

Exploring the Dynamics of Social Media Influence on The Purchasing Patterns of College Students of Lucknow

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Abstract—The analysis reveals that a substantial portion of student's report encountering product promotions and peer-endorsed content on platforms like Instagram, which in turn contribute to impulsive or planned purchases. Peer-influence and FoMO emerged as significant factors driving purchase behaviour, while ease of access to product information on social media also facilitated buying decisions. However, the degree of influence varied some students remained cautious and attributed their purchases more to need than to social media prompts. The study underscores the dual role of social media as both an enabler of informed consumer choices and a channel for marketing-driven consumption among college students. The findings carry implications for marketers aiming to engage the student demographic, and for educators and policymakers concerned about responsible consumption and digital literacy.

Index Terms—Social media influence; Consumer purchase decision

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, social media has reshaped how young adults discover, evaluate and purchase products, especially among college-going students. For students in India, constantly connected to platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, the boundaries between social interaction, brand messaging and consumer activity are increasingly blurred. Research shows that a large portion of Indian youth are active on social media, often spending several hours daily. This study seeks to explore how social media influences the buying behaviour of college students how they become aware of products, how peer- or influencer-endorsed content affects their decisions, and how their unique goals, budgets and preferences shape these patterns. By focusing on

students who are immersed both in campus life and the digital world, the research aims to shed light on how consumption among this group is evolving in the Indian context, and what this means for brands, educators and policymakers.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Yingxuan Yang (2024) has explored the mechanism of social media's influence on consumer purchase decisions. This study shows that social media significantly shapes consumer purchase behaviour and brand attitudes through content distribution, social authentication and user interaction.

Kaplan, A.M. & Haenlein, M, (2010) in their paper titled "Users of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media" conclude that social media platforms provide a space for users to create, share, and influence content, which significantly impacts consumer decision-making processes. The study highlights that social media has transformed traditional marketing by enabling direct interaction between brands and consumers.

Mangold, W.G. & Faulds, D.J., (2009) in their paper titled "Social Media: The New Hybrid Element of the Promotion Mix" conclude that social media combines elements of traditional advertising and word-of-mouth communication. It plays a crucial role in shaping consumer purchasing behaviour by allowing users to share opinions, reviews, and experiences online.

Duffett, R.G., (2017) in his paper titled "Influence of Social Media Marketing Communications on Young Consumers' Attitudes" concludes that social media marketing has a significant positive effect on the

purchasing intentions of young consumers, especially college students, who are highly active on digital platforms.

Djafarova, E. & Rushworth, (2017) in their paper titled “Exploring the Credibility of Online Celebrities’ Instagram Profiles in Influencing Purchase Decisions” conclude that young consumers, particularly females, are highly influenced by social media influencers. The study emphasizes that trust and relatability of influencers strongly affect buying behaviour.

De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V. & Hudders, (2017) in their paper titled “Marketing Through Instagram Influencers: Impact of Number of Followers and Product Divergence” conclude that influencers with a large number of followers and perceived authenticity have a stronger impact on consumer attitudes and purchase intentions.

Hennig-Thurau, T. et al., (2004) in their paper titled “Electronic Word-of-Mouth via Consumer Opinion Platforms” conclude that online reviews and consumer feedback significantly influence purchasing decisions. Positive and negative reviews both play an important role in shaping consumer perceptions and trust.

Tuten, T.L. & Solomon, M.R., (2017) in their book “Social Media Marketing” conclude that interactive and engaging social media content enhances brand awareness and encourages consumer engagement, which ultimately leads to increased purchasing behaviour among users.

Smith, A.N., Fischer, E. & Yongjian, C., (2012) in their paper titled “How Does Brand-related User-generated Content Differ Across YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter?” conclude that user-generated content plays a major role in influencing consumer perceptions and brand choices, especially among young users.

Khan, G.F., (2017) in his study on social media usage concludes that social networking sites significantly affect consumer buying behaviour by providing easy access to product information, peer reviews, and brand interactions..

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, a sample comprising fifty respondents, all of whom are college students residing in Lucknow, was selected to provide the necessary research data. Data for the study was gathered using a questionnaire created on Google Forms. The questionnaire link was shared on social media and was send on WhatsApp to students. Adequate time was given to the participants to provide their responses. A structured questionnaire is developed to gather quantitative data on various aspects of students. The questionnaire is designed based on the research objectives and includes multiple-choice questions. The questionnaire covers topics such as frequency and duration of social media usage, preferred platform and frequency of purchases.

