



The Role of Social Media Influencers in Advertising Cosmetic Brands: A Study on Instagram

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Abstract

Instagram is a social media network where product and services-based businesses, influencers, celebrities, and coaches can flourish and excel. It is a multi-media driven social media platform that involves various techniques and methods to advertise various products and services. One such method is Influencer advertising on Instagram. Influencer advertising on Instagram is a type of social media marketing that uses influencers – (individuals who have a dedicated social following and are considered as experts in their area of interest) to endorse and advertise various products and services. Influencer advertising involves a brand collaborating with an influencer to endorse or advertise its products and services. This kind of advertising works because of the amount of trust and accountability the influencers have built up with their followers. Influencer advertising allows brands to locate and advertise directly to their target audience. Influencers are effective at generating higher ROI and value for their brand. There are majorly four types of influencers based on number of followers – Mega Influencers (1M+ Followers), Macro Influencers (100K – 1 M), Micro Influencers (10K - 100K Followers) and Nano Influencers (less than 10K Followers). According to Influencer Marketing Hub, the influencer industry reached \$16.4 billion in 2022, this figure will exponentially grow to \$21.1 billion in 2023. The main aim of the research is to understand and analyze the importance and role of social media influencers on Instagram in Advertising cosmetic brands with the help of primary research (questionnaire) and analyzing data from previous studies and reports. The major objective of this research is to comprehensively examine, conduct a study of social media influencer advertising and check its effectiveness in promoting cosmetic brands. The research also tries to study and analyze different types and strategies used by social media influencers to endorse cosmetic brands on Instagram.

Keywords: social media, social media advertising, social media influencers, Instagram, Instagram advertising, cosmetic brands, Instagram influencers, advertising.

Introduction

Instagram has become the most used and powerful social media platform in terms of advertising any brand or products online. Instagram is said to be the fastest growing social media services where users share their life images and videos with other users. Advertisements on Instagram are expected to reach \$2.81bn in 2017 - more than both Twitter and Google in the US (Vizard, 2015a, Vizard, 2015b). More and more people spend more time on Instagram than other sites making it more relevant to conduct research on it. Instagram has reported 400 million monthly active users (Statista, 2016). Multinational brands are planning to increase their spending on influencer marketing in the next 12 months, with 65% aiming to spend more, according to new research from the WFA.

Instagram advertising is very popular and used by various national and international brands worldwide. One such method used on Instagram to promote and advertise various products is using social media influencers.

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Social media influencer is someone who has authority and expertise in a particular genre or area to engage with large number of social media followers. Those profiles are the top - most followed pages on Instagram, which are frequently used to deliver promotional communication messages to their followers. A social media influencer usually signs contract with various brands to promote and advertise their products and services to these followers. Many research studies have confirmed that endorsements done by social media influencers significantly increase advertising effectiveness (Atkin and Zhou et al., 2016). According to Chekima & Chekima, 2019, Schouten 2020; Bergkvist and Zhou 2016 influencer endorsement is said to have a quadruple effect to enhance communication effectiveness, better brand name recall, as well as increased advertising effectiveness and ultimately purchase of the product. Social media influencers are popularly also known as vloggers or Instagram famous personalities. Each genre has different influencers who tend to focus on area specific promotion or advertising of brands. For example: Beauty influencers will advertise and work for makeup, cosmetic brands and Fitness influencers will focus on advertising pharmaceutical, health, gym, yoga, fitness brands. With the help of different social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook social media influencers can engage, publicize brand or products as well as communicate any offers, sale and latest information/updates regularly with their online followers through photos, video ad, live content, v blog, product review, etc. (Market hub 2016; Liu et al. 2012).

Social media influencers gain popularity and huge number of followers by enthusiastically sharing self-generated content of a different product or topics viewed by followers hence turning them to be perceived as an expert on social media platforms (Lin, Bruning, and Swarna 2018). Influencers or bloggers are used in brand communication and brands can engage with bloggers, currently considered as online opinion leaders, from the perspective of the two-step flow theory. Brands often employ influencers to endorse a product to get attention from audience, add glamour to the product and make the advertisement more credible and memorable. The strategy where brands are choosing these popular social media influencers is being adopted by various makeup brands such as Maybelline, Sugar cosmetics, Nykaa, Mac, Nyx, etc. to improve the effectiveness and credibility of the advertisement.

Social media influencers are increasingly employed as product endorsers and advertisers and a lot of academic research confirms that influencers are an effective advertising instrument.

