

Trust, Clicks, and Conversions: A Comparative Analysis on Micro and Macro Influencers on Consumer Trust, Engagement, and Purchase Decisions

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Abstract

The study offers a comprehensive comparative analysis of micro and macro influencers, focusing on their influence on consumer trust, engagement behavior, and purchase decisions. As social media continues to reshape the marketing landscape, influencers have emerged as central figures in brand communication strategies. However, the varying impact of different influencer types remains an area requiring further investigation. A quantitative research design was employed for this research. Data was collected through a structured survey questionnaire distributed using a non-probability snowball sampling technique. The survey yielded a total of 211 valid responses, providing a robust dataset for analysis. To interpret the data effectively, statistical tools such as percentage analysis and Chi-square tests were employed using SPSS software. The findings of the study reveal distinct differences in how audiences perceive and interact with micro versus macro influencers, offering insights into which category is more effective in driving consumer behaviour. The study contributes to the growing body of knowledge in influencer marketing by highlighting key audience response variables that inform brand collaboration strategies.

Keywords: influencer marketing, macro influencers, micro influences, consumer trust, consumer engagement, purchase decisions

1. INTRODUCTION

The advent of social media has significantly reshaped the landscape of global communication, interaction, and information sharing. What began as a tool for personal interaction has evolved into a powerful ecosystem where individuals, businesses, and communities engage in real-time dialogue and storytelling. As of April 2025, approximately 5.31 billion individuals worldwide are active users of social media, accounting for 64.7% of the global population (Kemp, 2025; Statista, 2025). This increase highlights the profound impact social media has on various aspects of society, including marketing, education, and social interaction.

These platforms have shifted the dynamics of how individuals consume media, replacing traditional one-way communication with interactive, user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This participatory culture empowers users to create, share, and influence opinions at scale—blurring the lines between content consumers and content creators. This has led to the emergence of new communication

paradigms, where peer recommendations, user-generated content, and influencer interactions hold more persuasive power than traditional advertising (De Veirman et al, 2017).

One of the most pivotal outcomes of this transformation is the rise of user-generated content (UGC), which has fundamentally altered the way media is created, shared, and consumed. According to Stackla (2021), 79% of consumers report that UGC plays a substantial role in shaping their purchasing decisions, often more so than content from brands or influencers. This impact stems from UGC's perceived sincerity and community-based endorsement, which taps into peer-to-peer validation.

Social media has thus laid the foundation for influencer marketing, a strategy that capitalizes on the trust, relatability, and expertise of online personalities to influence consumer attitudes and behaviors. Brown and Hayes (2008) defined influencer marketing as a form of marketing that involves leveraging prominent individuals, known as influencers, to promote a brand's message to a broader audience. Unlike traditional advertising, influencer marketing relies on authenticity, trust, and relatability to create a more personal connection with consumers.

By leveraging the parasocial relationships that followers form with influencers, brands are able to humanize their messaging and integrate their products into relatable, everyday narratives. This shift has redefined the dynamics of brand communication. Influencer marketing has become a cornerstone of digital strategy, enabling brands to move from monologue-driven advertising to dialogue-driven engagement (Boerman et al., 2017).

Moreover, the democratization of influence has empowered micro-influencers, individuals with smaller but more engaged followings, to compete with macro-influencers and celebrities in delivering impactful marketing outcomes (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). As influencer marketing continues to grow, understanding its mechanisms, particularly how different tiers of influencers impact consumer trust, engagement, and purchase behavior, has become essential for brands aiming to optimize their communication strategies in the digital age.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In recent years, influencer marketing has become a pivotal strategy in digital marketing, shaping consumer behavior and brand perception. Consumers who engage with peers on social platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter also expect a similar level of interactivity and engagement from brands (Berne-Manero & Marzo-Navarro, 2020). In this constantly evolving social media landscape, influencers are increasingly categorized into micro and macro tiers based on follower count. Micro-influencers and macro-influencers play distinct roles in digital marketing, each offering unique advantages and challenges.

2.1. Influencer Marketing and Consumer Behavior

Influencer marketing leverages opinion leaders to promote products or services on digital platforms, particularly social media. As a form of native advertising, it relies on the trust influencers build with their audiences to sway consumer attitudes and behaviors. Consumers tend to exhibit a higher level of trust toward product recommendations made by social media influencers than traditional advertisements due to their perceived relatability and authenticity (De Veirman et al., 2017). This trust is rooted in the informal, everyday tone of influencer content, which tends to feel more like peer-to-peer conversation than commercial persuasion.

The perceived credibility of social media influencers is a critical factor in influencing consumer attitudes and perceptions. Consumers tend to trust influencers who are perceived as authentic and knowledgeable, which enhances the perceived value and brand image of the products they endorse (Kanwar & Huang,

2022). Lou and Yuan (2019) assert that influencer credibility significantly influences consumer attitudes and behaviors, including trust and purchase intention. These findings collectively emphasize that it is not merely exposure, but the perceived trustworthiness and expertise of the influencer that drives consumer responses.

Authenticity and transparency are crucial in building trust between influencers and their followers. These elements significantly influence consumer purchasing behaviors, consumers demonstrate a higher inclination to trust and act upon recommendations made by influencers who are perceived as authentic and credible.(Viswanadh, 2024). This aligns with the broader understanding of the digital consumer psyche, where transparency signals sincerity and reduces the perception of manipulation or coercion.

The parasocial relationships that consumers develop with influencers can enhance the perceived value of endorsed products. This relationship is mediated by the influencer's credibility and the emotional connection they foster with their audience (Kanwar & Huang, 2022). The illusion of personal interaction, even in one-way communication, creates an emotional bond that boosts message acceptance and consumer trust.

Positive attitudes towards influencers can lead to increased purchasing intentions. Consumers who trust and feel connected to influencers are more likely to be influenced by their endorsements, leading to higher conversion rates (Singh, 2021). These psychological dynamics of emotional connection and trust often translate into tangible consumer behaviors such as repeat purchases or brand switching.

Social media platforms facilitate reciprocal relationships between influencers and consumers through likes, comments, and shares. These interactions enhance the perceived intimacy and connection between influencers and their audiences, which can influence consumer behavior by making the relationship feel less commercial and more personal (Segova, 2020). Such two-way communication amplifies the influencer's persuasive power by giving consumers a voice and a sense of participation in the dialogue.

Consumer-influencer engagement involves consuming, contributing, and creating content related to influencer endorsements. This engagement is a key driver of consumer behavior, as it reflects the consumer's intention to interact with and be influenced by the content. High levels of engagement, such as sharing and creating content, indicate a strong influence of social media influencers on consumer behavior, leading to brand loyalty and evangelism (Rungruangjit & Charoenpornpanichkul, 2022). These behaviors signal not only passive agreement with the influencer's message but also active advocacy—a powerful outcome for any marketing strategy.

However, it is also important to note that Word of Mouth (WoM) remains a powerful influence on consumer behavior, often surpassing the impact of influencer marketing. Consumers tend to trust recommendations from their social circles more than those from influencers (Singh, 2021). This underscores the enduring importance of personal relationships in shaping consumer decisions, and suggests that influencer campaigns may benefit from strategies that integrate or simulate authentic peer recommendations.

2.2. Micro vs. Macro Influencers: A Comparative Lens

A primary distinction between micro and macro influencers lies in their relative trade-off between reach and engagement. Macro influencers, with follower counts typically ranging between 100,000 and 1 million, are often engaged for their expansive visibility and ability to generate mass awareness (Opic & Pandža Bajs, 2024). In contrast, micro influencers—commonly defined as those with 10,000 to 100,000 followers—are known to cultivate stronger, more meaningful engagement rates (Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Conde & Casais, 2023).

Micro influencers consistently outperform their macro counterparts in trust and perceived authenticity. Conde and Casais (2023) found that followers of micro influencers experience higher levels of parasocial interaction—the psychological closeness people feel with media figures—which enhances message acceptance and perceived credibility. This finding aligns with Kay et al. (2020), who argue that disclosure transparency and emotional resonance play a vital role in the credibility of micro influencers, especially when their endorsements appear sincere and integrated into their personal narratives.

Balaban and Mustățea (2019) also observe that micro influencers are viewed as more relatable, often regarded as peers rather than distant figures. In contrast, macro influencers—while respected for their professionalism and popularity—can suffer from the perception of being overly commercial, particularly when promoting too many sponsored products. According to Li et al. (2024), this authenticity gap affects how followers respond to brand endorsements, with micro influencers driving more persuasive intent under conditions of higher message-persona congruence.

From a budgetary and performance standpoint, micro influencers are significantly more cost-effective. Due to their relatively lower rates and high engagement-to-cost ratio, brands with limited budgets often favor micro influencers for campaigns that prioritize conversions over visibility (Berne-Manero & Marzo-Navarro, 2020). Kay et al. (2020) support this by noting that micro influencers offer better returns per engagement than macro influencers, particularly when advertising disclosure is optimized for clarity and authenticity.

Li et al. (2024) underscore that while macro influencers may drive reach, this often comes at a diminishing marginal return when compared to the ROI generated by micro influencers in high-engagement niches. The nuanced targeting capabilities of micro influencers allow brands to reach highly relevant audiences with minimal spillover, maximizing the efficiency of influencer spend.

The use of micro and macro influencers depends heavily on campaign goals. Macro influencers, with their broad audiences, are best suited for brand awareness campaigns, large-scale product launches, or viral campaigns where visibility is key (Opic & Pandža Bajsić, 2024; Conde & Casais, 2023). Hu et al. (2024) suggest macro influencers can also serve well in cross-platform campaigns, leveraging their broad appeal across multiple touchpoints.

On the other hand, micro influencers excel in niche-targeted campaigns, storytelling-driven marketing, and building long-term consumer-brand relationships. They are particularly effective in sectors like beauty, fashion, wellness, and sustainability—where consumer trust is paramount (Berne-Manero & Marzo-Navarro, 2020; Singh, 2021). Li et al. (2024) demonstrate that in such contexts, micro influencers lead to higher message engagement and product recall, outperforming macro influencers when consumer mindset favors community and credibility over celebrity.

2.3. Follower Count and Perceived Credibility

While a higher follower count can signal popularity and authority, it does not always equate to increased trustworthiness or authenticity in the eyes of consumers. Influencers with a large following are often perceived as authoritative figures, leveraging the principle of social proof to enhance their credibility (Han et al., 2024). However, this vast reach can also lead to skepticism among consumers, who may question the authenticity of endorsements, suspecting them to be driven by commercial interests rather than genuine recommendations (Han et al., 2024).

Conversely, micro-influencers, characterized by a smaller but more engaged audience, tend to foster higher levels of trust and relatability. Their perceived authenticity and closer connection with followers often result in more effective persuasion and influence on consumer behavior (van

Reijmersdal et al., 2024). This is further supported by findings that micro-influencers' endorsements lead to higher perceived authenticity of the endorsed brand (Park et al., 2021).

The impact of follower count on perceived credibility is also influenced by contextual factors such as the influencer's niche and the cultural orientation of the target audience. For instance, in collectivist cultures, a higher follower count may enhance credibility due to the emphasis on social conformity and group consensus (Kim & Yoon, 2024). Similarly, consumers with high uncertainty avoidance orientation tend to perceive influencers with a large follower number as more reliable and credible information sources (Kim & Yoon, 2024).

While some studies highlight the advantages of a large follower base, others point to the effectiveness of micro-influencers in driving engagement and purchase intentions. This dichotomy suggests that follower count alone is not a definitive indicator of credibility; instead, the quality of engagement and the authenticity of the influencer play pivotal roles (Han et al., 2024).

2.4. RESEARCH GAP

While influencer marketing literature is growing, key gaps remain in understanding the distinct roles of micro and macro influencers in shaping consumer trust, engagement, credibility, and purchase intentions, especially in the Indian context.

Although prior studies acknowledge the role of influencer credibility, there is limited empirical evidence comparing how trust is attributed to micro vs. macro influencers. The impact of follower count on perceived credibility also remains underexplored, with existing findings being mixed. Hence, there is a need for a comprehensive, comparative analysis that investigates how follower count influences trust, engagement, credibility, and purchase intent across both influencer types — a gap this study seeks to fill.

2.5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employs Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), Source Credibility Theory (SCT), and Parasocial Interaction Theory (PSI) to examine how micro and macro influencers impact consumer trust, engagement, credibility, and purchase intention.

2.5.1. Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

UGT posits that audiences are active participants who engage with media to fulfill psychological and social needs (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973). The theory identifies five primary needs: information, personal identity, social interaction, and entertainment.

According to Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973), media users seek to fulfill needs such as:

- **Information and Education:** Learning about current events, society, and general knowledge.
- **Personal Identity:** Seeking affirmation of personal values and behavioral models.
- **Integration and Social Interaction:** Developing an understanding of others' experiences and fostering a sense of social belonging.
- **Entertainment:** Escaping, relaxing, or enjoying aesthetic experiences.

Ruggiero (2000) extended UGT to digital platforms, emphasizing interactivity, demassification, and asynchronicity, which shape media consumption in the social media age. UGT helps explain why users actively follow influencers — selecting them based on gratifications like inspiration, authenticity, or relatability.

Macro influencers often satisfy needs for aspirational content and prestige, aligning with personal identity and entertainment (Katz et al., 1973). In contrast, micro influencers, seen as authentic and relatable, fulfill needs for social interaction and trustworthy information. UGT also supports the idea that consumer

interactions (likes, shares, purchases) are goal-directed, reinforcing the active role of the audience in influencer engagement.

2.5.2. Source Credibility Theory (SCT)

SCT states that message effectiveness depends on how credible the source appears to the audience (Hovland et al., 1953). It identifies two main components: expertise (knowledge and competence) and trustworthiness (honesty and integrity). Later, Ohanian (1990) introduced attractiveness as a third dimension, acknowledging its role in enhancing persuasive appeal.

In influencer marketing, micro influencers are often seen as more trustworthy and relatable, while macro influencers are perceived as more authoritative due to their broader reach. However, the latter may sometimes seem less authentic. SCT helps explain why follower count can affect perceived credibility — influencing whether an audience views an influencer as knowledgeable, sincere, or merely commercial. It also clarifies why consumers trust micro influencers more, despite their smaller audiences.

