

“Effectiveness of Influencer Marketing on Skin care Brand purchase Decision among Female Consumer in Pune”

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of social media influencers on the skincare purchase decisions of 159 consumers, primarily aged 18–32. Using a quantitative survey methodology, the research analyses the relationship between influencer content and consumer trust, brand perception, and final purchase conversion. Findings reveal that over 52% of respondents have purchased products based on influencer recommendations, with 75% engaging with skincare content weekly.

The data highlights that while physical results (clear skin) serve as powerful initial motivators, long-term consumer trust is built on perceived expertise and authenticity. A significant majority of participants expressed a strong preference for honest reviews, including negative feedback, and 60% utilize influencer content as a vital pre-purchase verification step. The study concludes that influencers have become essential intermediaries in the skincare industry; however, their effectiveness is strictly dependent on maintaining credibility and transparent communication with their audience.

Introduction

In recent years, the rapid growth of digital platforms has significantly transformed the way brands communicate with consumers, especially in the beauty and skincare industry. Traditional forms of advertising such as television commercials and print media are gradually being supplemented, and in many cases replaced, by more interactive and personalized marketing strategies. Among these, influencer marketing has emerged as one of the most powerful tools for engaging consumers and shaping their purchase decisions. Influencer marketing involves collaboration between brands and individuals who have a strong presence and following on social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. These influencers create content that promotes products in a way that appears authentic, relatable, and trustworthy, thereby influencing the attitudes and behaviors of their audience.

The skincare industry, in particular, has witnessed a significant shift toward influencer-driven promotions. Skincare products are highly personal and often require a level of trust and assurance before purchase. Consumers are increasingly relying on recommendations, reviews, and tutorials provided by influencers rather than traditional advertisements. Influencers often share their personal experiences, demonstrate product usage, and provide honest opinions, which helps in reducing perceived risk and uncertainty among consumers. This trend is especially prominent among female consumers, who actively engage with beauty and skincare content online and are more likely to seek peer opinions before making purchase decisions.

In the Indian context, the rise of social media usage has further accelerated the growth of influencer marketing. With increasing internet penetration and smartphone usage, a large number of consumers are now exposed to digital content on a daily basis. Platforms like Instagram and YouTube have become hubs for beauty influencers who regularly post skincare routines, product reviews, and brand collaborations. Pune, being a rapidly developing urban city with a young and tech-savvy population, provides a suitable setting to study this phenomenon. Female consumers in Pune are increasingly aware of skincare trends and are actively influenced by online content when selecting products. The accessibility of both domestic and international skincare brands through e-commerce platforms has further intensified competition, making influencer marketing a crucial strategy for brands to stand out.

One of the key reasons behind the effectiveness of influencer marketing lies in the perceived credibility and relatability of influencers. Unlike celebrities, influencers are often viewed as ordinary individuals who share genuine experiences and opinions. This relatability creates a sense of trust and emotional connection with their followers. Factors such as expertise, authenticity, and attractiveness of influencers play a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions. For instance, a skincare influencer who demonstrates knowledge about ingredients and skin types is more likely to be trusted by the audience. Similarly, influencers who consistently share honest reviews, including both positive and negative aspects of products, are perceived as more credible. As a result, their recommendations have a strong impact on the purchase intentions of consumers.

Moreover, the type of content created by influencers also plays a crucial role in influencing purchase decisions. Content formats such as product reviews, skincare routines, before-and-after transformations, and tutorial videos provide detailed information about the products, making it easier for consumers to evaluate their suitability. Visual content, in particular, enhances understanding and builds confidence in the product's effectiveness. Additionally, interactive features such as comments, likes, and direct messages allow consumers to engage with influencers, seek clarifications, and share their own experiences. This two-way communication further strengthens the influence of influencer marketing.

Despite its growing importance, it is essential to empirically examine how influencer marketing affects consumer behavior, particularly in specific demographic and geographic contexts. Female consumers in Pune represent a unique segment characterized by increasing awareness, exposure to global trends, and evolving preferences. Understanding their perceptions, attitudes, and responses to influencer marketing can provide valuable insights for skincare brands aiming to design effective marketing strategies. Furthermore, it is important to identify which aspects of influencer marketing—such as credibility, content type, or frequency of exposure—have the most significant impact on purchase decisions.