Here are few listed reasons why brands are choosing social media influencers to advertise their products over other strategies of advertising on Instagram:

1. The foremost reason being the persuasive power of influencers that is derived from their unique positioning as authentic, relatable, and accessible.
2. They are perceived as relatable and accountable endorsers.
3. In comparison with traditional celebrity endorsers, the consumers feel a sense of trustworthiness and perceive them to be more like them, and also aspire to be like them.
4. They serve as brand ambassadors for products and services, and keep the consumers updated about new product updates and information.
5. They are the new age opinion leaders who change the perception of consumers hence increasing brand value, brand recall and purchase intentions.
6. Many studies have revealed that Instagram users regularly bought or recommended products reviewed by 'Instafamous' personalities and Instagram influencers ads perform better than company sponsored promotions.
7. According to Influencer Marketing Hub, the industry reached \$16.4 billion in 2022. This is expected to grow to \$21.1 billion in 2023.
8. It helps to enrich the content strategy as influencers help to build content according to the taste and liking of the followers which are the potential customers.
9. It tends to increase sales as the influencers are said to promote the brand and consumers believe them hence but it.
10. Influencer advertising leads to increased reach of the brand that leads to unlimited sharing of the brand on social platforms. This hence contributes to an effective ROI (Return on Investment).

Objectives of the Research

The objectives for the research are as follows:

1. To determine the effectiveness of social media influencers on Instagram in influencing customers to buy cosmetic brands.
2. To determine the importance and credibility of social media influencers in promoting cosmetic brands on Instagram.
3. To compare social media influencer advertising with other forms of advertising on Instagram to advertise cosmetic brands.

Literature review

1. Brahim Chekima, Fatima Zohra Chekima, Azaze-Azizi Abdul Adis, Universiti Malaysia Sabah (2020) in their research stated that it is suitable to hire a social media influencer to promote cosmetic brands in Malaysia due to social media influencer credibility that covers attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise to advertise effectively and contribute towards creating purchase decision of the valuable and potential customers. They created a conceptual framework that demonstrated that they measured with attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise of the social media influencers to advertise the product and it positively influences consumer attitudes towards ad and subsequently drives towards increase in intention to purchase the cosmetic products. This research demonstrated that respondents were more likely to trust the social media influencer for product fit and attractiveness with whom they perceived resemblance. The influencers must have effective communication skills to attract the customers to create positive social behaviour that further leads to increment in sales.
2. Evans, N.J., J. Phua, J. Lim, and H. Jun. 2017 in their research identified the factors that constitute a credible and authentic social media influencer who endorses brands and products on Instagram. The method used in the research was exploratory and qualitative where groups were asked to analyze the posts of influencers. The research findings state that the authentic social media influencers are composed of majorly four features which are trustworthiness, transparency, reliability, and expertise. Firstly, the influencer must build trust to yield the best valuable results for the brand. Secondly, the influencer must be transparent. Endorsers should be open about the payment or contract or any such affiliate programs with the sponsors. Thirdly, there must be relatability between the influencer and the consumer. Fourthly, the social media influencer should have expertise in the product. The model introduced in the research could help in further research in areas of social media marketing.
3. Uzunoğlu, E., and S.M. Kip. 2014 in their research stated that the growing power of influencers to influence their audience has emerged a new communication theory for brands. This study elaborates upon the role of bloggers in brand communication and states how brands can collaborate with influencers to communicate the brand messages to the audiences from the perspective of the two-step flow theory. This study involves discussion of seven major issues arising from the literature review and inter-views that includes definition of bloggers, blogger selection criteria, digital integration, power of bloggers, long-term relationship building with bloggers, measurement, and budgetary issues in blogger communication. This model is called brand communication through digital influencers model. They identified the important factors to investigate when selecting a social media influencer for the brand. Some of them being Blogger and brand match, Tone of voice, Number of followers, Content, Popularity & Reliability. In social media, the dissemination of brand messages through bloggers is like two-step flow theory, which as previously indicated, suggests that information flows through one or more individuals considered as influential opinion leaders. This research has showed that, compared with conventional journalists, brands find bloggers more independent and resemble with them since they have no direct affiliation.
4. Lee, J.E., and B. Watkins. 2016 in their research analyze YouTube vloggers' influence on consumer luxury Brand perceptions and intentions. The study proposes a model that assesses the influence of physical attractiveness, social attractiveness, and attitude homophily of video blogger (vlogger) on Para social interaction; and its effects on luxury brand perceptions (i.e., brand luxury, luxury brand value, and brand-user-imagery fit) and luxury brand purchase intentions. Results show that purchase intentions for the experimental groups, who watched vlogs reviewing luxury products, were higher than control group, who did not watch vlog. Overall, the study supports the use of YouTube vloggers or influencers as a social media platform to persuade people to purchase luxury brands. The study reveals that social media can be an imperative tool to promote luxury brands. It can be useful for building positive relationships with consumers. Consumers who view vloggers as like them will likely develop Para social interaction with the

vlogger which has attract them to behave like them hence will lead to increase in purchase behavior. This study supports the use of YouTube and fashion vloggers as advertising tools for fashion brand managers to reach consumers outside of traditional marketing strategies.

