apparent. Within the influencer marketing ecosystem, micro influencers with smaller, more specialized audiences, and sometimes viewed as more

authentic and closer to them, have become increasingly central.

- **The dominance of short-form video content:** Short form video content, made popular by platforms such as TikTok, later adopted by Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts, has seen particular success in capturing their attention as well as at maintaining it, especially among students.
- **Escalating corporate investment in influencer marketing initiatives:** Today, more and more businesses from a wide variety of sectors are increasingly spending larger slices of their marketing budgets on partnering with influencers for collaboration, and it's no secret that corporates have begun to come around to associate influencer marketing as a powerful means to get their message, or for that matter products or services instilled in a narrow group of minds exactly on the marketer's target consumer behaviour.
- **A heightened focus on performance measurement and demonstrating ROI:** With a higher level of rigor for influencers marketing campaign effectiveness, it requires to measure properly in terms of effectiveness and show a reported clear and quantifiable return on investment (ROI), this generated the evolution in more complex formulas, which are capable of tracking and analysing the impacts of influencer activities.

While influencer marketing and its impact on consumer behaviour are a popular topic of study, academia remains liable to academic research in fields like marketing, communication studies and social psychology. Nevertheless, additional research is needed to study the specific effect of influencers on student decisions with regard to academic choices, lifestyle preferences, and psychological well being. In this research, we attempt to fill this gap by taking a comprehensive look at what exactly creates the complex interaction between social media influence and traditional education in shaping young people's behaviour and decisions in the digital world.

1.2 Basics of this research paper

The objective of this research is focused on finding in the college students decision making impact of social media influencer. This involves, for example, evaluating the way in which influencers impact certain areas of students' life, such as their shopping behaviour, lifestyle decisions, academic or career choices. To answer these gaps, the study aims to understand the psychological and cognitive mechanisms through which influencer content seeks to resonate with students, and by proxy by which influencers succeed in garnering trust, perceiving credibility, and fostering aspirational connections.

Moreover, the research would investigate how the participation of macro-influencers and micro-influencers in social media can influence students' purchasing purposes and brand perceptions. It also attempts to examine the nature of this influence and the role that social media platforms play in multiplying it as well as the types of content on which students choose to engage through algorithmic personalization.

The study will evaluate the ethics of influencer marketing by considering whether transparency exists among paid promotions, and whether students are capable of determining when something is authentic and when it is sponsored.

Influencer Generated Content will identify the level of how influencer generated content influences the social norm, value and trend in the students lifestyle, ultimately reaching their notion, liking and satisfaction.

The research will conclude with the proposal of actionable strategies for allowing students to get a grip on influencer marketing safely. Two ways it includes media literacy and critical thinking enhancement as well as recommendation of ethical guidelines for influencer collaborations. The study attempts to understand the nuanced role of social media influencers in this digital age with a view of contributing to the understanding on the role played by social media influencers in students' decision-making process.

1.3 Purpose of the study

This study looks at how social media influencers sway student decision making. It seeks to find out how these web personalities affect student choices regarding academics, lifestyle, and shopping. The research aims at establishing whether influencers can significantly impact real-life decisions like course selection at university and what institution to study in as well as analyzing their effect on fashion and healthy lifestyle of students. It also measures the extent at which they formulate consumer behavior patterns of students, as well as purchase decisions. Further assessment includes the effects of social media with regard to student psychology such as management of negative emotions, developing a positive self-concept, and problem dealing (Chen & Xiao 2022). The research also investigates whether cultural aspects such as values and ethics would affect the effectiveness of social media influencers among learners of different regions (Pop et al., 2022) or not plus study the effects of the long-term social media exposure effects on student attitudes towards brands, loyalty, and repeat purchases (Grover et al., 2022). This paper therefore aims at providing useful solutions for marketers through suggestions given about use of social media influencer initiators that will enhance marketing effectiveness through strategies which will enable informed decision making processes by students.

1.4 Application of the study

Study has a lot of applications in perspective of how social media influencers affect decision making in students thereby being beneficial to students and teachers, and also impact the influencer community itself. The following are a few possible ideas: Educational Program: Schools may develop seminar or curriculum modules for teaching students skills in media literacy. Students would then be better prepared for dealing with influencer content in an objective fashion, recognizing bias, and coming to defensible conclusions. Advisory for parents: Educating parents on how their children are affected by other people's decisions would allow them to counter some negative influences and also empower their children to better use social media. Ethical Guidelines for Influencer Marketing could be developed by social networks along with influencer companies. This could include caring for the welfare of students, avoiding misleading information, and encouraging sponsorship declarations. Students may have products marketed for them: Educational resources/services are encouraged to redesign their marketing strategies to consider influencers' atmospheres. Joining credible influences who encourage moral decisions might be a very wise move here. Social-Media Algorithm: Social media companies use

science of the influencer's impact to variations of algorithms, such that what is pulled out are motivating, educating, and suitable materials for students at different ages. This may also include making unhealthy behavior-promoting materials less accessible.

1.5 Significance of the study

This study aims to help businesses understand what influences students' purchasing decisions. It examines how well social media influencers are reaching young people and which platforms are best for students to advertise. This is valuable information for marketers. During the study, it will be determined if the use of social media influencers is an effective way to market products and what criteria should be considered when choosing influencers. It focuses on what makes influencers credible in the eyes of young people, because credibility is central to successful advertising. Influencers who have a good reputation and a strong connection with their audience can greatly enhance an advertising campaign. Research also helps influencers build their image and reputation, which increases job opportunities. It directs companies to choose trusted influencers and emphasizes the importance of trust in young adults when making purchases. In addition, the study is useful for established companies that are unsure of their current marketing strategies. As business moves online, some companies continue to question the effectiveness of social media influencer marketing over traditional advertising such as radio and television. This study provides insight into youth perceptions of social media influencer marketing and helps entrepreneurs make informed decisions..

1.6 How it works:

There are several underlying psychological mechanisms and a number of interconnected stages through which social media influencers influence student decision making (Krcmar, Masur, and Chess 1997).