2.5.3. Parasocial Interaction Theory (PSI)

PSI Theory, introduced by Horton and Wohl (1956), describes one-sided relationships where individuals feel emotionally connected to media figures. Over time, these relationships evolve into parasocial relationships (PSRs) — emotionally meaningful bonds (Rubin & McHugh, 1987).

Key components of PSI include:

- **Illusion of Intimacy:** Audiences feel they “know” influencers personally through behind-the-scenes content and personal storytelling (Horton & Wohl, 1956).
- **Perceived Reciprocity:** Followers feel influencers are speaking directly to them, enhancing emotional engagement (Rubin & McHugh, 1987).
- **Emotional Investment:** Viewers may experience deep emotional reactions based on influencers’ content or life events (Giles, 2002).

PSI is especially relevant to social media, where influencers actively engage followers through stories, comments, and personal updates. Micro influencers, due to their approachable and less commercial image, often foster stronger parasocial bonds, resulting in higher trust and engagement than macro influencers. This theory explains why smaller influencers may be more effective in generating authentic consumer connections and influencing purchase decisions.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to systematically examine and compare the effectiveness of micro and macro influencers based on three key variables: consumer trust, audience engagement, and purchase intentions. A quantitative approach was selected due to its capacity to produce measurable, objective data that can reveal statistically significant patterns and relationships (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.1.2. Sampling

A non-probability snowball sampling technique was adopted for respondent recruitment. This method involves identifying a small pool of initial participants who then refer or recruit others from their network to participate in the study. Snowball sampling is particularly useful when researching niche populations or when access to a broader sampling frame is limited (Naderifar, et al, 2017). Due to the niche nature of the subject matter in the current study, individuals who actively follow or engage with influencers on social media, this method was appropriate for reaching relevant participants through referrals within

digital communities. Initial respondents were selected based on their known interest in influencer marketing, and they were subsequently asked to share the survey with others in their networks who met the inclusion criteria.

3.1.3. Survey

Data was collected through a structured survey questionnaire, a widely used tool in quantitative research for gathering standardized data efficiently (Groves et al., 2009). The questionnaire was circulated with individuals aged between 18 and above who actively use social media and follow at least one influencer (micro or macro). The questionnaire included a combination of structured (closed-ended) and semi-structured (open-ended) questions to allow for limited qualitative elaboration. Likert scale items (5-point scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree") to assess variables such as trust, engagement, credibility, and purchase influence. The Likert scale is a validated psychometric tool frequently used in social science research to assess attitudes and perceptions quantitatively (Joshi et al., 2015).

3.1.4. Statistical Tools

To analyze the collected data, percentage analysis was employed to understand the distribution and frequency of responses across various variables. This method helped in presenting the data in a simplified and interpretable form, enabling easier comparison of trends and patterns.

In addition, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to perform the Chi-square test of independence. "The Chi-square test of independence is commonly used to assess the relationship between categorical variables" (McHugh, 2013). This test was applied to determine whether there was a statistically significant association between selected categorical variables relevant to the study. The Chi-square test enabled the researcher to validate relationships and test hypotheses based on the survey data.

3.2. Research Objectives

In the evolving digital marketing landscape, social media influencers have emerged as pivotal players in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors. Among these influencers, two distinct categories of micro and macro influencers have gained prominence for their unique approaches to audience engagement, content creation, and brand promotion. Each objective is designed to address a critical aspect of how consumers perceive and interact with these influencers, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of influencer marketing.

The researcher has chosen the following objectives for this research:

1. To evaluate the level of trust consumers attribute to micro and macro influencers.
2. To analyse the differences in engagement levels between micro and macro influencers.
3. To examine the impact of follower count on perceived credibility of influencers.
4. To compare the influence of micro and macro influencers on consumers' purchase decisions.

3.3. Research Question

To explore the objectives of this study, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. How does the level of trust attributed to micro influencers differ from that attributed to macro influencers among consumers?
2. What are the key differences in engagement levels generated by micro and macro influencers across social media platforms?
3. What is the impact of follower count on the perceived credibility of influencers?

4. How do micro and macro influencers differ in their influence on consumers' purchase decisions?

3.4. Hypothesis

To examine dynamics between micro and macro influencers empirically, the following hypotheses have been formulated. They aim to test differences in consumer trust, engagement levels, perceived credibility, and influence on purchase intentions between micro and macro influencers. These hypotheses are grounded in existing research suggesting that audience size alone does not always translate to greater impact, particularly in domains like trust and authenticity (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

Hypothesis 1: This hypothesis examines whether micro-influencers, due to their perceived authenticity and approachability, inspire more trust compared to macro-influencers, who may be viewed as more commercialized. Trust is a vital component in influencer marketing as it directly affects how consumers respond to promotional messages and product endorsements.

H1: There is a significant difference in consumer trust between micro and macro influencers.

H01: There is no significant difference in consumer trust between micro and macro influencers.

Hypothesis 2: Engagement refers to measurable interactions such as likes, comments, shares, and saves. Studies have shown that micro-influencers often achieve higher engagement rates, as their content resonates more with smaller, dedicated audiences. This hypothesis tests whether those differences are statistically significant.

H2: There is a significant difference in engagement levels between micro influencers and macro influencers.

H02: There is no significant difference in engagement levels between micro influencers and macro influencers.

Hypothesis 3: This hypothesis explores whether an influencer's follower count impacts how credible they are perceived to be. While a large following can enhance perceived authority, it can also reduce perceived authenticity. This relationship is complex and may vary depending on audience attitudes and platform norms.

H3: There is a significant relationship between the follower count and the perceived credibility of influencers.

H03: There is no significant relationship between follower count and the perceived credibility of influencers.

Hypothesis 4: This hypothesis explores whether an influencer's follower count impacts how credible they are perceived to be. While a large following can enhance perceived authority, it can also reduce perceived authenticity. This relationship is complex and may vary depending on audience attitudes and platform norms.

H4: There is a significant difference in the influence of micro influencers and macro influencers on consumers' purchase decisions.

H04: There is no significant difference in the influence of micro- and macro-influencers on consumers' purchase decisions.

3.5. Operational Definitions

In the context of this study, it is essential to establish clear operational definitions for key terms related to the evolving landscape of online communication and influence. The following operational definitions are used in this research to ensure clarity and consistency:

Social Media: Social media are “forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information,

ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)” (Merriam-Webster, 2025).

Social Media Influencers: SMIs are defined as “ordinary Internet users that have a substantial number of followers in social media and a recognized above-average ability to influence behaviors and attitudes. These individuals are described as particularly opinionative, trustworthy and often sought out by their peers – whether online or offline – for their advice” (Conde & Casais, 2023).

Micro influencers: Micro-influencers are “ordinary individuals with a smaller yet notable impact within specific communities, with followers numbering between 1000 and 100,000” (Chen et al., 2024).

Macro influencers: Macro influencers have “a more diverse audience in comparison with micro-influencers and a substantial number of loyal followers between 100,000 – 1,000,000.” (Conde & Casais, 2023).

4. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

4.1. Data Analysis

The research received 211 responses through a survey questionnaire. The data collected was systematically analyzed to address the research objectives. Quantitative responses, primarily gathered using Likert scale items, were subjected to statistical analysis to identify patterns, relationships, and differences in consumer perceptions of micro and macro influencers. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize general trends, while inferential technique of correlation analysis helped compare trust levels, engagement, credibility, and purchase intentions associated with each influencer type. This analysis provided a clear understanding of how influencer characteristics impact consumer behavior in the digital marketing landscape.

4.1.1. Demographic Profile

Age of the Respondents

The age distribution of the survey respondents reveals that the majority fall within the 18–24 age group, accounting for 53.55% (n = 113) respondents. This suggests that over half of the participants are young adults, a demographic that is typically very active on social media and highly engaged with influencer content. This is followed by a notable proportion in the 25–34 age, representing 34.60% (n = 73) respondents. Additionally, only 2.37% (n = 5) of the respondents belonged to the older age groups of 45 - 64 age.

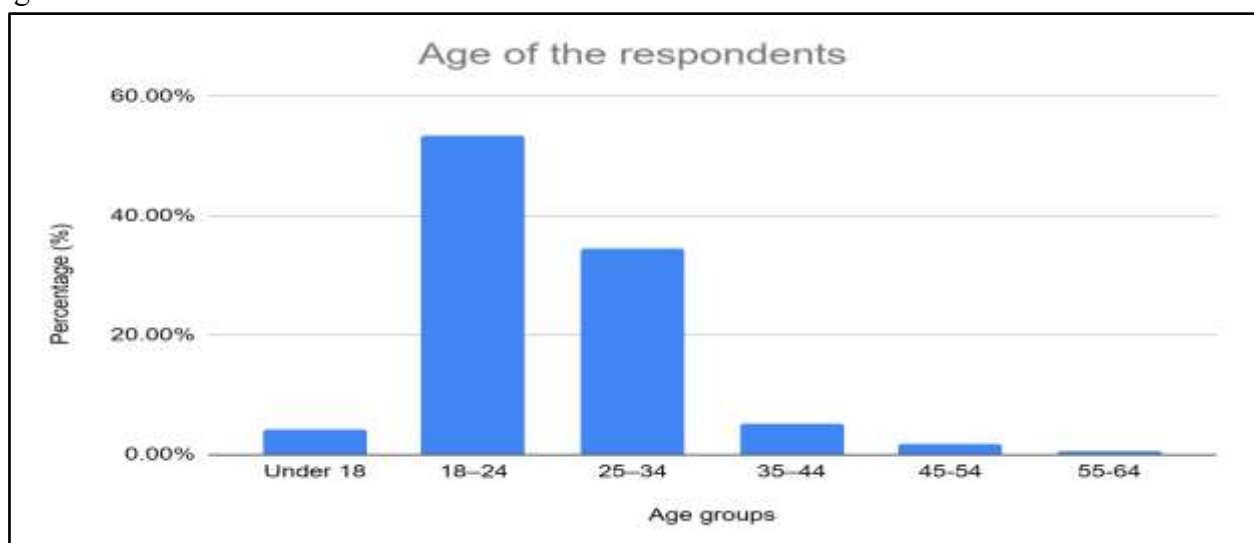


Figure 1: Graph on Age of the Respondents

These figures suggest that the research sample is inclined towards younger demographics (18–34 ages), which aligns well with the target audience for social media influencer marketing. This also suggests that influencer marketing is particularly relevant and resonates more strongly with younger audiences, indicating that marketing strategies leveraging influencer platforms might be most effective if tailored towards these age groups. This also is in sync with the social media penetration at various age groups level in India.

Gender of the Respondents

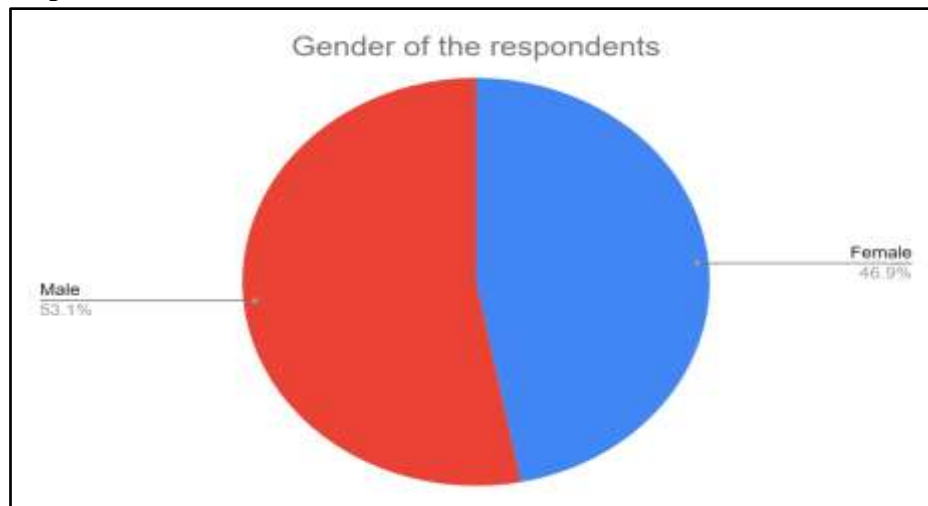


Figure 2: Graph on Gender of the Respondents

The gender distribution of the respondents is relatively balanced, with a slight majority of male participants at 53.08% (n = 112) compared to female participants at 46.92% (n = 99). This near-even split ensures that the perspectives of both genders are fairly represented in the study. This balance is beneficial for the study, as it reduces gender-related bias and provides a more comprehensive understanding of influencer impacts. Additionally, findings related to trust, engagement, and purchase behaviors can be generalized across genders, enhancing the validity and applicability of the conclusions drawn from this research.

Education Qualification of the Respondents

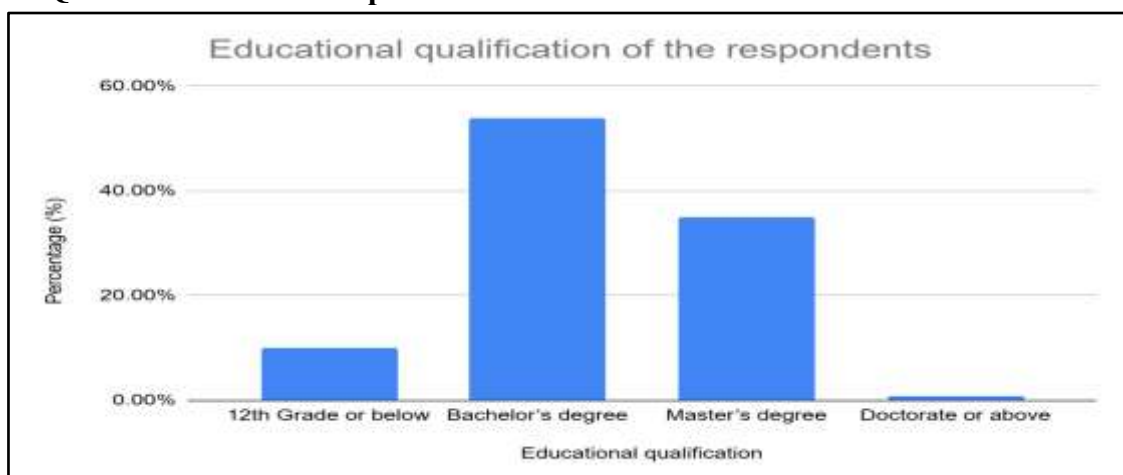


Figure 3: Graph on Educational Qualification of the Respondents

The educational background of the respondents indicates that the majority hold a Bachelor's degree, comprising 54.03% (n = 114) of the total sample. This is followed by those with a Master's degree, accounting for 35.07% (n = 74). Together, these two categories represent nearly 90% of the respondents, suggesting that the sample is largely well-educated. A smaller portion of participants, 9.95% (n = 21), have completed education up to 12th grade or below, while only 0.95% (n = 2) hold a Doctorate or higher qualification.