5. De Veirman, M., V. Cauberghe, and L. Hudders. 2017 in their research study marketing through instagram influencers revealed that Instagram influencers with huge number of followers are considered more likely as they are understood as more popular. The research investigated that whether number of followers affects popularity or help people to form opinion leadership to the influencer. Then, it examines the relationship between the number of followers and popularity and opinion leadership. A high number of followers may be popular, and subsequently higher likeability, but it does not mean that the influencer is an opinion leader. It also revealed that a high number of followers also show that the product is not that unique, as many others might be interested in it. Therefore, the topics influencers post about and the kind of audience they reach in terms of interests and activities is more important than the size of their audience.
6. Pixelfy.me (2022) - 10 Reasons Why Influencer Marketing Is the Next Big Thing stated that the rise of the social media influencer creates a world of possibilities. It helps brands to connect with the customers more directly and organically. It is growing exponentially with over 3.6 billion social media users in the world, influencer marketing is a good idea for growth and welfare of any business. It briefly explains 10 reasons why advertisers and marketers should consider influencer marketing for their brand:
 - It is cost effective.
 - It is easy to monitor.
 - Enhanced Brand recognition
 - It helps to find new customers.
 - It refines and improves customer relations.
 - It is very competitive in nature.
 - It helps in Search engine optimization (SEO).
 - It provides an intrinsic ad experience.
 - Paid ads are expensive and not worth it.
 - It makes the brand a trendsetter and unique.

Methodology

The research was conducted using convenience sampling method as the sampling technique and survey method as the research methodology. It involved standardized questionnaire and interviews to collect data about people and their preferences, thoughts, and behaviors on the effectiveness and importance of social media influencers on Instagram in a systematic manner. An online survey was conducted through a questionnaire. The target group for the research was females aged 15 - 45 years. Google Forms with a questionnaire were forwarded/floated across WhatsApp chat to get responses. The responses were then recorded, and data was analyzed using pie charts and bar graph. The favorable sample size was 100 respondents to execute the survey.

Findings

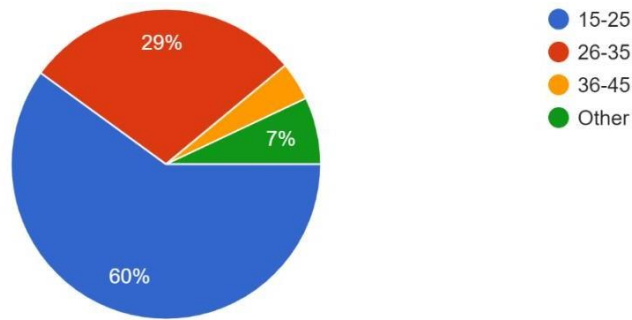
- Total Respondents: 100
 - Gender: Female
 - Geographical Area: Bhopal & Indore
1. 60% of the respondents are from age group 15-25 years followed by 29% from age group 26-35 years and then 7% being aged between 36-45 years. The majority of the audience belongs to age group in between 15-25 years.

Do you follow social media influencers on Instagram?

100 responses

What is your age?

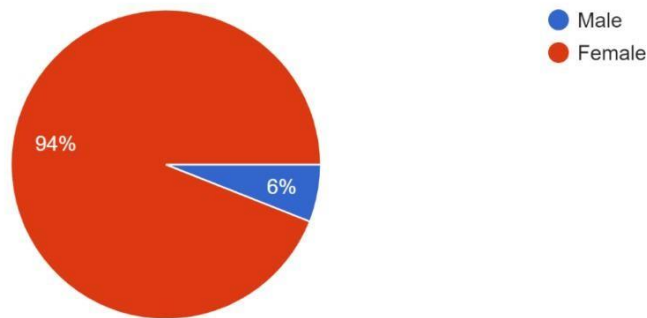
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2. 94% of the respondents were females who contributed to the research who are the target audience of the research.

What is your gender?

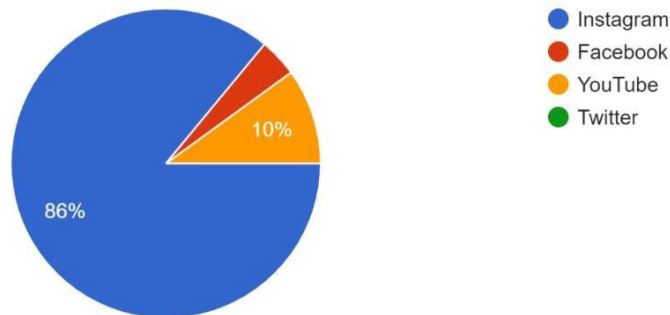
100 responses



3. 86% of the population uses Instagram as a social media platform the most when compared to YouTube (10%) then Facebook and Twitter.

Which social media platform do you use the most?

100 responses

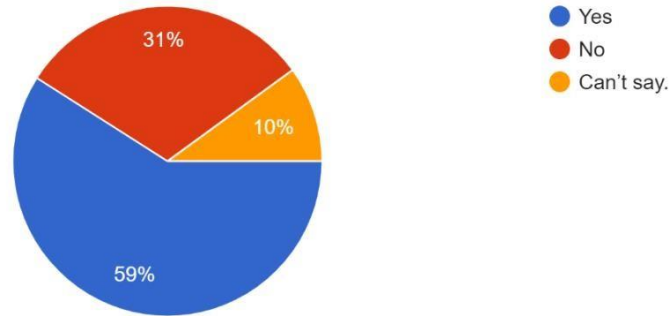


4. According to the research 77% of the respondents follow social media influencers on Instagram that shows the interest of respondents in Instagram as a social media tool

5. 59% of the respondents buy makeup products when it is advertised by social media influencers whereas 31% do not get influenced by their advertisements.