- **Exposure and Attention:** The first step is the students visiting content made and distributed by influencers all across different social media platforms. There are several ways that this exposure can happen: organic posts you may see on their customized social media feed, sponsored posts labelled as 'ads,' targeted advertising showing the social media user a particular type audience etc., and recommendations from the social media user's friend circle (what they post). There is so much content clamouring for attention in this modern digital world, this is a highly competitive attention economy. Due to such competitive environment, influencers utilize different strategic things to grasp and keep a focal point with the watchers. The techniques involve utilizing this high value content formats like high value images, high value video content, good stories that inspire and reach out to their audience, recognizing the trending audio clips and the application of appropriate hashtags to be discoverable by more people, as well as interact directly with their audience on comments section, live streams and interaction feature such as polls and Q and A sessions.
- **Engagement and Interaction:** On exposure, the level of interaction with content is the key for effective influencer impact. This interaction can be as simple as the likes, comments, shares, and saves, but the inspiring ones include liking, commenting, sharing, saving posts,

engaging in interactive features like polling or polling, and most importantly, following an influencer's channel or following her account. In addition to amplifying the influencer's reach by publicising the user's content to more people, these actions are important in cementing a strong impression of the influencer's association with each individual student. Additionally, social media algorithms are designed in favor of content, pushing those that have triggered a high level of engagement at the front of the platform, resulting in a positive feedback loop where the more social media influencers draw attention with an abundance of interaction are presented with further visibility within the platform, increasing their reach even further.

- **Trust and parasocial relationships:** The engagement with content that pulls students' interest, which connects to their values, interests or aspirations, in a consistent manner gives the sense that creates a floor trust and familiarity, resulting in the establishment of parasocial relationships. These one sided relationships give off the impression that there is a connection and intimacy to these relationships between the student and the influencer which in turn makes the student be more willing to take on the behaviors, opinions and the feedback of the influencer. Form and maintenance of these pseudo social bonds are based on factors like perceived authenticity, transparency about sponsored content, as well as consistent communication.
- **Influence and Adoption:** When an influencer creates a basis of trust by signalling their thoughts, recommendations, and actions, students are more likely to take the influencer's viewpoints, recommendations, and action into their own. This influence can manifest in various forms:
 - a) **Informational Influence:** Students might believe in what influencers say, as they look to use their knowledge to help them with things that are important to them, like academic strategies, career advice, reviews on their products and the like in their everyday lives.
 - b) **Normative Influence:** Thus, students might alter their behaviours and preferences with regard to influencers' promoted trends and norms, because of a desire for social approbation or fear of missing out (FOMO).
- **Identification Influence:** At a more fundamental level, students can connect with selected influencers, 'living' their values, their beliefs, and their behaviour as his or her part of self identity. This happens when students see a great fit between their identity and the projection of the influencer persona. The identification can have a deeper and longer lasting impact on students' future behaviour and attitude directed by it.
- **The consumer doppelganger effect:** This consumer behaviour phenomenon is well documented and revolves around people's tendency to emulate (consumption patterns, lifestyles) of who they admire including social media influencers. How this might manifest is through buying promoted products and adopting certain fashion trends to when similar career or academic specialization is chosen. A further intensification of the impact is created when influencer content is curated and aspirational with idealised lifestyles and material possessions emphasised, promoting a desire among

followers to emulate the influencer's assumed success and social status.

1.7 Students' Perception:

Students' perspective of social media influencers involves being complex and multifaceted due to the joint influence of psychological and social factors. Though they are following: students are following influencers for many reasons, which means they have many different motivations and different needs. Some of these motivations, include derive entertainment from seeing and often funny material, gathering information and seek for knowledge and practical advice for our respective topics of interest, finding inspiration and motivation for personal development, academic fields, career ambitions, connecting sociably and this 'sense of belonging' in a community of like-minded people, and also be current with the recent trends in fashion, technology, music and any other aspect of popular culture. Much depends on the way in which the student perceives the credibility and trustworthiness of influencers. This includes perceived expertise, referring to the extent that the influencer is perceived to be knowledgeable and experienced in a particular field; perceived trustworthiness, concentrated on the influencer perceived to be honest, loyal, and impartial; perceived authenticity, comprising perceived authenticity, cohesiveness, and visibility; perceived similarity, signifying how the student feels about the influencer as similar to himself in terms of measures such as curiosity, values and social standing; and social proof, which can be measured by indicators,

But if students are constantly exposed to idealised online personas and carefully curated content then this could have a real negative impact on their self perception and their mental well-being. Instead of performing upward social comparison, with students comparing themselves to the often unattainable lifestyles and appearance boasted by influencers. With all this social comparison, you can become more inadequate, envious, and feel less about yourself. The proliferation of these unrealistic beauty standards in an already looked upon normalized world of beauty standards; often filtered and heavily edited can lead to a body image dissatisfaction, disordered eating, and a distorted perception of physical attractiveness. Feelings of anxiety, depression, and social isolation can be worsened by the pressure to stay 'presentable' online, paired with the fear of missing out on whatever the latest piece of social media news — FOMO. The appearance of 'influencers,' or financial influencers who give financial advice, and spew investment tips on social media platforms is a new concern. While some influencers park valuable financial literacy information, this is paired with the unregulation of this space and that means the risk for unqualified advice, misleading information, even scams and financial exploitation with the most vulnerable of pupil populations.

Students also make their academic and lifestyle decisions influenced by influencers. It may advise students on university or course selection, give advice on career and give an insight about diverse professional fields, promote certain fashion trends and beauty products, or influencing students' dietary and exercise habits. This guidance can be good or bad. On the bright side, influencers could also preach healthy lifestyle choices, share valuable educational resources, and push students to pursue a problem solving scientific approach to their academic and professional goals. On the down side,

it can also set unrealistic benchmarking, and propagate products and practice with potentially negative outcome and misinformation. This is especially true for students engaged in transitional periods of their lives in need of wisdom and validation from sources they are familiar with and can comfortably relate to, and influencers allow us to reach them and their peers.

2. Review of literature

M.Galan, L.Meredith, C.Michael 2015 "Social Media's Use In Postgraduate Students' Decision-Making Journey: An Exploratory Study," examines how postgraduate students use social media when making decisions. The survey highlights postgraduate business students' preferred social media platforms and the kinds of content they look for. It investigates the use of social media at various phases of the decision-making process. The results point to the necessity of more investigation into the interaction between professional social networking sites such as LinkedIn and postgraduate students.