This distribution shows that most respondents are either currently pursuing or have completed higher education, which may influence their digital behavior, critical thinking about influencer content, and online purchase decisions. The relatively high educational attainment also suggests that the audience is likely to be more informed and discerning in their interactions with influencers.

Occupation of the Respondents

The occupation data reveals that the majority of respondents are either working professionals i.e., 52.13% (n = 110) or students i.e., 43.60% (n = 92). These two groups together make up over 95% of the total sample, indicating that the study primarily reflects the views of individuals who are either actively engaged in the workforce or in the process of entering it. A small percentage of respondents identified as business owners accounting for 3.32% (n = 7), self-employed i.e., 0.47% (n = 1) and public sector employees, i.e., 0.47% (n = 1).

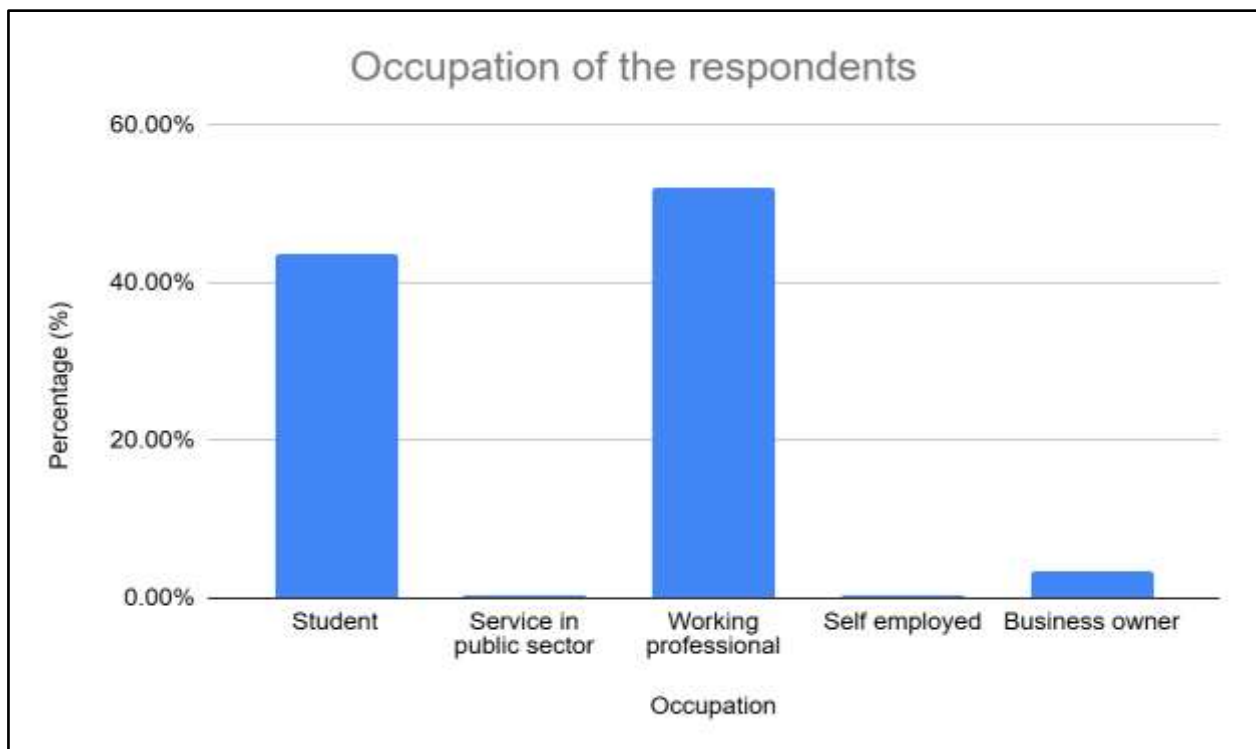


Figure 4: Graph on Occupation of the Respondents

This distribution highlights a predominantly young and professionally active audience, which aligns with the demographics typically most engaged with social media and influencer content. The low representation from business owners and public sector employees may suggest less interest or lower relevance of influencer marketing within those groups.

4.1.2. Social Media Habits

Social Media Platforms used by the Respondents

The survey results clearly indicate that Instagram and YouTube are the dominant platforms for influencer engagement among respondents, with 87.20% (n = 184) and 71.56% (n = 151) of participants respectively identifying them as their primary channels. This dominance underscores the visual-centric nature of modern influencer marketing, where platforms that support image, video, and short-form content thrive due to their ability to deliver immersive, creator-driven narratives. Instagram's blend of Reels, Stories, and static posts, alongside YouTube's long-form video format, continues to support high levels of user engagement and trust, especially among younger, digitally active demographics.

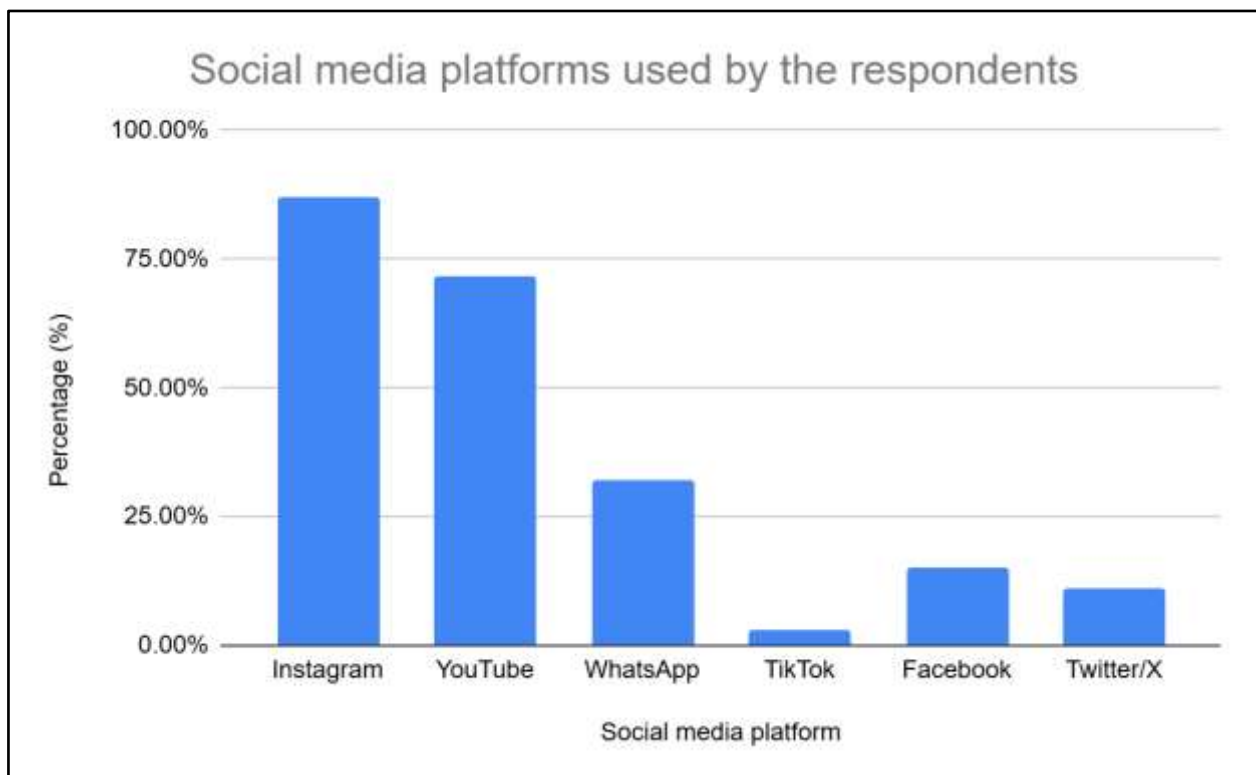


Figure 5: Graph on Social Media Platforms Used by the Respondents

Additionally, 32.32% of respondents (n = 68) reported following influencers through WhatsApp, a traditionally private messaging platform. This points to an emerging trend of closed-network marketing, where influencers or brand representatives share content through private groups, broadcast lists, or personal status updates. The comparatively lower presence of Facebook (15.17%, n = 32), Twitter/X (10.90%, n = 23), and TikTok (n = 6) indicates these platforms may serve niche segments or offer supplementary reach rather than being core influencer platforms.

Usage frequency of social media platforms

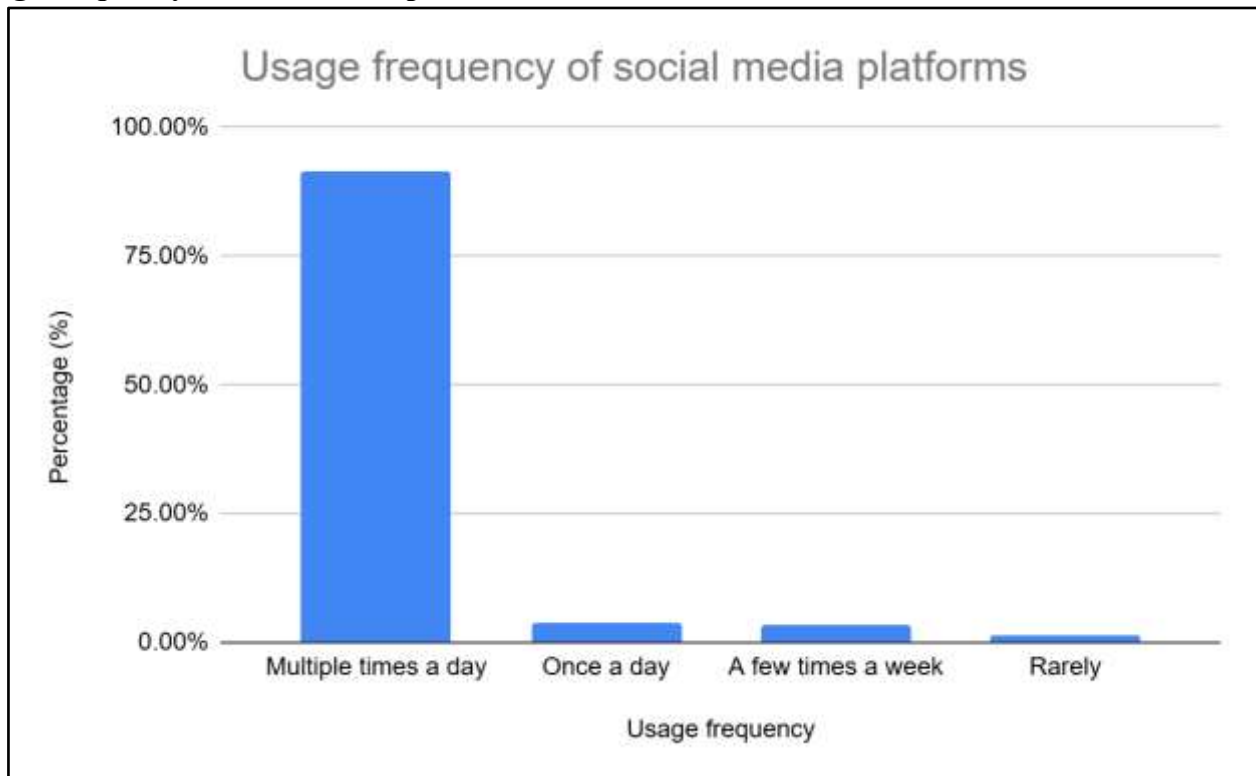


Figure 6: Graph on Usage Frequency of Social Media Platforms

The data shows that an overwhelming majority of respondents, 91.47% (n = 93), use social media multiple times a day, indicating a highly active and digitally engaged audience. This frequent usage suggests that these individuals are likely to be regularly exposed to influencer content, making them highly relevant for a study on influencer marketing. A much smaller portion of respondents use social media once a day: 3.79% (n = 8), a few times a week: 3.32% (n = 7) and rarely: 1.42% (n = 3).

The dominance of heavy social media users in the sample reinforces the validity of the research, as it focuses on individuals who are most likely to interact with and be influenced by influencers. The very small proportion of infrequent users suggests that the vast majority of respondents are actively engaged with social media and therefore capable of offering meaningful insights into micro and macro influencers.

4.1.3. Type of influencers followed by the respondents

Nearly half of respondents 47.39% (n = 100) follow both micro and macro influencers equally, indicating openness to diverse influencer content irrespective of their following. A significant portion of 30.33% (n = 64) does not actively follow influencers.

Among those with a distinct preference, a higher proportion—15.17% (n = 32)—follow macro influencers, while a smaller segment—7.11% (n = 15)—follows micro influencers. This disparity suggests that macro influencers currently hold a broader appeal, likely attributed to their higher visibility, celebrity-like status, and extensive follower base, which may enhance their perceived credibility and influence.

However, the presence of micro influencer followers, though smaller, is still notable and highlights their value in specific communities. The lower percentage points to a need for more targeted, personalized marketing approaches when engaging micro influencers, such as focusing on authentic storytelling, product relevance, and community trust.

While macro influencers tend to attract a larger following due to their widespread recognition and mass appeal, micro influencers should not be underestimated. Their niche positioning and perceived authenticity can be strategically leveraged to drive deeper engagement and trust, especially within specific audience segments.

