

**Effects of Influencers on Consumer Behaviours on Social Media: Do Audiences know their needs, or they only follow their opinion leaders?**

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## Candidate Declaration

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I certify that the dissertation entitled:

submitted for the degree of **MSc in Global Brand Management** is the result of the my own work and that where reference is made to the work of others, due acknowledgment is given.

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## **Acknowledgements & Dedication**

Firstly, I would like to thank my mother and father who believed in me and encouraged me during my study from kilometres away.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Garrett Ryan, for his help and for guiding me to complete my dissertation. I feel very lucky to be working with him, and I am grateful for his support.

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## **Abstract**

### **Effects of Influencers on Consumer Behaviours on Social Media: Do Audiences know their needs, or they only follow their opinion leaders?**

*Irmak Kucur*

This study aims to examine the effect of sponsored advertisements made by influencers with brands on consumer behaviour on social media. In this study, cosmetic products and beauty influencers are discussed. The opinions of consumers when they see these advertisements and their attitudes towards these advertisements are tried to be understood. It is aimed to understand whether the consumers who are social media users are positive or negative approaches to paid partnerships made by brands and influencers, the reasons that lead to shopping and whether they are shopping according to their own needs or recommendations. The prepared survey reached 104 people, and the data were analysed. Surveys were statistically analysed. The results showed that consumers who are social media users do not trust influencer advertisements one hundred per cent. They try to make purchases in line with their own needs, but still cannot be completely indifferent to these advertisements. Most of the participants stated that they were looking at influencer comments when they were researching a product they needed. Reasons for respondents' following influencer were found to be high rates of beauty inspiration, product reviews, and product tutorials. It has been observed that, as age groups change, consumers follow influencer advertisements, and their trust and priority to these advertisements have changed. Also, no significant difference was found when compared with age groups, positive or negative approaches to advertised products. The majority of the participants stated that they saw these advertisements and stated that they generally approach the products they see in the advertisements positively. The majority of the participants stated that they saw these advertisements and stated that they generally approach the products they see in the advertisements positively. However, they stated that they were sceptical about how honest the influencers were about the promoted products. When these two groups were compared, a significant difference was found.

**Keywords:** beauty influencers, social media marketing, quantitative study

## Table of Contents

CANDIDATE DECLARATION .....	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & DEDICATION .....	III
ABSTRACT .....	IV
LIST OF FIGURES .....	VII
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....	VIII
<b>1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 OVERVIEW .....	1
1.1 RESEARCH PURPOSE .....	5
1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY .....	6
1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE .....	7
1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY .....	7
<b>2 LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 OVERVIEW .....	8
2.2 WHO ARE INFLUENCERS? .....	9
2.2.1 <i>Influencer Credibility</i> .....	9
2.3 ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH.....	10
2.4 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING CHANNELS .....	12
2.4.1 <i>Instagram</i> .....	12
2.4.2 <i>YouTube</i> .....	13
2.5 WHY COMPANIES HAVE TO BE IN SOCIAL MEDIA? .....	14
2.5.1 <i>Firms Interested in Social Media</i> .....	16
2.6 WOMEN CONSUMING BEHAVIOUR ON COSMETIC PRODUCTS.....	17
2.6.1 <i>Impact of Social Media on Customers' Purchasing Process</i> .....	18
2.7 SOCIAL MEDIA INTEGRATION THEORY MODEL .....	18
2.8 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	19
2.9 CONCLUSION.....	20
<b>3 METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN .....</b>	<b>21</b>
3.1 OVERVIEW .....	21
3.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY AND APPROACH .....	21
3.3 RESEARCH STRATEGY.....	23
3.3.1 <i>Sampling</i> .....	24
3.4 COLLECTION PRIMARY DATA .....	25
3.4.1 <i>Sources</i> .....	25
3.4.2 <i>Access and Ethical Issues</i> .....	26
3.5 APPROACH TO DATA ANALYSIS .....	27
3.6 CONCLUSION.....	27
<b>4 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>28</b>

4.1	OVERVIEW .....	28
4.2	FINDINGS .....	28
4.3	DISCUSSION .....	50
4.4	CONCLUSION.....	53
<b>5</b>	<b>CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF THIS RESEARCH, ITS LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH .....</b>	<b>56</b>
5.1	IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS FOR THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	56
5.2	CONTRIBUTIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH .....	57
5.3	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE .....	58
5.4	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	58
5.5	FINAL CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIONS.....	58
	<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>60</b>
	APPENDICES .....	A1
	<i>Appendix A</i> – .....	<i>A1</i>
	<i>Appendix B</i> – .....	<i>B1</i>
	<i>Appendix C</i> – .....	<i>C1</i>

## List of Figures

Figure 2.7.1: Social Media Integration Theory Model .....	18
Figure 2.8.1: Conceptual framework .....	19
Figure 3.2.1: Research Onion .....	22
Figure 3.4.1: Test Survey Question.....	26
Figure 3.4.2: Test Survey Question.....	26
Figure 4.2.1 How much of the participants are familiar with the term influencer. ....	28
Figure 4.2.2: User frequency of social media platforms.....	29
Figure 4.2.3: Survey Question.....	30
Figure 4.2.4: Survey question graph about frequency of purchasing beauty product. ....	32
Figure 4.2.5: Comparative graph of question 10 and question 11 .....	35
Figure 4.2.6: Pie chart of impact of product popularity on the purchasing behaviour .....	37
Figure 4.2.7: Pie chart of respondents' brand loyalty .....	38
Figure 4.2.8: Graph of Likert scale question.....	39
Figure 4.2.9: Evaluations of respondents' reasons for following beauty influencers on social media and their purchasing behaviours. ....	40
Figure 4.2.10: Likert scale question about participants' experiences of researching products on social media.....	42
Figure 4.2.11: Evaluations of question to understand participants' experiences of researching a product on social media.....	44
Figure 4.2.12: Chi-Square Test.....	46
Figure 4.2.13: Symmetric Measures.....	47
Figure 4.2.14: If an influencer has tried and endorsed a product would that encourage you to think more positively about that product? * Do you believe that beauty influencers are truthful about whether they are being sponsored to promote a product? Crosstabulation	48
Figure 4.2.15: Chi-Square Test for age groups.....	49

## **List of Abbreviations**

WOM            Word of Mouth

eWOM          Electronic Word of Mouth



# **1 Introduction**

In this section, the subject to be discussed during the research is mentioned. The approach of digital consumers and cosmetics companies to these issues and their current status are indicated. Following this section, the purpose of the research, the importance and objectives of the research and the structure of the study are mentioned.

## **1.1 Overview**

The digitalisation of content has become one of the new century's most essential elements. Furthermore, we see digitalization in many aspects of our lives; social life working life, human relationships, consumer behaviour, business marketing social networks. In particular, marketing has drawn considerable interest in all fields (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). The digitalization of marketing content has led to the formation of a new social group defined as digital consumers. They are known as people who are using technology and Internet to buy and sell products and interacting each other. Many companies such as Google and Facebook formed to drive and exploit a new symbiotic relationship between consumer products, digital content producers social media and sales and marketing.

This symbiosis is challenging for the end-user or consumer to understand. As a consequence of advances in communications technology and the digitization of content, consumers are exposed to brands, products and related images via a gambit of social media channels. However, from a consumer point of view, the relationship between brands, products and disseminators of digital content and images is, for the most part, implicit and requires investigation.

According to We Are Social and Hootsuite's 2017 global digital report, there are 3.77 billion internet users and 2.80 billion social media users worldwide; in other words, half of the world's population is using the Internet; 37% of them are social networks (Kemp, 2017). With digitalization, online social networks have become more widespread and turned into an area where people interact more. Human relationships, socialization, activities have moved from the real world to online

platforms, the virtual world, and this has allowed people to access communicate on global social networks.

At the same time, according to their tastes, they have the opportunity to follow their interests, and to participate in online communities. These communities enable consumers involvement by sharing information, entertaining, recognizing different cultures and so on.

Consumers are not limited to the passive reading of information from search engines. They now learn first-hand by interacting with experienced people. This ability to interact has driven online consumption facilitating more efficient, effortless shopping experience from a consumer perspective. Consumers can find commentary about thousands of products leading to an increase in sales for communications tech-savvy companies.

Contemporary developments in communication technology have led to an exponential growth in the number of internet users. User are no longer passive readers of content. More recently, internet traffic is characterized by the number of personal websites, blogs and YouTube channels. Internet users can create their own web pages and write whatever they wish, and this trend is becoming more common.

According to Tiago and Verissimo (2014) consumers are more impressed by classical advertisements than peer promotions and people who are familiar with the product they are looking for, and they claim that traditional advertising has changed (Tiago and Verissimo, 2014). Therefore, a deep understanding of consumer behaviour is a critical success factor for marketers. Sheth and Mittal (2004), advise that consumers do more research post online consumption, leading to increased demand for more information and content (Sheth and Mittal, 2004).

Social media has become a platform where purchasing behaviour takes place, contributing to a consumer-led change to products. Moreover, it facilitates information search and decision making and change to the purchase process. An examination of consumer behaviour shows that shopping on these platforms based on trust, 50% of them read the reviews and shop accordingly, and 16% are influenced by information on the Internet (Yavisha and Krishna, 2013).

In response to consumer activity on social media, companies adjust their marketing strategies by looking at their social media interactions. E-mail, marketing, direct or telephone marketing, radio and television advertisements are being replaced by digitally enabled platforms. These traditional marketing methods served as a means of reaching and informing consumers but were insufficient to reach wider audiences.

Companies found that contextualized word-of-mouth communication is more useful in establishing a relationship with customers. This online communication allows consumers to communicate and respond, establishing a deeper relationship between consumers and companies (Tiago and Veríssimo, 2014).

Companies are increasingly allocating budgets and investing in digital marketing. The primary driver of this investment is that digital marketing requires much lower investments than traditional. According to Weinberg and Pehlivan (2011), 18% of companies plan to increase their investment in social media. At the same time, 81% plan to invest in social media sharing sites (Weinberg and Pehlivan, 2011).

With the growing power of social media, cosmetic industries started to focus on influencer marketing strategies associated with online marketing when launching their new products. Social media marketing has been increasing while social media platforms are developing rapidly. These actions are reflected in consumers online brand-related activities (COBRA) and electronic word of mouth (eWOM)(Schivinski *et al.*, 2016)(Muntinga *et al.*, 2011). Electronic word of mouth marketing is based on consumer reviews, comments. Whether positive or negative, and they can influence the audiences who are searching for products online. Consumers activities on social media channels inform companies about consumer satisfaction and extend their target audience reach. Social influencers have emerged in response to the growth in social media channels. They disseminate their experiences with products to consumers and react to their needs. Influencer marketing provides to reach target customers individualizing the consumer relationship.

On social media, influencers are defined as opinion leaders or opinion formers because one social media posts of influencers are more effective than social media post by an average consumer (Sepp *et al.*, 2011). They have social status with their experiences, beliefs, education levels, previous work experiences, and they are enough to influence people with their opinions for one or more product. Marketers believe that customers are willing to buy products which are promoted by influencers since they gained the trust of society and reach out to them individually on social media.

Influencers can be categorized as micro or macro-influencers, and macro-influencers appeals to a broad audience and they do not give personal information such as their thoughts. Micro-influencers who have a smaller number of followers have excellent communication between their followers, and this provides a direct impact on the consumer's social graph (Brown and Hayes, 2008).

ODM group study found that 74 % of buyer behaviours are influenced by social media posts. Their claims are supported by a HubSpot report, showing 71 % of buyers tend to make purchases in response to social media comments and advice (Garvin, 2019).

The Internet hosts many comments which are made by individuals. However, the accuracy or reliability of these comments can be questionable, so companies prefer to use influencers who aligned with their product and target audience.

In summary, this study explores the changing strategy of marketers in response to digitalization. Consumer response to advertisements on social media, their buying behaviours and the activities of influencers on social media are examined.

The results were supported by the data collected from the consumer perspective and used as a reference for the topic under investigation. The effect of this new generation media on consumption has been researched. Besides, how people react to this new marketing strategy and how the buying behaviour is directed by the effects of the advertisements they see has been investigated.

## **1.1 Research Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to understand how influencers affect consumers purchasing behaviour. In addition, the research must explore the notion of Influencer ethics in so far as they influence approval ratings from consumers (Dekavalla, 2019).

In particular, this research focuses on the cosmetics industry and how beauty influencers affect the buying decisions of consumers. The beauty industry is fickle in so far as sets trends in response to the needs of each generation, culture, climate and season.

The consumer-generated content via social media is a significant part of the daily entertainment of the millennium generation. On the other hand, these contents also create an environment of struggle with brands that want to have useful content on the users' profile pages. Users are facing advertisements which are do not want to see by every user because the user is confronted with a branded content other than his own content or the content of the person or brands that he/she follows without obtaining his / her approval. Also, users see the same contents and advertisements in different pages under coercion. In this point, people should have similar ideas, values and pleasures for effecting influencers' comments. So, people who are defined as an influencer can influence people's decisions of buying because people want to be "he/she" or they want to be with he/she. In this situation, influencers show that the way of being like to him/her. Such as, the giving message of their promotions is that if you are using this product, 'it makes you beautiful as me'. So, in the first instance the research aims to understand the reaction and buying tendencies of consumers to the product promotions of influencers.

The second aim of this research is that cosmetic products depend on people's skin types and pleasures so that customers focus would be their needs but, in this point, when looking influencers' activities, they promote different type of products and all of them is not suitable for every single consumer. When looking companies and influencers works, they are all paid advertisements and their reliabilities are questionable because they would be biased comments. In this view, consumers

have to know their skin types and what would be good for them. It is not depending on only the influencers' follower numbers.

## **1.2 Significance of the Study**

There are many articles and researches about consumer behaviour, there is a gap in the studies about the effect of cosmetic advertisements on the consumer in social media.

Firstly, the reason for showing this gap is that there are studies on consumer behaviour and the persuasiveness of marketers on consumers. However, there is a dearth of contemporary research on the factors that push consumers to buy in new generation marketing.

Secondly, research fails to explain the link between the cosmetics industry and influencer marketing. According to Gerdeman (2019), consumers are more impressed with influencer product promotions than with television adverts (Gerdeman, 2019). However, the studies are too broad, and none specifically address the cosmetic sector. The promotion of beauty products on social media and the reactions of consumers require investigation.

This study investigates women consumers and the effects of social media on their cosmetics purchasing decisions. Many women, categorized as Millennials, are on social media and are familiar with the concept of the influencer. Millennials are the first generation to have lived their whole lives in the digital environment (Bolton *et al.*, 2013). It is still inevitable for users to see their product promotions. The effects of influencers on the purchasing behaviour of women consumers were investigated.

The main question in this study is whether the female consumer group that is targeted is shopping according to their own needs or do they tend to buy popular products that are 'trending' on social media.

### **1.3 Research Objective**

There are three main objectives of this research;

- To understand that users shop according to their own needs or do they tend to buy 'trending' products in that period by looking at the comments of influencers they trust in social media,
- To understand the term influencer and how these people create the urge to buy a particular product on female consumers,
- To examine social media, users see collaborations between companies and influencers as an aggressive advertising campaign or do they find it informative.