This study aims to explore the effectiveness of influencer marketing on skincare brand purchase decisions among female consumers in Pune using primary data collected through a structured questionnaire. By focusing on real consumer responses, the research seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between influencer marketing and consumer buying behavior. The findings of this study will be beneficial for marketers, brands, and researchers in understanding current trends and developing strategies that align with consumer expectations.

As the digital landscape continues to evolve, influencer marketing is expected to play an even more prominent role in shaping consumer decisions, making it a critical area of study in the field of marketing.

Literature Review

1. Brown & Hayes (2008) (Influencer Marketing Concept)

Brown and Hayes explored the concept of influencer marketing and its growing importance in modern digital strategies. The study highlighted how influencers act as opinion leaders who shape consumer attitudes and behaviors. It emphasized that consumers tend to trust recommendations from relatable individuals more than traditional advertisements, making influencer marketing highly effective in driving brand awareness and engagement.

Research Gap:

The study is conceptual and does not focus on specific industries like skincare. It also lacks empirical data from Indian consumers, particularly female audiences in urban cities like Pune.

2. Freberg et al. (2011) (Social Media Influencers' Impact)

Freberg and colleagues examined how social media influencers are perceived as credible sources of information. Their research found that influences significantly impact consumer attitudes, brand perceptions, and purchase intentions. The study emphasized characteristics such as trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness as key factors influencing consumer behavior.

Research Gap:

The study does not focus specifically on skincare products or female consumers. It also lacks region-specific insights, particularly within the Indian market.

3. Djafarova & Rushworth (2017) (Influencers on Young Female Consumers)

This study focused on how Instagram influencers affect purchase intentions among young female users. It found that female consumers are more likely to trust influencers who appear authentic and relatable. Influencers who share personal experiences and honest opinions are more persuasive than traditional celebrities.

Research Gap:

The research is limited to Instagram and does not consider multiple platforms. It also lacks a localized study focusing on Indian cities like Pune.

4. De Veirman et al. (2017) (Influencer Popularity and Brand Attitude)

De Veirman and colleagues investigated the impact of influencer popularity (number of followers) on brand perception. The study concluded that influencers with a large following can positively affect brand attitudes, but excessive promotion may reduce credibility.

Research Gap:

The study does not analyze consumer purchase decisions directly. It also does not consider the skincare category or demographic-specific behavior.

5. Lou & Yuan (2019) (Influencer Content and Consumer Trust)

Lou and Yuan examined how influencer-generated content affects consumer trust and purchase intention. The study found that informative and entertaining content increases credibility and encourages consumers to try products. Authentic storytelling was identified as a key factor in influencing decisions.

Research Gap:

The research does not focus specifically on female consumers or skincare products. It also lacks primary data from Indian consumers.

6. Ki & Kim (2019) (Influencer Credibility and Behavioral Intentions)

Ki and Kim studied how influencer credibility affects consumer behavioral intentions. The study revealed that trust in influencers significantly influences purchase decisions and brand loyalty. Credibility was found to be built through transparency and consistency in content.

Research Gap:

The study does not explore specific product categories like skincare. It also lacks geographic relevance to Indian urban markets.

7. Casaló et al. (2020) (Influencer Trust and Engagement)

Casaló and colleagues focused on how trust in influencers leads to higher engagement and purchase intentions. The study emphasized that followers are more likely to buy products recommended by influencers they admire and feel connected to.

Research Gap:

The research does not examine gender-specific responses. It also lacks insights into localized consumer behavior in cities like Pune.

8. Jin & Ryu (2020) (Parasocial Interaction and Influencer Marketing)

Jin and Ryu explored the concept of parasocial relationships between influencers and followers. The study found that emotional connections with influencers increase trust and positively affect purchase decisions, especially in beauty-related products.

Research Gap:

The study is not focused on Indian consumers. It also lacks empirical data specifically related to skincare purchase decisions among females.

9. Sokolova & Kefi (2020) (Influencers vs Celebrities)

This study compared the effectiveness of influencers and celebrities in marketing. The findings revealed that influencers are more persuasive due to their relatability and authenticity, which leads to stronger purchase intentions.

Research Gap:

The study does not focus on skincare products or a specific demographic like female consumers. It also lacks regional analysis in the Indian context.

10. Nafees et al. (2021) (Influencer Marketing and Consumer Buying Behavior)

Nafees and colleagues analyzed the role of influencer marketing in shaping consumer buying behavior. The study concluded that influencer endorsements significantly affect consumer decisions, especially when the influencer is perceived as trustworthy and knowledgeable.