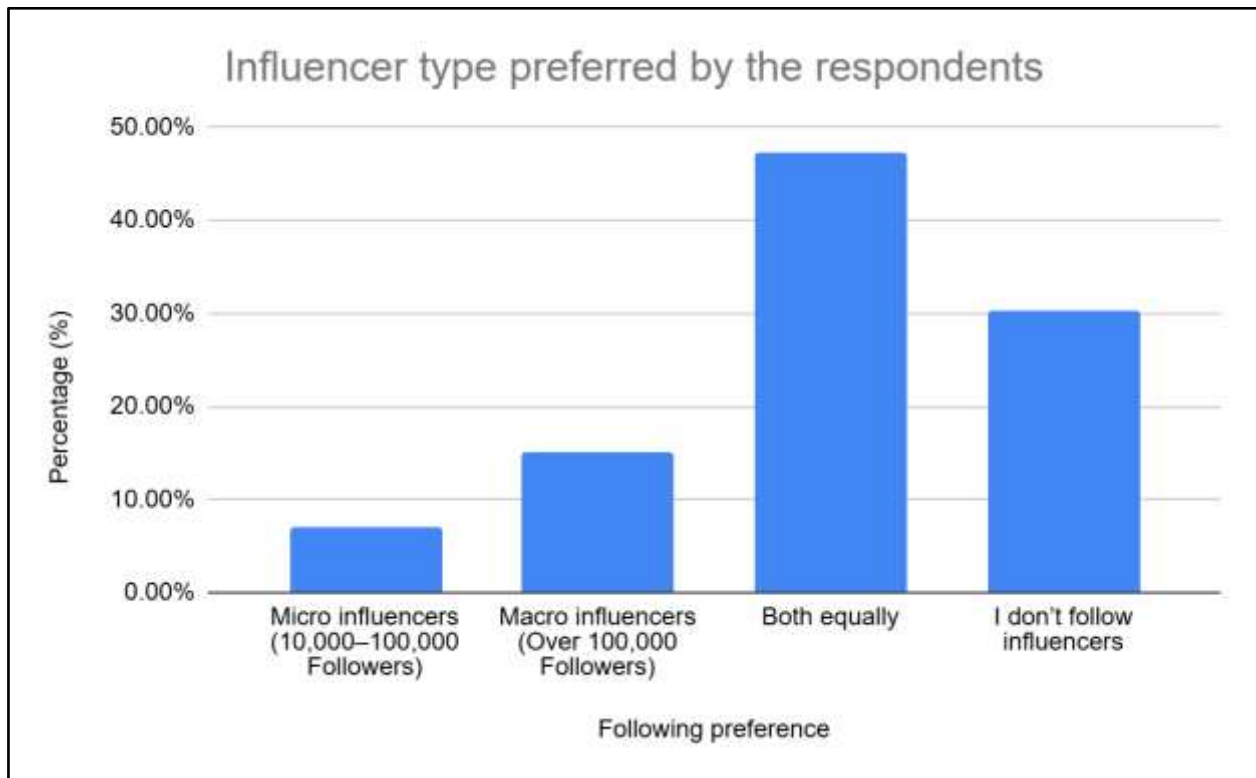


Figure 7: Graph on Influencer Type Preferred by the Respondents

4.1.4. Trust on Micro and Macro Influencers

The data shows that 49.76% ($n = 105$) of respondents felt neutral toward micro influencers and 52.13% ($n = 110$) felt neutral toward macro influencers in terms of trust. This suggests that a significant portion of the audience neither strongly trusts nor distrusts influencer content, regardless of the influencer's following. This response could be attributed to skepticism toward sponsored content or oversaturation of influencer content. This overall neutrality suggests that while influencers may have reach and visibility, trust is not guaranteed. It highlights the importance for both micro and macro influencers to build genuine relationships with their audience through authentic content, transparency, and consistent value delivery.

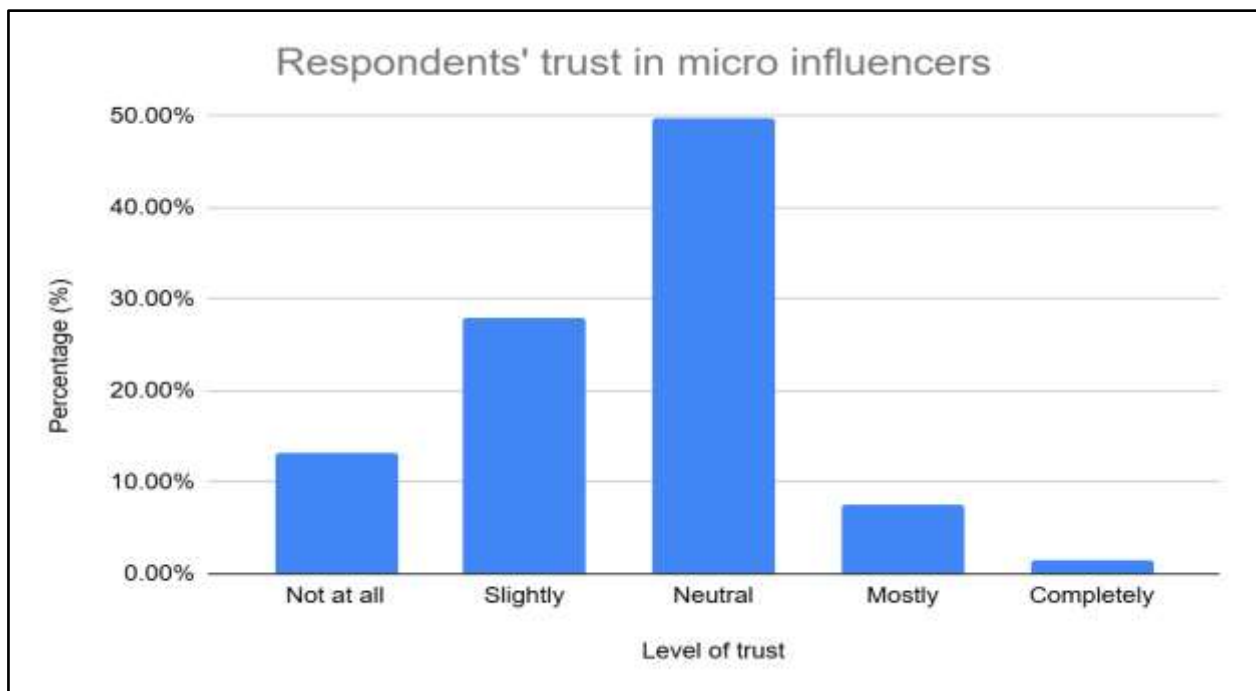


Figure 8: Graph on Respondents' Trust in Micro Influencer

The data also reveals that trust levels attributed to micro influencers are slightly more than to macro influencers among respondents, with 33.18% ($n = 70$) expressing trust in macro influencers and 36.96% ($n = 78$) in micro influencers. This suggests that follower count alone may not significantly influence how much trust an influencer garners. While the difference in trust levels is not large, it suggests a modest preference for micro influencers when it comes to trustability. This could be attributed to the perceived authenticity, relatability, and closer audience connection that micro influencers often cultivate, as opposed to the more commercial and brand-driven image typically associated with macro influencers. This trend reflects a broader shift in consumer behavior where trust is increasingly placed in influencers who appear more genuine and community-oriented.

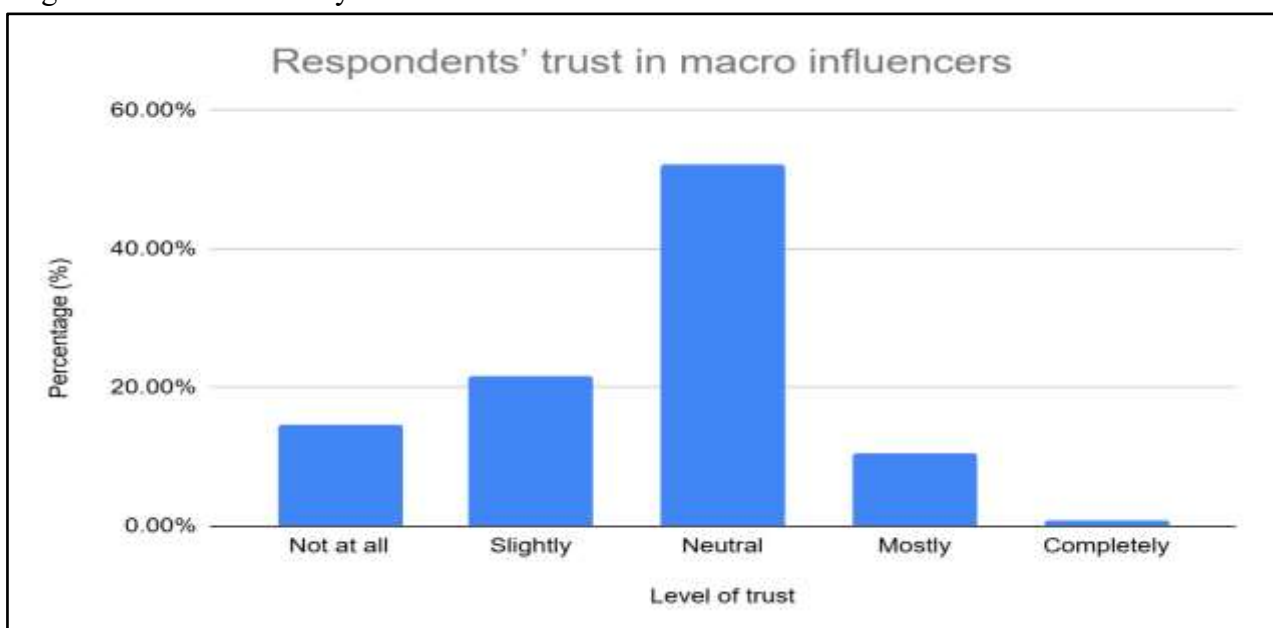


Figure 9: Graph on Respondents' Trust in Macro Influencer

Additionally, the proportion of respondents who reported not trusting influencers is relatively modest, 14.69% (n = 31) for macro influencers and 13.27% (n = 28) for micro influencers. While this is a smaller group, it still points to the presence of skepticism in the influencer space, possibly due to concerns around paid promotions, lack of transparency, or over-commercialization. This skepticism affects both categories similarly, indicating that distrust is not necessarily skewed toward larger or smaller influencers.

Overall, the findings suggest that consumer trust is not significantly swayed by an influencer's reach but rather by their perceived credibility and consistency. For influencers, these findings highlight the importance of focusing on authenticity, consistency, and audience connection rather than solely growing follower count. Building trust through transparent communication, genuine content, and meaningful interactions can significantly enhance credibility and long-term influence.

4.1.5. Perceived Honesty in Product Recommendations of Micro and Macro influencers

The largest segment of respondents, 35.55% (n = 75), believe that neither micro or macro influencers provide honest recommendations, revealing a broad skepticism toward influencer marketing as a whole. This level of distrust may stem from increasing consumer awareness of paid promotions and the blurred lines between genuine endorsements and sponsored content. It suggests that influencer credibility is being critically evaluated by audiences who are becoming more discerning about the authenticity of digital recommendations.

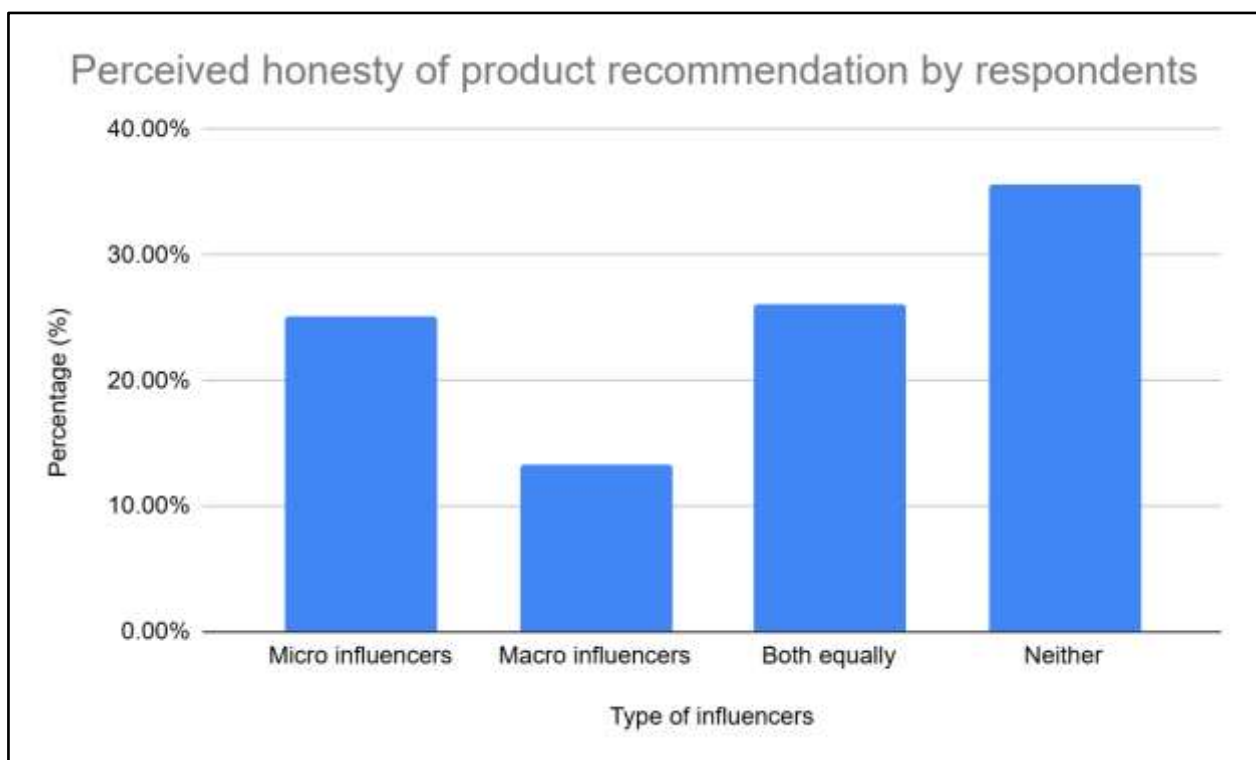


Figure 10: Graph on Perceived Honesty of Product Recommendation by Respondents

In addition, 26.07% (n = 55) consider both micro and macro influencers equally honest implying that for this group, honesty is seen as an individual trait rather than one inherently tied to an influencer's follower size. This indicates that while some users may be skeptical, others judge influencers on a case-by-case basis, possibly considering personal experiences or the nature of the content shared. This is reflected in

the response from one of the respondents who mentioned “I usually compare reviews from both micro and macro influencers before buying any product. However, most of the real, authentic reviews come from micro influencers, as their opinions are less likely to be influenced by paid collaborations compared to macro influencers.”