Angele & Neil 2018 This paper explores how the postgraduate students make course selection decisions in the digital era. The study was conducted among seven post graduate students from UK, EU and International. The study identified 5 different application pattern categories, together with highlighting the importance of evaluating the students' pre-purchase experience during the application process. The findings of the study were found a circular decision-making approach with evidence of rational and emotional decisions where students do not always commence with a wide choice set.

Vy Huynh 2020 Examines how customers feel about Vietnamese beauty and cosmetics influencers on social media and what influences their level of confidence in these influencers. The study also examines how customers' perceptions of VBC SMIs relate to their demographic traits. The research's findings are intended to serve as a basis for future studies that wish to measure and quantify the impact of different social media influencer characteristics on the Vietnamese beauty and cosmetics market. The paper makes recommendations for future research directions, including assessing SMI relevance ratings and examining how sponsorship information transparency affects SMIs and brand perception. The study also highlights how crucial it is to comprehend how SMIs function in consumer decision-making processes and how effective they are in comparison to other types of marketing and advertisements.

Hinterstein & Lee 2020 The study highlights the influence that Social Media platforms and the interactions that take place within them have on the online consumption decisions of university students. The data was collected through questionnaire distributed among the students. The findings of the study show through the result of questionnaires, among the students revealed that Instagram and Twitter are the two platforms that, besides being the most used, have the biggest influence on users when it comes to the online consumption decisions of university students. Additionally, it was found that E-WOM has become the main source of information that is used by consumers prior to making a consumption decision online.

Samantha Kay, Rory Mulcahy, Joy Parkinson 2020 In their study, Samantha Kay, Rory Mulcahy, and Joy Parkinson examined the effects of varying disclosure levels and influencer sizes on how users react to sponsored material on

social media sites. The researchers looked at purchase intentions, authenticity assessments, and customer engagement.

Jason Weismueller, Paul Harrigan, Shas Ha Wang, Geoffre Y Soutar 2020 Jason Weismueller, Paul Harrigan, Shasha Wang, Geoffre, and Soutar conducted this study with the goal of shedding light on the efficacy of hashtags and disclosure statements in influencer marketing. The researchers looked into the effects of varying disclosure levels and influencer sizes on how users react to sponsored content on social media sites. The study looked at purchase intentions, authenticity perceptions, and consumer engagement.

Bruno & Ahmad 2021 The research highlights the attitude and subjective norms of students on Social Media Influencers towards the behavioural intent on their dietary choices in accordance with the Theory of Reasoned Action. For the data they selected the final year students in University Malaysia Sabah as respondents. The result shows that there is a significant relationship between the subjective norms of students on Social Media Influences with the behavioural intent on their dietary choices.

Sara Javed Mds.Salamun Rashidin , Yun Xiao 2021 The purpose of this study by Sara Javed, Mds. Salamun Rashid, and Yun Xiao was to determine how students' decision-making is influenced by social media influencers. The goal of the study was to comprehend how students behaved when making new purchases. In order to assess structural equation models in influencer marketing research, they used measuring scales for opinion leaders and seekers. The study also looked at how people perceive the personality features of social media influencers and how photography and selfies affect interpersonal relationships.

Rebeka Anna Pop, Zsuzsa Saplacan, Dan Cristian Dabija, And Monika Anetta Alt 2021 "The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Travel Decisions: The Role of Trust in Consumer Decision Journey," a 2021 study, explores how social media influencers affect consumers' travel choices. The study uses Customer Journey Theory to examine how trust functions as a mediator at different phases of the decision-making process. According to the study, consumer trust in social media influencers has a beneficial impact on every stage of the decision-making process for travel, with each stage mediating the impact on the subsequent one, creating a constant influence. In the tourist sector, social media influencers are essential for promoting travel desires, information seeking, alternative assessment, buying decisions, post-purchase contentment, and sharing of trip experiences.

Syahrudin Ahmad, Diandra Eleanor Bruno 2021 "Social Media Influencers and The Dietary Choices Among University Students," examines the connection between students' attitudes regarding social media influencers and their dietary choices. In order to comprehend how social media influencers affect students' nutritional decisions, the study investigates the connection between students' subjective norms regarding these individuals and their food preferences.

Castro Et al 2022 This paper aims to contribute to a better understanding of social media influencers, their impact on adolescents' lives from a consumer behaviour perspective. Therefore, the main objective of this review is to present valuable information regarding social media influencers as critical players in influencing young people during their purchase decision-making process. The findings of paper are

marketers must consider online marketing strategies using social media influencers as crucial components to reach the attention of younger generations, such as generation Z.

Kecek Et al 2022 The research aimed to determine whether influencers on social networks are the leaders of marketing activities. Therefore, the paper examines the students' perception of influencers and influencer marketing on social networks concerning gender, age, level of study and type of study. The research took the sample of 142 students from the university North in Croatia. The findings of the study shows that only the variable level of study influences the formation of attitudes about influencers and influencer marketing.

social media. Instagram is most actively used platform.

Nadanyiova & Sujanska 2023 The study aims to explore the Impact of Influencer Marketing on the Decision-Making Process of Generation Z. which also includes providing the theoretical background and analysis of influencer marketing from the viewpoint of Slovak and foreign authors. The study uses general scientific method for the data collection, uses both primary and secondary data. Findings of the paper was marketing campaign on social media in cooperation with influencers requires the correct selection of the influencer according to their follower base, profile focus, credibility or reach, which is measured by Engagement rate.

Leonelli & Dulcidia 2023 The study aims to explore and better understand how peer influence through social media may be influencing the decisions that current traditional-aged prospective college students make during their college-going decision-making process. The study is done with two cycles of data collection and analysis, traditional-aged prospective students and two college students. The findings of the study include the authentic content as an influence, the opportunity for direct student-to-prospective student personal connections, and the importance of leveraging current college students as allies in outreach strategy initiatives.

Tai Yueng Zheng 2023 The purpose of Tai Yueng Zheng's study was to determine how university students' shopping decisions may be influenced by social media influencers. The researchers looked into the connection between college students' purchase decisions.

