

# A Study on the Influence of Social Media on Consumer Behaviour

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**Abstract**—Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have significantly influenced consumer behaviour, altering how individuals interact with brands, discover products, and make purchasing decisions. This study explores the impact of social media on consumer behaviour, focusing on the roles of influencers, user-generated content, and social media advertising. Through a mixed-methods approach, including surveys and case studies, the study highlights the importance of transparency, personalized engagement, and platform-specific strategies in shaping consumer trust, engagement, and loyalty. Findings reveal that visual content, peer reviews, and targeted advertising significantly influence purchase intentions. Ethical considerations, including data privacy and authenticity, are also addressed. The results provide actionable insights for marketers seeking to optimize social media strategies.

**Index Terms**—social media, consumer behaviour, influencers, user-generated content, purchase decisions, trust, social media marketing, data privacy, engagement, digital marketplace.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Social media has revolutionized consumer-brand interactions, offering unprecedented access to product information, peer reviews, and targeted advertisements. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube have become key drivers of consumer behaviour, enabling brands to connect with audiences through visual storytelling and interactive content. This paper investigates the influence of social media on consumer behaviour, emphasizing the roles of influencers, user-generated content, and targeted advertising.

## II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To analyze the role of social media influencers in shaping consumer behaviour.
- To examine the impact of user-generated content on consumer trust and purchase intentions.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of social media advertising in driving conversions.
- To identify ethical challenges related to social media marketing.

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Social Media and Consumer Engagement

- Smith & Zook (2021) – In their study "Social Media and Consumer Behaviour", the authors discuss how interactive features such as likes, shares, and comments enhance consumer engagement. They highlight the growing influence of visual content and short-form videos in driving audience participation.
- Johnson et al. (2020) – Their research "Visual Content and Consumer Engagement on Social Media" emphasizes that images and videos significantly impact consumer attention and interaction. They found that brands leveraging visually appealing content experience higher engagement rates.
- Keller (2019) – In "The Role of Influencers in Modern Marketing", Keller explores how influencers create personalized interactions that foster trust and loyalty among consumers. The study indicates that 70% of consumers are more likely to engage with brands endorsed by influencers.
- Nielsen Report (2022) – The "Consumer Trust in Social Media: Trends and Insights" report presents

data on how consumer engagement is driven by trust in peer reviews and user-generated content. It notes that 84% of consumers prefer recommendations from other users over direct brand advertisements.

- Smith & Taylor (2018) – Their paper "Digital Engagement Strategies: The Impact of Social Media on Brand Loyalty" examines the importance of real-time interactions, customer service responses, and community-driven engagement in building long-term consumer relationships.

#### B. Influencers and Consumer Trust

- (Keller, 2019)- Influencers play a critical role in building trust by providing authentic, relatable content. Studies show that 70% of consumers trust influencer recommendations over traditional advertisements.
- Brown & Hayes (2020) – In "Influencer Marketing: Building Consumer Trust in the Digital Age", the authors highlight how influencers act as intermediaries between brands and consumers. Their research found that 63% of consumers trust influencers more than traditional advertisements.
- Evans et al. (2021) – Their study "Authenticity in Influencer Marketing and Consumer Trust" explores the role of authenticity in influencer endorsements. The study concludes that influencers who share genuine experiences rather than scripted promotions generate higher consumer trust.
- Lou & Yuan (2019) – In "Influencer Marketing: The Impact of Parasocial Relationships on Consumer Trust", the authors discuss how strong emotional connections between influencers and their followers enhance trust and brand credibility.
- Schouten et al. (2020) – Their research "Social Media Influencers and the Role of Relatability in Trust-Building" finds that micro-influencers, who are perceived as more relatable, have a stronger impact on consumer trust than celebrity influencers.
- Djafarova & Rushworth (2017) – Their study "Exploring the Credibility of Social Media Influencers and Its Effect on Consumer Trust" reveals that consumers view influencers as more trustworthy when they maintain transparency regarding sponsored content.