V. OBJECTIVES

Following are the major objectives of the study:

1. To study the impact of social media platforms on the buying behaviour of college students in Lucknow.
2. To identify the most influential social media platforms (such as Instagram, YouTube, etc.) affecting students purchase decisions.
3. To examine how social media advertisements, influence the preferences and choices.
4. To evaluate the level of trust college students place in social media marketing.
5. To study the relationship between time spent on social media and purchasing behaviour.
6. To identify the types of products (fashion, electronics, cosmetics, etc.) most influenced by social media.

VI. DATA ANALYSIS

WHAT IS YOUR GENDER

The response from figure 1, shows that within this sample, 40% of the respondents are female, while the remaining 60% represented male. The data collected shows more males responses than the female representing the male dominated research.

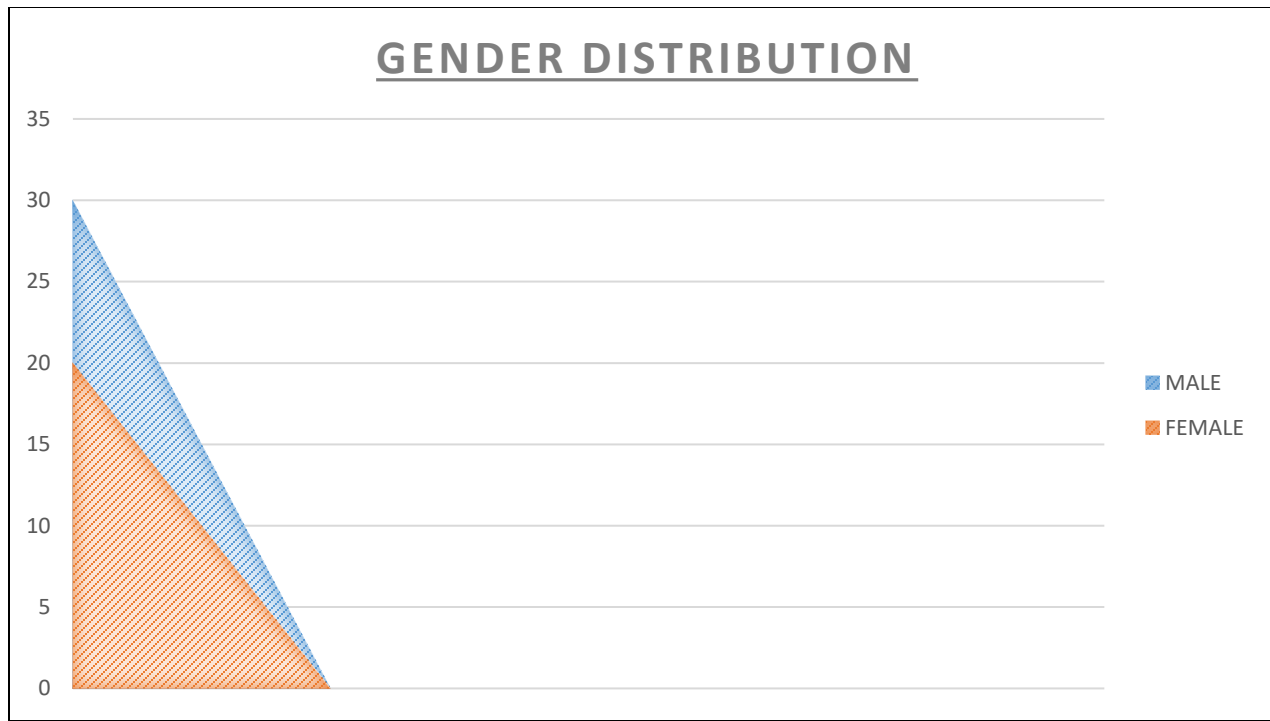


Figure 1

WHAT IS YOUR AGE?

From figure 2, we can conclude that the major responses are from ages 18-22 and some are from the

ages 23-29, which shows that the audience for this research is the youth. The engagement is of college students.