### **1.4 Structure of the Study**

This section is an overview is given before the literature review about why the study was done, and it's subject. In the research, brief information about the focus points is given, and the basis is given for understanding in the next sections. The gaps in the literature and why it is necessary to conduct this study are explained, and the central questions of the study are explained. In the next section, the literature review was done by examining the references, and the past studies that were the basis of the research were examined. The gaps in previous studies have raised the main questions asked by this research and formed the basis. In the third part, ethical issues in this study are discussed, and the operation of the study is explained and answered. In the fourth section, questionnaires, which are the primary reference of this study, are included, and the analyses are presented. In the fifth section, the effects of the findings on the research questions, contributions and limitations of the research, application suggestions and suggestions for future research are mentioned. While concluding the article, the final results and reflections were mentioned.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Overview

In this literature review, an overview of the term influencer was first given, and then social media marketing and features were searched. Besides, the effect of social media marketing on the purchasing behaviour of consumers and the companies related to this new media are examined. Finally, the behaviour of women consumers, who are the subject of this research, to purchase cosmetics has been investigated.

Influencer marketing has many definitions, and from a general perspective, a marketing strategy focused on delivering the message of a brand to the targeted group of a product. Research identifies influencers as opinion leaders and sees them as a brand. Influencers are themselves a brand, and they are influential people who are considered reliable by their followers. Therefore, brands use these people to increase their awareness. In this type of marketing, consumers follow influencers to decide who will see their shares, and this is still unpredictable for brands that still want to appeal to a particular group. However, this situation is effective in the decision-making process of customers.

According to De Veirman et al. (2017), Electronic Word of Mouth is more effective compared to traditional advertising. Consumers tend to seek advice from someone like them and find it more reliable (Veirman *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, eWOM has been found more effective in the decision-making process. The reason why influencer advertisements are more effective than television advertisements using celebrities is that consumers find it easier to identify with influencers who are more readily accessible. When more personalized relationships between consumers and influencers are formed, trust is more likely to be established.

According to Jalilvand et al. (2012), potential buyers of products carefully read the comments of social media influencers and before making purchases. This situation shows that the effect of influencers on brands and brand awareness and the fact



that they are consciously buying a product with the direction of influencers while meeting the needs of consumers (Jalilvand *et al.*, 2013) .

## **2.2 Who are Influencers?**

Social media influencers are a new type of third party self- employed people who are working with different companies (Freberg *et al.*, 2011). The impressive element of social media is that a user who has established credibility in a particular industry has access to a broad audience range and can convince others to act according to their recommendations.

According to Olapic's study, the definition of influencer was asked to the participants provided that demographic features were at the forefront. The 55-61 age group defined as Baby Boomers could not identify with the definition of an influencer, and this group showed that it interacted least with influencers. Gen X and Gen Z, the millennials, said that social media influencers were defined based on the number of followers. When this number is generalized, the survey shows that social media users with 10000 followers and above are described as influencers. When asked what features made them distinctive when defining influencers, survey participants said that sharing more information along with the number of followers is the feature that distinguishes influencers. Furthermore, according to this survey, an influencer is the person who is loved by social media users and has a paid relationship with a brand (Connolly, 2017).

### **2.2.1 Influencer Credibility**

They have many tools for engaging attention to consumers, and they can motivate them to buy. There are many influencers with different social statuses, such as students, celebrities, corporates. The main focus is that being an influencer is gaining credibility and persuade people to buy. Munnuka (2016) claims that credibility, expertise, attractiveness and similarity are credibility factors (Munnukka *et al.*, 2016). This authoritarian position will be further strengthened by several situations: a high number of followers, sharing and appreciation. Therefore, it will be easier for the society to be convinced. The value given by the social media celebrity to the society will affect any individual. If the majority is doing something, everyone thinks it's the right thing.

The reliability of a communicator or message source is a significant factor in the persuasion power that defines social media influencers as micro endorsers. In advertising, turnovers generally assume the role that message sources play in the process of persuasion (Lou and Yuan, 2019). The main features of influencers are that they actively use different social media platforms, their shares have a high interaction rate, and they can pioneer innovations. Influencers offer the products they promote and approve through their own lives, thus enabling a closer relationship with the average consumer. They can have high impact and reliability with the society by sharing their own experiences, and with the sincerity, they have established with consumers (Can and Koz, 2018). The persuasion rate of an influencer is directly proportional to its reliability. According to Munnuka et al. (2006), source and credibility have a significant impact on consumers. Credibility is based on similar interests, demography, ideological factors. They create a bond between consumer and influencer, and it is more likely to face to face interaction. Persuasion becomes more manageable when a consumer thinks the person who suggests products is trustworthy (Munnukka *et al.*, 2016).

Reaching a target audience has always been difficult and costly for companies. Today, there is an audience that prefers the Internet as their primary source of media as opposed to; television, newspapers, magazines, and radio. In addition to this, almost the only way to reach these target audiences is through social media. By contacting these target groups, it is possible to establish a one-to-one relationship with each consumer through influencers. The positive image created by the influencers and the bidirectional communication established can be transferred to the brand (Can and Koz, 2018).

### **2.3 Electronic Word of Mouth**

Today's shoppers use the advantage of the Internet first, instead of visiting the store, allowing them to make more informed choices. The internet environment provides comments, user experiences and suggestions about products, leads the consumer. "Word of mouth", which is a marketing method, is that the comments and recommendations that consumers share affect the decision on whether or not to buy that product. Consumers can read reviews about these products before deciding to buy them. People who write these reviews may be real users who have

experienced the products. They share their own experience with that product and give ideas to those who are considering buying that product. This method is one of the frequently preferred methods of its time, and its brands have also prompted consumers to question how they can turn their buying decisions into positive (Sernovitz, 2012).

When consumers make a purchase decision, interpersonal impact and word of mouth communication (WOM) are their most important sources of information. Today, the Internet has made it possible for consumers to obtain information from other consumers who post comments on social media. Growth of the Internet and the electronic commerce industry has changed consumption habits, enabling consumers to access information about the product more quickly and easily. In the online world, consumers can compare product and service quality and prices; however, they can communicate with other consumers and product providers. As a result, electronic word of mouth research has become a daily activity for consumers who shop online today before buying a product (Lin *et al.*, 2018).

Almana and Mirza (2013) combine online consumer views into three factors: the characteristics of the views, the reviewers, and the website where the views are presented. Their studies show that a combination of high product ratings and opinions had the most impact on the purchasing decision. In addition, opinion consistency, number of opinions, and currency of opinions are important factors in purchasing decisions (Almana and Mirza, 2013).

According to a survey by Nielsen (2015) conducted in 60 countries, 83 per cent of the people who participated in the research showed that they trust friends and family recommendations and spend accordingly. This report conquers with previous surveys indicating that individuals continue to be influenced by persons they trust and make purchases based on these comments. In another study conducted in the United States, 71 per cent of consumers claimed that the most effective marketing way when buying cars is the word of mouth marketing. Also, the same research found that only 17 per cent of television advertising was effective in influencing purchasing behaviour (Halliday, 2015).

Studies examined the effect of electronic word (eWOM) of mouth on sales, but they do not agree with the same idea. Duan et al.(2008) states that online reviews of any product predict the number of product sales (Duan *et al.*, 2008). Furthermore, negative eWOM is also an important criterion in reducing sales. As is the case with studies, it is vital to decrease sales with negative eWOM than to increase sales with positive eWOM. In short, a complaint comment about a product is more effective than positive thoughts about that product (Mayzlin *et al.*, 2014). Besides, according to Kikumori et al., Negative eWOM is a factor that increases product reviews and sales. If there are only positive reviews about a product on the Internet, it has been found to affect consumers' trust in the product. If there are negative reviews, this influenced the purchasing behaviour of the consumer. For example, when the positive and negative comment ratio is 9: 1 and 8: 2, the reliability of the eWOM messages and the attitude towards the product were higher. This shows that negative eWOM has a positive effect on consumer behaviour (Kikumori and Ono, 2013). However, on average, eWOM is positively associated with sales and eWOM's effectiveness on social media platforms is stronger. Besides, eWOM has a more substantial impact on sales of tangible goods that are new in the market, while the product lifecycle does not reduce the effectiveness of eWOM in services (Babić Rosario *et al.*, 2016).

## **2.4 Social Media Marketing Channels**

### *2.4.1 Instagram*

Instagram, founded in 2010, started as an only photo-sharing platform and in 2013. The majority of users in Instagram are young women (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017); most influencers are women as well (Wally and Koshy, 2014). Instagram announced the sponsored post would be on users' timelines. In other words, sponsored content determined by the user's news feed and interests. Besides, users can find their interests or the product by using hashtags. Features such as sponsored advertisements, product labelling, company page creation and statistics have facilitated the sales and marketing brands here. Instagram is preferred because it is a more interactive platform and speed. The cosmetics and fashion sectors are at the top of the companies that prefer the system. Worldwide, the most followed beauty influencer on Instagram is Huda Kattan, who is a make-

up artist before and based in Dubai. She has 39 million followers on Instagram, and she had her own make-up brand (Wally and Koshy, 2014).

Today, Instagram is seen as an essential promotion and sales channel, especially for small businesses, as its cost is low, but the mass it reaches is large. For this reason, small businesses or individuals opt for promoting their products and selling them via Instagram pages. Instagram's growing popularity in online sales applications, in particular, 'consumer-to-consumer' sales is undeniable (Alkhowaiter, 2016).

Instagram influencers can have a significant effect and persuasion ability on brand advertising, examining that the influencer achieves more social interaction than the brand's account. Some brands try to attract the attention of their target audience by making active campaigns on Instagram, while others are actively using celebrities.

Djafarova and Rushworht (2017) investigate the concept of source credibility, consumer buying behaviour. They interviewed 18 female users which their ages between 18 to 30. They found that endorsements from social media influencers are considered more reliable than traditional celebrities as the general public can relate to them in more robust ways (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017). Furthermore, the research participants prefer independent, authoritative and self-confident Instagram profiles because they believe these people's reviews and comments are unbiased and encouraging. Che et al. (2017) state that perceived benevolence, honesty and approval of other Influencers or celebrities are essential factors affecting consumer trust in Instagram, and consumer intent to buy (Che *et al.*, 2017). Aprilia and Setiadi (2017) explore the buying behaviour of generation Y Instagram users. These consumers rely on Instagram to aid their purchasing decisions and have regard for the number of followers of the business and the content design of influencer profiles. They concluded that generation Y know what to trust (Aprilia and Setiadi, 2017).

#### 2.4.2 *YouTube*

There are content-sharing websites on the Internet that enable users to produce and upload multimedia content. The first and most preferred website is YouTube.

YouTube has more than 1 billion users, is in a user-friendly and interactive design. YouTube is particularly functional for small and medium businesses. Consumers can access a large number of videos, including brands, products, services and other information. Businesses can reorganize their product strategies based on user reviews and video statistics. It is possible to quickly share visual content 'liked' on YouTube on other social media platforms. In this regard, YouTube is very convenient for a word of mouth marketing activities over the Internet. Besides, YouTube has become a handy platform for product placement marketing strategies (Armağan and Doğaner, 2018).

Post foundation YouTube transformed to become a well-suited platform for marketing. In particular, the promotion of a specific brand or product (Burgess, 2015). Recently, companies have been working with YouTube content creators for brand promotion. There are over 50 million YouTube content creators, offering endless choices for companies to collaborate with them as brand ambassadors. Past few years, sponsored contents have been increasing especially beauty and fashion sector (Schwemmer and Ziewiecki, 2018). Contemporary research shows that younger customers are the most crucial target groups when promoting products on social media channels and YouTube. Amateur and professional Influencers agree that YouTube is the commercial channel of choice. Many individuals have a personal YouTube page leading to a dichotomy of content in terms of quality and creativity. Initially, content creators did not design the area where they recorded their videos and used the unprofessional cameras. Now influencers are using different places like film sets with professional cameras and lights.

According to a study in Germany, firms allocate more than two-thirds of their marketing budget to social influencers since the customer is more disposed to influencer marketing than traditional marketing (Roth *et al.*, 2016). In consequence, social influencers are frequently defined as opinion leaders.

## **2.5 Why companies have to be in social media?**

Companies; consumers should reach out to them in every possible environment. Although every new marketing medium or media that has emerged questions the impact and effectiveness of traditional media, which will always be of particular

importance as the mainstream should also be valued (Özmen, 2018). There are many advantages of marketing from social media such as increasing brand awareness, improving brand loyalty, cost-effective advertisements. IAB and PwC are spending more money on digital marketing in the United States. They are more focused on online advertising rather than TV advertising (IAB, 2019).

With the development and rise of internet technology, marketing processes have entirely changed, leading many traditional marketing methods to shift to a digital environment. This digitization of the marketing environment makes possible an accurate measurement of consumers buying behaviour and habits. Traditional marketing methods were reliant on face-to-face communication but is now replaced by a new process realized through virtual networks established on the Internet (Liang and Lai, 2002). The digitization of marketing has led to an exponential growth in understanding marketing in terms of; receiving information, purchasing, and communicating through Internet-based channels. Also, the rapidly expanding form of social media communication contributes significantly to the advertising of products and services. In this context, traditional marketing has ceased to be an application made with people famous for its television and radio channels. With a new understanding, it has become an area where social media and well-known people advertise on social media (Dimitriadis and Tsimonis, 2014).

Influencer marketing is decreasing due to cost, and it provides to reach a broader range of people (Ledbetter, 2016). Since, traditional offline marketing is confined to contacting people within a regional base (Powers and Schloss, 2017). Social media marketing increases web traffic. Nadaraja and Yazdanifard (2013) claim that web traffic shows the flow from search engines and other sites (especially social media sites) to the brand's site, demonstrating how much consumers follow and adopt the company and brand. Organizations who spend time and energy on social media have a healthy relationship and communication with their users. Positive views and behaviours are expected to encourage consumer loyalty.(Nadaraja and Yazdanifard, 2013)

### 2.5.1 *Firms Interested in Social Media*

Marketing or advertising is always for consumers. It is vital to consider the wishes and preferences of the consumer. As a result of the correct analysis for brands, Influencer Marketing, which has a high impact on these works, has become an indispensable advertising area in our lives (De Veirman *et al.*, 2017). Companies are more interested in social media profiles such as private blogs and videos, and social media users tend to believe in these profiles. Influencer comments affect people's buying behaviour (Cox, 2012). These new types of independent marketers started with blogs such as BlogSpot websites and continued with Instagram and YouTube. Companies have to understand these new types of marketers and they take advantage of their power of social media and target customers (Babić Rosario *et al.*, 2016). Sepp *et al.* claims that influencers help to get through the disconnect between the consumer and the company because nowadays internet sharing is much more interactive and based on information sharing and exchange of ideas (Sepp *et al.*, 2011). At the same time, companies collect their customers' data, so social media effect has been accepted by firms (Booth and Matic, 2011).

Looking at the statistics, in 2020, about two-thirds of companies' state that they will allocate more budget to Influencer social media accounts in their marketing efforts. The budget allocated at the end of the year is expected to increase by 65 per cent. It shows that they allocate an essential budget to these influencers and that the money spent will increase. While 19 per cent of the firms say that these budgets will be between 1000 and 10000 dollars, 18 per cent say that they will allocate a budget of 100,000 to 500,000 dollars a year. Also, 7 per cent of companies say they will spend a million dollars more on influencer marketing efforts. Companies say that the income generated through influencers has more returns than other marketing channels. These companies can be small or large, but they say that investment in influencer marketing is profitable. Instagram, which has the first-rate with 89 per cent, is YouTube with 70 per cent and they use sponsored brand posts on these channels (Bailis, 2019).