Have you ever bought any makeup product advertised by social media influencers?

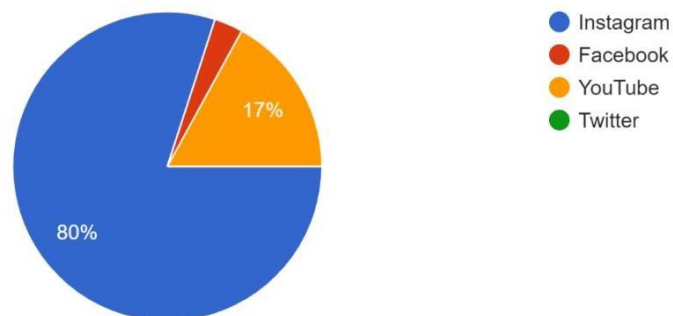
100 responses



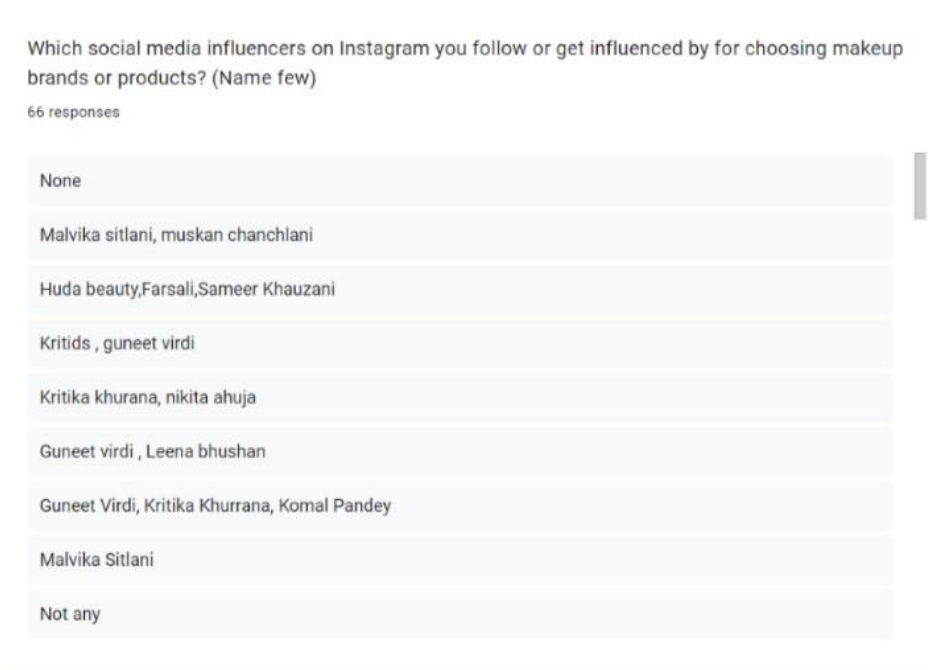
6. Social media influencers on Instagram persuade the customers by 80% to buy makeup products they promote or advertise, rest 17% are influenced by YouTube influencers.

Which social media platform influencers persuade you the most to buy makeup products?

100 responses



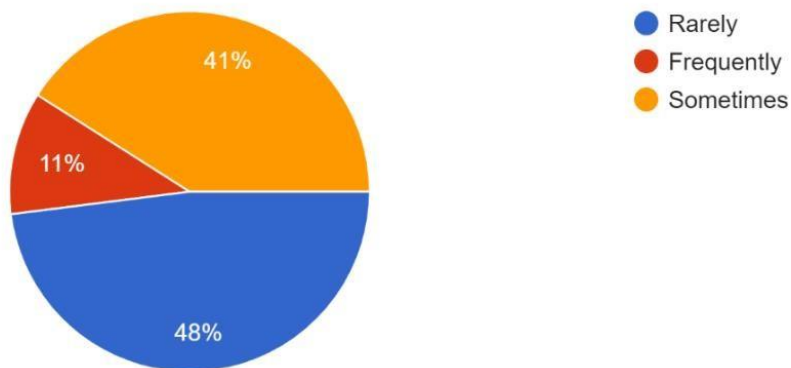
7. The following below answers show the most renowned social media influencers in choosing cosmetic brands.