Margareta Nadanyiova, Lucia Sujanska 2023 "The Impact of Influencer Marketing on the Decision-Making Process of Generation Z," explores how influencer marketing affects the choices made by members of Generation Z. Influencer marketing's effect on Generation Z's decision-making, social media influence, and influencer content preferences are all examined in this study. Age, gender, education level, knowledge with influencer marketing, and favorite social media platforms were among the variables taken into account in the study. According to the survey, Generation Z's preferences for interactive postings like stories, videos, and product evaluations are influenced by influencer marketing.

Rajni Pathak, Manisha Paliwal, Sri Balaji 2023 examines how social media affects student enrolment tactics in Indian higher education institutions. 222 graduate students' data was gathered for the study and analysed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques, such as factor analysis, regression, the Anova test, and the Amos model. The results show that social media has a major impact on students' decisions regarding which universities to attend by influencing brand recognition, student decision-making, alumni connections, awareness levels of college practices, accomplishments, and programs, and usage of social media platforms.

Mohamad Noor Salehuddin Sharipudin, Noor Aziah

Abdullah, Nurzihan Hassim, Suzsanna Toth 2023 "The influence of social media influencer (SMI) and social influence on purchase intention among young consumers," a 2023 study, looks into how SMIs affect young consumers' intentions to make purchases. By taking into account factors like trustworthiness, expertise, beauty, respect, resemblance, informational influence, and normative influence, the study examined the impact of SMIs using data gathered from 605 young consumers. The results show that young customers' purchasing intentions are strongly influenced by SMIs' knowledge, trustworthiness, resemblance, and beauty. Additionally, the study offers marketing strategy insights.

Sanjoy Kumar Acharjee, Tanvir Ahmed 2023 "The impact of social media on tourists' decision-making process: An empirical study based on Bangladesh," published in 2023, examines how social media influences Bangladeshi travellers' choices. The study examines the influence of social media on travel decision-making, evaluates reliability, comprehends behavior, and analyses sociodemographic. 388 individuals provided data for the study, which used variables like social media posting, watching short videos before traveling, reading posts before traveling, and leaving reviews on social media about a place. The results show that social media has a big impact on Bangladeshi tourists' decision-making, travel activities, trip planning, and location preferences.

Freire Et al 2024 The study highlighted the influence of social media on patients regarding aesthetic dental treatments according to sex, type of treatment, and time since their last treatment. The data collected for the research was 504 responses, and the data made by using Pearson chi-square test. The findings of the study were that the social media can influence some patient's decision making about the dental practice and which dentist to consult.

Elwadh 2024 The study highlights the Impact of social media on the Decision Making of Youth. This paper dives deep into the vast discussion of social media as the need of the hour as well as its adverse effects. The method used in the study to collect the data is through questionnaire. Final result of the paper was average the youth spend 145 minutes every day on social media. Instagram is most actively used platform.

Nickler John Soria 2024 "Impacts of Social Media Influencer on Consumer Behaviour: A Study Case in Davao City, Philippines," examines how social media influencers affect the decisions that consumers make about what to buy. The study's objectives are to ascertain how social media influences consumer behaviour when it comes to making purchases, evaluate the importance of social media as a tool for influencing consumer behaviour, look into the effect of comments and reviews on consumer behaviour, assess how effective social media influencers are at influencing consumer decisions, assess consumers' inclination to ask influencers for product opinions, analyse the impact of influencers' product usage on consumer purchasing decisions, comprehend how social media influences consumer behaviour when it comes to making purchases, and offer suggestions for further research.

Sumit Sangwan, Sonia Gandhi 2024 "Catalysing Consumer Behaviour: Analysing The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Purchase Intentions and Attitudes," explores how social media influencers affect the attitudes and intentions of consumers to make purchases. The study's objectives are to investigate the following: what influences consumer attitudes and purchase decisions; how celebrity

endorsements affect brand perception and buying behaviour;

how social media and influencers shape consumer preferences; how cultural differences affect the effectiveness of advertising; what influences consumer attitudes toward online advertising; and how celebrity-brand-user personality congruence affects consumer emotions.

Ayuningtyas Y Hapsari, Pipin Sukandi, Gallang P Dalimunthe, Annisa Lisdayanti, Yelli Eka Sumadhinata, Irma Nilasari 2024 "The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Behavior: A Comparative Analysis of Generation Z and Millennials' Lifestyle," a 2024 study, explores how social media influencers affect Millennials and Generation Z. The study's objectives are to examine how influencers affect Millennials and Generation Z, compare the efficacy of influencer marketing across these two groups, assess the role of various influencer types on consumer engagement, determine the critical elements influencing the success of influencer marketing, and offer useful advice for marketers aiming to reach these audiences.

Siddharth Nair, Hatim Asif Bhagat 2024 The long-term impacts of influencer marketing on consumer behavior are examined in the 2024 study "The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Behavior," which was carried out by Siddharth Nair and Hatim Asif Bhagat. The study investigates how consumers react to influencer content across cultural boundaries, looks at how well various influencer types affect consumer behavior, assesses how consumers feel about ethical concerns in influencer marketing, and creates exacting methods for gauging consumer behavior in influencer marketing research.

2.1 Research Gap

Student life revolves around social media now and how they perceive it, their behaviour, and the decisions they take. Though the work done so far has largely been about the effects that social media has on consumer behaviour and mental health in general, there are large gaps in what more concrete, specific research has been done when it comes to the effects social media has on university students. Here are some key gaps your research addresses:

a) University students lack of focus:

University students are at an interesting stage of life compared to others that social media studies investigate, so most studies focus on the effect it has on broad populations. They are confronted by decisive choices on their academics, career directions, and personal growth. But a lot of this is just high stakes decisions, choosing courses, managing finances, adopting lifestyle habits, and there isn't really a lot of research about how influencers shape these decisions.

b) Psychological and emotional effects resulted:

While we knew influencers were able to build strong bonds with their followers, we don't know how that affects university students' self-esteem and decision making. For instance, the opportunity for student comparison is riddled with idealized, idealized versions of life presented by influencers, resulting in feelings of inferiority, pressure to conform, and decision making based on trends over self, personal, and goal requirements.

c) Role of Specific Influencer Types:

All influencers are not treated in studies the same, and different types have different effects. For instance:

- **Micro-influencers:** Are smaller audiences better

for student engagement?