## **2.6 Women Consuming Behaviour on Cosmetic Products**

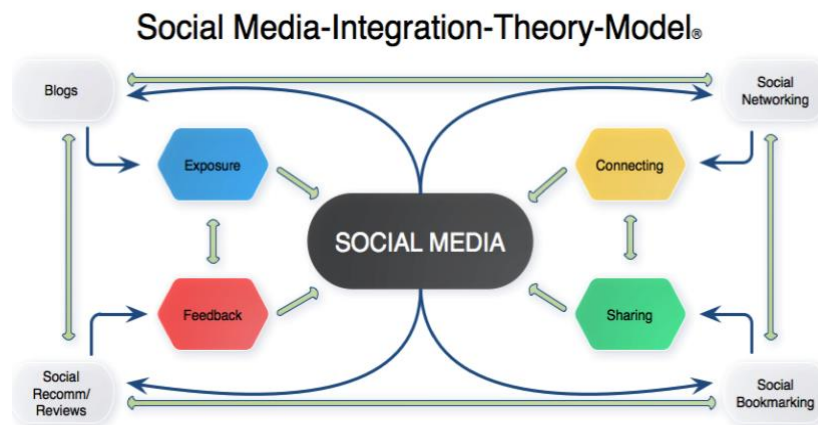
Consumption is a process, and it starts with production. Decision-making units are not only consumers because decisions can be made by a single person or a group decision. In order to better understand consumer behaviour, keys are mentioned (Wilkie, 1994). Social media and internet advertisements, consumer behaviour, motivation. Furthermore, consumer behaviour involves different roles. For example, they are identifying needs, influencing, decision-making, and purchasing. Additionally, as external factors influence consumer behaviour, the situation of the market, social environment, alternative products' prices. Besides, consumer behaviour differs for all people so that it differs according to the environment, economic situation, social group, occupation and education level.

In recent years, the impact of the Internet on people has increased and people using it for their shopping. By looking social media marketing, their buying behaviour can be defining as suggestive impulse. It takes places when the consumers see a product for the first time and realize the need for the product, although she/he has no previous personal knowledge. The impulsive purchase that comes with the suggestion differs from the remainder because it does not have the product information to assist in the purchase decision. They are the purchases made by encountering a product that satisfies a need that has not been felt before and attracted to the product and its other elements. The quality, functionality and feeling of the product should be evaluated at the point of sale. The difference from purely impulsive buying is that the emphasis is on rational or functional buying rather than emotions (Karbasivar and Yarahmadi, 2011). In today's modern life, people try to be different with their images and their ability and possibilities to make a difference. In this context, the human body, especially the face, plays an important function. Continuous monitoring of younger and healthier lifestyles has become an important marketing decision for most women consumers. Increasing awareness among women consumers is often encouraged by pictures and messages supporting the beauty of mass media. Women consumers use a variety of resources (such as word of mouth, advertising, and the Internet) to obtain information about personal care that enhances their sense of looking different from their real age. As a result, women's purchasing behaviour in cosmetic products has grown strongly (Villi, 2013).

### 2.6.1 Impact of Social Media on Customers' Purchasing Process

Social media changes the decision-making processes of consumers' buying behaviours (Constantinides and Stagno, 2011). Under favour of social media tools, communication between consumers and companies has been reinforced. Consumers can easily express their positive or negative opinions about products or services through social networks. There are three basic behaviours that affect consumption behaviours on social media. Firstly, positive or negative oral communication and the impact of influencers. Secondly, users' search for information about products and friends' opinions about the environment, for example, the behaviour of consumption-related behaviour. Thirdly, users at the end of the purchasing process in the social media research and past complaints, satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the assessment of the situation by showing the purchase behaviour (Durukan, 2012).

### 2.7 Social Media Integration Theory Model



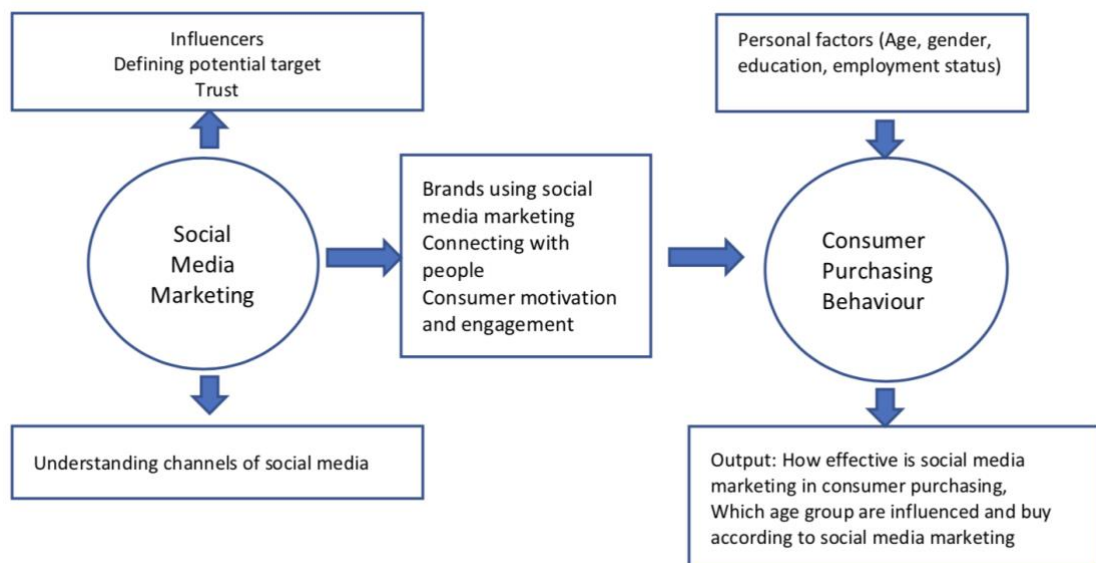
Source: Garcia, I. (2010).

Figure 0.1: Social Media Integration Theory Model

To understand consumers' social media activities, according to Garcia (2011), all of these interactions are between brand and consumers, and it allows feedbacks and sharing information about proper products online. This then provokes

communication among popular communities, which then extends through the "two-way street" exchange cycle into the social networking environment. The concept for social media incorporation, after all, reveals social media's organic existence, and it turns viral communication, which means knowledge sharing between people through the reproduction of oneself. The exposure, feedback, engagement and exchange that social media networks offer produces major changes in the conventional understanding of communication. Usually, the flow of information is no longer considered a "one-way street." A manner in which the audience received messages through the mantra "I interact – you get." Instead, the incorporation of social media is seen as an interactive mechanism that allows for the same level sharing of information between user and company. To create a long-lasting communication feedback process and to give the brand a total relationship of engagement. (Garcia, 2010).

## 2.8 Conceptual Framework



**Source:** Author's own

**Figure 2.8.1:** Conceptual framework

This conceptual framework is formed after the research subject and detailed literature review. It consists of a combination of information to be used, and the results planned to be obtained at the end of the research. This examines influencers and consumer buying behaviour, a concept of social media marketing.

The effects of social media marketing and how effective consumers find it is discussed. As a result of this conceptual framework, it is investigated how consumers are affected by the advertisements they see in social media marketing, whether they have positive or negative effects when purchasing the products. Cosmetics sector was chosen as the subject. Therefore, buying behaviour should be examined by knowing that everyone's body has different needs in consumer behaviour. The extent to which products trended by influencers on social media push consumers to buy should be investigated. Social media marketing and purchasing behaviours are two interconnected and influencing elements. And these are the brands that make up the context and the advertisements that these brands reach to the consumer are made through social media. A conceptual framework has been created that aims at how these advertisements affect the attitude of the consumer in the digital world.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

This literature review provides an understanding of the behaviour of a segment that is defined as a digital consumer and the impact of social media influencers that cause these behaviours. In this literature review, the group defined as the digital consumer is restricted to female consumers only, and the area in which they display their buying behaviour is focused on the cosmetic sector. In light of this information, the literature review is used to create a conceptual framework. As mentioned in the literature, word of mouth marketing is digitized and can be used to explain a number of results. However, research should be done primarily considering the increasing awareness of consumers, age and demographic conditions. In the literature review, social media influencers prove their reliability, their contribution to purchasing and one of the most returnable channels for marketing in recent years. This research aims at how women consumers are affected by social media marketing strategies, the effects of social media influencers on their buying tendencies. The next step will be to create surveys, reach female consumers in the specified age group, collect data and analyse the data.

### **3 Methodology and Research Design**

#### **3.1 Overview**

In this research, the critical philosophy approach is adopted, and it is suitable for the subject of the research. A quantitative method was used as data from consumers was collected and analysed. Female consumers in the specified age group were reached, and comparable data were obtained. The collected data were matched with the questions asked and compared. This research investigates the effect of influencers on consumer behaviour. With the increasing influences of beauty influencers and cosmetic companies in recent years, it explores the way in which women react to the advertisements of cosmetics, which consumers are exposed to, and whether they make purchases. The survey of this research was prepared in English, but it was conducted with Turkish female participants. The survey was tested with a test group of 7 people before it was distributed to all participants, and questions that could cause any misunderstanding were rearranged. Female users who have a good command of English answered this questionnaire and had the researcher's contact information if they had any questions. All questions were added to the Appendix C, and statistical analysis of the questions used effectively in the study was made.

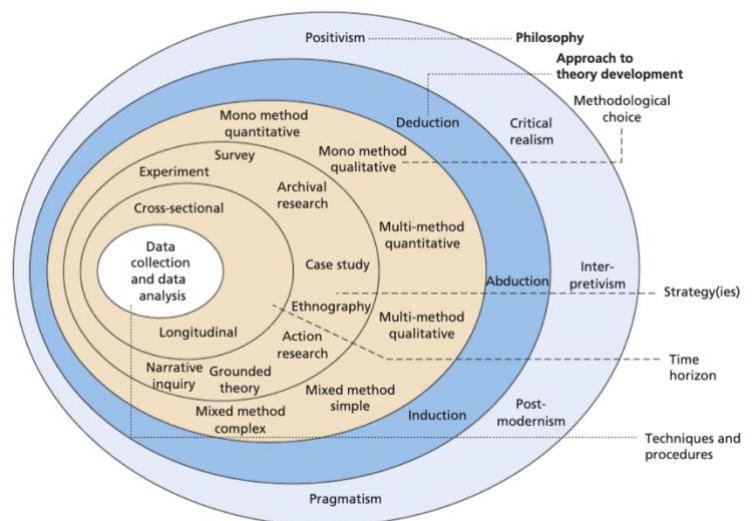
#### **3.2 Research Philosophy and Approach**

The research paradigm underpinning this study can be defined critically. Critical assumption is a philosophy that typically aligned with quantitative research, where the causes of effects and consequences are determined. They do not rely on exact results, and the establishment of facts, moreover ontologically speaking quantitative research designs rely on the presentation of probabilities. The purpose of this approach is to test hypotheses and research questions by gathering data from a sample of the research population and is based on the observation and measurement of objective reality. With this approach, the researcher puts forward a theory, collects subject matter data and subjects this data to statistical test support or refute the hypothesis.

Research onion developed by Saunders et al. (2009) and this shows all the stages in the development of a research study. The research process presents as a multi-layered exercise beginning with a philosophical position and ending with data analysis. The researcher must critically evaluate each layer during the formation of their research design (Saunders *et al.*, 2009).

In this study, this chapter explains the primary philosophical framework of this research. Digital marketing and social media differ from traditional marketing, so some part of the marketing environment is hard to understand, and the research philosophies would be sufficient to understand this research and continue. The reason for this research to adopt critical philosophy is that it strives for a balanced and democratic community, as opposed to researching and validating the status quo, like traditional theories. It is about differentiation and interaction of the community in terms of race, gender, economy etc. According to Horkheimer, the benefits of this theory are to understand what is wrong with the current results and to explain what is wrong, to define the action needed to change, and to be critically open (Bohman, 2019).

In this study, individuals' decision-making processes and their positive or negative



Source: Saunders et.al (2019) **Figure 3.2.1:**Research Onion

effects on individuals and brands are investigated. The research has been handled from this perspective in order to give forward recommendations with the results found and to interpret and criticize the current situation (Asghar, 2013). According to the critical paradigm, it is foreseen that a change and difference will occur by revealing the hidden truth. Therefore, in terms of critical paradigm, science and scientific research indirectly include relativity and subjectivity. When the consumer behaviour, which is the subject of this research, is viewed in terms of a critical paradigm, people can make false decisions, so according to this paradigm, subjective ideas are common, and these ideas are the subject of research.

As a result, these researches are an essential resource in revealing people's illusions. Looking at the topic of this research, analyzing consumer behaviour and social media marketing, this topic will yield results that may differ from society to society or between specific age groups. According to Phillips and Burbules (2000), absolute truth can never be found, research, data, evidence and rational thoughts shape reality. Information about the responses and reactions given by the participants is collected.

The quantitative method is chosen to collect this information . According to Patton (1990) notes, the advantage of the quantitative approach is that it allows a particular set of questions to measure the responses of large groups of people, thus facilitating data comparison and statistical processing (Patton, 1990).

In other words, the reason why this study was chosen as quantitative is that it is possible to reach a larger populations through surveys. Such large data sets are more difficult to aquire when using qualitative approaches. Qualitative approaches are characterised by small data sets due to the time limitation of conducting and analysing interviews.

### **3.3 Research Strategy**

In this study, an online questionnaire was designed and targeted at female consumers in the desired age range. This study investigates the effect of social media influencers on consumer, trust and purchasing impulses from the consumer point of view. Factors leading the consumer to buy online are identified and analysed.

The author selection to use a survey engine (SurveyMonkey Inc., 1999), which facilitates the design and dissemination of online surveys. These questionnaires are distributed online to the target group and conducted anonymously. A plain language statements (Appendix A) and a consent forms (Appendix B) are circulated along with the surveys. In the survey, 17 questions were asked, and the total duration of the survey is estimated at 5 to 10 minutes maximum. A total of 104 participants completed the questionnaire. The questions were based on understanding consumers' trust in social media influencers and how much they merit their ideas when shopping. Social media marketing, which has emerged in

recent years, is the trend of many products in the field of cosmetics, and when viewed by consumers, women who shop for cosmetics can only purchase because they are popular. In order to perceive this, the questions asked are sent only to female users in the specified age group.

### 3.3.1 *Sampling*

Snowball sampling method was used in this research. It is the process of creating a sample in the snowball sampling method begins by reaching one of the individuals to whom the research will be conducted. At the end of the found with this participant, other individuals suggested by that participant are reached, and after finding those individuals, other individuals suggested by them (Naderifar *et al.*, 2017). Thus, the number of participants increases, and the process continues. After a while, this process focuses on certain people and ends with sampling. With this method, questions were shared with participants and communities on Instagram and WhatsApp. The participants were also asked to share the survey with their friends. The survey was prepared in English and shared with the participants.