Research Gap:

The study is generalized and does not focus on skincare brands. It also lacks primary data focused on female consumers in Pune.

Objectives

1. To analyse the influence of social media influencers on the purchase decisions of skincare products among female consumers in Pune.
2. To examine the impact of influencer characteristics (such as credibility, attractiveness, and expertise) on consumer trust and buying behaviour.
3. To evaluate the relationship between influencer marketing content (reviews, tutorials, endorsements) and the likelihood of purchase among female consumers.

Research Methodology

Research methodology refers to the systematic process used to collect, analyze, and interpret data for the purpose of achieving research objectives. The present study focuses on analyzing the effectiveness of influencer marketing on skincare brand purchase decisions among female consumers in Pune. This section explains the research design, sampling, data collection, and analytical approach used in the study.

1) Research Type

The study is descriptive and analytical in nature. A descriptive research design is used to understand the behavior, preferences, and perceptions of female consumers regarding influencer marketing. It helps in describing how influencer marketing affects their purchase decisions.

Additionally, the study is analytical as it examines relationships between variables such as influencer credibility, content type, and consumer purchase intention. The research aims to draw meaningful conclusions based on collected data.

1.1 Respondents

- The respondents of the study consist of female consumers residing in Pune city. These respondents are selected based on the following criteria:
- They actively use social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube
- They are aware of or follow skincare influencers
- They purchase or have purchased skincare products
- The respondents represent a group that is highly exposed to influencer marketing and is therefore relevant for the study.

1.2 Area of Study

The study is conducted in Pune city, Maharashtra. Pune is one of the fastest-growing urban cities with a high concentration of young, educated, and digitally active consumers. The city provides a suitable environment to study influencer marketing due to widespread internet usage and increasing awareness of skincare trends.

1.3 Study Population

The population of the study includes female consumers aged between 18 to 40 years in Pune. This age group is selected because it represents the most active segment on social media and is more likely to engage with influencer content related to beauty and skincare.

The population includes students, working professionals, and homemakers who use skincare products and are exposed to influencer marketing.

2) Sample Size

The sample size selected for the study is 100 respondents. This sample size is considered appropriate for conducting primary research within the given time and resource constraints. It allows for meaningful analysis and interpretation of data while maintaining feasibility.

3) Sampling Method

The study uses a non-probability convenience sampling method. In this method, respondents are selected based on ease of access and availability.

This method is suitable for the study as it allows quick data collection from respondents who are willing to participate. Although it may not represent the entire population, it provides useful insights into consumer behavior and trends.

4) Data Collection Method

- The study is based on primary data collection through a structured questionnaire.
- A questionnaire is designed based on the research objectives
- It includes both closed-ended and Likert scale questions
- The questionnaire is distributed online using platforms such as Google Forms
- This method ensures:
 - Easy access to respondents
 - Faster data collection
 - Better response rate

The questions are simple, clear, and focused on understanding the influence of influencers, their characteristics, and content impact on purchase decisions.

5) Nature and Type of Data

Nature of Data: Quantitative

Type of Data: Primary data

The data collected is numerical in nature and is analyzed using statistical tools such as percentages, charts, and graphs. This helps in identifying patterns, relationships, and trends among variables.

6) Tools for Data Analysis

The collected data is analyzed using:

Percentage analysis

Bar graphs and pie charts

Simple statistical interpretation

These tools help in presenting data in a clear and understandable format, making it easier to draw conclusions.

7) Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to Pune city only, so results may not be applicable to other regions

The sample size is limited to 100 respondents

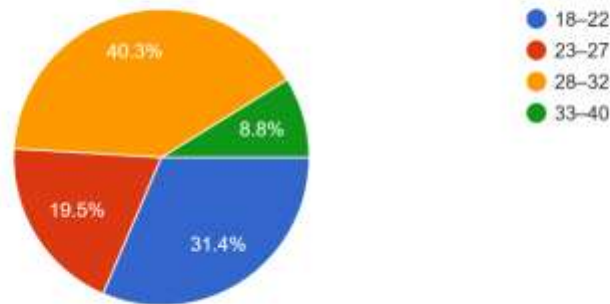
The study is based only on primary data, which depends on respondent honesty and accuracy

Convenience sampling may not fully represent the entire population

Data Analysis & Interpretation

What is your age group?