A larger proportion of respondents ie., 25.12% (n = 53) view micro influencers as more honest compared to the smaller 13.27% (n = 28) who attribute greater honesty to macro influencers. This supports the growing narrative that micro influencers, with their smaller and more engaged audiences, are perceived as more relatable and less commercially driven. Another respondent highlighted this sentiment by stating, “I have purchased makeup recommendations from micro beauty influencers. They are more relatable and endorse affordable makeup options.” These insights suggest that micro influencers may hold a credibility advantage when it comes to fostering trust.

4.1.6. Effect of Follower Count on Perceived Credibility

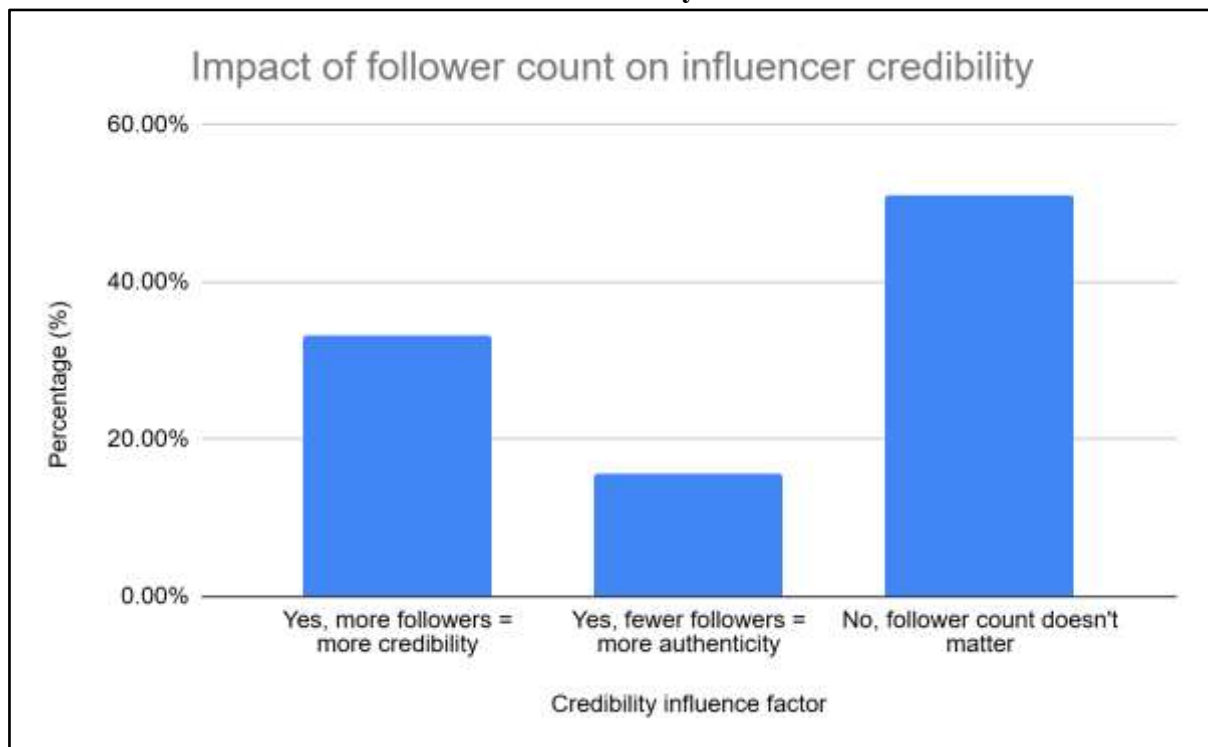


Figure 11: Graph on Impact of Follower Count on Influencer Credibility

The responses indicate a varied and insightful understanding among social media users regarding the relationship between follower count and influencer credibility. A majority of 51.82% (n = 108) believe that follower count does not influence an influencer’s credibility. This suggests that for over half of the participants, credibility is not determined by number of followers but likely by the content quality, consistency, engagement style, and perceived authenticity of the influencer. It reflects a shift in consumer mindset where audiences are more inclined to assess influencers based on substance rather than scale.

Meanwhile, 33.18% (n = 70) associate a higher follower count with increased credibility. This perception aligns with the traditional belief that popularity signals trustworthiness or authority. For these respondents, a large following might indicate expertise, social proof, or reliability, characteristics that tend to influence consumer behavior, particularly in trend-driven markets.

On the other hand, a smaller but notable segment of 15.64% ($n = 33$) feel that fewer followers contributes to greater credibility. This reflects the growing appeal of micro influencers, who are often perceived as more relatable, accessible, and transparent. These respondents may value personalized engagement, niche content, and the reduced likelihood of commercial bias associated with smaller-scale influencers.

Overall, these findings highlight the significance of context when assessing influencer credibility. Although visibility is still linked to trust by some, a growing majority now value authenticity and content relevance more than the sheer number of followers. For influencers, these findings emphasize the growing importance of building genuine connections with their audiences rather than solely focusing on expanding follower count. Influencers who prioritize transparency, authenticity, and meaningful engagement are more likely to build long-term credibility, regardless of the size of their audience.

4.1.7. Likelihood of engaging with a post by Micro and Macro influencers

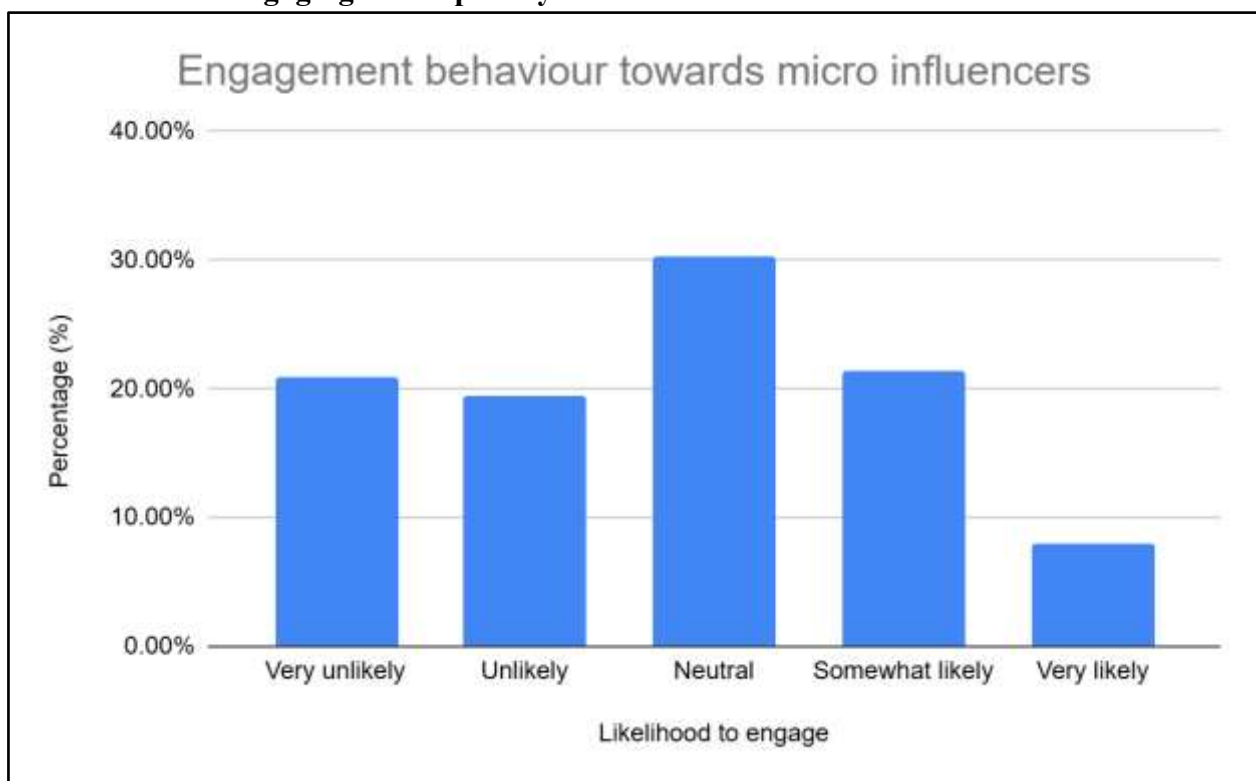


Figure 12: Graph on Engagement Behaviour Towards Micro Influencers

When comparing the likelihood of engaging (liking, commenting, or sharing) to posts by micro versus macro influencers, some interesting patterns emerge:

Micro Influencers: Engagement with micro influencers shows a divided audience response. While 29.39% ($n = 62$) of respondents indicated a positive likelihood to engage (either “somewhat likely” or “very likely”). A larger segment of 40.28% ($n = 85$) expressed an unwillingness to interact (either “unlikely” or “very unlikely”) with their content. This reveals a considerable portion of the audience remains disengaged despite micro influencers' reputation for authenticity and community connection. However, the presence of 30.33% ($n = 64$) neutral respondents suggests a significant group of passive followers who neither actively interact nor completely ignore content. This neutrality could be a result of content fatigue or a lack of perceived value in engaging. The data implies that while micro influencers

have potential for engagement, their effectiveness may depend heavily on niche targeting and relevance of content.

Macro Influencers: Macro influencers appear to elicit slightly lower active engagement compared to micro influencers, with only 26.54% (n = 56) of respondents expressing a positive inclination to engage. A slightly lower but still significant 39.81% (n = 84) reported a reluctance to engage, closely mirroring the disengagement seen with micro influencers. Interestingly, macro influencers also had a slightly higher neutral segment i.e., 33.65% (n = 71) than their micro counterparts. This neutrality may stem from a perception of macro influencers as more promotional or distant, which could dilute their perceived authenticity. Despite their broader reach and visibility, macro influencers might struggle to foster meaningful interaction unless their content is relevant to audience interests.

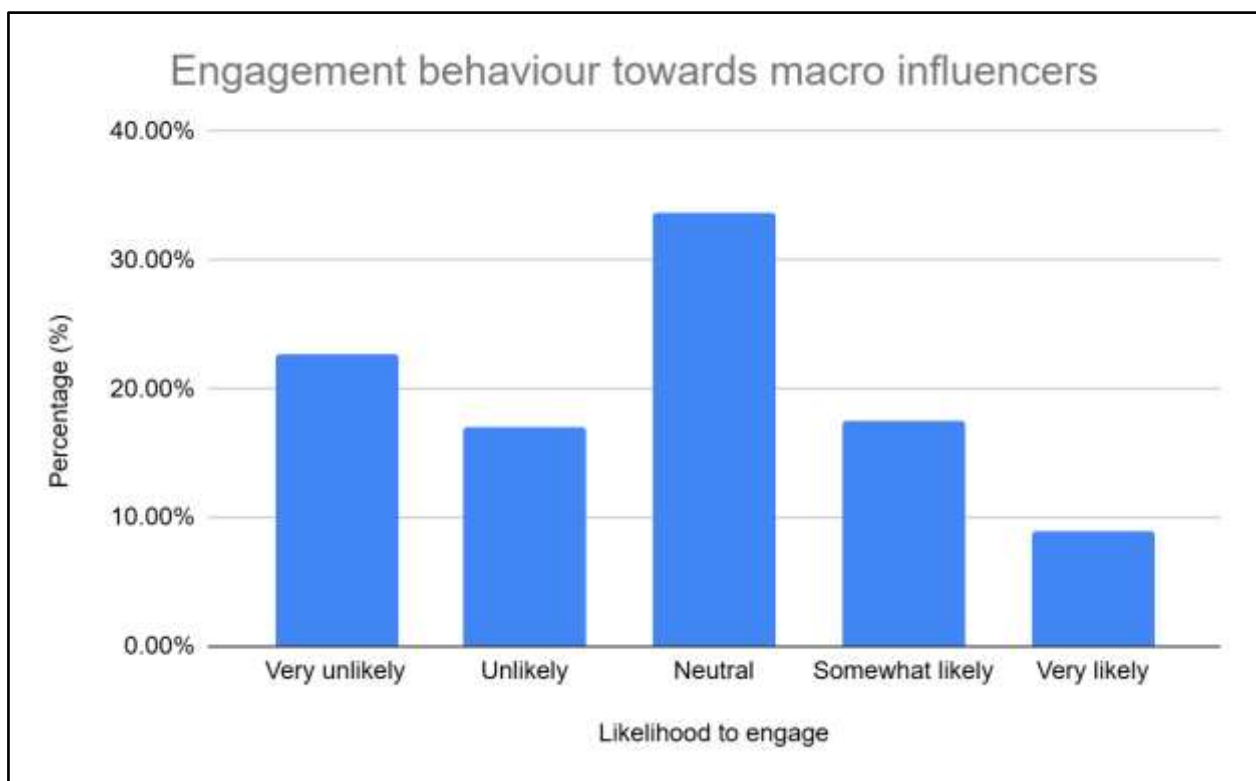


Figure 13: Graph on Engagement Behaviour Towards Macro Influencers

In essence, the data indicates that both influencer types face challenges in sustaining active engagement, with a large proportion of audiences either neutral or disinclined to interact. This perspective is evident in a respondent's comparison of the experience to 'window shopping'." This suggests that neither follower count nor visibility alone guarantees engagement. Content quality, relevance, and perceived authenticity play crucial roles.

Micro influencers may offer better targeted engagement in niche communities, while macro influencers may be better suited for campaigns aiming at broader awareness rather than direct interaction. A notable portion of respondents across both influencer types can be classified as passive followers (those who view content without actively engaging) highlighting the need for more compelling and personalized content strategies to convert passive attention into active interaction.