The question types ranged from closed yes/no questions to Likert rating scales. Likert scaled question is a closed-ended psychometric survey that measures the participants' views on a range of expressions. (Tullis and Albert, 2013). Particular care is taken in the design of the questionnaire. Questions that could mislead or direct participants are avoided. The prepared questionnaire was piloted with a test group of 7 people. The reason for this is to avoid misunderstanding. Based on the feedback from the pilot group, the questionnaire was redesigned before going live. Some of the questions included in the survey are listed below;

- Does the popularity of the product affect your purchasing behaviour when purchasing a product?
- When buying beauty and skincare products are you loyal towards the brands that you buy?
- How much do you agree with the following statements? (Starts with strongly disagree to strongly agree)
  - ⇒ I make purchases based on online recommendations.
  - ⇒ I find out about new trends on social media.



- ⇒ If my favourite blogger/online personality recommends a brand, I am more likely to try it.
- ⇒ I follow Instagram influencers to discover new products on the market.
- ⇒ When seeing an influencer using a specific item of my interest it makes me long for that product.

In this research, participants were informed about their rights. First of all, each participant was warned to give correct answers to the truth and then they were informed about the characteristics of the research, the right to confidentiality, the right to give up if they wish, and the privacy. In addition, the participants were informed about how the research will proceed, how to develop it, and the analysis to be conducted with these data. Participants were informed that the results obtained when the thesis was completed could be shared with them if requested. In addition, participants were given the option to leave the study. Although the participants may have questions about this research, the contact information of the researcher was provided. All collected data is kept private during the study and afterwards. Confidentially, the data collected in this research did not be used in any other research.

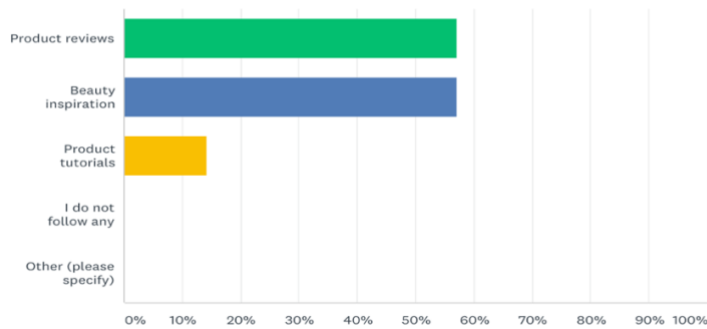
### **3.4 Collection Primary Data**

#### *3.4.1 Sources*

In this study, the primary data source is Turkish female social media users. All participants were legally mature. These participants were reached online via social media, WhatsApp and all were informed about the questionnaire. Participants were encouraged to complete the survey and were confirmed to be over 18 years old. Responses from participants outside the target group were not included in the analysis. The survey prepared before starting primary data collection was tested on a test group of 7 people. Arrangements were made according to the feedback received. At the same time, the answers given by the test group to the questions are given below according to the percentile without sharing the survey again.

What is your main reason for following beauty influencers on social media?

Answered: 7 Skipped: 0

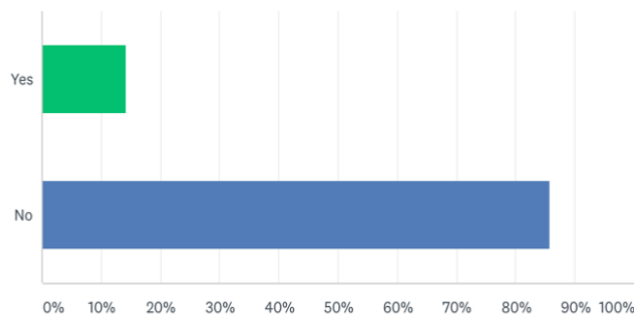


Source: **Survey Monkey**

**Figure 3.4.1:**Test Survey Question

Do you believe that beauty influencers are truthful about whether they are being sponsored to promote a product?

Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



Source: **Survey Monkey**

**Figure 3.4.2:**Test Survey Question

### 3.4.2 Access and Ethical Issues

Scientific research involves scientists' mental efforts and practices in revealing information specific to nature, people and society. Even if scientists carry out their research independently, they are also responsible for examining the reflections of the information that may arise on the environment and society and making qualifying statements about their results. For this reason, social and ethical responsibilities are taken into account in scientific research.

All participants are informed about the conditions of participation. They were informed about the features of the research, the right to privacy, the right to

withdraw, data use and storage. Furthermore, they were informed about how to do the study, and request the results of the research.

### **3.5 Approach to Data Analysis**

In order to understand the correlations and interactions, the survey data made on Survey Monkey were examined and exported to SPSS (IBM Corp, 2019) for detailed statistical testing and analysis. The research objectives were matched with the responses received. Chi-Square test was used to understand the data of the research.

In the survey, an open-ended question was asked as the last question, and the participants were asked for their opinions. The answer to this question is separated from the statistical analysis, and these answers are critically addressed in the discussion section.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

In summary, this chapter presents the philosophy and approach adopted for this study. The data gathering method, sampling strategy and analysis approach are set out. The manner in which the author has addressed ethical concerns and how they were resolved in this research are discussed. Some of the questions asked in the survey are included in this section, and all of them are in the Appendix C.

## 4 Presentation and Discussion of the Findings

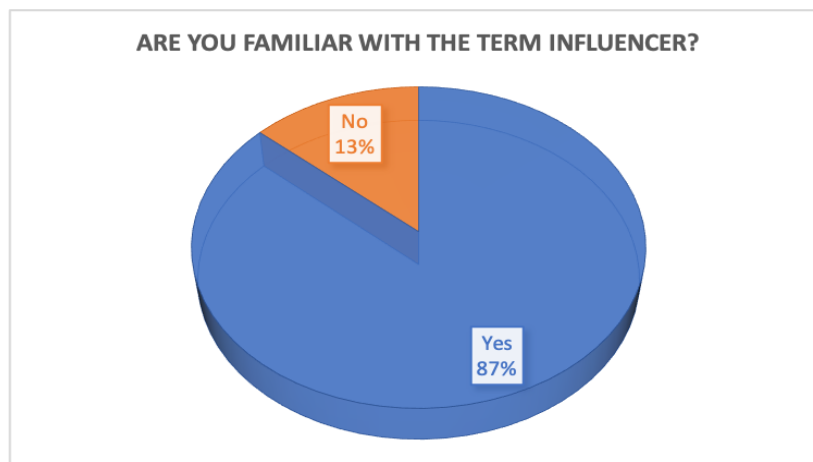
### 4.1 Overview

In this section, the data collected through the questionnaire were reviewed and analysed by quantitative methods. Statistical analysis of the survey results using Survey Monkey and SPSS are presented.

All responses were checked for missing answers. The results of the survey were coded. Chi-Square test was applied to explore the significance of the relationship between variables.

### 4.2 Findings

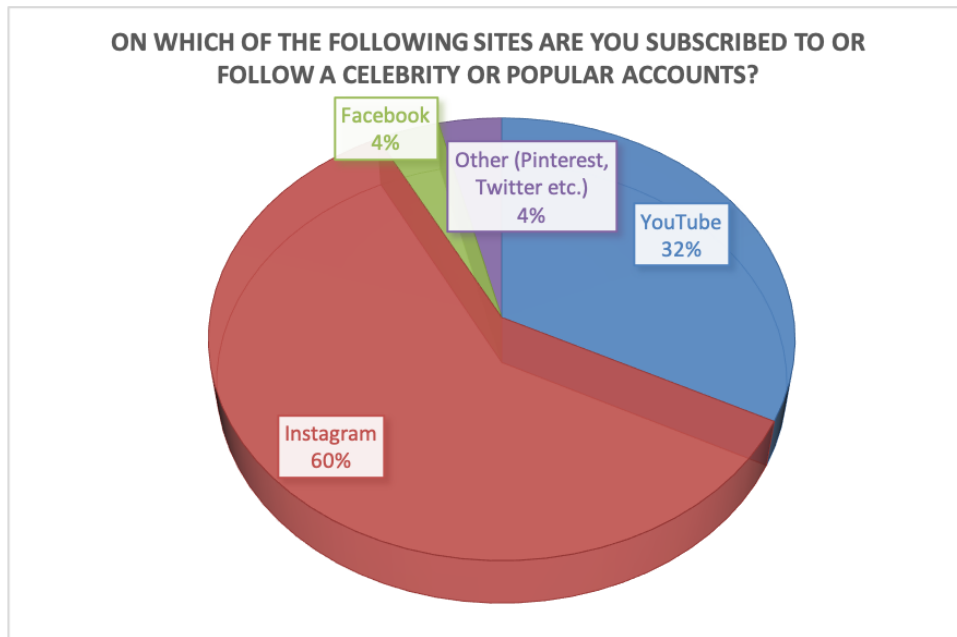
After taking demographic information in this questionnaire, participants were asked whether they are familiar with the concept of the influencer. Fourteen people stated that they were not familiar enough with the concept of an influencer but said that they use social media and follow the well-known people on these platforms. The remaining 90 participants stated that they are familiar with this concept.



**Source:** Survey Monkey **Figure 4.2.1** Frequency of the participants are familiar with influencers

When analysed by age group distributions, two people between the ages of 18-20, 9 people between the ages of 21-29, 2 people between the ages of 30-35 and 2 people over the age of 36 stated that they are not familiar with the term influencer.

Forty-six of the participants are currently employed, 11 are looking for a job, five are not working, and 42 were students.

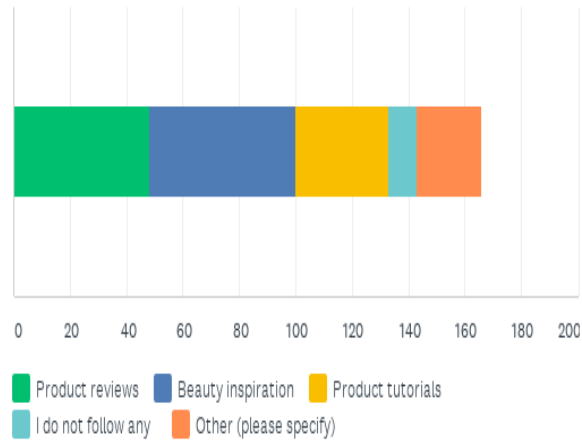


**Source:** Survey Monkey

**Figure 4.2.2:** User frequency of social media platforms

The data shows that at Instagram (60%) is the most used social media channel followed by YouTube (32%), Facebook (4%). Users stated that they follow social media influencers and celebrities through these channels. Instagram and YouTube are social media channels, where product promotions and advertisements are made more intensely. In particular, celebrities and influencers, rather than using Twitter and similar social media channels, are more popular with YouTube and Instagram. They promote their products through these channels. For this reason, nearly 90 per cent of the participants use these social media more intensively and see the ads from here.

## Q7 What is your main reason for following influencers on social media?



Source: **Survey Monkey**

**Figure 4.2.3:** Survey Question

The majority of the respondents stated the reasons for following the influencers are beauty inspiration (52%), product reviews (48%), and product tutorials (33%). Participants who followed their beauty influencers to get inspired on issues such as makeup and skincare also proved that these accounts are of great importance for getting information about how they read their reviews and use them without buying a product. Nine per cent of the participants stated that they did not follow these people. At the same time, the participants said that following the influencers is a fun or a good alternative for spending time in their spare time. They stated that they follow influencers for other reasons such as their lifestyle, their travels, their understanding of fashion, and following trends. Twenty-two per cent of the respondents said that they were following the influencers on social media because they were curious about, among others private life, homes and living standards.

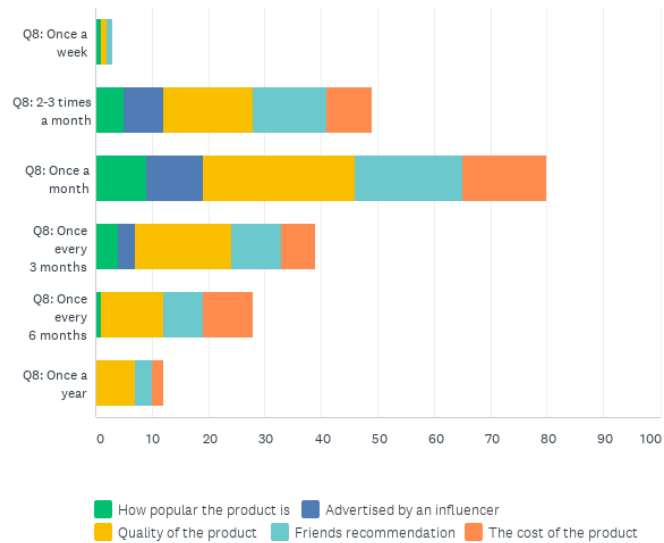
Respondents were asked about the frequency of shopping, and 97% of the female consumers who answered the survey are shopping for cosmetics. The majority (31%) of this rate stated that they buy cosmetic products once a month. 21% said that they shop for cosmetics every three months, 14% every six months, 20% 2-3

times a month, 2% once a week and 7% once a year. The remaining 3 per cent was a group of 4 people who never shop for cosmetics.

According to the frequency of cosmetic shopping, questions were asked in order to understand who respondents trusted when purchasing cosmetic products, or what was the important criterion for them when making this purchase. When the participants who did not buy makeup products were removed, it was seen that the quality of the product (78%) was the most marked and most important factor for the participants. Female consumers who participated in the survey with a 50 per cent rate stated that they listened to their friends' recommendations. The price of the product (38%) is also a factor followed by the popularity of the product (20%).

The least chosen option was that an influencer advertised the product. Consumers listen to product quality, popularity, price and friend recommendations when buying a cosmetic product, and at the very least stated that they act according to the advertisements made by influencers. When looking at the statistics of this question, the segment, which says that it has purchased products under the influence of influencer advertisements, constitutes only 19 per cent of the survey responses.

Q9 What do you look for when you are purchasing a beauty product?



Source: Survey Monkey **Figure 4.2.4:**The graph about frequency of purchasing beauty product.

When the 8th question and the 9th question are taken together and compared, the frequency of cosmetic shopping and the intensity of what to pay attention to while performing this shopping can be seen in figure 4.2.4.

This analysis was made thanks to the detailed analysis and comparison option of Survey Monkey. Participants stating that they did not receive any cosmetic products from this analysis were excluded, and all participants were included from the one who bought a cosmetic product once a week to once a year.

The majority of the participants stated that they shop for cosmetics once a month, and 81 per cent of women who buy cosmetics once a month stated that the most important criterion is the quality of the product and directs it to purchase. Fifty-seven per cent said that the recommendation of friends is important and that 45 per cent of the product price is one of the factors in their purchase.

According to influencer comments, 30 per cent stated that they shop for cosmetics, and 27 per cent said they pay attention to how popular the product is. Participants who received a cosmetic product once a week found equal attention to the popularity, quality and friend recommendation of the product. The distribution of the survey responses of the participants, who stated that they shop for cosmetics 2



or 3 times a month, is similar to the participants who do it once a month. The most important factors are product quality (80%), friend recommendation (65%), price of the product (40%), They said influencer advertisements (35%) and the popularity of the product (25%).

Respondents who made purchases once every three months stated that they care about the quality of the product at the highest rate (77%) as in other groups. Following this option, friend advice (41%), the price of the product (27%), the popularity of the product (18%) and influencer advertisements (13%) were found. In this group, unlike the groups mentioned earlier, the lowest option is the influencer advertisements. Participants in this group said that the criteria they paid the least attention when buying a product were sponsored advertisements made by influencers.