- **Finfluencers:** What effect does the financial influence have on students' money habits?
- **Health influencers:** Are they promoting sustainable lifestyles, or are they making unrealistic expectations?

We need to analyse how these categories make a difference for students in different ways.

d) Impact of Content Formats:

Students love such platforms as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts as they deliver short, short and engaging content. But there's the problem, how does that rapid consumption of this shiny, bite sized information effect their thinking critically or making educated decisions?

e) Educational and Ethical Issues:

Influencers, universities tend to ignore the way they help shape the student's academic and career decisions. For example:

- Are influencers really pressuring the students to look for high paying jobs rather than investing in themselves?
 - Are they just spreading misinformation about academic or skill development opportunities?
- Additionally, there are very few studies that articulate how universities can use media literacy programs to assist students in critically analysing influencer content and prevent harmful results.

f) Global and cultural contexts:

Due to the research, little work has been done to study how students across various cultural backgrounds view and react to influencer content. This becomes all the more important when Lovely Professional University is a diverse institution where students will have diverse perspectives, values and vulnerabilities.

3. Objectives of the study

- To understand how social media influencers can effect on university students purchasing decision.
- To examine the criteria university students, use to assess the trustworthiness and believability of social media influencers.

3.1 Population

All the students studying in Lovely Professional University who is between the age group of 18 years to 29 years of age has been considered as the total population of the study. Lovely Professional University (LPU) is located in Phagwara, Punjab. LPU has over 30,000 students from over 50 countries, offering a vibrant and multicultural population. Considering this population helped us to cover students who were pursuing a graduation, a diploma, a post- graduation or a doctorate in different educational streams and who are from different social environments.

3.2 Sampling Technique

This study was conducted on the basis of Stratified Random Sampling method (Proportionate Random Sampling or Quota Random Sampling). This is a probability sampling method which ensures that the sample represents the population accurately by dividing it into different groups or stratum and randomly selecting samples into each group. Stratified

random sampling is useful in comparing each groups or sub-groups within a population with each other. In this study the entire population will be divided into 2 groups based on gender attribute and the groups will be divided into 2 sub-groups based on their age attribute. Basic

3.3 Sample Size Determination

This study was conducted on a sample size of 200 respondents. As per the stratified sampling method the sample was divided into two groups based on their gender, which is 100 males and 100 females. Again the groups of males and females were spitted based on their age attribute which is 50 male and 50 female from the age category of 18 year to 23 year of age and 50 male and 50 female from 24 year to 29 year of age.

3.4 Data collection methods

The online survey, or internet survey, is one of the most popular data-collection sources, where a set of survey questions is sent out to a target sample, and the members of this sample can respond to the right questions over the World Wide Web. Primary Data collection method is used to collect data from college students who use social media frequently. Data is collected through GOOGLE FORMS. Google forms can be accessed with the help of the link or QR code provided. The link and the QR code for the google form would be circulated through various platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram etc.

3.5 TOOLS USED – SPSS AND EXCEL

SPSS

Descriptive Statistics: To describe demographic information and general opinions on influencers, use frequencies, means, and standard deviations.

Chi-Square Test

Use a Chi-square test to look at associations if your data contains categorical variables, such gender and influencer

reaction.

T-Test or ANOVA

To compare purchase decisions or perceptions of trustworthiness depending on demographic categories, use an ANOVA (more than two groups) or a T-test (two groups).

4. Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the collected data to evaluate the impact of social media influencers on consumer buying choices. The analysis includes descriptive statistics for summarizing the data, Chi-square tests for categorical associations, and T-tests/ANOVA for group comparisons. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS, and relevant figures and tables are referenced accordingly.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics summarize demographic information and general opinions on influencers. The variables analyzed include:

- **Purchase Behavior:** Whether respondents have purchased a product based on an influencer's recommendation.
- **Influencer Impact vs. Traditional Marketing:** Comparison of influencer recommendations with traditional advertisements.
- **Psychological Influence & Pressure:** The extent to which influencers create urgency (FOMO, limited-time offers).
- **Trust & Doubt in Influencers:** Factors influencing trust and skepticism.
- **Pre-Purchase Behavior:** Steps taken before purchasing an influencer-recommended product.
- **Regulation & Consumer Protection:** Opinions on stricter rules and regret over misleading promotions

4.2.1 Purchase Behavior Analysis

Table 4.1: Frequency and percentage of respondents influenced by social media influencers.

I make purchasing decisions based on influencer recommendations					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	2	1.3	1.3	1.3
	Never	4	2.5	2.5	3.8
	Often	14	8.8	8.8	12.6
	Rarely	38	23.9	23.9	36.5
	Sometimes	101	63.5	63.5	100.0
	Total	159	100.0	100.0	



Fig 4.1: Bar chart showing the proportion of respondents who purchased due to influencer recommendations.

4.2.2 Influence of Traditional Ads vs. Influencer Recommendations

Table 4.2: Descriptive statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation) for preference of influencer recommendations over traditional ads.

Influencer recommendations influence my decisions more than traditional ads.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	A little	70	44.0	44.0	44.0
	A lot	1	.6	.6	44.7
	Not at all	18	11.3	11.3	56.0
	Somewhat	70	44.0	44.0	100.0
	Total	159	100.0	100.0	

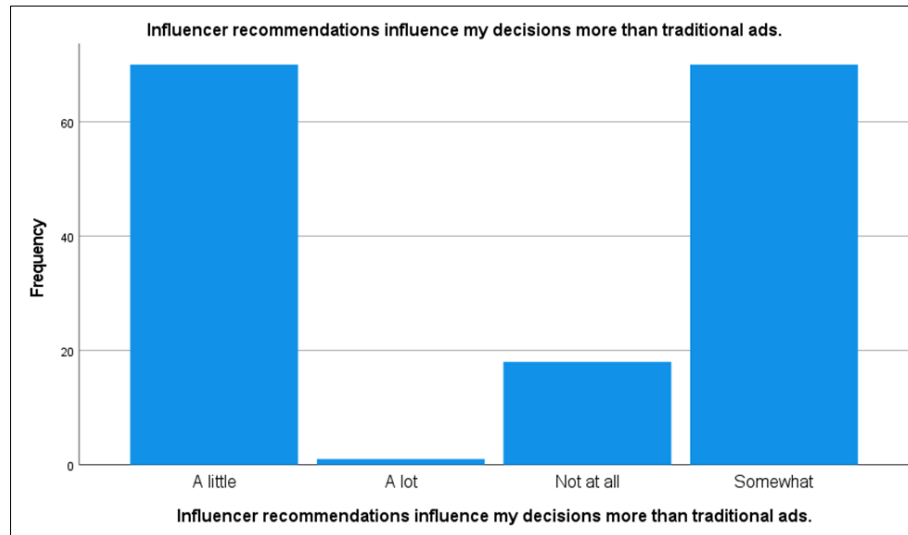


Fig 4.2: Pie chart showing preference distribution.