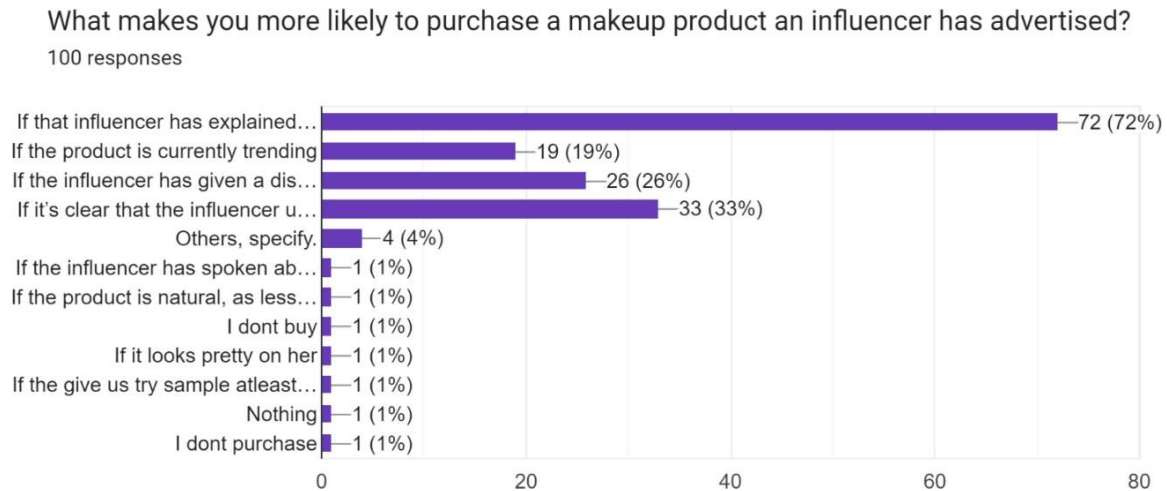
8. 48% of the respondents rarely buy makeup products suggested by social media influencers whereas 41% buy makeup suggested by influencers sometimes and rest 11% buy frequently.

How often do you buy products suggested by a social media influencer?

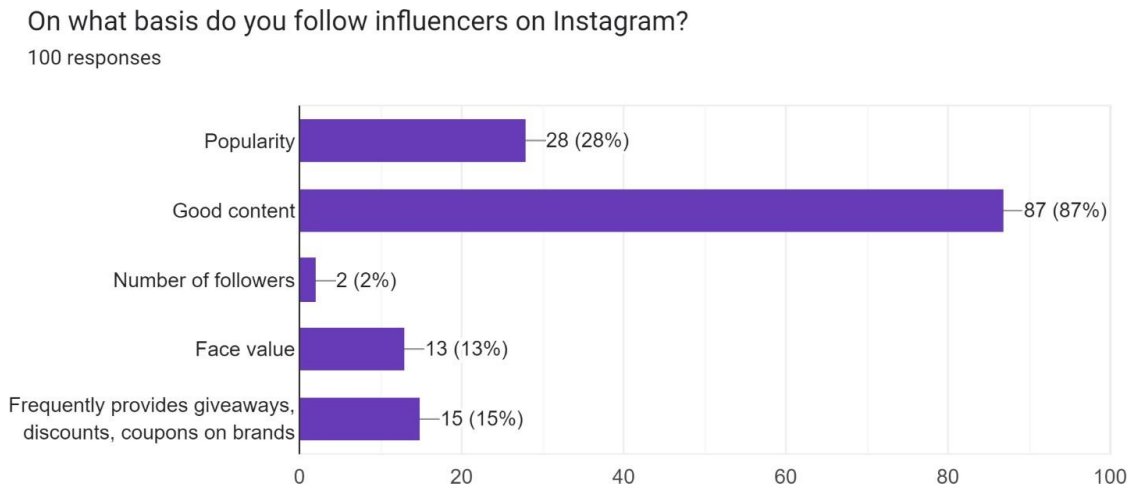
100 responses



9. The most common answer on why people purchase a makeup product that an influencer has advertised is when the influencer has explained the pros and cons of the product followed by If it's clear that the influencer uses the product in their own lives.

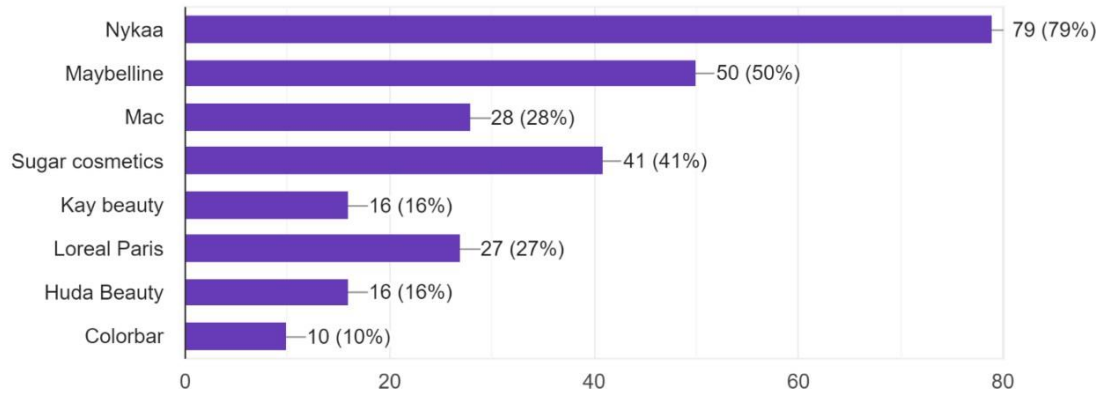


10. According to the responses good content encourages people follow Instagram influencers the most, followed by their popularity, that plays a crucial role in deciding whether to follow or not follow a particular influencer on Instagram.