In the group that performs the cosmetic shopping every six months, unlike other groups, it was observed that they did not consider influencer advertisements when purchasing the product, the number of users who chose this option is zero. Seventy-three per cent marked product quality, 60 per cent product price, 46 per cent friend recommendation, and 6 per cent product popularity, as in other groups.

As for the previous group, the segment that bought beauty products once a year stated that influencer advertisements are not a guide in their purchasing decisions and that high quality of products is an important criterion. However, 37 per cent said that they shop according to the recommendation of friends, while 25 per cent say that they shop according to the product price. It was observed that influencer advertisements and the popularity of the product were not effective in purchasing the product in this group.

Considering the 9th question filtered by the age group distribution, it was found that 67 per cent of the 18-20 age range was shopping according to product quality, 16 per cent to influencer comments, 8.33 per cent to the popularity of the product and 8.33 per cent to comments from their friends.

When the same criteria are analysed in the 21-29 age group, it is stated that they pay attention to product quality by 45 per cent, friend recommendation by 31 per

cent, influencer advertisements by 12 per cent and the popularity of the product by 11 per cent.

In the participants, which is a group between the ages of 30-35, the most selected criterion is product quality, as seen in the other groups with a rate of 45 per cent. This criterion is followed by product popularity (25%) and product price (25%). The criterion that affected the age group the least was the influencer advertisements with a rate of 6 per cent.

Participants in the age group 36 and above selected only two criteria. These criteria were the quality of the product (57%) and friend recommendation (43%). This indicates that the quality of the product is the most important criterion for women consumers of all ages participating in the survey when purchasing cosmetic products.

Influencer advertisements have the greatest impact in the age group of 18-20, and influencer recommendation has been found to be effective in purchasing behaviour in the 21-29 age range. Compared with the age group and cosmetic shopping frequency criteria of question 9, different rates emerged, and these are discussed in the discussion section.

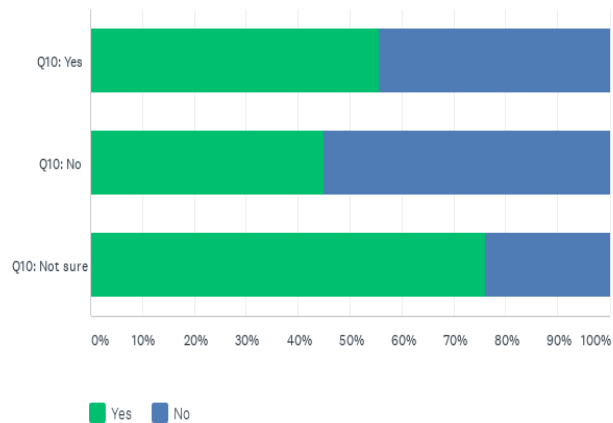
In the 10th question, the participants were asked the question 'Do you believe that beauty influencers are truthful about whether they are being sponsored to promote a product?'

Eight per cent of respondents stated that they found influencer advertisements reliable, 47 per cent did not find it reliable and 44 per cent were not sure. According to the age group distribution, the answer "I find reliable" was not received from the participants between the ages of 18-20. Thirty-three per cent of this group said they did not find it reliable, and 67 per cent said they were not sure.

The respondents in the 21-29 age group, with a rate of 47 per cent, said 'I do not believe that they are sincere' and 46 per cent stated that they are not sure. Between 30-35 years of age, most of them (41%) stated that they do not find influencer advertisements sincere and honest. It was found that they found it reliable with a rate of 33 per cent and 25 per cent were not sure.

In the group above 36 years old, no participants found the influencer advertisements reliable. Eighty per cent do not think that these advertisements reflect the truth, and 20 per cent stated that they are not sure.

Q11 If an influencer has tried and endorsed a product would that encourage you to think more positively about that product?



Source: Survey Monkey

Figure 4.2.5: Comparative graph of question 10 and question 11

In the 11th question of the questionnaire, the participants were asked the question If an influencer has tried and endorsed a product would that encourage you to think more positively about that product?.

The comparative graph of these two questions depicted in figure 4.2.5. Sixty per cent of the answers received were "yes, I think more positively about that product".

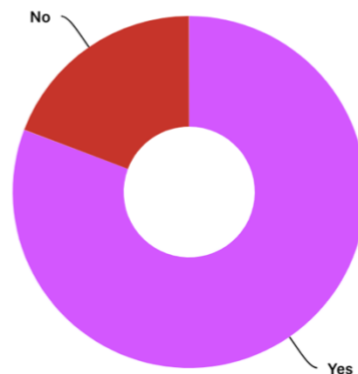
The participants in the 40% segment stated that they disagree with this view and that the influencer comments and their experience did not have a positive effect on their opinions about the product. It was thought that this question should be compared with the 10th question of 'Do you believe that beauty influencers are truthful about whether they are being sponsored to promote a product?'. Fifty-five per cent of respondents who responded and found influencer advertisements reliable stated that they thought more positively about the products they saw in these advertisements.

Forty-five per cent of the same group stated that they were not more positive about the product thanks to these advertisements. Forty-five per cent of the group, who do not find Influencer advertisements as reliable, stated that they do not think more positively about the product through advertisements, and 55 per cent of them said that these advertisements positively affect the opinions of the respondents about the product.

Seventy-six per cent of the group, which are not sure about honesty, said that seeing product advertisements on social media through influencers, their opinions about this product are more positive, and 24 per cent say it not affect their opinions positively. It showed that the people who found it reliable did not trust all of the advertisements and that the product promotions were not affected in every way. Likewise, the data suggests that people who follow an influencer but do not find it reliable have positive opinions about the product when they see the product promotion. . Furthermore, it suggests how respondents who are not sure about reliability are affected by product advertisements and see and may change their opinion about these products with advertisements.

Does the popularity of the product affect your purchasing behaviour when purchasing a product?

Answered: 104 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Yes (1)		80.77%	84
No (2)		19.23%	20
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>104</b>

BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	2.00	1.00	1.19	0.39

**Source:** Survey Monkey

**Figure 4.2.6:** Pie chart of impact of product popularity on the purchasing behaviour.

Question 12 asked about the impact of product popularity on the purchasing behaviour, the majority of respondents (80.7%) stated that they had a tendency to buy the popular products, and 19.23 per cent said that popular products were not a criterion for them when making purchases. 20% of those who answered this question were the participants who took care of the popularity of the product while buying a cosmetic product in question 9.

All participants who stated that they did not buy cosmetics according to product popularity, marked this question as no. Consistency was found in the statistics of these two questions.

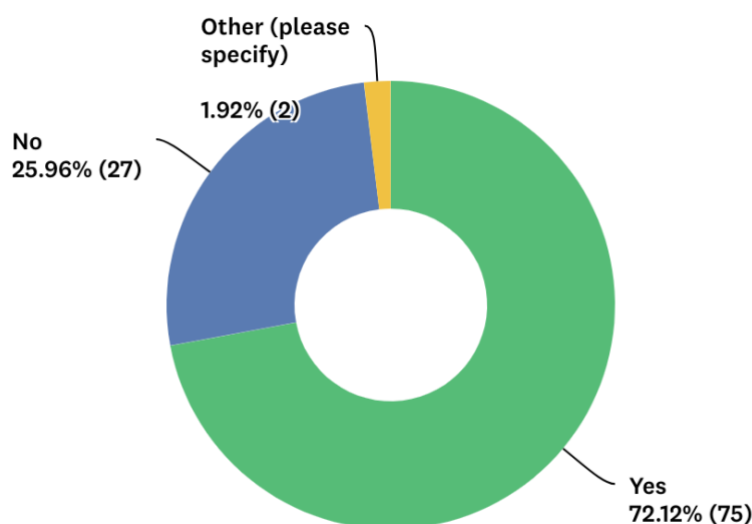
Likewise, while purchasing a cosmetic product, another multi-choice question was asked to understand whether or not women were shopping as a result of consciously focused research. The majority of respondents (75%) stated that they knew their skin types and tended to buy products accordingly. Only 5 per cent of respondents said they bought popular products promoted by influencers.

However, 20 per cent said they looked at influencer reviews and bought the product after a detailed investigation. In short, a group of 25 per cent paid attention to influencer reviews before purchasing products.

In order to understand other behaviours, users were also asked for their comments. Some participants stated that they tried to get the cheapest when choosing a product and the reason for this was the absence of skin problems. Another respondent stated that buying cosmetics according to climate changes and seasonal needs took shape and tried random products without looking at the comments.

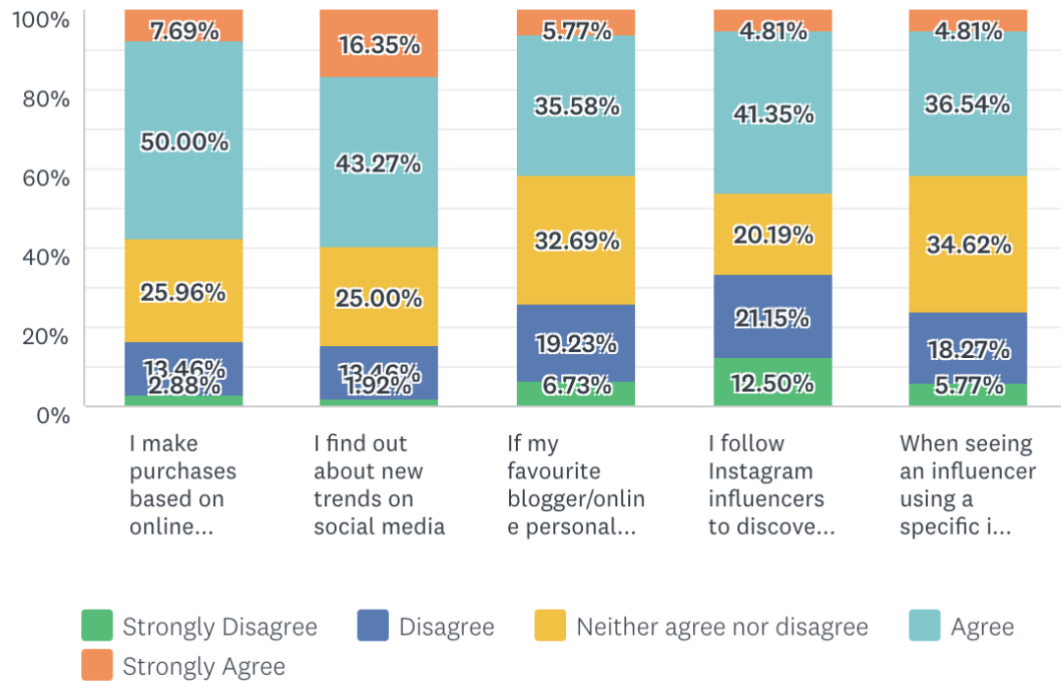
When it comes to brands and companies, the claimed importance of using social media ads has been explored in the literature review section. In addition, to the promotion for the brands, it is important that consumers who purchase their products are satisfied with this shopping and regained consumers' loyalty.

The participants were asked the question "When buying beauty and skincare products are you loyal towards the brands that you buy?" And as shown in the figure 4.2.7, the participants stated that they are highly loyal. Some participants stated that they are open to trying new products and brands.



Source: Survey Monkey

Figure 4.2.7: Pie chart of respondents' brand loyalty



Source: Survey Monkey

Figure 4.2.8: Graph of Likert scale question

The output of the question asked in order to understand how consumers tend to buy the products they see advertised on the Internet is shown in the figure 4.2.8. Question is shown in table below (Figure 4.2.9). More than half of the participants stated that they shop with the influence of online comments.

These comments are considered as eWOM, as described in the literature, and are user comments, experiences or comments of recognized persons or influencers. Just as the effect of word of mouth marketing, which is the type of traditional marketing, cannot be denied, eWOM effect is observed to be important to users. In short, the people in the 8 per cent segment vehemently denied this view, while the remaining participants stated that they were not unresponsive to these comments.

At the same time, an option presented participants, to understand whether social media follows new trends. Sixteen per cent strongly agree with this view; 43 per cent said they agree. It also showed that eWOM is useful in the context of marketing and product promotion for these consumers.

In order to understand this situation from the perspective of influencer, participants were asked to evaluate how eager they were in receiving the products introduced by influencers. 40 per cent of the participants declared that they agreed with this opinion. Thirty-three per cent of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. These individuals show that, as discussed in the literature review, the collaboration of influencers and brands increases the purchase drive in the consumer. At the same time, the vast majority of these survey respondents are millennials, as mentioned. When influencer credibility and consumer behaviour are evaluated together, people are more affected by the digital endorsements of peer influencers.

At the same time, the sentence of 'When seeing an influencer using a specific item of my interest it makes me long for that product' was given close ratios with the previous evaluation as seen in the figure. It validates the effect of social media on purchasing.

	Mean	Standard Deviation
I make purchases based on online recommendations.	3.46	0.92
I find out about new trends on social media	3.59	0.98
If my favourite blogger/online personality recommends a brand, I am more likely to try it.	3.14	1.01
I follow Instagram influencers to discover new products on the market.	3.05	1.15
When seeing an influencer using a specific item of my interest it makes me long for that product.	3.16	0.97

**Source:** Survey Monkey

**Figure 4.2.9:** Evaluations of respondents' reasons for following beauty influencers on social media and their purchasing behaviour

In this ranked and scaled question, five options were presented to the respondents. It ranked as strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree and strongly agrees respectively. According to this ranking, the answers are scored from 1 to 5, and basic statistics can be found in Figure 4.2.9.



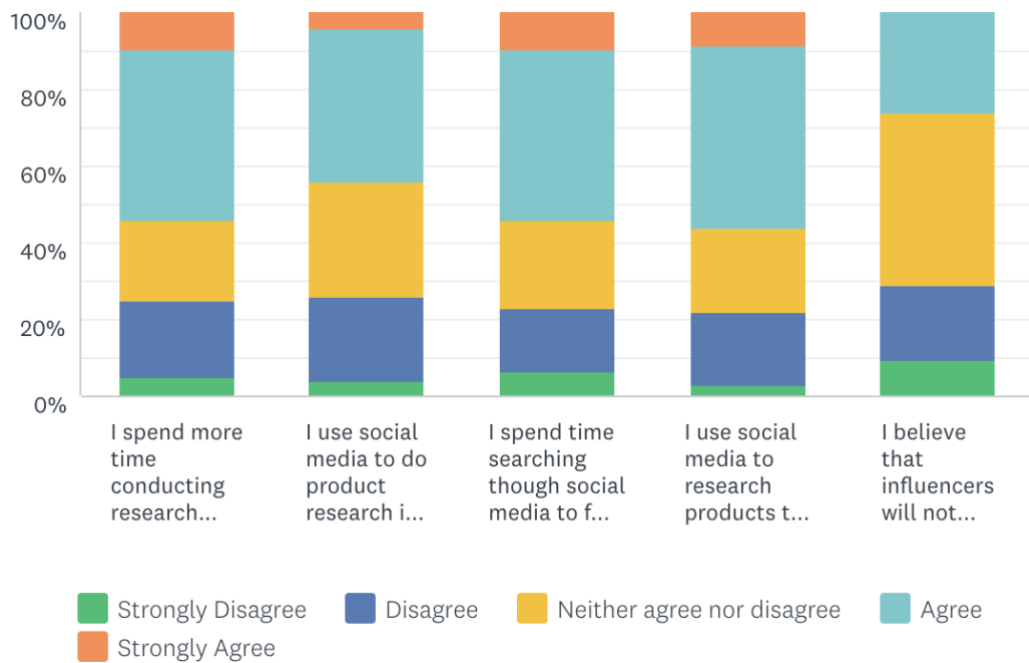
In summary of the data series, standard deviation is often used together with the mean. The average is the measurement of the central value, and the standard deviation is the measure of the distribution. Data is close to the average; it will show low in standard deviation.