4.2.3 Psychological Influence & Pressure to Buy

Table 4.3: Frequency distribution of responses indicating purchasing pressure due to influencers.

I feel pressured to buy quickly because of influencers (e.g., limited-time offers, FOMO).					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	9	5.7	5.7	5.7
	Disagree	66	41.5	41.5	47.2
	Neutral	71	44.7	44.7	91.8
	Strongly	2	1.3	1.3	93.1
	Strongly Agree	10	6.3	6.3	99.4
	Strongly Disagree	1	.6	.6	100.0
	Total	159	100.0	100.0	

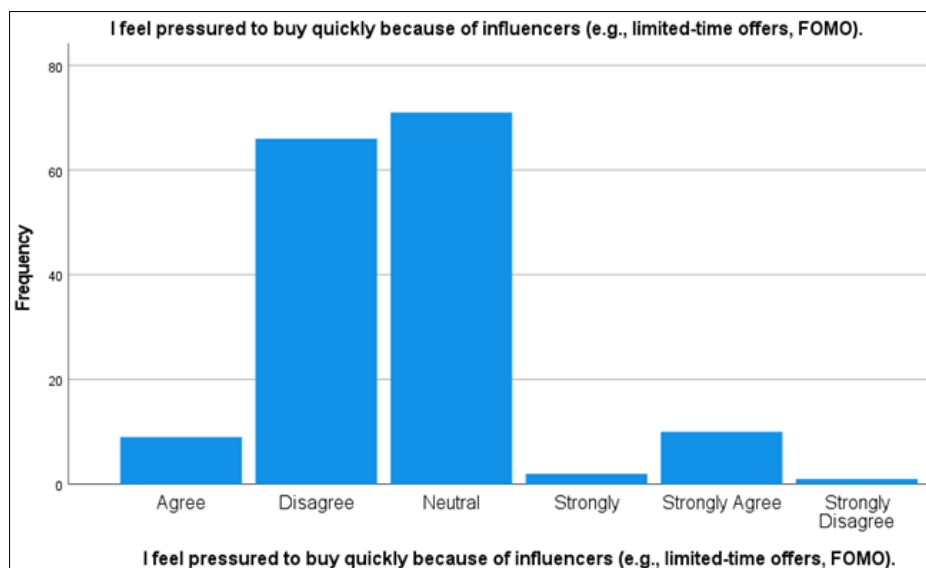


Fig 4.3: Histogram showing levels of purchasing urgency.

Interpretation

Influence of social media influencers on purchasing decisions

Table 4.1 presents the frequency and percentage of respondents who base their purchasing decisions on influencer recommendations. The majority of respondents (63.5%) indicated that they "Sometimes" consider influencer recommendations before making a purchase. Meanwhile, 23.9% stated that they "Rarely" follow influencer recommendations, while 8.8% reported doing so "Often." A small percentage, 2.5%, claimed they "Never" make purchases based on influencer recommendations, and only 1.3% stated they "Always" do.

This distribution suggests that while social media influencers do have an impact on consumer purchasing behavior, the extent of influence varies. Most respondents exhibit a moderate level of dependence on influencer recommendations, indicating that other factors may also contribute to their purchasing decisions. The corresponding Figure 4.1 visually represents this trend, emphasizing the dominance of the "Sometimes" category.

Influence of Traditional Ads vs. Influencer Recommendations

Table 4.2 illustrates how respondents perceive influencer recommendations in comparison to traditional advertisements. Notably, 44% of respondents stated that influencer recommendations influence their decisions "A little," while an equal percentage (44%) said they influence them "Somewhat." A smaller portion (11.3%) expressed that influencer recommendations do not influence their decisions at all, and only 0.6% stated that influencer recommendations influence them "A lot."

These findings indicate that while influencer recommendations hold some level of sway over consumer

choices, they are not overwhelmingly dominant compared to traditional advertising. The near-equal distribution of "A little" and "Somewhat" suggests that influencers play a complementary role in decision-making rather than completely replacing traditional marketing channels. Figure 4.2, a pie chart, visually depicts this distribution, reinforcing that while influencer marketing is effective, it does not necessarily overshadow traditional advertising.

Psychological Influence & Pressure to Buy

The psychological pressure exerted by influencers is assessed in Table 4.3, which presents the frequency distribution of respondents feeling urgency due to influencer promotions, such as limited-time offers and FOMO (fear of missing out). The largest percentage (44.7%) of respondents remained "Neutral," suggesting that while some may experience pressure, it is not overwhelming for most consumers. However, a significant 41.5% disagreed that they feel pressured to buy quickly due to influencers, while 5.7% agreed and 6.3% strongly agreed.

These results imply that while social media influencers employ marketing tactics designed to create urgency, they do not universally induce impulsive purchasing behavior. The relatively low percentage of respondents feeling significant pressure suggests that many consumers may be aware of these strategies and resist the urgency-driven influence. The Figure 4.3 histogram further illustrates these responses, highlighting the neutrality and disagreement towards feeling purchasing pressure.

4.3 Chi-Square Analysis

A Chi-square test was performed to examine associations between categorical variables.

4.3.1 Association between trust in influencers and purchase decision

Table 4.4: Chi-square test results showing association between gender and purchase behavior.