#### C. User-Generated Content

- User-generated content, including reviews and testimonials, fosters credibility and community among consumers. According to a Nielsen report (2022), 84% of consumers trust peer reviews more than brand advertisements.
- Cheung et al. (2019) – In "The Power of User-Generated Content in Influencing Consumer Decisions", the authors discuss how online reviews, testimonials, and social media posts impact consumer trust and brand perception. Their findings suggest that 82% of consumers rely on user-generated reviews before making a purchase.
- Muntinga et al. (2011) – Their study "Understanding User-Generated Content: A Consumer Perspective" explores different motivations behind content creation, such as entertainment, self-expression, and brand involvement, highlighting the role of UGC in driving consumer engagement.
- Dessart (2017) – In "Social Media Engagement: The Role of User-Generated Content in Brand Communities", the author explains how UGC fosters emotional connections between consumers and brands, increasing brand loyalty and advocacy.
- Smith et al. (2020) – Their research "User-Generated Content and Brand Credibility: A Comparative Analysis" finds that consumers trust peer-generated content more than corporate advertisements, making UGC a powerful marketing tool.
- Pentina et al. (2018) – In "The Influence of User-Generated Content on Brand Perceptions and Purchase Intentions", the authors examine how positive and negative UGC affects brand image and consumer decision-making. Their study highlights that brands with more authentic user reviews tend to have higher credibility.

#### D. Ethical Concerns in Social Media Marketing

- (Jones, 2021)- Data privacy and authenticity are major concerns. Consumers are increasingly wary of how their data is used and the transparency of influencer endorsements.
- Jones & Silver (2018) – In "Ethical Challenges in Social Media Advertising: Transparency and Consumer Trust", the authors discuss how deceptive advertising, hidden sponsorships, and

misleading influencer promotions raise ethical concerns. They emphasize the need for clear disclosures and transparent marketing practices.

- Kaplan & Haenlein (2020) – Their study "Data Privacy and Ethics in Social Media Marketing" explores consumer concerns about data collection, targeted advertising, and potential misuse of personal information. The study highlights the growing demand for stricter data protection regulations.
- Gerlitz & Helmond (2019) – In "The Politics of Algorithmic Advertising: Ethical Issues in Targeted Social Media Campaigns", the authors examine how algorithms influence content visibility and create ethical dilemmas related to consumer manipulation and misinformation.
- Xie & Karan (2021) – Their research "The Ethics of Influencer Marketing: Transparency and Accountability" discusses the ethical responsibility of influencers and brands in disclosing paid promotions. The study finds that consumers feel deceived when sponsorships are not clearly labeled.
- Tuten & Solomon (2017) – In "Social Media Marketing: Ethical Risks and Best Practices", the authors provide an overview of ethical risks in social media marketing, including data security, consumer manipulation, and the spread of fake news. They suggest guidelines for ethical marketing practices.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

##### A. Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative case studies to analyze the influence of social media on consumer behaviour.

##### B. Data Collection

- Survey: A Likert-scale questionnaire was distributed to 100 participants via Google Forms.

##### C. Constructs and Measurement

The survey included the following constructs:

- Social Media Usage: Frequency and platform preferences.

- Purchase Decisions: Impact of social media on purchasing behaviour.
- Brand Interaction: Engagement with brands on social media.
- Content Influence: Role of visual and user-generated content.
- Concerns and Trust: Ethical considerations and trust factors.

#### D. Results and Data Analysis

Table 1.1 Demographic Profile

	Particulars	Percentage
Gender	Male	30
	Female	70
Age	<20	36
	>= 20-40	57
	>=40	7
Marital Status	Single	84
	Married	16
Average Monthly Income	No Income	71
	>15000-20000	8
	20001-35000	7
	35001-45000	6
	45001 and above	8
Occupation	Business/ Self Employed	12
	Service / Executive	10
	Student	72
	Home maker	4
	IT	1
	Retired	1
Education Level	High school degree or less	0
	PUC	2
	Bachelor Degree	78
	Master degree	19
	Ph. D degree	1

##### E. Source: Primary Data

###### 1) Gender Distribution

- 30% of the respondents are male, while 70% are female.

Conclusion: The majority of the respondents are female.

###### 2) Age Group

- 36% are below 20 years.
- 57% are between 20 and 40 years.
- 7% are above 40 years.

Conclusion: The majority (57%) of the respondents fall in the 20–40 age group.

3) Marital Status

- 84% are married.
- 16% are unmarried.

Conclusion: The majority of the respondents are married, not unmarried.