If the standard deviation value is significant, the distinctive feature of the test is high, the group is heterogenic. The difference between the values is high. If the standard deviation value is small, the discrimination of the test is low. The group is homogeneous, and the difference between the values is low.

When the average and standard deviations of these answers are compared, the standard deviation was found to be the lowest in the first answer, and it can be said that the majority of these users gave similar answers and were classed as a homogeneous group. The highest standard deviation was found by comparing with other standard deviation values.

The participants were asked to evaluate the question 'I follow Instagram influencers to discover new products on the market', and the highest standard deviation was the result of these evaluations. It means that the opinions of the participants are the most different and the rates of participation in this opinion are different.

As seen in the literature review, online comments and recommendations are considered very useful in influencing purchasing behaviour and are supported by the research done by Nielsen research company (Halliday, 2015). The question with the highest standard deviation and the lowest average value was found in the ratings for "I follow Instagram influencers cover new products on the market. It shows that not everyone is equally interested in influencer ads and promotions.



**Source:** Survey Monkey

**Figure 4.2.10:** Likert scale question about participants' experiences of researching products on social media.

Another scaled question was asked in order to understand the participants' experiences of researching a product on social media. Question is shown in table below (Figure 4.2.11). Results were reached and evaluated with the same scaling system as in the previous question. As shown in Figure 4.2.10, the participants stated that they use social media to research the products they are unfamiliar with. Fifty-five per cent of respondents stated that they spent time on social media to research new products they had not used before. It supports why brands and companies are spending more on social media. As found in the literature review, data suggests that social media users are now aware that product information and promotions are accessible worldwide.

24% of the participants stated that they do not use social media to discover and research a new product. When the participants wanted to get information about a product, it was asked to determine time management and whether they used social media to reach this information in a shorter time.

Web 2.0 is defined as second-generation internet services, social communication sites, wikis, communication tools, folksonomies that is the system created by internet users collectively and by sharing.

Along with Web 2.0, personal web pages provide content producers with the opportunity to access information about a product in a short time, and the vast majority of participants do not reject it.

At the same time, more than half of the participants stated that they use social media to research products that may be an alternative to the products they love and are satisfied with.

In another question, when asked for the reason, respondents stated that they follow the beauty influencers on social media in order to find products that have cheaper, cleaner content or may be more beneficial to them when the climate changes.

Fifty-six per cent of the participants claim that they research social media on products before purchasing the products. Evidence of three basic items of social media consumption behaviour is qualified. First, the comments of verbal communication and influencers, the second, the comments of friends and people around them, and finally comments on users' satisfaction or complaints after purchase.

All of these affect the behaviour of users in the purchasing process. At the same time, as mentioned in the literature review, women's impulses are defined as a suggestive impulse by purchasing cosmetic products by looking at social media marketing. This situation is defined as whether they have information about the product or not, and they are affected by a recommendation and start to think that they need the product.

Finally, respondents were asked to evaluate social media influencers in order to understand how they react to the promotions and the brands they promote. The question 'I believe that influencers will not purposefully endorse a brand that will harm me. Unlike others, this the 'strongly agree' option was not selected by participants. 26% of the participants stated that they agreed with this opinion, and

30% did not agree. It was the most neutrally evaluated question compared to other questions, and 44% of respondents responded as 'neither agree nor disagree'. The basic statistics of this question can be founded in Table 2 below.

	Mean	Standard Deviation
I spend more time conducting research about products that are unfamiliar to me.	3.34	1.05
I use social media to do product research in order to minimise research time.	3.18	0.95
I spend time searching though social media to find alternative products.	3.34	1.07
I use social media to research products that I am considering buying.	3.39	0.98
I believe that influencers will not purposefully endorse a brand that will harm me.	2.88	0.91

**Source:** Survey Monkey

**Figure 4.2.11:**Evaluations of question to understand participants' experiences of researching a product on social media.

Finally, the participants were asked about their opinions about whether it is correct whether or not to take the influencer comments as a basis when buying a product so that they can express their opinions adequately. Forty participants did not skip this question and answered it. Many answers suggest that the factor of trust is vital in the promotion of cosmetic products.

They stated that they shop according to the influencer comments, which they find trustworthy and sincere, and that some promotions do not inspire confidence, they believe they are made only to earn money.

Therefore, they said that they thought they did not indicate this even if the products had a negative effect. Some participants think that the paid partnership made by the brands does not reflect the real opinions. Some participants stated that they think influencers are buying comments with false positive opinions for their sponsored posts. Another view was that influencers could not be honest

about their comments as they did not receive academic training on product contents, and it was not healthy to buy products for consumers' skin based on these comments.

On the other hand, some say that they find influencer promotions as logical in discovering new products. Furthermore, they follow trends quickly because they can see and learn about new products in a shorter time. However, they said that it was disturbing for these trending brands advertising their products with many different influencers at the same time. They stated that seeing the advertisement of the same product on every social media page made a poor impression.

Another view was that the choice of cosmetic products is personal, and every skin has different needs. Participants say people think it was not right to trust what someone else said about their skin needs. They say they trusted their research more, but they knew that many people did not read the content while buying the product. Some participants claim they avoided using popular products because the product quality decreased as the customer base expanded.

The chi-square test measures whether the distribution of the values in the sample group is compatible with the distribution of the main population proposed in the hypothesis (Sullivan, 2016). The compatibility between expected values and obtained values is investigated.

When determining the null hypothesis, it is stated how the data is distributed. Expected frequency values and observed frequency values are compared. This test is used to examine the relationship between two categorical variables.

This test compares the frequencies of the participants in each of the categories against the expected values when the rates are not related to the two variables. The test is based on the cross-tabulation of participants classified by categories in each variable (Sullivan, 2016).

Therefore, the hypothesis set up as follows;

*H<sub>0</sub>:  $\mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3$  ("all of group 1,2 and 3 means are equal")*

*H<sub>1</sub>: At least one  $\mu_i$  different ("at least one of the group means is not equal to the others")*

The Chi-Square test was applied to the 10th (Do you believe that beauty influencers are truthful about whether they are being sponsored to promote a product?) and 11th (If an influencer has tried and endorsed a product would that encourage you to think more positively about that product?) questions. The Chi-Square analysis shows that there is a significant relationship between the effect of product advertisements on individuals, pushing them to buy and whether these product promotions give confidence. The fact that people who see product promotions are affected positively or negatively about the product is meaningfully associated with those who find or do not find, or they are unsure about product promotions. The fact that people think positive or negative against the products approved by influencers and are encouraged to purchase is a significant difference between these two groups. So, according to the significance value, H<sub>1</sub> was accepted.

### Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.654 <sup>a</sup>	2	.008
Likelihood Ratio	9.915	2	.007
Linear-by-Linear Association	9.479	1	.002
N of Valid Cases	104		

Source: SPSS.

Figure 4.2.12: Chi-Square Test

a. 1 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.63.

## Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.305	.008
	Cramer's V	.305	.008
N of Valid Cases		104	

Source: SPSS

Figure 4.2.13: Symmetric Measures

**If an influencer has tried and endorsed a product would that encourage you to think more positively about that product? \* Do you believe that beauty influencers are truthful about whether they are being sponsored to promote a product? Crosstabulation**

		Do you believe that beauty influencers are truthful about whether they are being sponsored to promote a product?			Total	
		Not Sure	Yes	No		
If an influencer has tried and endorsed a product would that encourage you to think more positively about that product?	Yes	Count	35	5	22	62
		Expected Count	27.4	5.4	29.2	62.0
		% within If an influencer has tried and endorsed a product would that encourage you to think more positively about that product?	56.5%	8.1%	35.5%	100.0%
		% within Do you believe that beauty influencers are truthful about whether they are being sponsored to promote a product?	76.1%	55.6%	44.9%	59.6%
		% of Total	33.7%	4.8%	21.2%	59.6%
	Adjusted Residual	3.0	-.3	-2.9		
	No	Count	11	4	27	42
		Expected Count	18.6	3.6	19.8	42.0
		% within If an influencer has tried and endorsed a product would that encourage you to think more positively about that product?	26.2%	9.5%	64.3%	100.0%
		% within Do you believe that beauty influencers are truthful about whether they are being sponsored to promote a product?	23.9%	44.4%	55.1%	40.4%
% of Total		10.6%	3.8%	26.0%	40.4%	
Adjusted Residual	-3.0	.3	2.9			
Total	Count	46	9	49	104	
	Expected Count	46.0	9.0	49.0	104.0	
	% within If an influencer has tried and endorsed a product would that encourage you to think more positively about that product?	44.2%	8.7%	47.1%	100.0%	
	% within Do you believe that beauty influencers are truthful about whether they are being sponsored to promote a product?	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	44.2%	8.7%	47.1%	100.0%	

Source: SPSS

**Figure 4.2.14:** If an influencer has tried and endorsed a product would that encourage you to think more positively about that product? \* Do you believe that beauty influencers are truthful about whether they are being sponsored to promote a product? Crosstabulation

Each cell has an additional value called adjusted residual in crosstabulation. This value is a useful statistic especially for the 2 × 3 tables, and in this case, values greater than 2.0 say that the number of participants is significantly more



significant than expected, and values less than -2.0 are less than expected. In short, the adjusted residual value with an absolute value greater than 2 indicates a significant difference between the groups. This value helps to identify differences between groups (Sharpe, 2015).

Crosstabulation shows that there is a significant difference between the group that is tried by influencers and is more favourable to the proposed products and the group that states that they are not sure of sponsored product advertisements by influencers. Besides, there is a significant difference between people who are not sure about the trustworthiness of sponsored products and people who do not tend to buy cosmetic products which are endorsed by influencers. However, there is no significant difference between the group, which rejects positive behaviours against the products promoted by influencers, and the group that found these product promotions reliable.

### Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.514 <sup>a</sup>	3	.211
Likelihood Ratio	4.640	3	.200
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.454	1	.063
N of Valid Cases	104		

Source: SPSS

Figure 4.2.15: Chi-Square Test for age groups.

Chi-square test was performed to these groups to understand the relationship between age groups and positive or negative exposure from product advertisements. As a result of the test, there was no significant difference between these two groups.

### **4.3 Discussion**

There are points to be discussed when all results, analyses and tests are evaluated. The results of this survey showed that Instagram is the platform where users are the most active on social media, as evidenced by the literature review. Instagram is the platform where the influencers are followed the most, and in fact, it proves that it is the platform where the interaction between users and influencers is the strongest. Following this platform, YouTube was coming in second place, and YouTube is again a social media website that people use intensively to promote and use to get information about products. As the survey is about beauty influencers and cosmetics, the main reason for responders to follow influencer is beauty inspiration. At the same time, product promotion and tutorials on how to use cosmetic products are the other main reasons.

Nevertheless, such reasons cannot be denied, as these participants want to follow the influencers' homes and private lives. It may indicate two reasons. First of all, people who follow influencers with curiosity or because they like their lifestyle may not be objective about their product promotions. For example, these promotions create a desire for products they do not need. In short, promotions suggest that if they use that product, they may be like the influencer who endorses them.

Another reason why, regardless of product promotions or advertising collaborations, people watch the social media pages of influencers is for entertainment purposes.

This situation shows how valid word of mouth marketing is. However, friend advice does not fully explain this strategy. The least chosen option in these criteria was 'buying a product advertised by influencers'.

One of the reasons is that people think they are over-exposed to influencer ads, and these brand campaigns may become an aggressive marketing example. In this case, it could be said that it damages the trust of consumers in influencer promotions. If the social media influencer who promotes that product within a paid advertising campaign is not paying attention to consumers and pays more

attention to other criteria, then these ads do not give the consumers the effect they want.

Interestingly in the most frequent cosmetic shoppers' group, it is seen that shopping has the lowest rate according to influencer ads. It may indicate that consumers who often buy cosmetics consciously consume according to their skin type and do not need or value exposure to intense advertising.

The group that says they shop most in response to influencer advertisements is between the ages of 18-20. There may be three reasons for this; Firstly, people in this age group have just stepped into adulthood and may have more skin problems and be more inclined to try different products. Secondly, they are also more active on social media as a generation and have more social media savvy. Furthermore, popular beauty influencers may be more inclined to rely on the words of peers who are closer to them because they are in this age range or the same generation.

Thirdly, the influence of influencer advertisements in the 21-29 age range is also significant, but they stated that they pay more attention to friend recommendations. This situation may give clues as to how the credibility of influencers, which could be the subject of another study, changed according to the age group of consumers.

In age groups, it can be said that as people mature, they attach more importance to product quality and friend advice and are less affected by popular products and advertisements. At the rate of 8%, the participants said that the influencers do not find their ads reliable and this explains why they do not care about influencer ads as much as the others when buying a product.

The vast majority of respondents stated that they are not sure of reliability. It was an expected situation at the beginning of the survey because when the trust factor came into effect, there were advertising campaigns that resulted in many failures in social media and costed the health of consumers. It was predicted before the study that social media users familiar with the term influencer are aware of such problems.

The 'not sure' response suggests that people watch these ads, sometimes shop accordingly, but still feel completely unsure. 20 per cent of the participants stated that they purchased the product they saw in influencer advertisements after doing detailed research. This explains why the participants do not find these ads 100% reliable.

One of the aims of this research was to understand how female consumers were affected by these advertisements while purchasing cosmetic products and to understand their awareness of buying the product that suits their skin types and needs. Seventy-five per cent of the female consumers said that they knew their skin types and shop accordingly. However, 80% stated that popular products (endorsed and advertised by influencers) encourage people to buy.

There may be two reasons for this situation. First of all, people follow new products and purchase cosmetics more than once a month as proven. While making this purchase, they may be consciously exhibiting the behaviour of finding a trending product that suits them. However, another possibility is that people who are aware of their own needs cannot remain indifferent to these marketing campaigns by brands and influencers, and they feel they need a product as soon as they become aware of it. Both these cases suggest eWOM is effective, as stated in the literature.

In addition, the results of crosstabulation outputs with the Chi-Square test require comment. Firstly, the majority of respondents stated that they were not sure or rejected that influencers were honest about the products in their sponsored ad submissions. There is a significant difference between the group that responds, 'not sure' and the group that is positive about the products they see in sponsored advertisements and who intend to buy them.

It may indicate that users who are not 100% sure about the reliability of the products are unable to resist these advertisements and tend to purchase. At the same time, the same comment is made for the group, who do not find sponsored advertisements of influencers as reliable. However, there is no significant difference between people who are thinking more positively about the product

endorsed by influencers and think that influencers' sponsored advertisements are reliable.

When looking at other groups, there is a significant difference between the group that does not think positively about the product they see in sponsored advertisements and is not sure that influencers are honest in sponsored product promotions. Doubts about the reliability of advertisements lead to the behaviour of purchasing products. The same comment can be made among groups who do not think positively about the product they see in sponsored advertisements and believe that influencers are not honest in sponsored product promotions.