4.1.8. Engagement with followers between Micro influencers and Macro influencers

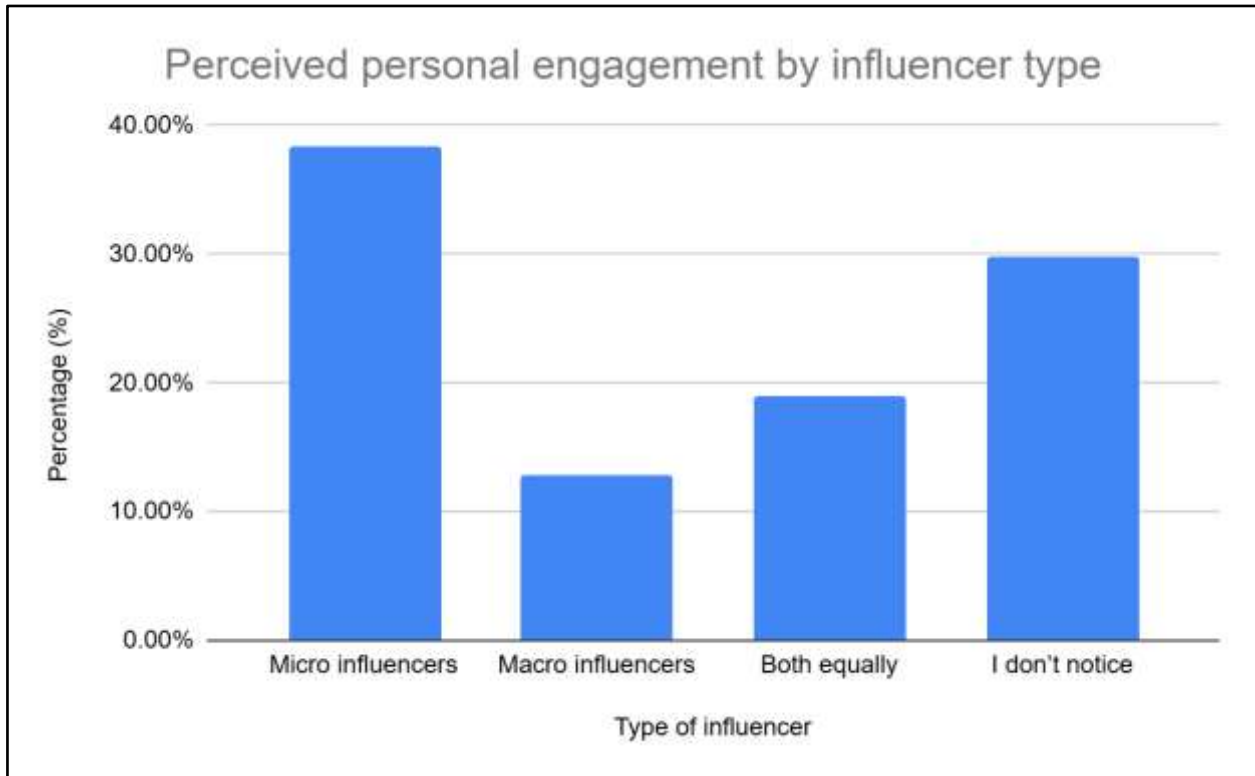


Figure 14: Graph on Perceived Personal Engagement by Influencer Type

The data suggests a clear perception among respondents that micro influencers are more personally engaging with their followers. With 38.39% (n = 81) identifying micro influencers as more personally interactive, this finding highlights the strength of micro influencers in building closer, more relatable relationships with their audience, often a result of their smaller, niche communities and more manageable follower bases.

Also, 29.86% (n = 63) did not observe a noticeable difference in engagement levels, and 18.96% (n = 40) felt both influencer types engage equally. These segments indicate that while micro influencers are generally perceived as more engaging, this distinction is not universally evident to all consumers. Only a small portion of 12.80% (n = 27) believed macro influencers are more personally engaging, underscoring the common perception that as follower count increases, personal interaction tends to decrease.

These results reinforce the perception that micro influencers foster a stronger sense of closeness and community. This aligns well with their typical smaller audiences and niche content styles, allowing for more intimate and meaningful interactions. Conversely, macro influencers, due to scale and volume, may be seen as less accessible or more one-directional in communication. These insights support the broader narrative that micro influencers are often more relatable and responsive, which could be leveraged to drive higher engagement and trust in targeted campaigns.

4.1.9. Purchase patterns on recommendations by Micro and Macro influencers

The data presents a fairly balanced perspective on consumer purchasing behavior influenced by micro and macro influencers.

For micro influencers, 28.91% (n = 61) of respondents affirmed that they had purchased a product based on a recommendation, showing a reasonable level of conversion. Some respondents specifically

mentioned micro influencers whose recommendations directly influenced their purchase decisions. For instance, one respondent cited '*The Insatiable Hunger*,' stating, "I've purchased coffee and banana chips recommended by him and also visited a few cafes." Another respondent mentioned '*Ishmales*' and acknowledged purchasing several of her handmade products.



Figure 15: Graph on Effect of Micro Influencer Recommendations on Purchase Decisions

However, the largest share, 43.60% (n = 92), reported not making a purchase, suggesting that while micro influencers may foster trust and engagement, this does not always translate directly into purchase behavior. Meanwhile, 27.49% (n = 58) selected "maybe," indicating a level of uncertainty or lack of recall, which is common in influencer-driven marketing where the decision-making process can be subconscious or cumulative over time.

For macro influencers, a nearly identical percentage of respondents—29.86% (n = 63)—reported making a purchase based on a recommendation, with the same percentage indicating "maybe." Several respondents named macro influencers whose recommendations influenced their purchase decisions. For instance, one cited *MKBHD* stating, "I have definitely purchased tech that was reviewed and praised by him as I trust that his reviews are unbiased and thorough." Another respondent mentioned Kusha Kapila by adding, "Yes, I've impulsively bought a product recommended by Kusha Kapila. It was a makeup brand she raved about on her Instagram stories. I didn't really need any new products, but the way she described it made me curious. I ended up buying the foundation she recommended. While it worked well, it wasn't really necessary at the time." Slightly fewer (40.28%, n = 85) said they had not made a purchase, suggesting that macro influencers may have a marginally higher conversion potential, likely driven by their broader visibility and influence.



Figure 16: Graph on Effect of Macro Influencer Recommendations on Purchase Decisions

When comparing purchase influence, macro and micro influencers demonstrate almost equal effectiveness. For both categories, approximately 29% of respondents confirmed purchasing a product based on the influencer's recommendation (28.91% for micro influencers and 29.86% for macro influencers). This indicates that reach alone does not guarantee a significantly higher conversion rate, as both types of influencers perform similarly in prompting purchases. However, the relatively high percentages of “no” and “maybe” responses for both categories indicate that influencer recommendations, while impactful, are not the sole drivers of purchasing decisions. This perspective was reflected in a respondent’s remark which said, “I follow some well-known influencers for updates and trends, but I’ve never made an impulsive purchase just because they recommended something.” Similarly, another respondent added, “Influencers don't really affect my impulsive shopping behaviour.”

4.1.10. Impact of Micro and Macro Influencers on Purchase Decisions of Consumers

The data reveals a clear skepticism among consumers regarding influencer-driven purchases. A significant 42.18% (n = 89) of respondents reported that neither micro nor macro influencers influence their purchase decisions, suggesting that a large portion of the audience remains largely unaffected by influencer marketing efforts. This aligns with previous findings indicating that over 40% of users had not made purchases based on influencer recommendations, underscoring a limited real-world impact of influencers on consumer buying behavior.

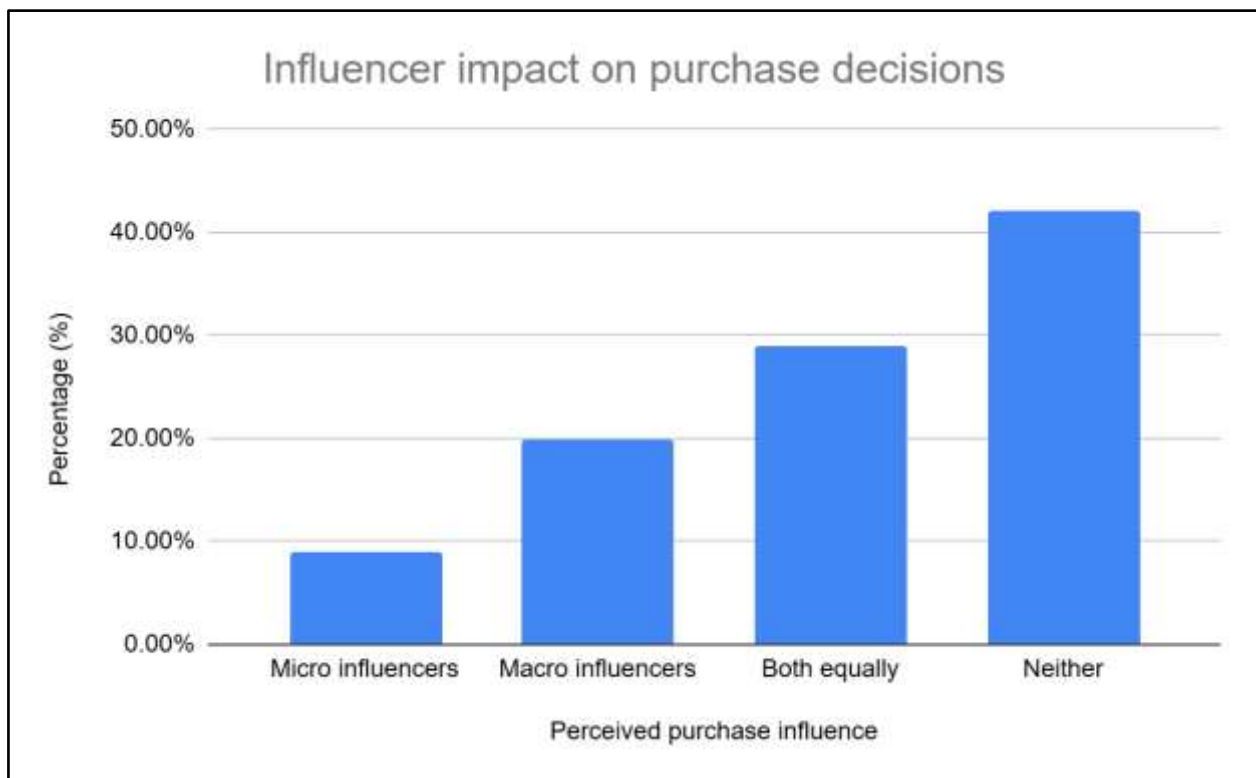


Figure 17: Graph on Influencer Impact on Purchase Decisions

However, a notable portion of 28.91% ($n = 61$) of respondents indicated that both types of influencers affect their buying decisions equally, suggesting that for a moderate segment of users, influencers do play a role in guiding purchase intent, regardless of their follower count. These consumers may be more focused on the relevance and perceived authenticity of the product recommendation than the popularity of the influencer.

Separately, macro influencers were credited with a greater impact on purchase decisions i.e., 19.91% ($n = 42$) compared to micro influencers i.e., 9.00% ($n = 19$). This suggests that macro influencers may carry more weight in influencing final purchase actions, likely due to their broader visibility, association with larger brands, and perceived credibility. Their endorsements may feel more mainstream and trustworthy to certain demographics, thereby triggering higher purchase conversion rates

4.1.11. Persuasiveness of Micro and Macro influencers

The findings suggest a notable parity in how persuasive micro and macro influencers are perceived by audiences. Nearly equal proportions of respondents found content from both types of influencers persuasive: 43.97% ($n = 97$) for micro influencers and 43.14% ($n = 91$) for macro influencers. This indicates that audience influence is not solely dependent on follower count, and both categories have comparable potential to shape opinions and behaviors.

However, a closer look at the negative responses reveals that fewer respondents found micro influencers unpersuasive i.e., 9% ($n = 19$) compared to macro influencers i.e., 12.32% ($n = 26$). This subtle difference may reflect a slightly higher level of trust or relatability with micro influencers, possibly due to their more personal content, perceived authenticity, or stronger audience connection.

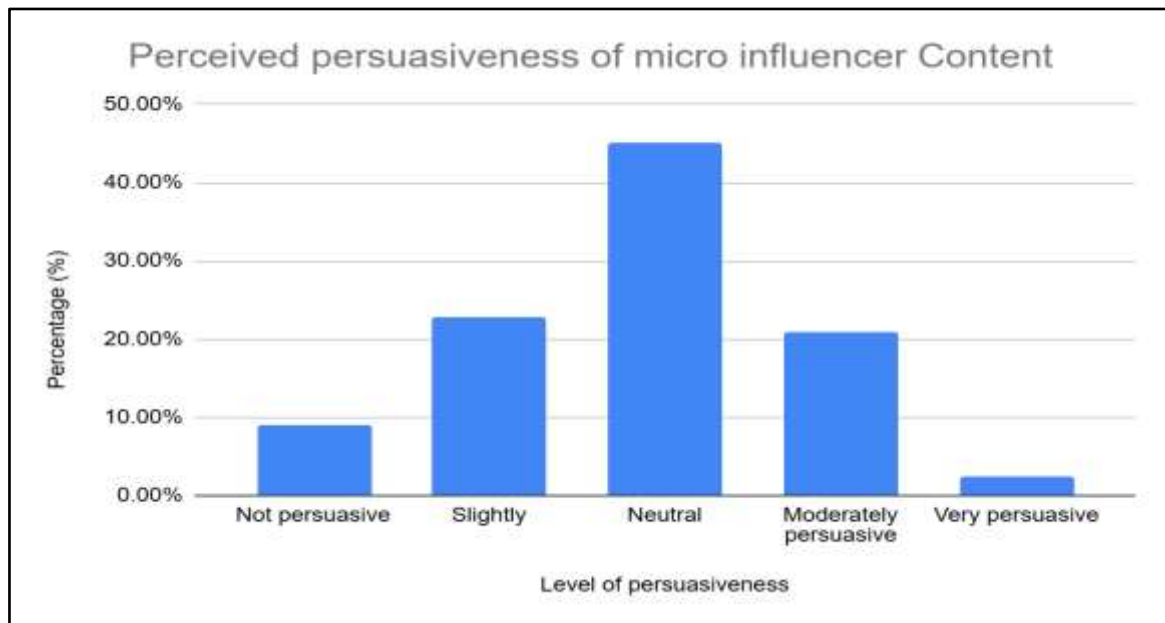


Figure 18: Graph on Perceived Persuasiveness of Micro Influencer Content

Meanwhile, neutral responses were also quite balanced, 45.02% (n = 95) for micro influencers and 44.55% (n = 94) for macro influencers, indicating that a substantial segment of the audience remains undecided or indifferent about the persuasiveness of influencer content. This neutrality highlights the challenge influencers face in breaking through audience apathy and underscores the need for more targeted and meaningful engagement.