11. The research study states that Nykaa (79%) uses the influencer marketing technique the most as compared to other brands on social media to advertise or promote its products.

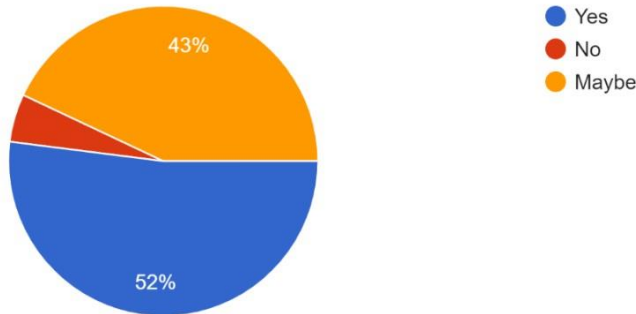
According to you, which makeup brand uses influencer marketing the most? (Pick any 2)
100 responses



12. 52% respondents stated that yes advertising done by social media influencers is the best way to promote makeup products online.

According to you, is advertising done by social media influencers the best way to promote makeup products online?

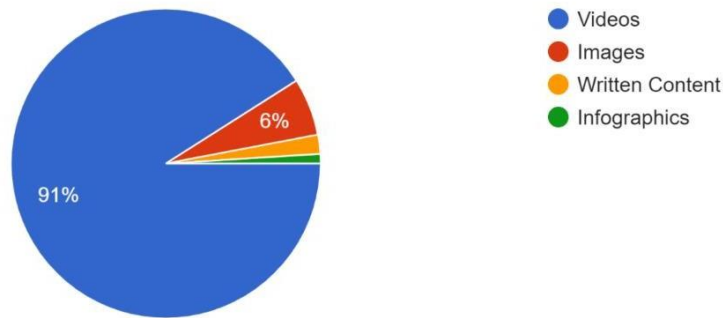
100 responses



13. The customers engage the most with video content as compared to other forms of content (images, infographics, written content) on social media platforms.

As a social media user, what is the most preferred content you engage with the most?

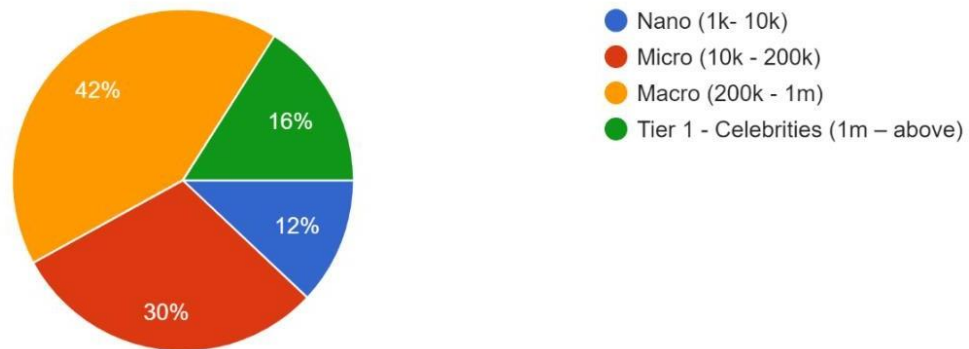
100 responses



14. The tier of macro that is the influencers who have 200 k to 1 million followers are the ones with whom the consumers engage the most followed by influencers with 10 k to 200 k followers.

As a social media user, what tier of influencers do you engage the most?

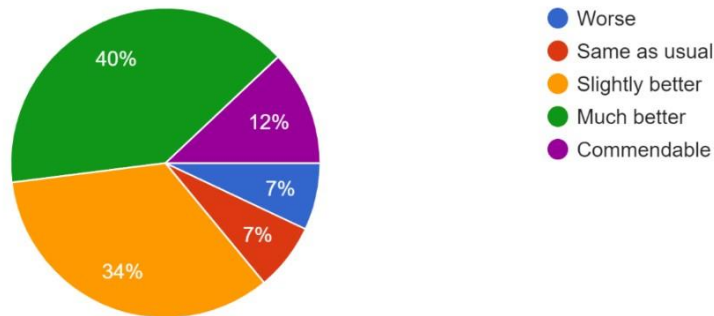
100 responses



15. The respondents stated that over the period of 1 year the influencers content has improved and is becoming better with time.

Over a period of one year, how will you rate the improvement in the quality of creativity in the content by influencers?