4) Income Level

- 71% have no income, indicating that most are students.
- 8% earn between ₹15,000–₹20,000.
- 7% earn between ₹20,000–₹35,000.
- 6% earn between ₹35,000–₹45,000.
- The remaining respondents earn above ₹45,000.

Conclusion: The majority (71%) of respondents have no income, suggesting they are primarily students.

5) Occupation

- 72% are students.
- 12% are in business or self-employed.
- 10% are in service or executive roles.
- 4% are housewives.
- 2% are retired or in IT jobs.

Conclusion: The majority of respondents are students.

6) Education Level

- 78% are undergraduate degree holders.
- 19% are postgraduates.
- 2% have completed PUC (Pre-University Course).
- 1% hold a PhD.

Conclusion: The majority of respondents (78%) are undergraduates.

Common way consumers discover new products

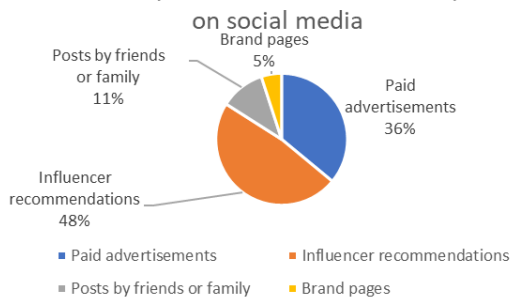


Figure 1.1

F. Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: Majority of the consumers discover new products on social media through influencer recommendations and further with paid advertisements.

Consumers typically check online reviews before making a purchase

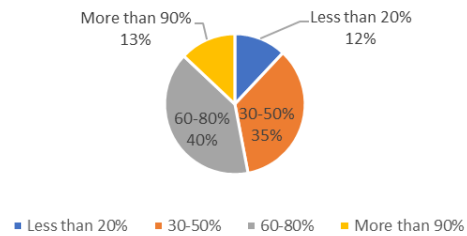


Figure 1.2

G. Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: Majority 60-80% consumers typically check online reviews before making a Purchase.

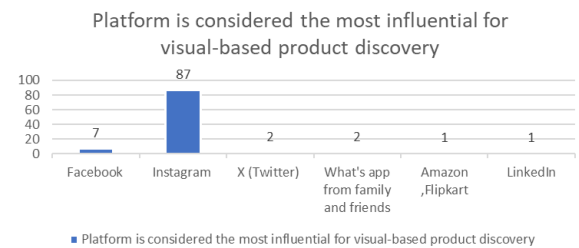


Figure 1.3

H. Source: Primary Data

Platform Preferences

- Instagram (87%): Preferred for visual based product discovery
- Facebook (7%): Preferred for visual based product discovery
- Twitter (2%): Preferred for visual based product discovery
- Amazon, Flipkart, LinkedIn (1%): Preferred for visual based product discovery

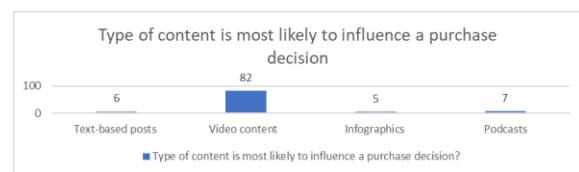


Figure 1.4

I. Source: Primary Data

Interpretation:

Majority respondents view video content which influence in purchase decision.

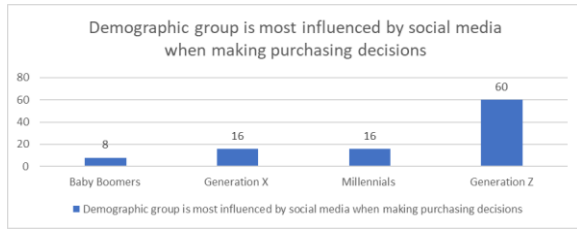


Figure 1.5

J. Source: Primary Data

Interpretation:

Majority respondents are Generation Z who are more influenced by social media when making purchase decisions.

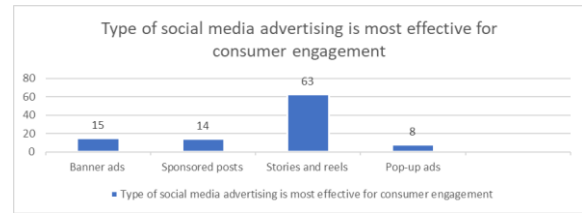


Figure 1.6

K. Source: Primary Data

Interpretation:

Majority respondents' stories and reels are most effective social media advertising for consumer engagement.