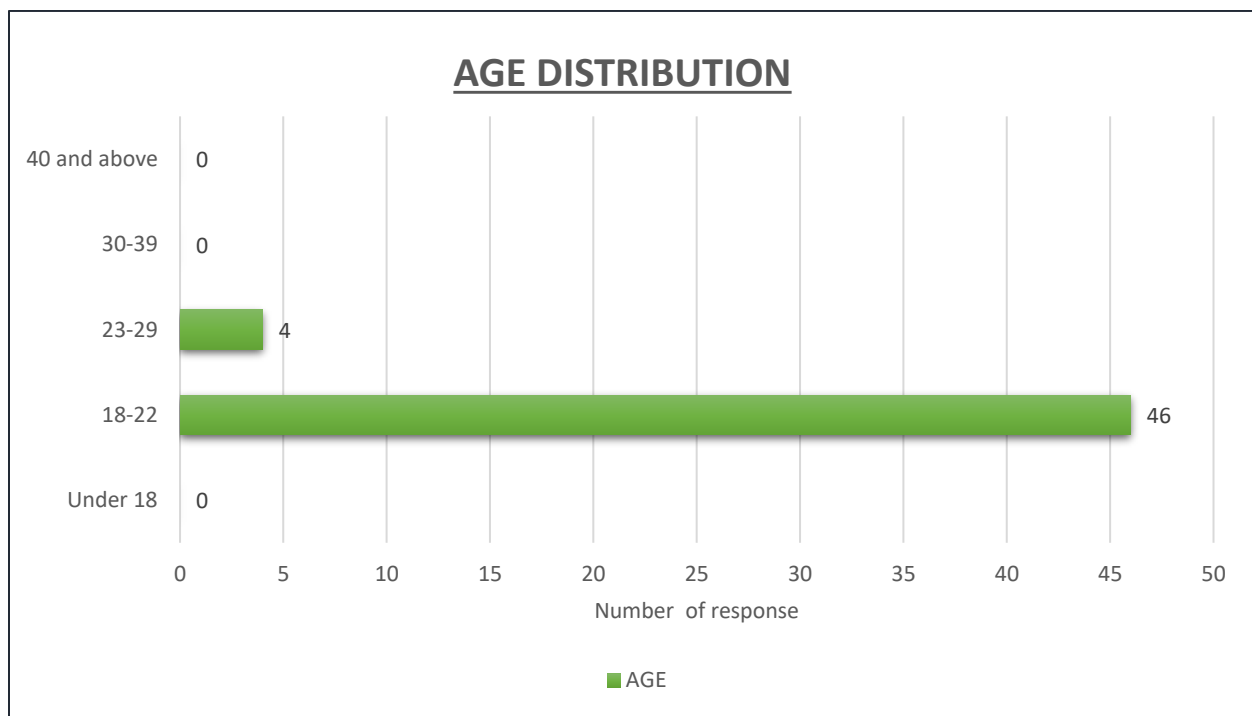


Figure 2

HOW MUCH TIME YOU SPEND ON SOCIAL MEDIA ON DAILY BASIS?

The data on daily social media usage among college students reveals important patterns relevant to understanding that digital engagement and its potential impact on consumer behaviour. The largest proportion of respondent's reports spending 1–2 hours per day on

social media, indicating a moderate but consistent level of online interaction. A significant share of students also falls within the 2–4 hours per day category. This level of usage suggests a higher degree of digital immersion, wherein students are more frequently interacting with product-related content.