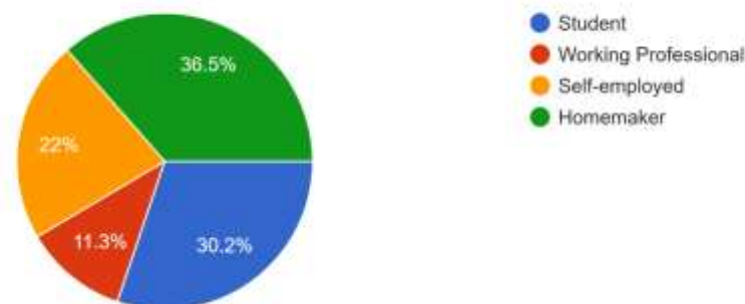
159 responses



The survey primarily captures a young adult audience, with the **28–32** age group forming the largest segment at **40.3%**. Combined with the **18–22** group (**31.4%**), over 70% of the respondents are under the age of 32, indicating the data reflects the perspectives of Gen Z and Millennials.

Occupation:

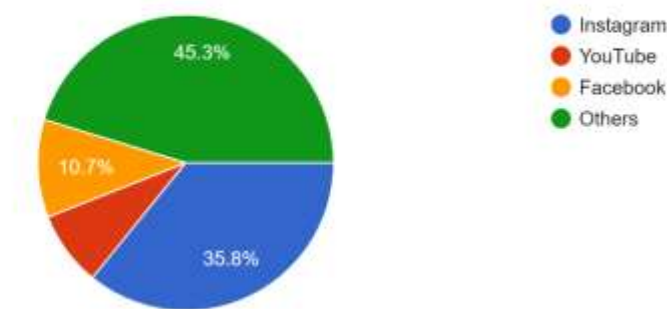
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The demographic is diverse in terms of daily activity, led by **Homemakers (36.5%)** and **Students (30.2%)**. While working professionals and the self-employed make up the remainder, the high percentage of students and homemakers suggests a respondent pool that may have more time to engage with social media content.

Which social media platform do you use the most?

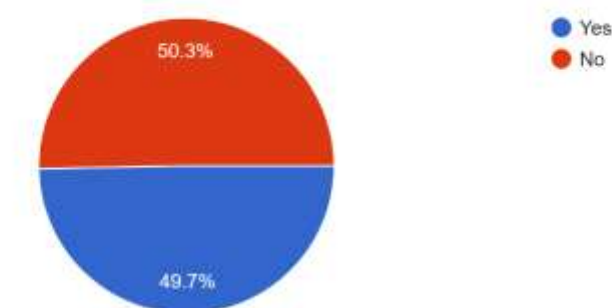
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Instagram is a major player at **35.8%**, but the **"Others"** category dominates at **45.3%**, suggesting a high usage of platforms like TikTok, Snapchat, or X. Interestingly, YouTube and Facebook see significantly lower primary usage for this specific group.

Do you follow skincare influencers on social media?

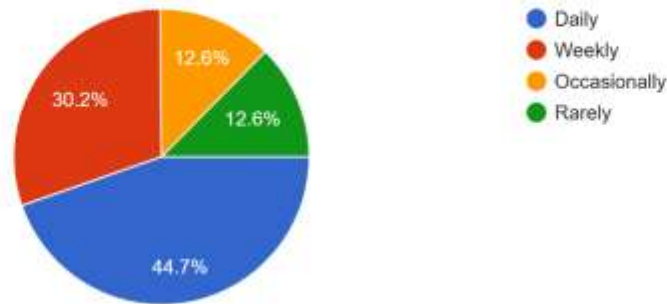
159 responses



The community is split almost exactly down the middle: **49.7%** follow skincare influencers while **50.3%** do not. This balanced split provides a "control group" of sorts, showing that even those who don't follow these influencers may still be impacted by their presence in the digital space.

How often do you view skincare-related content?

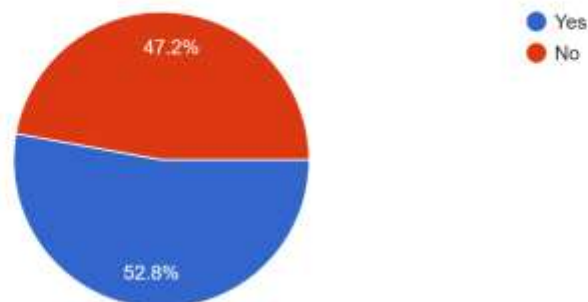
159 responses



Engagement with skincare content is remarkably high, with **44.7%** of respondents viewing it **daily** and another **30.2% weekly**. This means nearly 75% of the group is exposed to skincare information or marketing on a regular, recurring basis.