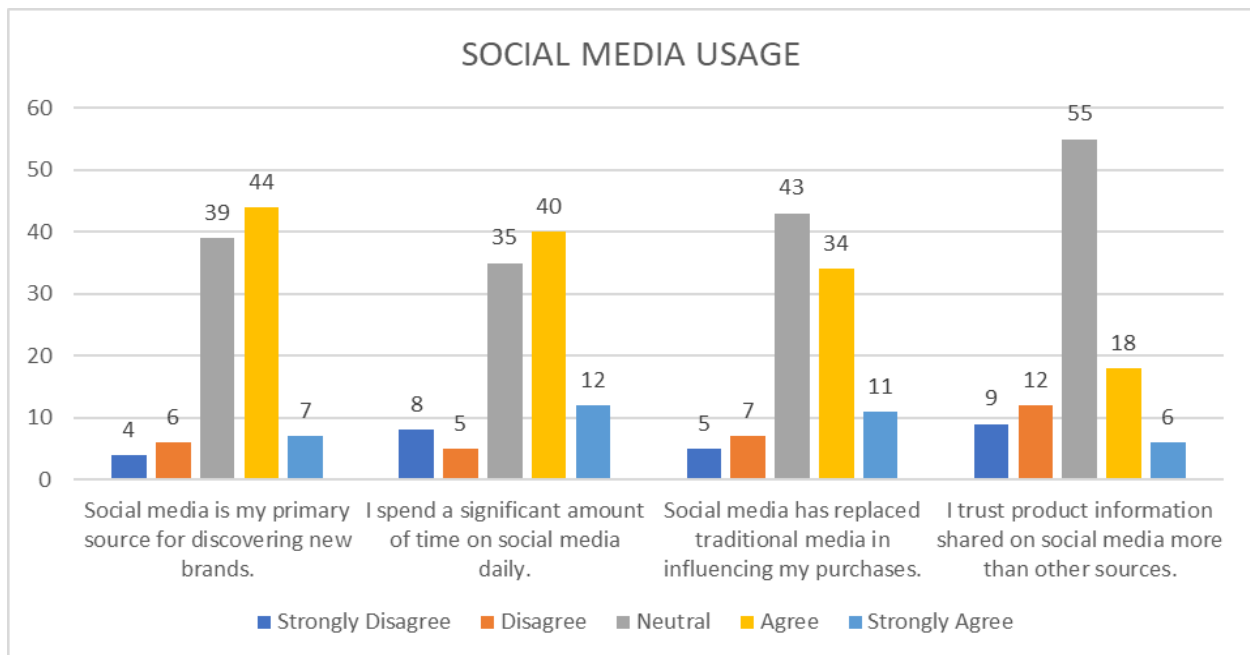


Figure 1.7

L. Source: Primary Data

Interpretation:

- Primary Source for Brand Discovery: A large majority Agree or Strongly Agree that social media is their main channel for finding new brands. This underscores social platforms as a critical marketing touchpoint.
- High Daily Usage: Most respondents report spending significant time on social media every day. This high engagement level suggests frequent opportunities for brands to connect with potential customers.

- Replacing Traditional Media: Over half of the participants feel social media now influences their purchase decisions more than traditional outlets (TV, print, etc.). It highlights a shift in how people research and choose products.
- Trust in Social Media Product Information: A strong majority Strongly Agree that they trust product details shared on social media more than other sources. Authentic reviews, testimonials, and user-generated content appear to carry substantial weight.