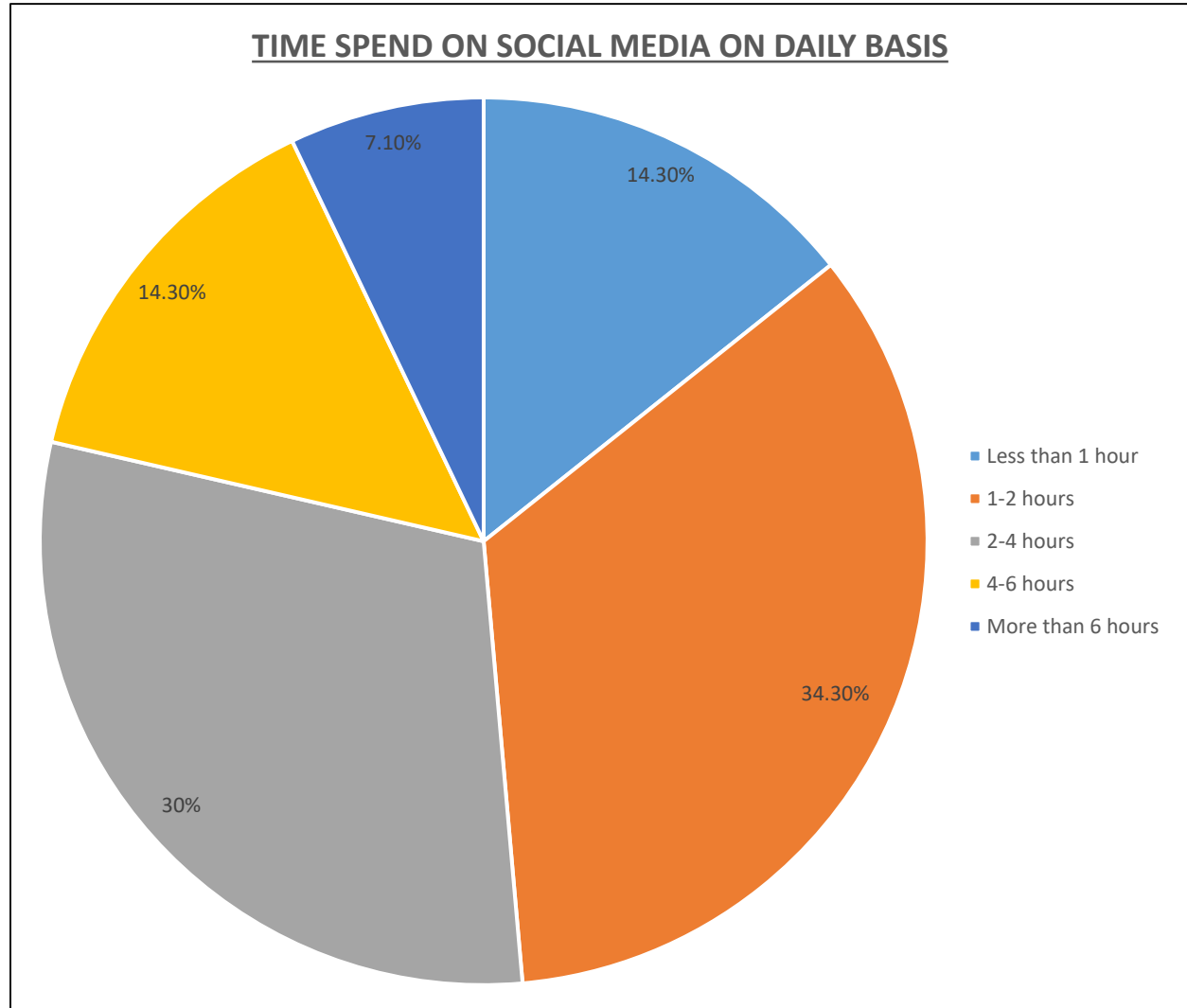


Figure 3

WHICH SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM DO YOU USE?

The distribution of preferred social media platforms among the 50 respondents reveals a highly concentrated pattern of digital engagement. A striking 81.9% of college students report Instagram as their

primary platform, indicating its dominant role in shaping online behaviour. In contrast, the remaining platforms—Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, and other minor categories collectively account for a much smaller proportion of user preference.