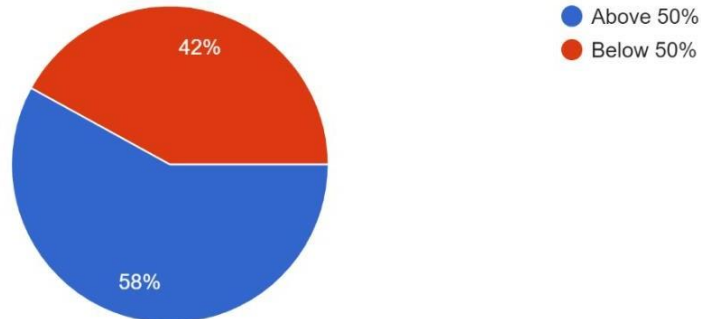
100 responses



16. 58% respondents are affected by social media influencer advertising when they buy a particular product. The advertising done by influencers affects their purchase decision

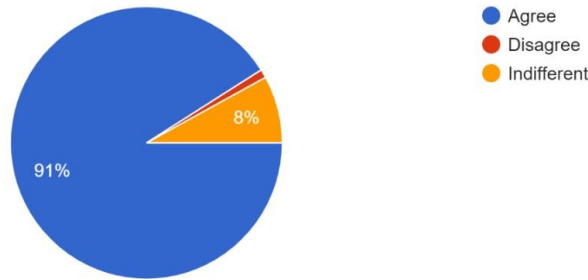
As a consumer, does social media influencer advertising affect your buying decision?

100 responses



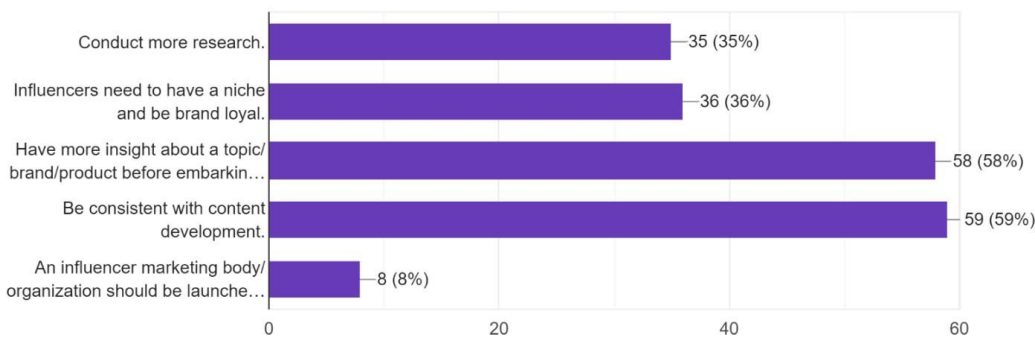
17. 91% people agree that Influencer advertising has played a pivotal role in the success of Nykaa (makeup brand), and the sales are growing exponentially after Nykaa has started to collaborate with Influencers to promote its cosmetic products.

Influencer advertising on Instagram has played a vital role in the success of Nykaa (Makeup Brand) in the last 12 months?
100 responses



18. 59% respondents say that the influencers should be consistent with content development and 58% agree that they should have more insight about a topic/brand/product before embarking on creating content to grow in India

According to you, what is the best way for influencers to grow in India?
100 responses



Results

Table 1

Sr. No	Aspect	Percentage derived from google form responses (%)
	Instagram Usage	86%
	Influencer Trust	77%
	Influence of Instagram influencer to buy a makeup product	59%
	Purchase decision when the influencer has explained the pros and cons of the product	72%
	Increase in sales due to Instagram Influencers	91%
	Impact of Influencer advertising	58%
	Video/ Reels engagement	91%
	Good content: The major reason people engage with Influencers	87%
	Brand Nykaa uses Influencer advertising the most	79%

- ❖ The data and percentage of the table is derived from google form responses of 100 respondents. This table outlines how influencers impact customer buying behavior on Instagram by increasing brand awareness, fostering trust, providing social proof through their recommendations, influencing preferences, and prompting immediate action towards making a purchase.

Table 2

Sr. No	Aspect	Description
	Reach	Influencers on Instagram have a wide reach, with follower counts ranging from hundreds of thousands to millions, exposing the brand to a large audience.
	Engagement	These influencers typically have high engagement rates, indicating that their followers are actively interested and involved in their content.
	Credibility	Influencers often build credibility in the cosmetics niche through their expertise, personal brand, and consistent promotion of beauty products.
	Authenticity	Authentic content creation by influencers fosters trust among their followers, making them more receptive to product recommendations and promotions.
	Product Demonstrations	Influencers showcase cosmetic products through various formats like tutorials, reviews, before-and-after shots, and demonstrations, influencing purchasing decisions.
	User-generated Content	Encouraging user-generated content through branded hashtags and challenges leverages the influencer's community to amplify brand awareness and engagement.
	Influencer Collaborations	Collaborating with multiple influencers or celebrities for product launches or special campaigns creates buzz and excitement around the brand.
	Influencer Discount Codes	Providing exclusive discount codes through influencers incentivizes their followers to make purchases, driving sales and ROI.