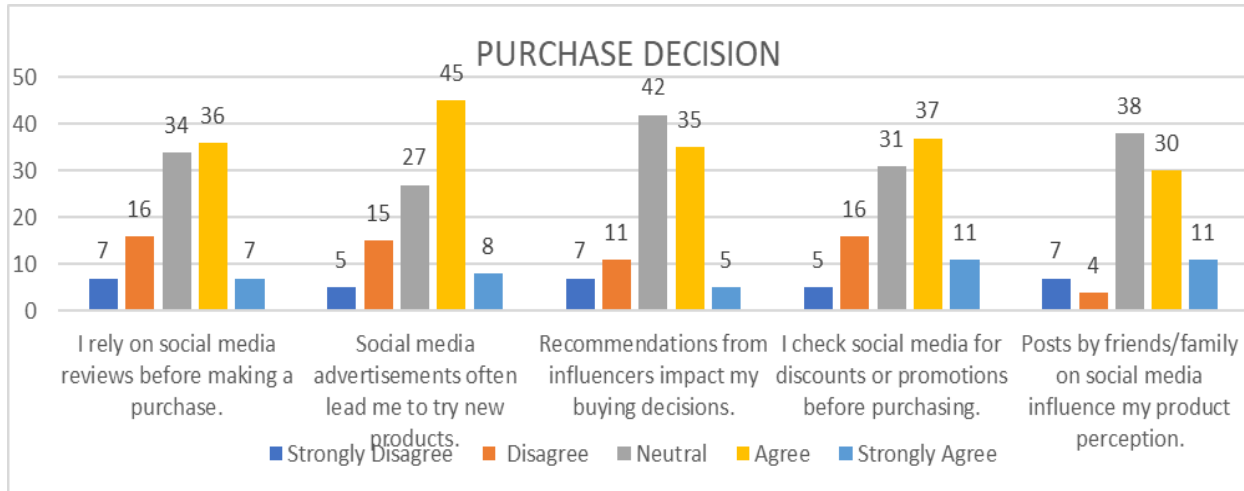


Figure 1.8

M. Source: Primary Data

Interpretation:

- **Reliance on Social Media Reviews:** A majority Agree or Strongly Agree that they depend on reviews from social platforms before buying. This underscores the importance of user-generated content and ratings in influencing purchase decisions.
- **Effectiveness of Social Media Ads:** Many respondents Agree or Strongly Agree that ads on social media prompt them to try new products. This shows social media’s power to spark interest and drive product trials.
- **Influencer Recommendations:** Most participants indicate that influencers’ opinions do affect their choices, suggesting influencer marketing can be a strong catalyst for purchase behaviour.
- **Searching for Discounts/Promotions:** A large share Agree or Strongly Agree that they check social platforms for deals before buying, indicating brands can boost sales by highlighting exclusive offers on social media.
- **Impact of Friends/Family Posts:** A high number also Agree or Strongly Agree that posts from friends/family influence their product perception, reflecting the continued importance of peer-to-peer recommendations in shaping consumer trust.

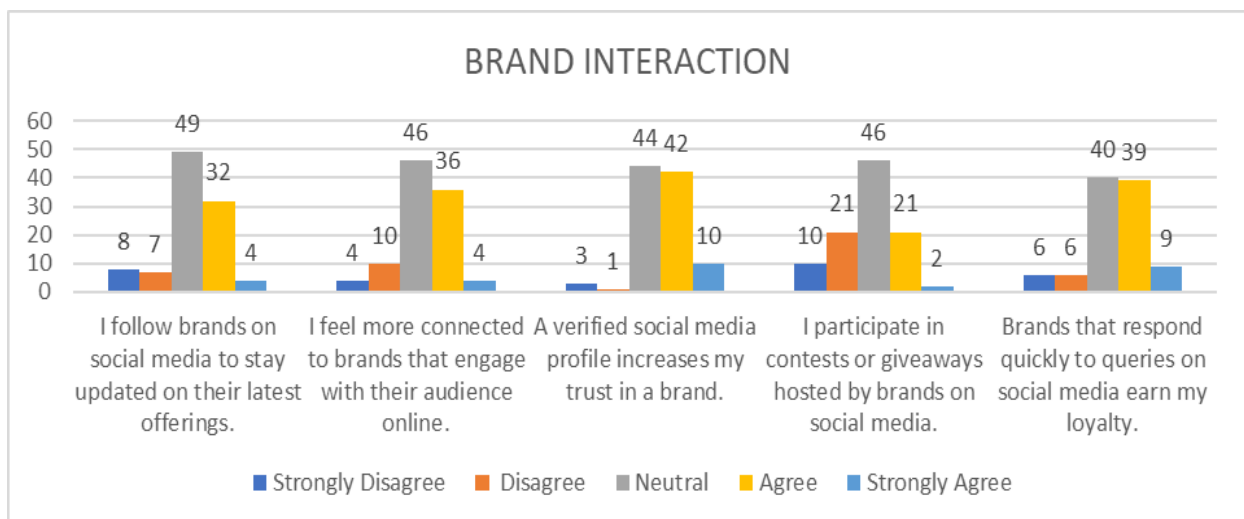


Figure 1.9

N. Source: Primary Data

Interpretation:

- **Following Brands for Updates:** A clear majority Agree or Strongly Agree that they follow brands on social media to stay informed about new products or services, emphasizing how crucial regular updates are for consumer engagement.
- **Connection Through Engagement:** Most respondents feel more connected to brands that actively interact with their audience, suggesting two-way communication (e.g., replying to comments, hosting Q&A sessions) can foster stronger relationships.