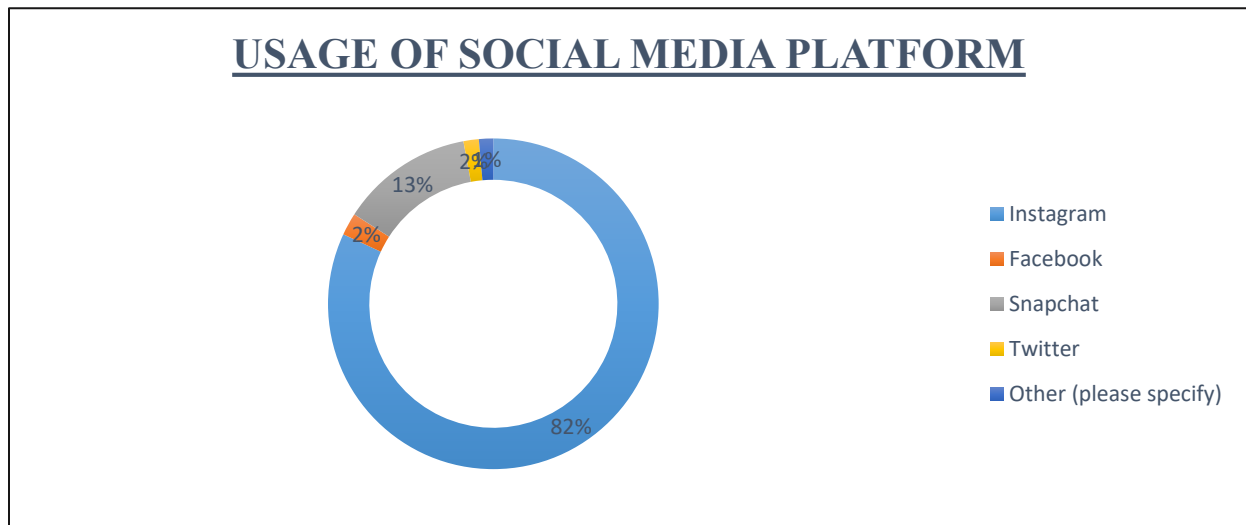


Figure 4

HOW FREQUENTLY YOU DO SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCED PURCHASES?

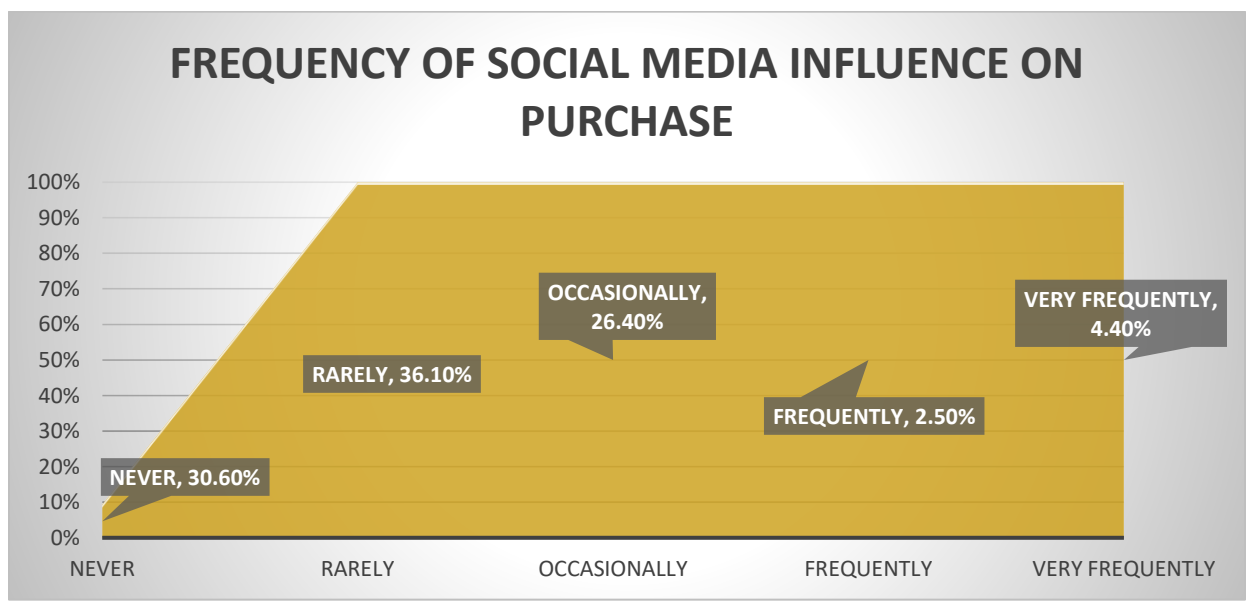


Figure 5

The largest segment of respondents, comprising 36.1%, reports that they rarely make purchases influenced by social media. A substantial proportion, 30.6%, states that they never make purchases influenced by social media. This highlights the presence of a more independent or traditional approach to consumption among a segment of college students.

WHAT TYPE OF PRODUCT YOU PURCHASE GENERALLY?

The data on the types of products purchased through social media reveals distinct consumption patterns among college students. The largest proportion of respondents are reported purchasing clothing and fashion items. This indicates that apparel remains the most influential category in social media driven commerce, likely due to the strong presence of fashion influencers, trend-based content, and visually appealing promotional strategies widely used on platforms like Instagram.