- ❖ This table outlines various aspects of the role of social media influencers on Instagram in promoting cosmetic brands and how they contribute to brand visibility, engagement, credibility, and ultimately, sales. The Research study is successful in finding out that Influencer advertising on Instagram is effective for makeup brands. The results from the study are as follows:
 - The responses from the google forms(questionnaire) clearly justified that women between age group 15-35 use Instagram the most to get influenced by the advertising of social media influencers to purchase cosmetic brands.
 - 58% of the audience agreed that they are highly influenced by social media influencers to make a purchase decision. The results also stated that audience frequently buys cosmetic brands that are marketed by influencers if they have explained the product well if they provide additional promo code or discount if the cosmetic brands is trending and lastly if the influencers themselves uses the cosmetic brands.
 - It stated that the followers follow Instagram influencers based on good content when compared with popularity, number of followers and face value.
 - It also resulted that Nykaa Beauty uses Instagram Influencer advertising in the best manner and 91% of the audience agreed that social media influencer advertising has helped Nykaa to promote its cosmetic brands

online.

- Accordingly, the followers engage with Macro level of Instagram influencers who have following of 200K to 1 million.
- The audience rated the performance of influencer marketing on Instagram has become much better and improved as compared to previous years.
- The audience also stated certain points through which influencers can grow in India, some of them being conducting more research, having a niche and being brand loyal, having more insight about a topic/brand/product before embarking on creating content, being consistent with content development.
- The research study hence proves that social media Influencer advertising plays an imperative role in advertising cosmetic brands and 77% of the audience is influenced to buy makeup products from certain brands.

Conclusion

This research demonstrated that respondents were more likely to trust the social media influencer as they are common people who resemble the audience. This helps the audience to connect better and understand which products fit them and which products do not suit them. The research finding could help the cosmetic brand marketers to consider choosing social media influencers who possess credible followers/audiences that indeed can be converted into customers who can purchase from these brands. The research can aid various brand marketers to develop effective ads using influencers to reach their potential customers and stand out from the surrounding media clutter. Amidst high rivalry market, influencers can help reach the audiences at a faster pace. The social media influencers must be able to attract the target audience in an effective manner using effective communication. This technique of advertising can maximize to create a positive social impact which indeed which leads to increment in sales. Doing so can assist with maximizing the influence of advertising endeavors to create positive social behavior and subsequently in formation of purchase decision followed by increased sales.

To conclude here is how Instagram influencer advertising typically works:

1. **Identifying Relevant Influencers:** Brands research and identify influencers whose audience demographics, interests, and values align with their target market and marketing objectives. Influencers can be categorized based on factors such as niche, industry, audience size, engagement rate, and content style.
2. **Outreach and Collaboration:** Brands reach out to selected influencers to propose collaboration opportunities, such as sponsored posts, sponsored stories, sponsored videos, or other types of content partnerships. Negotiations may involve discussing compensation, content requirements, deliverables, timelines, and contractual agreements.
3. **Campaign Planning:** Brands and influencers collaborate on campaign planning, including defining campaign goals, messaging, creative concepts, and campaign timelines. Brands may provide influencers with guidelines, brand assets, product samples, or access to exclusive events or experiences to facilitate content creation.
4. **Content Creation:** Influencers create authentic and engaging content featuring the brand's products or services, integrating them seamlessly into their Instagram posts, stories, or videos. Content may include product reviews, tutorials, demonstrations, endorsements, testimonials, or lifestyle shots that showcase the brand in a positive light while resonating with the influencer's audience.
5. **Disclosure and Transparency:** Influencers are required to comply with advertising guidelines and disclosure regulations set forth by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and other regulatory bodies. They must clearly disclose any sponsored content or brand partnerships to maintain transparency and trust with their audience, typically using hashtags such as #ad, #sponsored, or #paidpartnership.
6. **Publishing and Promotion:** Influencers publish sponsored content on their Instagram accounts, leveraging their reach and engagement to amplify the brand's message to their followers. Depending on the agreement, influencers may also promote the sponsored content through Instagram Stories, IGTV, or other features to maximize visibility and engagement.
7. **Engagement and Monitoring:** Brands and influencers monitor the performance of the sponsored content in real-time, tracking key metrics such as reach, impressions, engagement, clicks, conversions, and sentiment. They actively engage with the audience by responding to comments, addressing inquiries, and

fostering conversations to enhance brand awareness and credibility.

8. **Measurement and Evaluation:** Brands measure the effectiveness of the influencer advertising campaign by analyzing performance metrics, ROI, brand lift, and other relevant KPIs. They evaluate the impact of the campaign on brand awareness, customer acquisition, sales, and other business objectives to inform future influencer marketing strategies and investments.

Instagram influencer advertising offers brands a powerful and authentic way to connect with their target audience, drive brand awareness, and generate engagement and conversions through trusted and influential voices on social media. By collaborating with influencers, brands can leverage their credibility, reach, and expertise to create impactful and memorable brand experiences that resonate with consumers in today's digital age.

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