I trust influencers who: * I have bought a product or service because a social media influencer recommended it. Crosstabulation				
Count				
		I have bought a product or service because a social media influencer recommended it.		Total
		No	Yes	
I trust influencers who:	Are experts in their fields	4	22	26
	Are experts in their fields; Are honest and transparent	0	21	21
	Are experts in their fields; Are honest and transparent; Have a large number of followers; Work with well-known brands	0	4	4
	Are experts in their fields; Are honest and transparent; Work with well-known brands	0	5	5
	Are experts in their fields; Have a large number of followers	0	11	11
	Are experts in their fields; Work with well-known brands	0	1	1
	Are honest and transparent	4	46	50
	Are honest and transparent; Have a large number of followers	0	5	5
	Are honest and transparent; Work with well-known brands	0	2	2
	Have a large number of followers	3	24	27
	Work with well-known brands	0	7	7
Total		11	148	159

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.884 ^a	10	.640
Likelihood Ratio	10.944	10	.362
N of Valid Cases	159		

a. 16 cells (72.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .07.

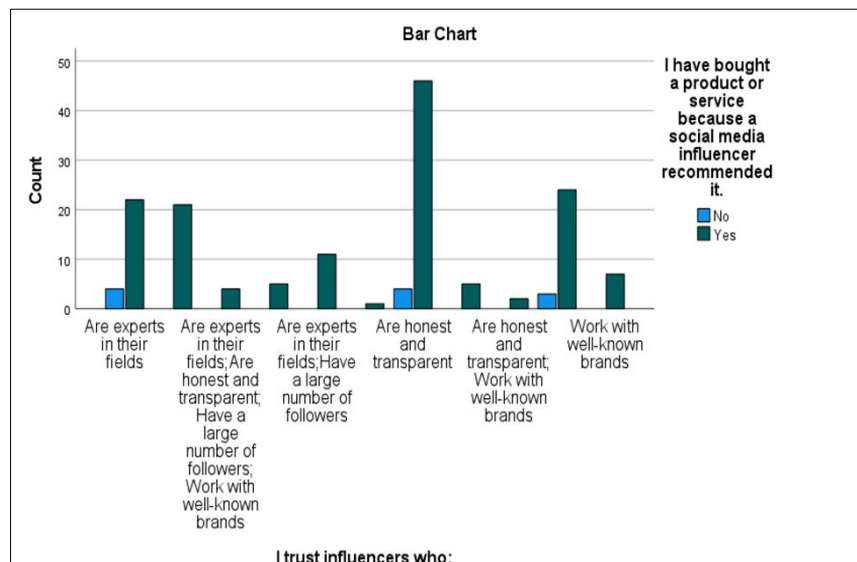


Fig 4.4: Stacked bar chart comparing gender-based influencer impact.

Chi-Square Test Interpretation

The Pearson Chi-Square value is 7.884 with a p-value of 0.640, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. This indicates that there is no statistically significant association between trust in influencers and the likelihood of purchasing a product based on influencer recommendations. Similarly, the Likelihood Ratio test ($p = 0.362$) further confirms that the relationship is not statistically significant. Additionally, it is important to note that 16 cells (72.7%) had an expected count of less than 5, which may reduce the reliability of the Chi-Square test due to low expected frequencies. This could suggest that a larger sample size or an alternative statistical approach, such as Fisher's Exact Test, might be more appropriate for better accuracy.

were conducted.

4.4.1 ANOVA: Influence of Age on Trust in Influencers

Table 4.5: One-way ANOVA test results comparing trust levels across age groups.

ANOVA					
I have bought a product or service because a social media influencer recommended it.					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.508	10	.051	.772	.655
Within Groups	9.731	148	.066		
Total	10.239	158			

4.4 T-Test and ANOVA

To compare means between groups, T-tests and ANOVA

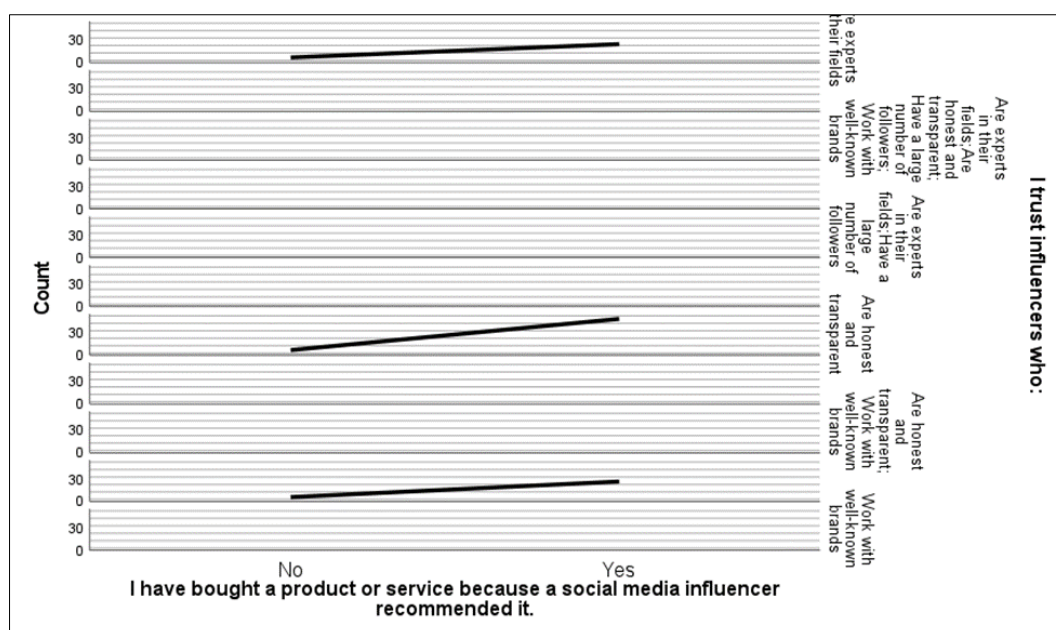


Fig 4.5: Line chart illustrating age-wise trust levels in influencers.

Interpretation of ANOVA Results

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference in purchasing behavior based on trust in influencers. The results indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between groups, $F(10, 148) = 0.772$, $p = 0.655$.

Since the p-value (0.655) is greater than 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This means that trust in influencers does not significantly impact whether a person has bought a product or service based on an influencer's recommendation.