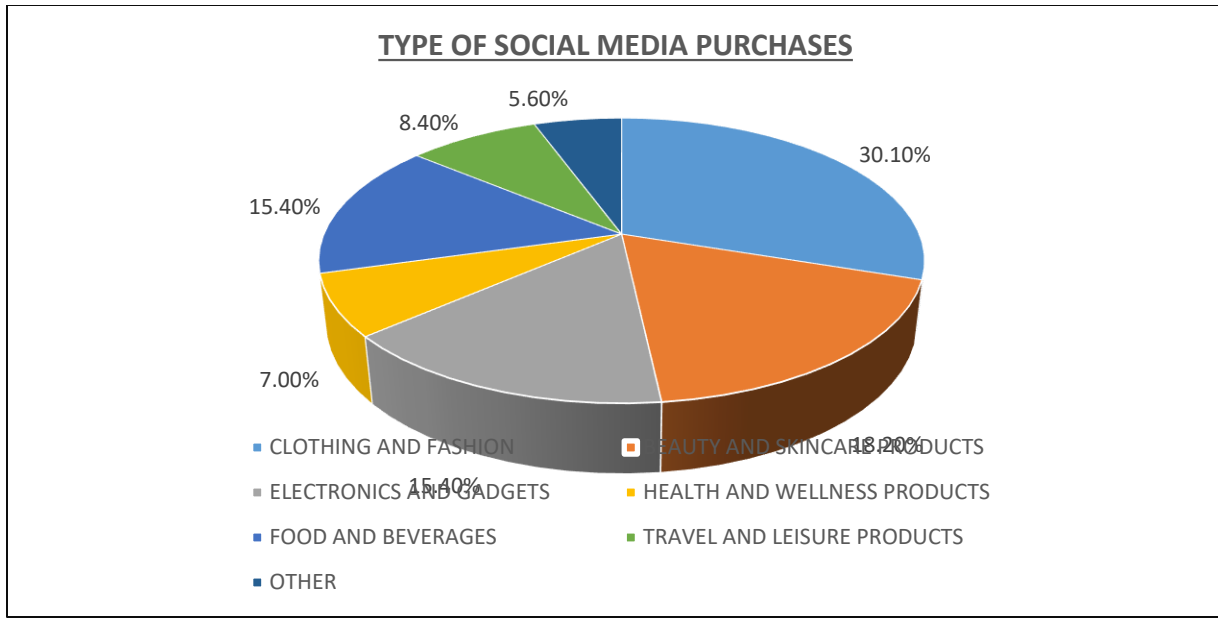


Figure 6

HOW MUCH TRUST DO YOU HAVE IN SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCES?

The data on trust in social media influencers reveals a perspective among college students, highlighting a moderate yet cautious level of confidence in influencer-driven content. The majority of

respondents, 48.6%, rated their trust level as 3 out of 5, suggesting that while students are receptive to influencer recommendations, they do not fully rely on them. A significant proportion of participants assigned lower trust ratings. Specifically, 22.2% rated their trust at 1, while 19.4% assigned a rating of 2.