At the same time, 'I believe that influencers will not purposefully endorse a brand that will harm me', which is the question with which the most neutral answer is received, and the people are asked to evaluate, shows that when people see these product promotions, they do not think that they are just informative and useful ads. They are aware that this is a sponsored post, paid partnership, and when they see the introductions of these products, they do not perform a 100 per cent positive buying behaviour. They think that this cosmetic product can be harmful; its content is not clean and is only promoted to make money. In short, consumers can be anxious and feel unsafe when they see these sponsored promotions.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

The results give many insights on the impact of social media influencers on consumers' purchasing behaviour, the criteria that consumers base on making decisions and their dilemmas. The results obtained from the survey are primarily in line with the literature and lead the research goal, achieving the answers desired in the research.

The first question of the research is how consumers tend to buy the product that suits them, knowing their cosmetic needs. This question was discussed, and with the high rate obtained from the survey answers, it was found that consumers were aware of their own needs and made appropriate purchases. The intensity of this situation was the same and high in every age group. However, when the age groups are examined in detail since there is not an equal number of participants in each group, it was interpreted over the rates. They are only responders between the

ages of 18 and 20, who are more likely to take on popular products. The reasons that may cause this are discussed in the discussion section.

Along with these results, it has been observed that people do not buy cosmetics only through their research. They state that they could not remain indifferent to Influencer ads, but they did deep research after these ads and bought those products. It raises the question of how effective and honest they find these advertisements.

An answer to this question was sought, and the findings showed that respondents did not fully trust the comments on the products, in other words, sponsored product promotions. The majority of the participants stated that they are not sure about this issue or find it unreliable. However, they also stated that product promotions had led them to purchase the product positively. More than half of the respondents stated that after influencers are trying and interpreting product, they were more positive about the product.

Looking at the overall responses of this questionnaire, this shows that respondents make informed consumption while purchasing a cosmetic product but cannot resist the advertisements of brands with influencer collaborations. Looking at the age group, the participants said that as they got older, they responded less to these advertisements. However, nevertheless, they did not deny that they were affected by these advertisements.

These advertisements not only encouraged people to buy but also caused consumers to be nervous about the products. Brands use this marketing strategy to increase their awareness because, as is the case in the literature review, this is the most effortless and low-budget way they can reach the target audience.

These advertisements, as some of the respondents point out, appear to consumers as a form of aggressive marketing. While it increases brand awareness, it also shakes the trust of a group of consumers. In the long term, with the developing technology and increasing awareness of the people, these advertisements may not create the desired effect. They may even cause sales to drop, and loyal customers may be lost.

Some of the respondents said that as a product became more popular, they doubted the quality of that product and did not buy it anymore. When these results are evaluated, the respondents are shopping knowing their needs, but when they see these advertisements, they want to think and buy that product, even if they do not need it.

It is a situation that brands want, but it can be seen in the survey results that the consumer's trust in these advertisements is still not very high. In the long run, consumers may view negative advertisements for frequently advertised cosmetics. At the same time, since it affects the reputation and reliability of this brand, it can be more challenging to influence the consumer when another marketing strategy replaces influencer advertisements and collaborations with the developing technology. This situation should be considered as a subject for further research topic.

Along with developing marketing strategies, it should be examined how brands' awareness and reliability have changed and how consumers are affected by this situation. At the same time, this study gives clues about what consumers think about influencer credibility.

If all these studies are conducted and analysed, the impact of digital marketing on consumers on social media will be fully understood.

## **5 Concluding Thoughts on the Contribution of this Research, its Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research**

In this part of the dissertation, a summary of the findings of the research and suggestions for future studies are presented. Also, the difficulties and limitations experienced during the study were specified.

### **5.1 Implications of Findings for the Research Questions**

Findings showed that people do not fully trust influencer advertisements, but they are affected by these advertisements. It also shows that people pay more attention to their needs and product quality and friend comments when making purchases. In this case, it shows that people who are consciously trying to consume cosmetics cannot remain indifferent to product advertisements. These findings have enabled us to understand what effect influencers have in purchasing behaviour, which is one of the aims of the research.

The reason they did not find these advertisements reliable is that although they managed to attract attention, they stated that they did not have confidence in promoting the same product in too many influencers at the same time intervals. This has been illustrative in understanding the response of consumers, one of the objectives of this research, to these sponsored advertisements. Respondents do not believe that influencers used some products and that they only knew that it was a paid sponsorship.

Besides, it has been concluded that advertising campaigns on social media are useful for brands. This situation proved to be a low budget and effective method for brands to reach the target audience, as seen in the literature review. The vast majority of respondents said that they are familiar with the term influencer and that they are not indifferent to the advertisements positively or negatively. Since these advertisements have an undeniable effect on consumers, eWOM has proven how powerful a strategy is in marketing as in the literature. However, these advertising studies were found to disturb consumers from time to time, and it was discussed whether this strategy would harm brands in the long term.

Influencer advertisements were found to have a high effect but decreased gradually when looked at age groups. The participants mostly said that they were



sceptical of these advertisements. However, the findings show that these advertisements show the necessary and relevant impact and are a positive strategy for the sales of brands. Purchasing behaviour will always be an important issue for researchers and academics. And this behaviour will be an interesting issue as the marketing strategies change day by day.

## **5.2 Contributions and Limitations of the Research**

This study contributes to the literature on the behaviour of buying cosmetics and how social media advertisements affect this behaviour. This study was carried out only from the perspective of adult consumers, and how the behaviour of consumers was shaped with new generation marketing strategies and their opinions and complaints about this marketing strategy were understood. It is a research that can be used to understand how the consumer perspective is when determining the marketing strategies to companies and brands, how disturbed or satisfied with these advertisements.

One of the limitations of this research is that the subject of the research is in a specific and single area. It is very difficult to find peer-reviewed articles about the effect of social media advertisements on consumer behaviour in the field of cosmetics.

Also, in this study, where the quantitative analysis was performed, 104 participants were reached due to the time limit. Accessing more data to obtain more significant and precise results will be a factor that will increase the reliability of the study. The reasons for this proposal are; It is the fact that the participants gave neutral answers, and the equal number of people could not be reached from the age groups. In generalizing the findings, more reliable findings will be found with more participants in order to make the researcher safer and not have difficulty in generalizing the results.

Besides, the participants were Turkish and created a limitation to generalize the results of this study. Due to factors such as cultural differences, and intercultural study should be conducted in order to look at the study globally. Another limitation is that double perspective research can be conducted with the marketing managers of the brands so that the researcher can see the effects of these

advertisements on the brands. This research can take place in the form of an interview. However, due to a global problem, COVID-19 pandemic both made it difficult to reach the participants and did not make these interviews possible.

### **5.3 Recommendations for Practice**

Among the outputs of this study, there are findings that researchers can benefit from findings. When the influencers, which are the subject of another research, are evaluated from the participants and their credibility is asked to be discussed, the outcomes of the survey made for this research give the researchers clues on these issues. At the same time, there was no statistical test for each answer given by the participants for all questions, as time constraints and a specific issue were focused on. When these answers are tested, different findings can be found. At the same time, suggestions can be made about how brand marketing strategies should be on social media.

### **5.4 Recommendations for Future Research**

This study was carried out with Turkish participants, as mentioned in previous sections. Further studies can be carried out in an intercultural way to reach a global conclusion. Besides, age groups are an important criterion, and the equal distribution of age groups will make a benefit for brands to reach their target customers. It makes it easier for the researcher to understand which group reacts negatively or is satisfied. In addition, interviews with brands marketing managers and social media influencers will help to understand this issue more deeply, and it will be more detailed research than conducting a survey only with consumers.

### **5.5 Final Conclusion and Reflections**

This study was started by determining research objectives and was carried out according to these objectives. With this research, it provided an opportunity to understand how consumers are affected by the advertisements in the cosmetics industry and according to what criteria the personal cosmetic products are purchased. It was not easy to analyse and collect quantitative data and to reach the appropriate consumer group for these data. These and other restrictions and suggestions are mentioned in the previous section. An intercultural study with a larger population will yield a more definitive final result. With this research, the tendency of people to buy cosmetics that they see in sponsored advertisements

was discovered. It has been discovered that the importance of digital marketing and brands can develop these marketing strategies.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A –



### Griffith College GBS

### Plain Language Statement

#### **I. Introduction to the Research Study**

Effects of Influencers on Consumer Behaviours on Social Media: Do Audiences know their needs, or they only follow their opinion leaders?

Griffith College Graduate Business School

Principal Investigator: Garrett Ryan

Email: [garrett.ryan@griffith.ie](mailto:garrett.ryan@griffith.ie)

Author: Irmak Kucur

Email: [kucurirmak@gmail.com](mailto:kucurirmak@gmail.com)

#### **II. Details of what involvement in the Research Study will require**

This project involves taking part in completion of a survey. It aims to collect the data from audiences of influencers and understanding of people's needs and how to make decisions. The participants of survey's names and any other personal information will not be recorded.

#### **III. Potential risks to participants from involvement in the Research Study (if greater than that encountered in everyday life)**

I do not anticipate any risk to participants as a result of involvement in this Research Study.

#### **IV. Benefits (direct or indirect) to participants from involvement in the Research Study**

The objective of this Research Study is to gain new knowledge about influencers and their audiences and understanding their effectiveness and effects of people decisions. There is no information or statistics about how people change their opinions through influencer marketing and this study provides reaching this information with surveys and researches.

#### **V. Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations**

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of participants. Participant names will not be recorded, as all participants will be assigned a code. the final report to protect participant's identity. Confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations.

#### **VI. Advice as to whether or not data is to be destroyed after a minimum period**

Data which is recorded from surveys will be destroyed and will not using any other research.

#### **VII. Statement that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary**

Involvement in this Research Study is voluntary. Participants will participate in the survey voluntarily. If they do not want to participate or give up, they can leave the survey at any time

**VIII. Any other relevant information**

Participants will be based on Turkey to reaching proper data and prepare question by looking these people's behaviours and habits.

**A Plain Language Statement should end with the following statement:**

**If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person.**

**Please contact:**

Dr Garrett Ryan,

Griffith College Research Ethics Committee

South Circular Road, Dublin 8, Ireland

Mail: [garrett.ryan@griffith.ie](mailto:garrett.ryan@griffith.ie)

Tel: +3531416332

*Appendix B –*



**GRIFFITH COLLEGE DUBLIN**

**Griffith College GBS**

**Informed Consent Form**

*Research Study Title* : Effects of Influencers on Consumer Behaviours on Social Media: Do Audiences know their needs, or they only follow their opinion leaders?

Griffith College Graduate Business School

Principal Investigator: Garrett Ryan,

Email: [garrett.ryan@griffith.ie](mailto:garrett.ryan@griffith.ie)

Author: Irmak Kucur

Email: [kucurirmak@gmail.com](mailto:kucurirmak@gmail.com)

**Clarification of the purpose of the research**

The aim of this research is to understand how to effect of influencers to consumers buying experience with their comments of proper product. This research aims to understand the question which is; 'Do people know their needs or they follow trends that are be popular thanks to influencers? '

**Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Plain Language Statement**

This project involves completion of a survey. Questions will be directed towards your thoughts on the influencer marketing process and how does it affect people's decision-making experience.

*Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question).*

*I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me)* *Yes/No*

*I understand the information provided* *Yes/No*

*I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study* *Yes/No*

*I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions* *Yes/No*

**Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary**

Involvement in this Research Study is voluntary. Participants will participate in the survey voluntarily. If they do not want to participate or give up, they can leave the survey at any time.

**Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations**

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of participants. Participant names will not be recorded, as all participants will be assigned a code. the final report to protect participant's identity. Confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations.

**Any other relevant information**

Participants will be based on Turkey to reaching proper data and prepare question by looking Turkish influencers and Turkish people's habits.

**VII. Signature:**

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researchers, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project

**Participants Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name in Block Capitals:** \_\_\_\_\_

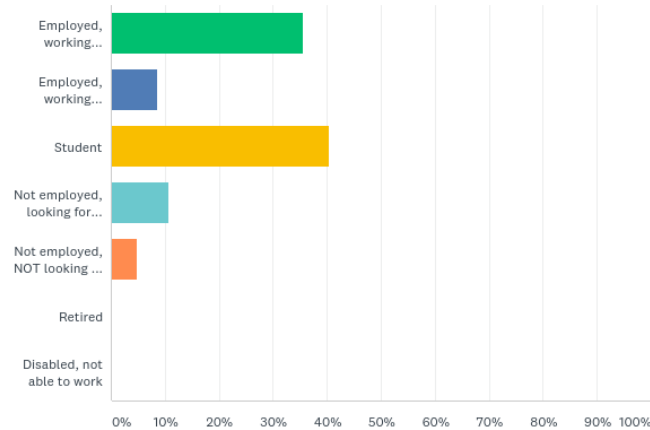
**Witness:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix C –

**Which of the following categories best describes your employment status?**

Answered: 104 Skipped: 0

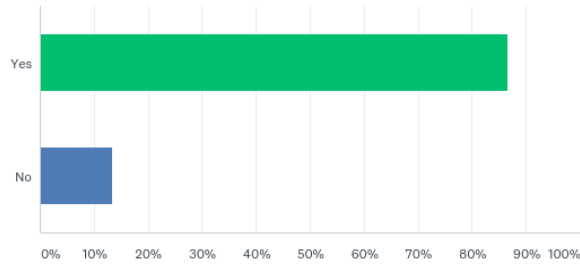


Powered by SurveyMonkey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Employed, working full-time	35.58%	37
Employed, working part-time	8.65%	9
Student	40.38%	42
Not employed, looking for work	10.58%	11
Not employed, NOT looking for work	4.81%	5
Retired	0.00%	0
Disabled, not able to work	0.00%	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>104</b>

## Are you familiar with the term Influencer?

Answered: 104 Skipped: 0

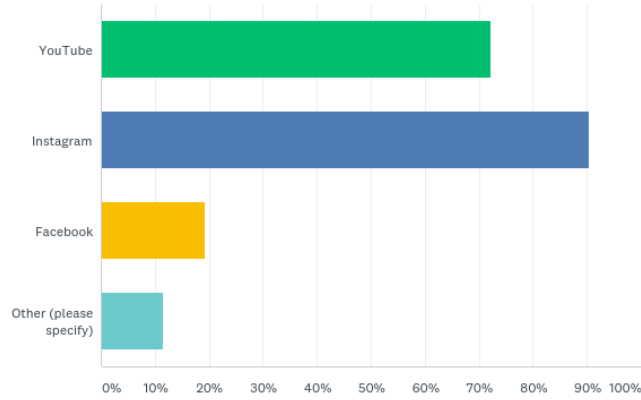


Powered by  SurveyMonkey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	86.54%	90
No	13.46%	14
TOTAL		104

## Which of the following online sites do you frequently visit?

Answered: 104 Skipped: 0

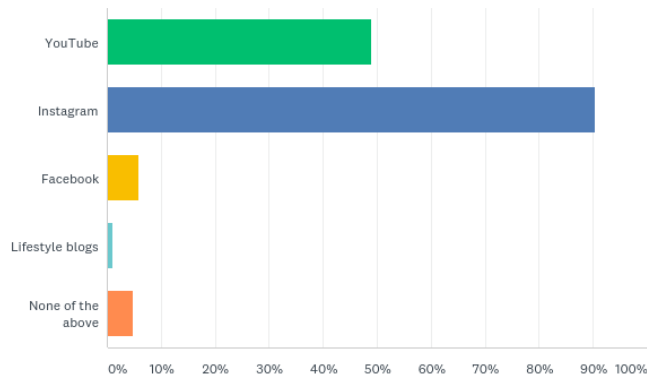


Powered by  SurveyMonkey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
YouTube	72.12%	75
Instagram	90.38%	94
Facebook	19.23%	20
Other (please specify)	11.54%	12
Total Respondents: 104		