While both influencer types are almost equally persuasive overall, micro influencers enjoy a slightly higher audience trust and face less skepticism, hinting at their potential to foster stronger, more personal resonance with audiences.

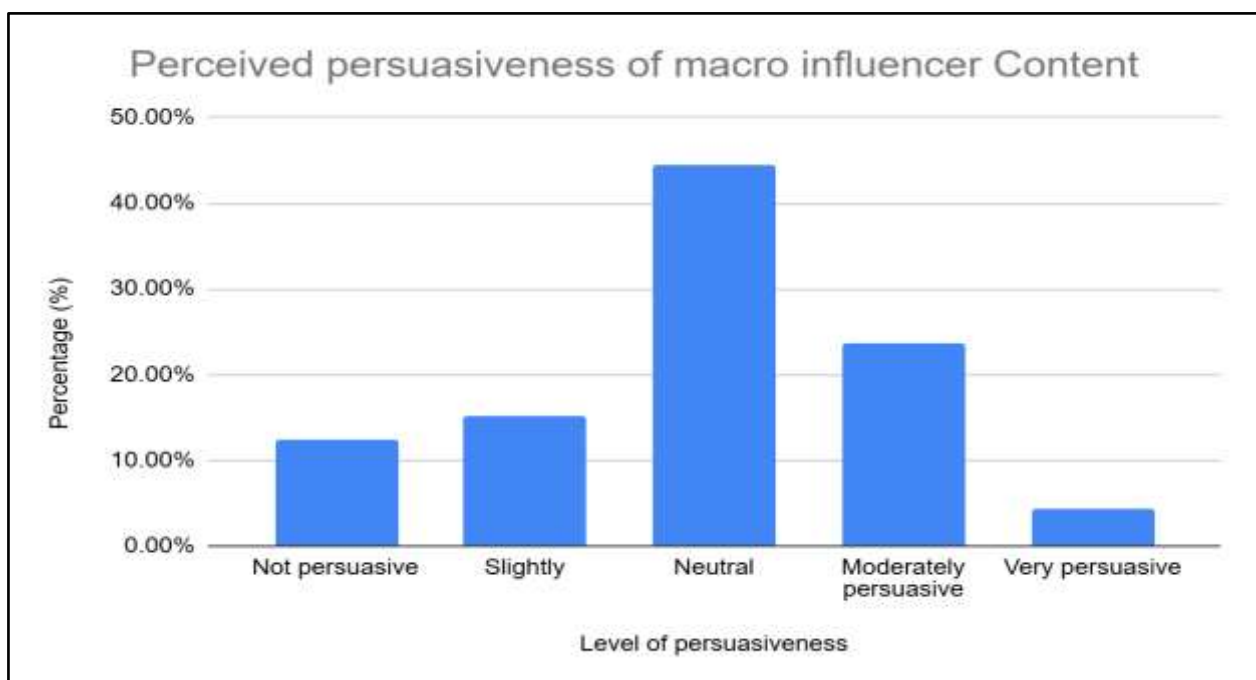


Figure 19: Graph on Perceived Persuasiveness of Macro Influencer Content

4.1.12. Strengths of Micro and Macro influencers

Strengths of Micro Influencers: The data highlights several key strengths that make micro influencers a compelling asset for brands aiming to build trust and authenticity. The most recognized attribute is their relatability, with 46.92% (n = 99) of respondents agreeing that micro influencers are “more relatable and down-to-earth.” This suggests that audiences are more likely to connect with micro influencers on a personal level, possibly because they seem more like everyday consumers rather than distant celebrities. Closely following this perception, 40.28% (n = 85) of respondents associate micro influencers with “more honest and authentic recommendations,” a trait that is critical in an environment where audiences are increasingly skeptical of promotional content. This reinforces the view that authenticity is a defining factor for micro influencers and a reason why many consumers may place greater trust in their endorsements.

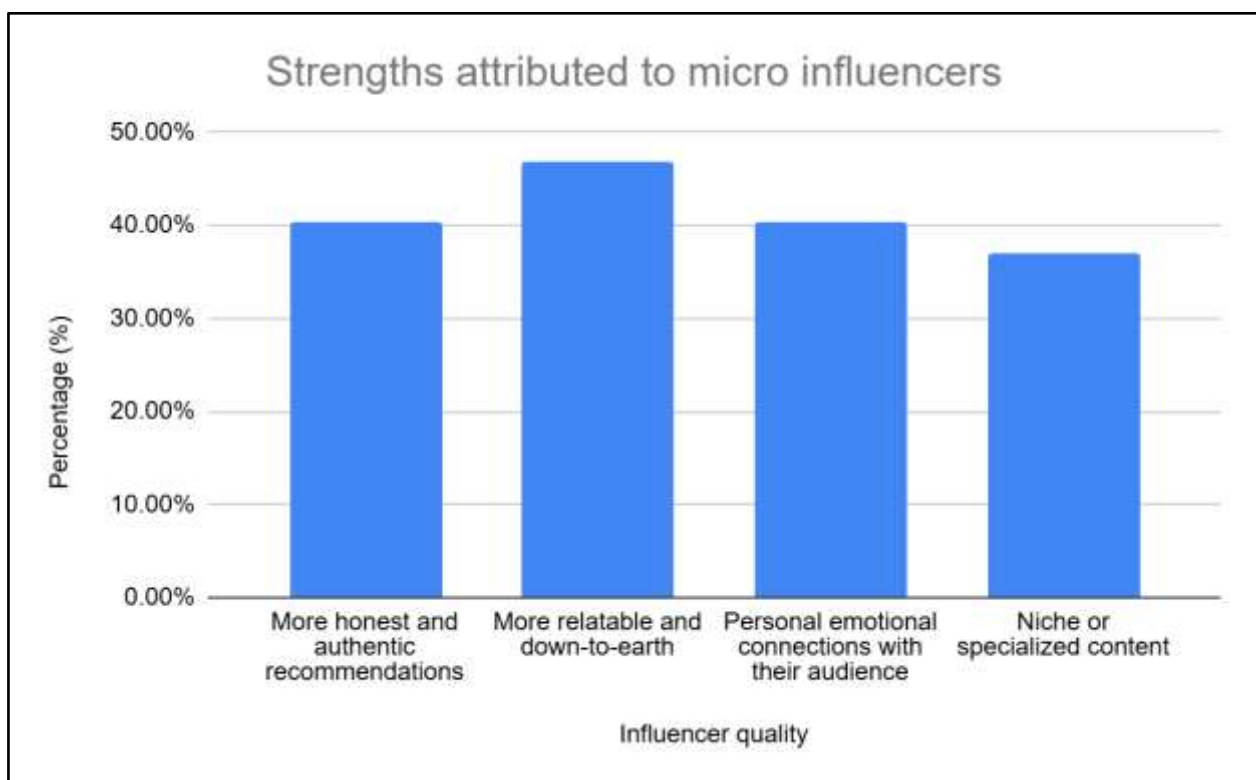


Figure 20: Graph on Strengths Attributed to Micro Influencer

Strengths of Micro Influencers: The data highlights several key strengths that make micro influencers a compelling asset for brands aiming to build trust and authenticity. The most recognized attribute is their relatability, with 46.92% (n = 99) of respondents agreeing that micro influencers are “more relatable and down-to-earth.” This suggests that audiences are more likely to connect with micro influencers on a personal level, possibly because they seem more like everyday consumers rather than distant celebrities. Closely following this perception, 40.28% (n = 85) of respondents associate micro influencers with “more honest and authentic recommendations,” a trait that is critical in an environment where audiences are increasingly skeptical of promotional content. This reinforces the view that authenticity is a defining factor for micro influencers and a reason why many consumers may place greater trust in their endorsements. Equally, 40.28% (n = 85) acknowledged that micro influencers develop personal emotional connections with their audience. This speaks to the intimacy and two-way communication often found in micro influencer communities, where creators actively engage with followers, respond to comments, and foster

a sense of community. This form of emotional resonance can significantly impact consumer behavior, from brand perception to purchase intent.

Moreover, 36.97% (n = 78) of respondents noted that micro influencers are valued for their ability to “offer niche or specialized content.” This specialization further strengthens their domain credibility and positions them as trusted voices within specific areas such as fitness, beauty, tech, or lifestyle, making them ideal for targeted marketing efforts.

Strengths of Macro Influencers: The data reveals several defining characteristics that contribute to the perceived strengths of macro influencers, particularly in terms of their reach, production value, and aspirational appeal. The most prominent strength, acknowledged by 60.19% (n = 127) of respondents, is their “stronger brand collaborations”. This suggests that audiences associate macro influencers with well-established partnerships and larger campaigns, enhancing their influence in the marketing landscape. It also indicates that macro influencers are often seen as trusted brand ambassadors, likely due to their visibility and association with reputable names.

About 52.13% (n = 110) of respondents appreciated the “high-quality, visually appealing content” produced by macro influencers. This reflects their access to professional resources which allows them to create polished and aesthetically engaging content that appeals to broader audiences and maintains consistency across platforms. High production value may also contribute to their authority and perceived professionalism, setting them apart from smaller influencers.

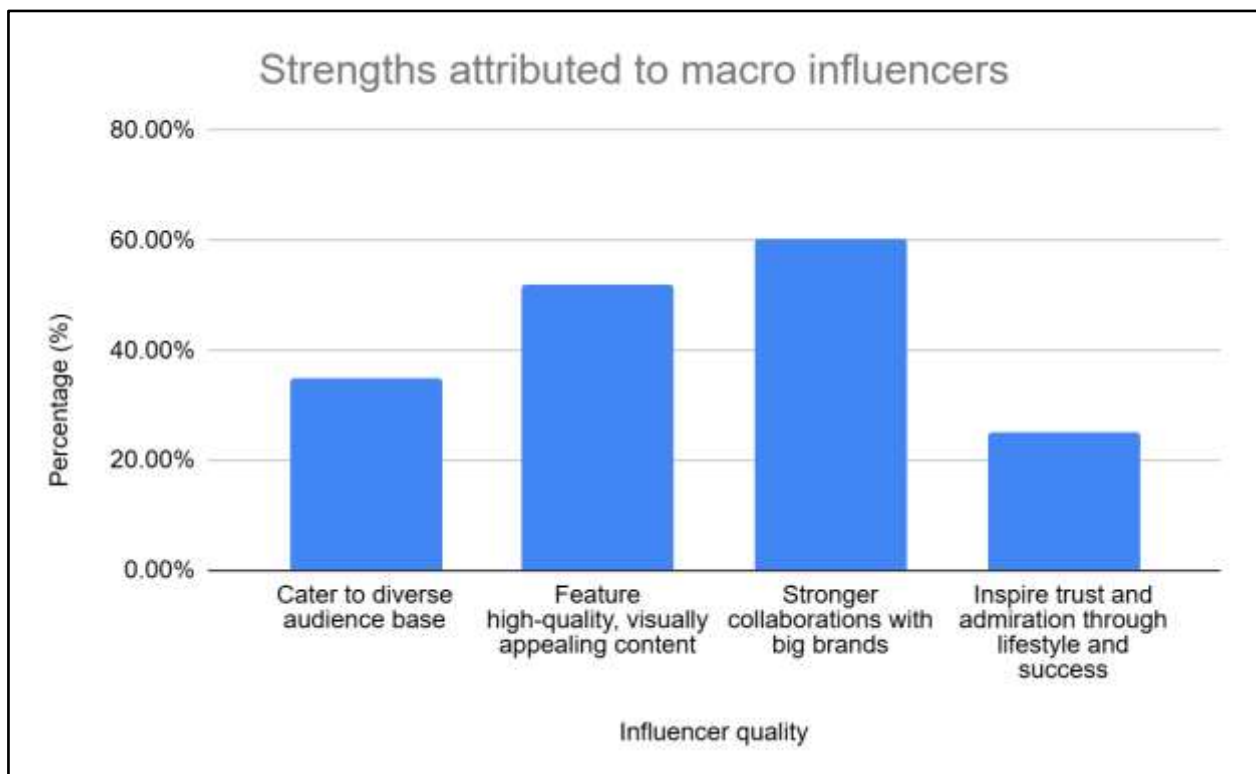


Figure 21: Graph on Strengths Attributed to Macro Influencer

35.07% (n = 74) of respondents recognized macro influencers for their ability to “cater to a diverse audience”, a direct result of their large and varied follower base. This trait positions macro influencers as effective tools for mass outreach and broad awareness campaigns, particularly when brands aim to connect

with a wide demographic. Their broad reach allows for versatile brand messaging that can span multiple interest groups and regions.

Additionally, 25.12% (n = 53) of respondents valued macro influencers for their ability to “inspire trust and admiration through their lifestyle and success”. This points to the aspirational nature of macro influencers, who often curate content that showcases success, luxury, or achievement. Their lifestyles may resonate with followers who view them as role models or symbols of attainable success, indirectly influencing perceptions of the products they endorse.

4.1.13. Statistical Analysis

Hypothesis 1: Consumer Trust in Micro and Macro influencers

The central objective of Hypothesis H1 is to examine whether there exists a statistically significant difference in the level of consumer trust toward micro influencers as compared to macro influencers. The first hypothesis states:

- **H1:** There is a significant difference in consumer trust between micro and macro influencers.
- **H01:** There is no significant difference in consumer trust between micro and macro influencers.

To compare the level of trust between micro and macro influencers, two primary analytical techniques were used. First, a descriptive comparison was conducted through a percentage analysis for both influencer categories to observe general trends and differences. This provided an overview of how trust varied between the two groups. Next, a Chi-Square Test of Independence was performed using a contingency table that compared trust-related responses across the two influencer types. This test helped determine whether the observed differences in trust levels were statistically significant.