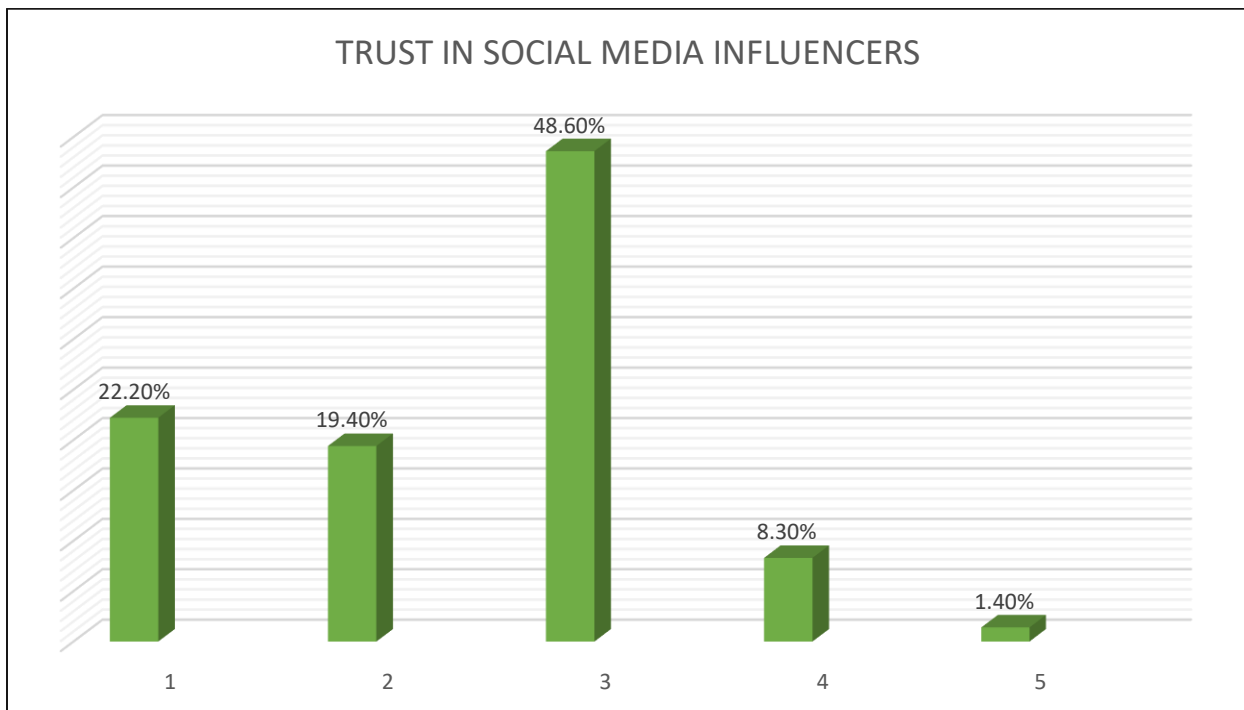


Figure 7

HOW DO YOU DISCOVER NEW PRODUCTS?