## On which of the following sites are you subscribed to or follow a celebrity or popular accounts?

Answered: 104 Skipped: 0

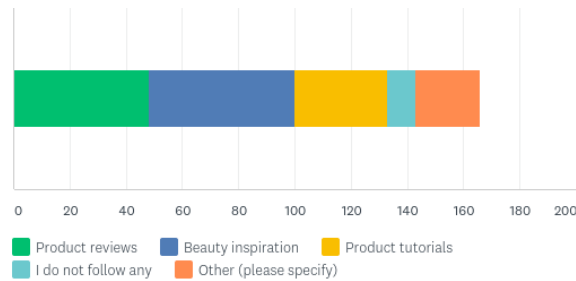


Powered by  SurveyMonkey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
YouTube	49.04%	51
Instagram	90.38%	94
Facebook	5.77%	6
Lifestyle blogs	0.96%	1
None of the above	4.81%	5
Total Respondents: 104		

### What is your main reason for following influencers on social media?

Answered: 104 Skipped: 0



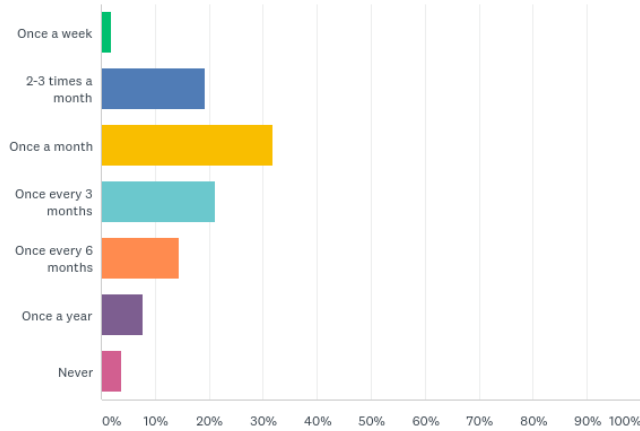
Powered by SurveyMonkey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Product reviews	46.15%	48
Beauty inspiration	50.00%	52
Product tutorials	31.73%	33
I do not follow any	9.62%	10
Other (please specify)	22.12%	23
Total Respondents: 104		



## About how often do you shop for cosmetics?

Answered: 104 Skipped: 0

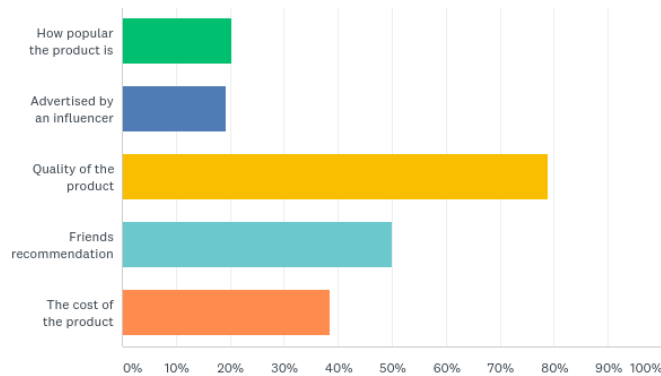


Powered by SurveyMonkey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Once a week	1.92% 2
2-3 times a month	19.23% 20
Once a month	31.73% 33
Once every 3 months	21.15% 22
Once every 6 months	14.42% 15
Once a year	7.69% 8
Never	3.85% 4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>104</b>

## What do you look for when you are purchasing a beauty product?

Answered: 104 Skipped: 0

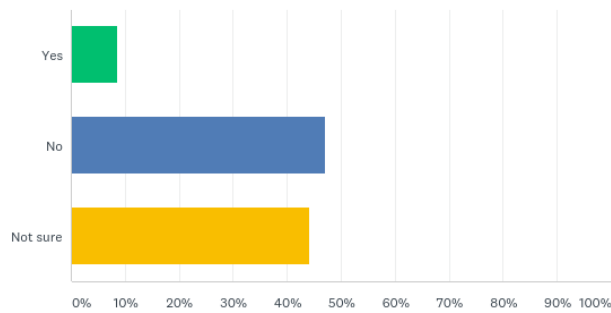


Powered by SurveyMonkey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
How popular the product is	20.19%	21
Advertised by an influencer	19.23%	20
Quality of the product	78.85%	82
Friends recommendation	50.00%	52
The cost of the product	38.46%	40
Total Respondents: 104		

### Do you believe that beauty influencers are truthful about whether they are being sponsored to promote a product?

Answered: 104 Skipped: 0

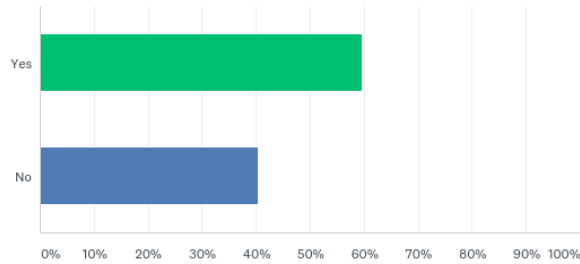


Powered by SurveyMonkey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	8.65%	9
No	47.12%	49
Not sure	44.23%	46
TOTAL		104

## If an influencer has tried and endorsed a product would that encourage you to think more positively about that product?

Answered: 104 Skipped: 0

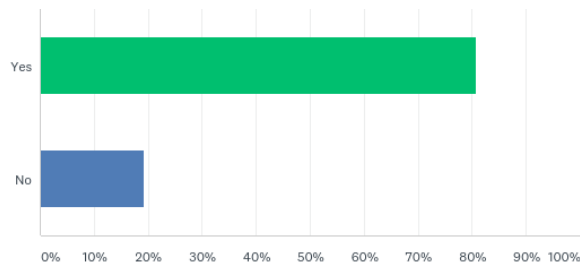


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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	59.62%	62
No	40.38%	42
TOTAL		104

## Does the popularity of the product affect your purchasing behaviour when purchasing a product?

Answered: 104 Skipped: 0

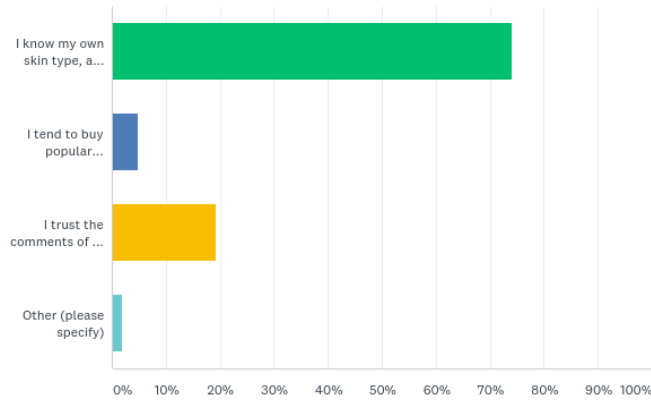


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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	80.77%	84
No	19.23%	20
TOTAL		104

**Are the most important criteria for purchasing beauty products are the requirements of your skin, or are the comments of those who try and like this product?**

Answered: 104 Skipped: 0

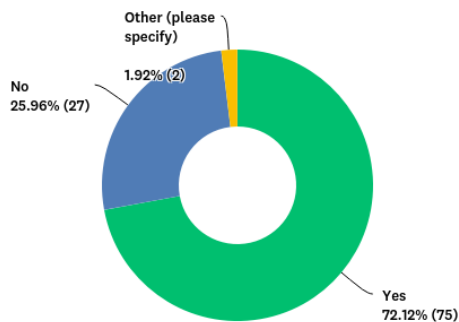


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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
I know my own skin type, and I tend to buy the product, which is definitely beneficial for my skin.	74.04% 77
I tend to buy popular products introduced by influencers.	4.81% 5
I trust the comments of the influencers, and after in-depth research, I buy the product that benefits my skin.	19.23% 20
Other (please specify)	1.92% 2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>104</b>

**When buying beauty and skincare products are you loyal towards the brands that you buy?**

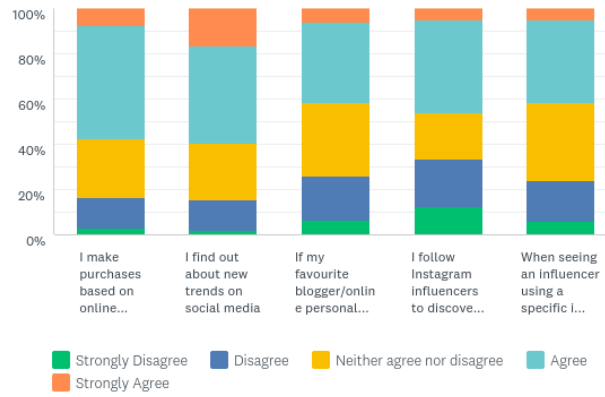
Answered: 104 Skipped: 0



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## How much do you agree with the following statements?

Answered: 104 Skipped: 0

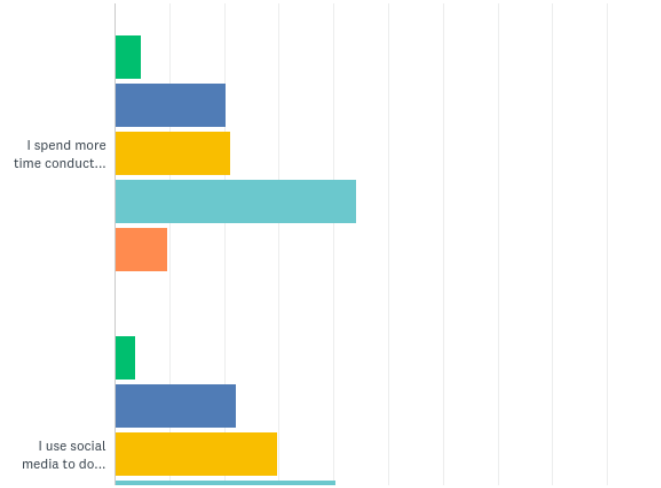


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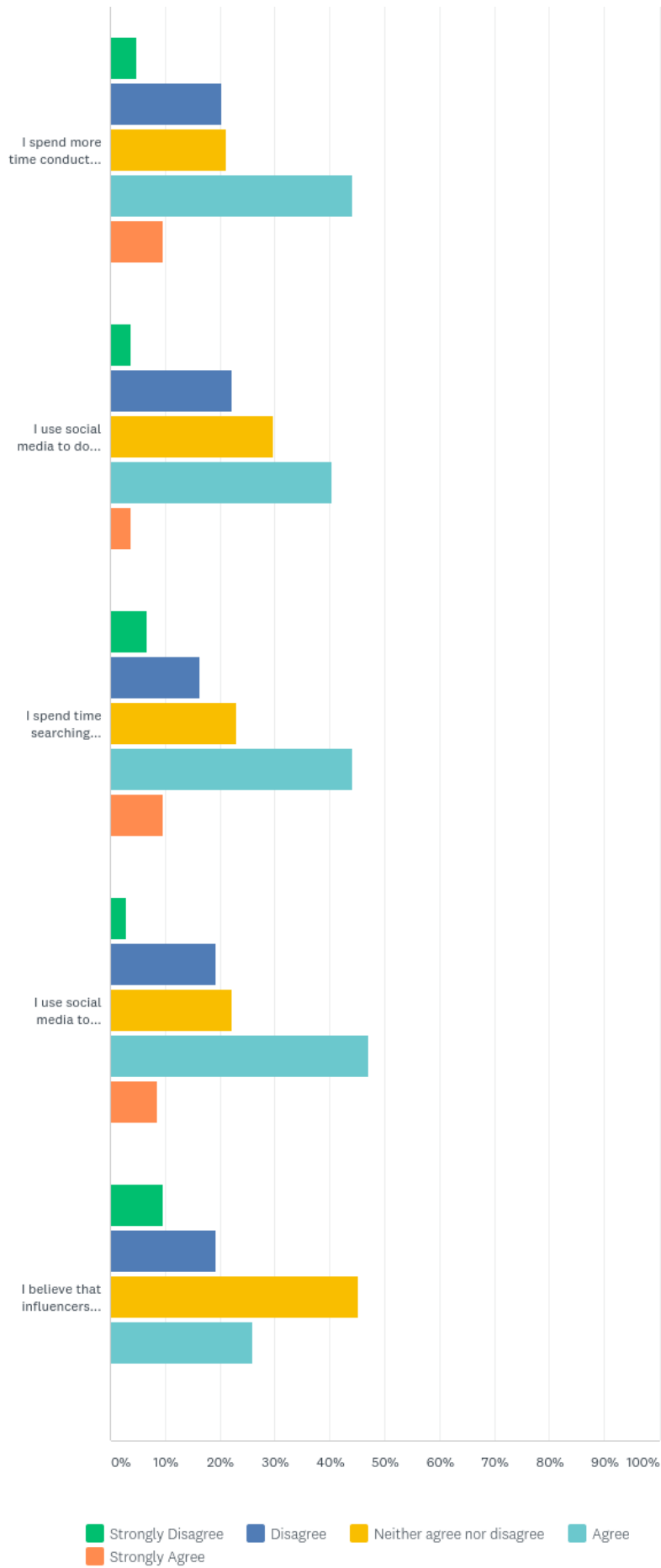
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
I make purchases based on online recommendations.	2.88% 3	13.46% 14	25.96% 27	50.00% 52	7.69% 8	104	3.46
I find out about new trends on social media	1.92% 2	13.46% 14	25.00% 26	43.27% 45	16.35% 17	104	3.59
If my favourite blogger/online personality recommends a brand, I am more likely to try it.	6.73% 7	19.23% 20	32.69% 34	35.58% 37	5.77% 6	104	3.14
I follow Instagram influencers to discover new products on the market	12.50% 13	21.15% 22	20.19% 21	41.35% 43	4.81% 5	104	3.05
When seeing an influencer using a specific item of my interest it makes me long for that product	5.77% 6	18.27% 19	34.62% 36	36.54% 38	4.81% 5	104	3.16

## How much do you agree with the following statements?

Answered: 104 Skipped: 0



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	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE</b>	<b>DISAGREE</b>	<b>NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE</b>	<b>AGREE</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>WEIGHTED AVERAGE</b>
I spend more time conducting research about products that are unfamiliar to me	4.81% 5	20.19% 21	21.15% 22	44.23% 46	9.62% 10	104	3.34
I use social media to do product research in order to minimise research time	3.85% 4	22.12% 23	29.81% 31	40.38% 42	3.85% 4	104	3.18
I spend time searching though social media to find alternative products	6.73% 7	16.35% 17	23.08% 24	44.23% 46	9.62% 10	104	3.34
I use social media to research products that I am considering buying	2.88% 3	19.23% 20	22.12% 23	47.12% 49	8.65% 9	104	3.39
I believe that influencers will not purposefully endorse a brand that will harm me.	9.62% 10	19.23% 20	45.19% 47	25.96% 27	0.00% 0	104	2.88