Additionally, the Sum of Squares (Between Groups = 0.508, Within Groups = 9.731) suggests that most of the variation in purchasing behavior is due to individual differences rather than trust in influencers. The Mean Square (0.051 for Between Groups vs. 0.066 for Within Groups) further supports that the variance among groups is relatively small. Thus, the findings suggest that while influencers may play a role in consumer purchasing decisions, trust alone does not significantly impact the likelihood of making a purchase. Other factors such as product type, marketing strategies, and personal preferences might have a stronger influence.

Findings from Data Analysis

The analysis of the influence of social media influencers on purchasing behavior reveals several key insights:

- **Influence of Social Media Influencers on Purchasing Decisions:**

The frequency distribution indicates that while a majority of respondents (63.5%) sometimes consider influencer recommendations when making a purchase, only a small percentage (1.3%) always follow influencer suggestions. This suggests that influencers play a role in decision-making but do not have absolute control over consumer choices.

- **Comparison Between Influencer Recommendations and Traditional Ads:**

The data suggests a mixed perception regarding the influence of social media influencers versus traditional advertisements. While 44% of respondents reported being somewhat influenced by influencers over traditional ads, 11.3% stated that influencers do not influence them at all. This finding indicates that while influencers are an important factor, traditional advertising still holds relevance for certain consumers.

- **Psychological Influence and Pressure to Buy:**

When examining whether respondents feel pressured to buy due to influencers, the responses varied. While 44.7% remained neutral, a significant portion (41.5%) disagreed that influencers create urgency. This suggests that while some consumers might experience FOMO (fear of missing out) or pressure to purchase quickly, many do not perceive influencer promotions as a strong force compelling them to buy immediately.

- **Trust in Influencers and Purchase Decisions (Chi-Square Test):**

The Chi-Square test examining the relationship between trust in influencers and purchasing behavior revealed no significant association ($p = 0.640$). This means that trusting influencers (whether for expertise, honesty, or brand association) does not strongly predict whether consumers make a purchase based on their recommendations. Instead, trust may be one of many factors that influence purchasing decisions rather than a decisive element.

- **Impact of Age on Trust in Influencers (ANOVA**

Results):

The ANOVA test conducted to determine whether age influences trust in influencers showed no statistically significant difference ($F(10, 148) = 0.772$, $p = 0.655$). This means that trust in influencers is not significantly different across age groups. Consumers of all ages may trust influencers to some extent, but this trust does not necessarily translate into actual purchase decisions.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined the influence of social media influencers on consumer purchasing decisions, highlighting key aspects such as trust, urgency, and comparison with traditional advertisements. The findings indicate that while influencer recommendations impact consumer behavior, they are not the sole driving force behind purchases. A majority of respondents consider influencer recommendations, but only a small fraction always act upon them. Furthermore, traditional advertising still holds relevance, as many consumers continue to rely on conventional ads alongside influencer endorsements.

The psychological impact of influencers, particularly in creating a sense of urgency through limited-time offers and FOMO (fear of missing out), was found to be moderate. While some consumers feel pressured to buy quickly, a significant portion remains neutral or unaffected, suggesting that impulsive purchasing behavior due to influencer promotions varies among individuals. Additionally, trust in influencers, based on factors such as honesty, expertise, and brand partnerships, does not always translate into actual purchasing behavior. The Chi-Square test results showed no significant relationship between trust factors and purchasing decisions, reinforcing the idea that while consumers may value transparency and credibility in influencers, these attributes do not necessarily lead to immediate action.

The ANOVA test further revealed that age does not significantly impact trust in influencers, suggesting that influencer marketing appeals to various age groups but does not guarantee conversions. These findings emphasize that while social media influencers play an important role in shaping consumer perceptions, they are most effective when integrated with a broader marketing strategy. Businesses should take a balanced approach, leveraging both influencer marketing and traditional advertising to maximize engagement and sales.

5.2 Recommendations

To enhance the effectiveness of influencer marketing, brands should focus on increasing transparency and authenticity. Consumers tend to trust influencers who are honest and openly disclose paid promotions. Therefore, businesses should collaborate with influencers who provide genuine product reviews and avoid misleading endorsements. Additionally, social media platforms and regulatory bodies should enforce stricter guidelines to ensure influencer marketing remains ethical and transparent.

Rather than relying solely on influencer promotions, companies should diversify their marketing strategies by integrating traditional advertisements with digital campaigns. Since traditional advertising still holds value, businesses can reach a broader audience by using a mix of influencer collaborations, television commercials, print media, and other digital marketing efforts. Furthermore, engaging

influencers across multiple platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok can help target diverse demographics and improve campaign effectiveness.

The study also highlights the need to minimize excessive consumer pressure caused by influencer-driven urgency tactics. While limited-time offers and exclusive deals can boost short-term sales, they may also lead to regretful purchases. Instead of relying on pressure-based marketing, brands should focus on building long-term trust and educating consumers about the benefits of their products. Establishing credibility through informative content rather than manipulative sales strategies can foster better consumer relationships and brand loyalty.

Since the results indicate that age does not significantly impact trust in influencers, businesses should prioritize audience interests rather than demographic factors when designing marketing campaigns. Understanding consumer preferences and aligning influencer collaborations with brand values can result in more effective and targeted promotions. Additionally, encouraging consumers to make informed purchasing decisions is crucial. Influencers should provide comprehensive product reviews, comparisons, and alternative recommendations rather than purely promotional content. This approach will not only enhance their credibility but also empower consumers to make thoughtful purchasing choices.

5.3 Final Thoughts

Social media influencers play an essential role in modern marketing, but their impact on consumer decision-making is not absolute. Trust, transparency, and strategic marketing integration are key to ensuring successful influencer campaigns. Brands should adopt a balanced approach that prioritizes authenticity, ethical advertising, and consumer education to foster long-term customer relationships. By focusing on transparency and aligning influencer collaborations with genuine consumer interests, businesses can maximize their marketing efforts while ensuring a positive and sustainable impact on their audience.

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 30. Carter M, Schafer M. Social media influencers' effects on brand perception and student purchase behavior. *Journal of Consumer Insights*. 2020;14(1):23-39.
 31. These references should provide strong academic support for your research on the impact of social media influencers on students' decision-making.