- **Verified Profiles and Trust:** Many participants Agree or Strongly Agree that a verified social media account boosts a brand’s credibility. The official “blue checkmark” (or similar badge) reassures users about the brand’s legitimacy.
- **Contests and Giveaways:** A significant number of people join brand-hosted contests or giveaways, indicating that interactive promotions can be an effective way to attract and retain followers.
- **Quick Response = Loyalty:** A large share Agree or Strongly Agree that swift replies to questions or concerns earn their loyalty. Timely, helpful customer support on social channels can therefore be a key differentiator for brands.

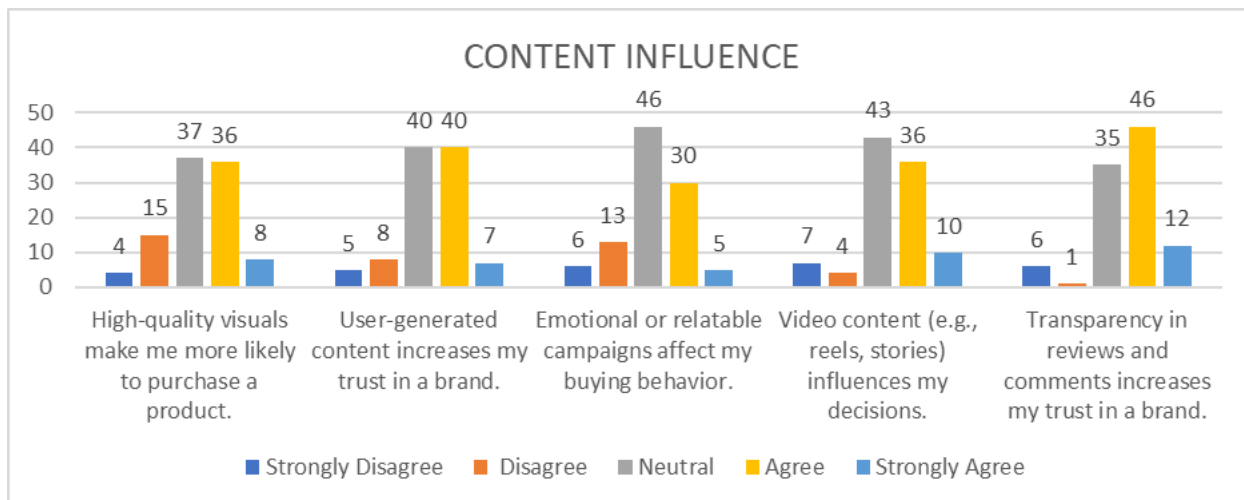


Figure 1.10

O. Source: Primary Data

Interpretation:

- **High-Quality Visuals:** Most respondents Agree or Strongly Agree that compelling imagery significantly boosts their likelihood of purchasing a product, highlighting the importance of visually appealing content.
- **User-Generated Content:** A large share Agree or Strongly Agree that seeing real customers’ posts and reviews increases brand trust. Authentic, relatable content can be more persuasive than traditional ads.
- **Emotional/Relatable Campaigns:** Many respondents indicate that emotionally charged or

personally relevant campaigns influence their buying decisions, suggesting storytelling and empathy can be powerful marketing tools.

- **Video Content:** A majority find reels, stories, and other video formats to be influential, indicating that dynamic, engaging video is a key driver of purchase decisions.
- **Transparency in Reviews:** Most participants Agree or Strongly Agree that open and honest reviews and comments from both brands and consumers foster trust, reinforcing the need for candid feedback and interactions on social platforms.