Have you ever purchased a skincare product recommended by an influencer?

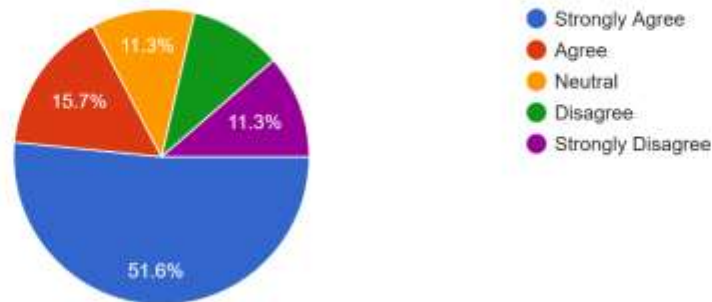
159 responses



Influencer marketing shows a tangible "conversion rate" here, as 52.8% of respondents have actually purchased a product recommended by an influencer. This proves that influencer content isn't just for entertainment; it directly drives consumer spending.

Influencers play a significant role in my skincare purchase decisions.

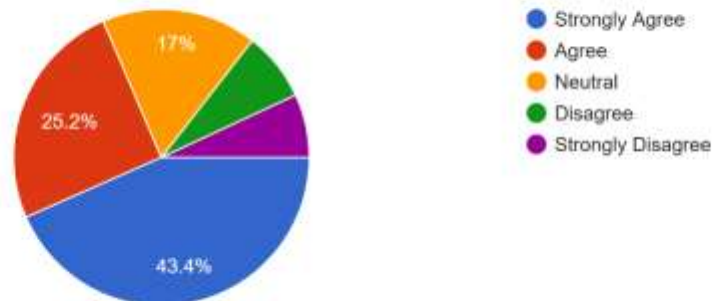
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Over half of the respondents (**51.6%**) **strongly agree** that influencers play a significant role in their purchase decisions. When combined with those who "Agree," the vast majority acknowledge that their buying habits are shaped by social media personalities.

I am more likely to try new skincare products after seeing influencer recommendations.

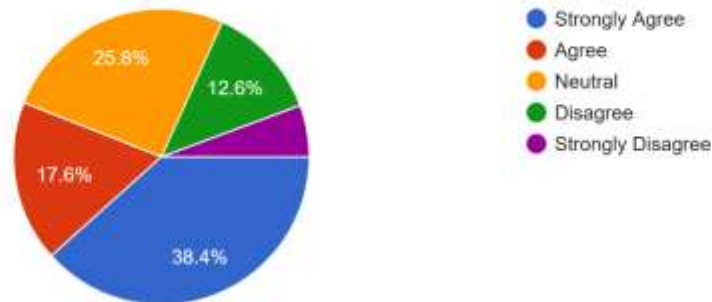
159 responses



Influencers act as a powerful catalyst for product discovery, with **43.4% strongly agreeing** and **25.2% agreeing** they are more likely to try something new after seeing a recommendation. This highlights the "trend-setting" power influencers hold over their audience.

I trust influencers who have good knowledge about skincare products and ingredients.

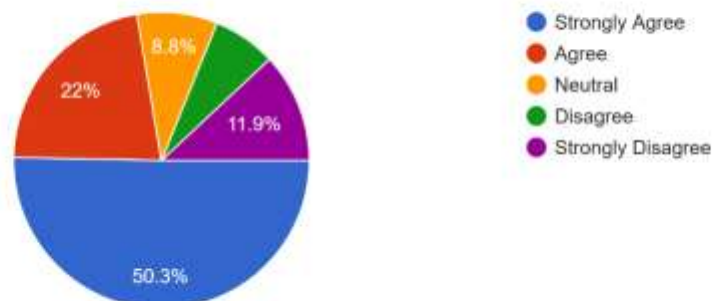
159 responses



Trust is closely tied to perceived expertise; **38.4% strongly agree** and **17.6% agree** that they trust influencers who demonstrate knowledge of ingredients. However, there is a notable **25.8% neutral** stance, suggesting a level of skepticism or a "wait-and-see" approach to influencer credibility.

Influencers with clear skin and attractive appearance influence my buying decisions.