The chi-square test is particularly suitable for testing the relationship between two variables. In the current research, it evaluates whether the level of trust in an influencer is independent of the type of influencer i.e., micro and macro.

Hypothesis testing

The average level of trust for both micro and macro influencers was determined using percentage analysis, as shown below:

- **Micro Influencers:** 36.96% of respondents expressed trust
- **Macro Influencers:** 33.18% of respondents expressed trust

These comparable percentages might suggest that there is slightly higher trust on micro influencers. To test this further, upon conducting the chi-square test, we obtained the following results:

- **Chi-Square Value:** 32.2133
- **p-Value:** 0.0000

This result is statistically significant at the 0.05 level, meaning there is less than 0.01% that the difference happened randomly. Although the average trust levels seem similar, the Chi-square test looks deeper. It checks how trust and no-trust responses are spread between micro and macro influencers, whether people trusted only one type, both, or neither.

For example, a number of respondents may trust both types, but a non-negligible group may exclusively trust one type over the other. These internal splits are what generate a higher chi-square value, highlighting distributional asymmetries even when simple averages match. Thus, the test reveals hidden variations that are not visible through means alone.

Based on the above statistical evidence, **the null hypothesis (H01) is rejected and the hypothesis, H01: There is a significant difference in consumer trust between micro and macro influencers, is accepted.**

This highlights the importance of recognizing that influencer trust varies across different influencer tiers and should not be viewed as a one-size-fits-all concept. Brands planning campaigns built around influencer trust need to account for the specific trust behaviors and preferences of their audience.

Hypothesis H2: Engagement with Micro and Macro influencers

The focus of Hypothesis H₂ is to investigate whether consumers engage differently with micro influencers as compared to macro influencers. The second hypothesis states:

- **H2:** There is a significant difference in engagement levels between micro and macro influencers.
- **H02:** There is no significant difference in engagement levels between micro and macro influencers.

To test this hypothesis, two analytical techniques were employed. First, a descriptive comparison was conducted by calculating the mean engagement rate (as a percentage) for both micro and macro influencers to identify general trends. Following this, a Chi-Square Test of Independence was performed to assess whether the differences observed in engagement distribution between the two influencer categories were statistically significant. Thus, the test helps to understand whether the engagement level is related to influencer type.

Hypothesis testing

The percentage of engagement rates for micro and macro influencers include:

- **Micro Influencers:** 29.39% of respondents were likely to engage
- **Macro Influencers:** 26.54% of respondents were likely to engage

Though the difference may seem modest, the chi-square test showed:

- **Chi-Square Value:** 67.733
- **p-Value:** 0.0000

This is well below the standard threshold of 0.05, indicating that the observed difference in engagement levels is statistically significant. The chi-square test accounts for not just the average engagement, but the overall pattern of response combinations i.e., those who engaged only with micro influencers, only with macro influencers, both, or neither.

The result suggests that the difference in engagement is not due to chance. A considerable portion of respondents show preferences that affect how they interact with different types of influencers. In fact, more users chose to interact with only micro or only macro influencers, highlighting that engagement is shaped not just by the content but by perceived persona and follower scale.

Based on the above results, **the null hypothesis (H02) is rejected and the hypothesis, H2: There is a significant difference in engagement levels between micro and macro influencers, is accepted.** That means **there is a statistically significant difference in how users engage with micro versus macro influencers.**

While micro influencers showed a slightly higher engagement rate (29.38%) compared to macro influencers (26.54%), this margin, though small, was backed by a strong chi-square significance. This implies that even subtle differences in audience perception and content resonance can lead to distinct engagement behaviors.

In practical terms, micro influencers might be more effective in campaigns aiming for interaction and conversation, while macro influencers may be more useful for broad awareness. This distinction can guide influencer selection depending on the engagement objectives of a campaign.

Hypothesis H3: Relationship between Follower count and Perceived Credibility

The aim of Hypothesis H₃ is to explore whether the number of followers an influencer has impacts how

credible they are perceived to be by the audience. The third hypothesis states:

- **H3:** There is a significant relationship between follower count and the perceived credibility of influencers.
- **H03:** There is no significant relationship between follower count and the perceived credibility of influencers.

To evaluate this hypothesis, the overall percentage of respondents who believe follower count matters was calculated. Then, we ran a **chi-square goodness-of-fit test** to determine whether the observed distribution of beliefs was statistically different from what we would expect by chance.

Hypothesis testing

Across the entire sample of respondents:

- **48.82%** believe follower count has some impact on influencer credibility.
- **51.18%** believe follower count does not affect credibility at all.

The chi-square test showed the following results:

- **Chi-Square Value:** 0.1185
- **p-Value:** 0.7307

The p-value is well above 0.05, indicating that the result is not statistically significant. This suggests there is no clear or consistent pattern linking follower count to perceived credibility. In simple terms, opinions are fairly evenly divided, and the difference between those who associate credibility with follower count and those who do not is not strong enough to be considered meaningful from a statistical standpoint.

Thus, **the null hypothesis, H03: There is no significant relationship between follower count and the perceived credibility of influencers, is accepted.** This means there is **no statistically significant overall relationship between follower count and perceived credibility.**

Hypothesis H4: Influence of Micro and Macro influencers on Purchase decisions

This report is centered around Hypothesis H₄, which attempts to determine whether there is a real and meaningful difference in the way micro influencers and macro influencers affect consumers' purchasing decisions. The fourth hypothesis states:

- **H4:** There is a significant difference in the influence of micro and macro influencers on consumers' purchase decisions.
- **H04:** There is no significant difference in the influence of micro and macro influencers on consumers' purchase decisions.

To analyze the behavioral data, we computed the percentage of respondents who believed their purchase decisions are impacted by influencer type ie., macro and micro influencers. Then, a Chi-square test was conducted to check if there was a statistically significant difference in those percentages. The responses from the survey suggested:

- **9%** of respondents said micro influencers have a stronger impact on their purchase decisions
- **19.91%** of respondents said macro influencers have a stronger impact on their purchase decisions.

After running a Chi-square test on the data, the following values were obtained:

- **Chi-Square Value:** 8.68
- **p-Value:** 0.0032

The p-value is less than 0.05, which means the result is statistically significant. In simple terms, even though the two percentages may appear close, there is enough variation in how people responded to say that this difference is real and meaningful, not random.

From the results of this analysis, **the null hypothesis (H04) was rejected and the hypothesis, H4: There**

is a significant difference in the influence of micro and macro influencers on consumers' purchase decisions. This means that there is a statistically significant difference between the influence that micro influencers and macro influencers have on consumers' purchase decisions.

Although both micro and macro influencers are capable of affecting buying decisions, macro influencers seem to hold more sway. The chi-square test confirmed that this effect is statistically valid and not random. Therefore, macro influencers have a significantly better record of prompting actual purchase behavior, even if the margin is small.

4.2. FINDINGS

The following section presents the key findings from the study, highlighting insights into consumer perceptions and engagement patterns with micro and macro influencers. These results offer a comprehensive understanding of the distinct strengths, challenges, and impact each influencer type holds in shaping audience behavior and brand interactions.

- Instagram (87.20%) and YouTube (71.56%) are the most dominant platforms for influencer engagement, driven by their strong visual and video content capabilities.
- WhatsApp (32.32%) is emerging as a non-traditional channel for influencer content, indicating growing traction in private, closed-group influencer marketing.
- 47.39% of respondents follow both macro and micro influencers equally, showing openness to varied influencer content.
- 30.33% of respondents do not follow influencers at all, pointing to a sizable segment resistant to influencer culture.
- Trust neutrality dominates for both influencer types: 49.76% (micro) and 52.13% (macro), indicating general caution or skepticism toward influencer content.
- In comparison, respondents attribute slightly more trust to micro influencers i.e., 36.96% than micro influencers i.e., 33.18%. Thus, H1: There is a significant difference in consumer trust between micro and macro influencers, was accepted (proved through a statistical analysis via Chi-square test).
- 35.55% of respondents believe that neither micro or macro influencers provide honest product recommendations, indicating deep-rooted skepticism toward influencer marketing and heightened consumer awareness of paid promotions.
- 26.07% respondents believe that both micro and macro influencers are equally honest in their product recommendations, suggesting that honesty is judged based on individual influencer credibility, not follower count.
- 25.12% of respondents perceive micro influencers as more honest in their product recommendations than macro influencers (13.27%), highlighting the growing trust in influencers who are seen as more relatable, community-oriented, and less commercially driven.
- 51.18% of respondents believe that follower count does not influence influencer credibility, emphasizing that authenticity, content quality, and consistency are more valued than following or popularity. Thus, H03: There is no significant relationship between follower count and the perceived credibility of influencers, is accepted (proved through a statistical analysis via Chi-square test)..
- A substantial portion of followers across both types of influencers (40.28% for micro and 39.81% for macro) are passive consumers, viewing content without engaging (liking, commenting, or sharing) with their content.

- In comparison, respondents demonstrate a higher likelihood of engaging with micro influencers' content (29.39%) compared to macro influencers (26.54%). This marginal difference suggests a potential preference for the perceived authenticity and relatability associated with micro influencers. Therefore, H2: There is a significant difference in engagement levels between micro and macro influencers, is accepted (proved through a statistical analysis via Chi-square test).
- A notable 38.39% of respondents perceive micro influencers as more personally engaging with their followers, compared to just 12.8% for macro influencers. This underscores the strength of micro influencers in cultivating closer, more relatable relationships with their audience as well as reinforcing H2.
- There is a near parity in perceived content persuasiveness between micro influencers (43.97%) and macro influencers (43.14%). This finding suggests that follower count alone does not dictate an influencer's ability to persuade; rather, both micro and macro influencers hold comparable power to shape audience opinions and behaviors effectively.
- In comparison, 19.91% of respondents perceive macro influencers as having a stronger impact on their buying decisions, nearly double the 9% who attribute greater influence to micro influencers. Thus, H4: There is a significant difference in the influence of micro and macro influencers on consumers' purchase decisions, is accepted (proved through a statistical analysis via Chi-square test)..
- Approximately 29% of respondents confirmed purchasing a product based on the influencer's recommendation.
- Micro influencers are valued for their relatability (46.92%), perceived authenticity and honest recommendations (40.28%), strong emotional connections with their audience (40.28%), and ability to provide niche, specialized content (36.97%), making them a trusted and effective choice for brands focused on building genuine engagement and targeted influence.
- Macro influencers are recognized for their strong brand collaborations (60.19%), high-quality content (52.13%), broad audience reach (35.07%), and aspirational appeal (25.12%), making them effective for large-scale, polished marketing campaigns and mass awareness.

4.3. CONCLUSION

This study offers a nuanced understanding of how consumers perceive and engage with micro and macro influencers in today's digital marketing landscape. It explores platform preferences, trust dynamics, engagement behaviors, and strategic effectiveness, offering insights that both reinforce and challenge existing assumptions.

A clear pattern is the dominance of visual platforms like Instagram and YouTube, which allow for immersive content that drives influencer engagement. Simultaneously, the rise of WhatsApp as a marketing space highlights a shift toward more private, personalized, and community-based engagement. Respondents reported following both influencer types equally, suggesting they view micro and macro influencers as complementary rather than competitive. However, some consumers remain disengaged from influencer culture due to skepticism or fatigue, reminding marketers not to treat influencer marketing as a universal solution.

Many consumers adopt a neutral stance on trust, likely due to increased awareness of sponsorships. While micro influencers enjoy slightly higher trust and relatability, macro influencers offer polish and scale but risk being seen as commercially driven. Trust is no longer tied to popularity alone but must be earned through transparency and consistency. Notably, follower count was not viewed as a strong indicator of

credibility. Instead, authenticity, content quality, and expertise were valued more. This shift urges brands to prioritize alignment over audience size. Passive followers—who observe but don't interact—add complexity to engagement metrics, while micro influencers tend to generate higher active engagement due to approachability and relatability.

Both influencer types are persuasive, but macro influencers have a slight edge in driving purchases, likely due to their broader reach and aspirational appeal. Micro influencers, however, drive more intentional and niche-specific purchase decisions. In summary, micro and macro influencers serve complementary roles. Micro influencers foster trust and community; macro influencers offer visibility and prestige. The choice between them should depend on campaign goals, audience, and desired connection depth.

4.4. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research focuses on the comparative influence of micro and macro influencers on consumer trust, engagement, and purchase decisions in the Indian context. While inclusive in scope, no specific demographic segment was targeted, and findings reflect general rather than segmented behaviors. All major platforms were considered, but Instagram and YouTube dominated findings, with WhatsApp emerging as a growing channel. However, platform-specific effects were not isolated. The study employed a quantitative survey method, which offers statistically relevant insights but lacks qualitative depth. Additionally, it categorized influencers solely by follower count, excluding nano and mega influencers. The research also does not account for industry-specific variables. Influencers may operate in various niches such as fashion, beauty, wellness, technology, finance, or education, each of which may affect consumer perception differently. However, the study refrains from segmenting responses based on industry categories, thereby maintaining a generalized approach.

4.5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

This study opens several promising avenues for further exploration into influencer marketing, as much remains to be investigated beyond the current scope. One key direction is the inclusion of additional influencer categories, such as nano influencers (under 10,000 followers) and mega influencers/celebrities (global fame beyond social media). Nano influencers may generate higher trust, while mega influencers offer unmatched visibility. Future studies should also conduct platform-specific analysis, as each platform varies in audience, content formats, and engagement features. This would allow for better alignment between campaign goals and influencer-platform strategies.

The absence of qualitative data limits deeper understanding of consumer motivations and emotional responses. Mixed-method approaches — combining surveys with interviews or focus groups — could uncover why consumers express trust neutrality or feel emotionally connected to influencers. Demographic segmentation is another area for exploration. Future studies should consider variables like age, region, and income, which significantly shape digital behavior and trust patterns. Industry-specific analysis could also reveal which influencer types are most effective in different sectors such as beauty, tech, wellness, and education. Lastly, longitudinal studies can help assess how consumer trust and behavior shift over time, especially in response to changing trends, algorithm updates, or controversies.

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