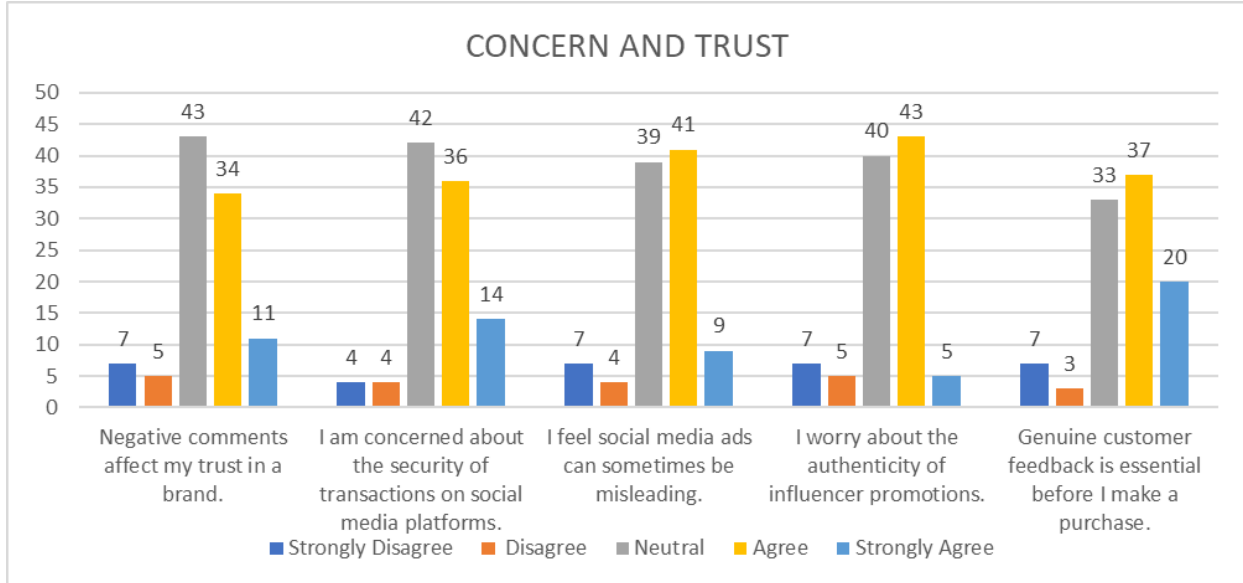


Figure 1.11

P. Source: Primary Data

Interpretation:

- “Negative comments affect my trust in a brand.”  
A clear majority either Agree or Strongly Agree that negative comments have an impact on their trust. This indicates that public criticism or poor reviews in social media comment sections can significantly undermine a brand’s credibility.

- “I am concerned about the security of transactions on social media platforms.”

Most respondents Agree or Strongly Agree that they are worried about the safety of financial or personal information when buying through social media. This underscores the importance of secure payment gateways and transparent privacy policies for brands selling on social platforms.

- “I feel social media ads can sometimes be misleading.”

Again, the vast majority Agree or Strongly Agree. This highlights a skepticism toward social media advertising and suggests that users often question the claims made in ads. Brands may need to provide more transparent and verifiable information in their social media campaigns.

- “I worry about the authenticity of influencer promotions.”

Similar to concerns about ads, a large share of respondents Agree or Strongly Agree that influencer endorsements can be questionable. Consumers appear to be wary of paid partnerships and want to see

genuine, honest influencer recommendations rather than purely sponsored content.

- “Genuine customer feedback is essential before I make a purchase.”

This statement has the highest proportion of Agree and Strongly Agree responses, indicating that user-generated reviews, testimonials, and authentic feedback are extremely influential in purchase decisions. People rely heavily on other customers’ experiences to validate a product or service.

## V. DISCUSSION

Key Findings

- Influencers significantly impact trust and purchase decisions.
- User-generated content is more credible than traditional advertisements.
- Visual and interactive content drive engagement across platforms.

Ethical Implications: Data privacy and authenticity are critical for maintaining consumer trust. Transparent practices, such as clear labelling of sponsored content, are essential.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study underscores the transformative impact of social media on consumer behaviour. Influencers, user-generated content, and targeted advertising are

key drivers of engagement and trust. Marketers must prioritize transparency, personalized engagement, and platform-specific strategies to succeed in the competitive digital landscape.

#### VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Collaborate with credible influencers to build trust.
- Encourage user-generated content through contests and campaigns.
- Invest in data-driven, platform-specific advertising strategies.
- Address ethical concerns by ensuring transparency and data security.

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