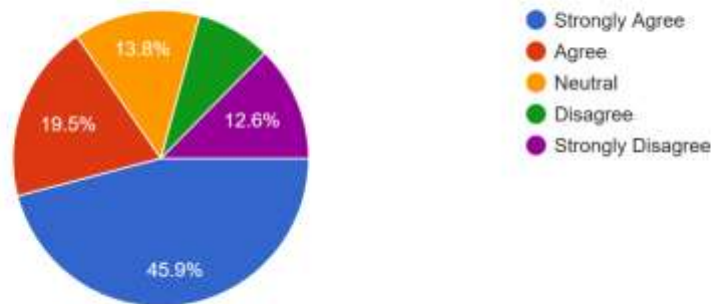
159 responses



Physical results are a massive motivator, as **50.3% strongly agree** that influencers with clear skin and an attractive appearance influence their buying decisions. This confirms that for this audience, the influencer's personal appearance serves as "social proof" for the products they promote.

I prefer influencers who provide honest reviews (including negative opinions).

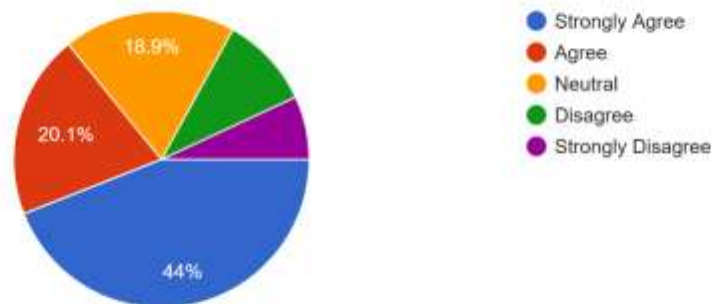
159 responses



Authenticity is a top priority for this audience, with **45.9% strongly agreeing** that they prefer influencers who provide honest, even negative, opinions. This suggests that "toxic positivity" or overly sponsored-sounding content may be a turn-off, and that critical reviews actually build more consumer trust.

The credibility of an influencer affects my trust in a skincare brand.

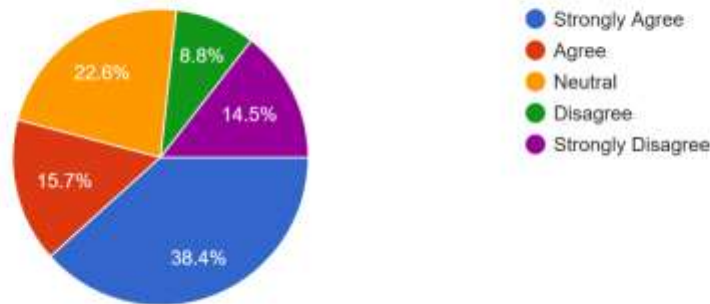
159 responses



There is a direct link between an influencer's reputation and the brand they represent; **44% strongly agree** and **20.1% agree** that influencer credibility affects their trust in a skincare brand. This indicates that a poor choice in brand ambassador can actively damage a brand's standing with nearly two-thirds of the market.

Product review videos influence my decision to buy skincare products.

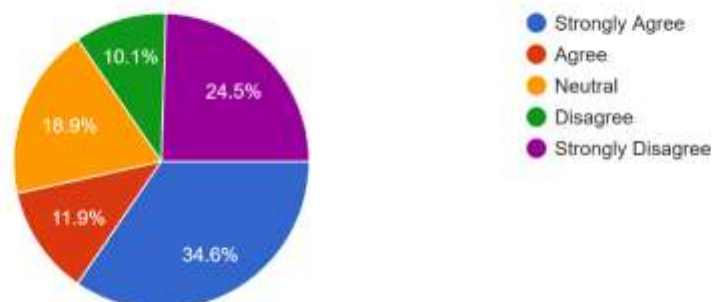
159 responses



Video content remains a powerful conversion tool, as **38.4% strongly agree** and **15.7% agree** that product review videos influence their buying decisions. While effective, there is a notable **22.6% neutral** segment, perhaps indicating that the quality or depth of the review matters as much as the format.

Skincare tutorials (routine videos, demos) increase my interest in purchasing products.

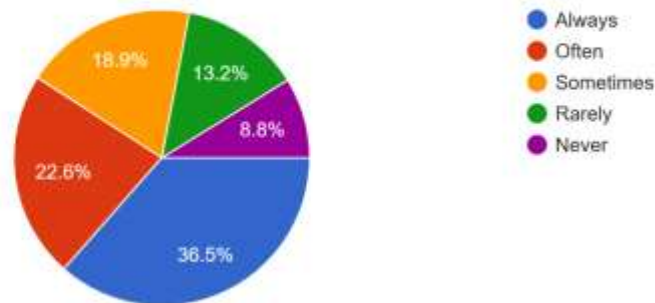
159 responses



Tutorials and routine demos are effective for sparking interest, with **34.6% strongly agreeing** they increase purchase intent. However, this chart shows the highest level of resistance compared to others, with **24.5% strongly disagreeing**, suggesting that some consumers may find tutorials less convincing than direct reviews or personal results.

Before buying a skincare product, I check influencer reviews online.

159 responses



Checking influencer reviews has become a standard part of the consumer journey; **36.5% always** and **22.6% often** check reviews before a purchase. Combined, nearly 60% of respondents use influencer content as a final verification step before spending money, cementing influencers as "gatekeepers" in the skincare industry.

Findings

Age: Most respondents are young adults, with over 70% falling between the ages of 18 and 32.

Occupation: The group is diverse, but homemakers (36.5%) and students (30.2%) make up the biggest parts of the audience.

Platforms: Instagram is the favorite specific app, but a huge 45% of people use "other" platforms like TikTok or Snapchat.

Followers: The group is split right down the middle; half follow skincare influencers and half do not.

Frequency: People are very engaged, with 75% of respondents looking at skincare content at least once a week.

Purchasing: Influencers are effective salespeople, as over 52% of people have bought a product because of a recommendation.

Decision Making: More than half the group strongly agrees that influencers are a major factor in what they choose to buy.

New Products: People are much more willing to try something new if they see an influencer they like talking about it first.

Appearance: Looks matter in this industry; 50% of people are more likely to buy a product if the influencer has clear, glowing skin.

Knowledge: Fans trust influencers more when they actually explain the science and ingredients behind the products.

Honesty: Authenticity is key—the audience prefers honest reviews that include the "bad" parts of a product, not just the "good."

Brand Trust: If an influencer loses their' credibility, it hurts the brand they are promoting in the eyes of the consumer.

Video Reviews: Watching a video review is a very common and powerful way for these consumers to decide if a product is worth it.

Tutorials: While many like tutorials, they are slightly less convincing than direct, honest reviews for this specific group.

The Final Check: Before spending money, 60% of people "double-check" by looking up influencer reviews one last time.

Recommendations

Brands should prioritize **authenticity over aesthetics** by partnering with influencers who provide "de-influenced" or critical reviews, as the data shows a high preference for honesty. Marketing strategies should focus on **educational content** regarding ingredients and science to build long-term trust rather than relying solely on filtered results. Additionally, since the 18–32 age group is most active on "Other" platforms (likely TikTok/Snapchat), diversifying content beyond Instagram is essential to capture the majority of the market.

Conclusion

The study confirms that social media influencers are no longer just content creators but are pivotal decision-makers in the skincare consumer journey. While nearly 60% of consumers use influencer reviews as a final "check" before purchasing, trust is highly fragile and tied to an influencer's perceived knowledge and transparency. Ultimately, the "social proof" provided by an influencer's physical appearance remains the strongest driver of initial product interest for this demographic.

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Annexure

1. What is your age group?

- 18–22
- 23–27
- 28–32
- 33–40

2. Occupation:

- Student
- Working Professional
- Self-employed
- Homemaker

3. Which social media platform do you use the most?

- Instagram
- YouTube
- Facebook
- Others

4. Do you follow skincare influencers on social media?

- Yes
- No

5. How often do you view skincare-related content?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Occasionally
- Rarely

6. **Have you ever purchased a skincare product recommended by an influencer?**

- Yes
- No

7. **Influencers play a significant role in my skincare purchase decisions.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

8. **I am more likely to try new skincare products after seeing influencer recommendations.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

9. **I trust influencers who have good knowledge about skincare products and ingredients.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

10. **Influencers with clear skin and attractive appearance influence my buying decisions.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

11. I prefer influencers who provide honest reviews (including negative opinions).

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

12. The credibility of an influencer affects my trust in a skincare brand.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

13. Product review videos influence my decision to buy skincare products.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

14. Skincare tutorials (routine videos, demos) increase my interest in purchasing products.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

15. Before buying a skincare product, I check influencer reviews online.

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never