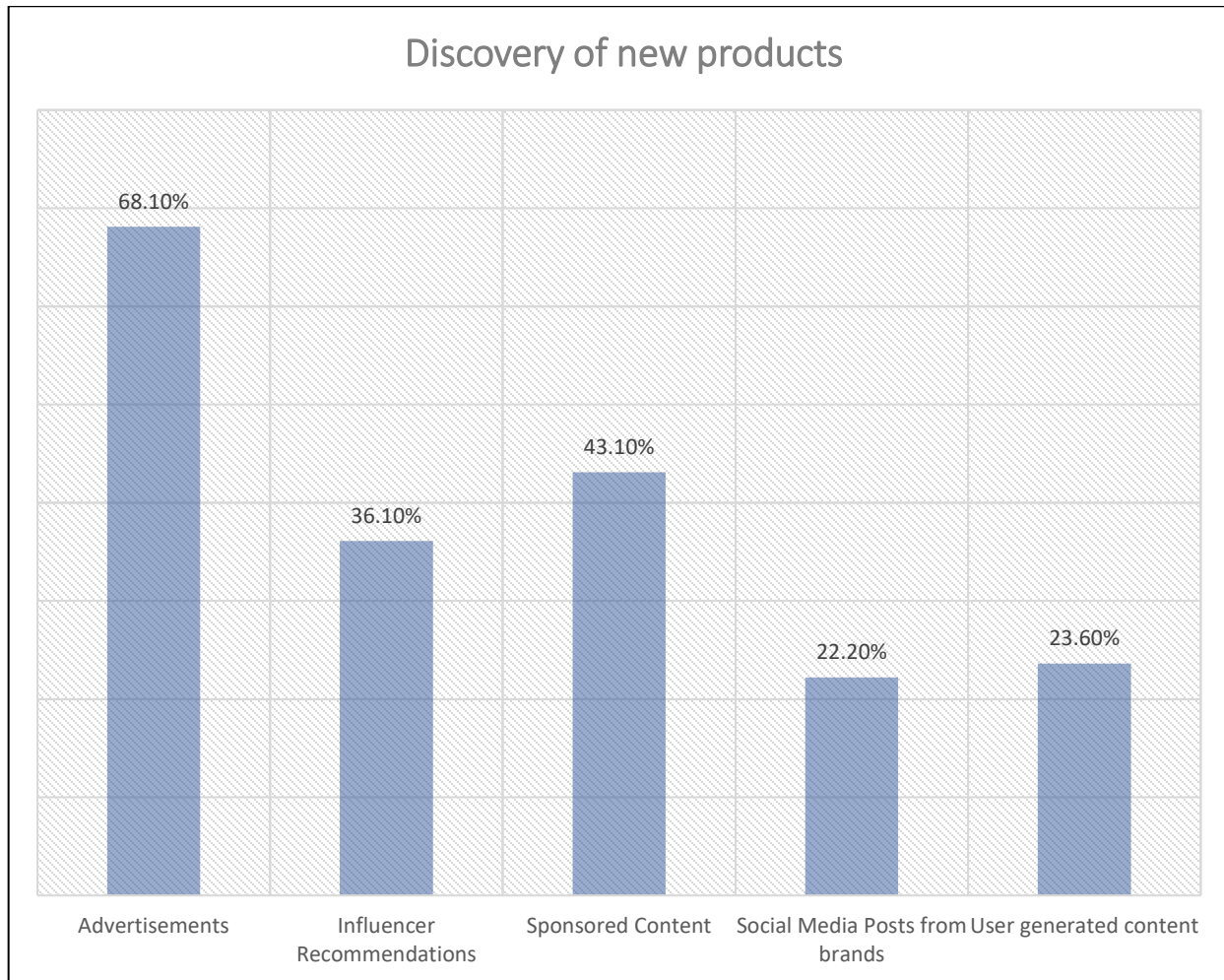


Figure 8

Advertisements represent the most influential channel (68.1% of respondents). Sponsored content (43.1%) and influencer recommendations (36.1%) also emerge as significant contributors to product discovery. These results demonstrate the continued impact of social media personalities and integrated promotional materials on shaping consumer engagement. Although less influential, social media posts from brands (22.2%) and user-generated content (23.6%) still play meaningful roles in the discovery process. These forms of content provide a combination of direct brand communication. Collectively, the data illustrates a multi-layered system of influence in which paid advertisements, influencer activity, sponsored promotions, and organic content all contribute to college students' awareness of new products.

HOW DO YOU DEVELOP TRUST ON SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTED PRODUCTS?

The most influential factor identified is reviews and ratings, selected by 39% of respondents. This indicates that college students rely heavily on collective user feedback. Brand reputation emerges as the second most influential factor, accounting for 38% of responses. This suggests that well established, reputable brands are more likely to earn students' trust, regardless of the promotional technique used. Influencer credibility, identified by 11% of participants, plays a comparatively smaller role in trust formation. Peer recommendations represent a minor yet meaningful source of trust, selected by a small portion of respondents.

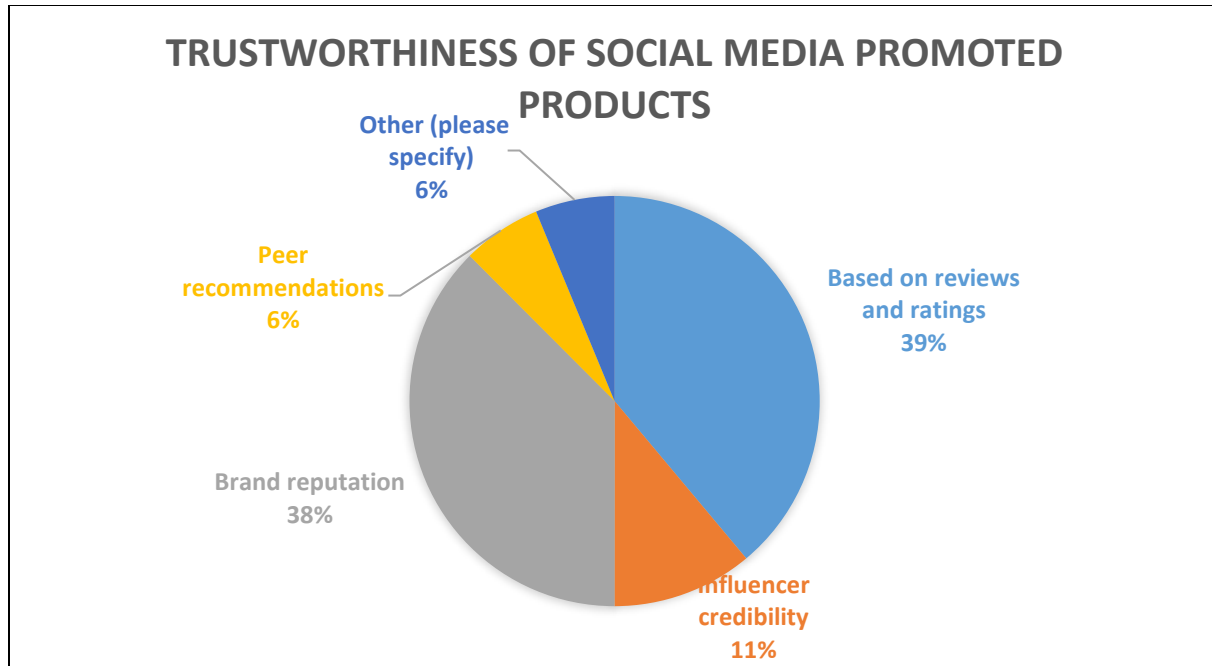


Figure 9

HOW MUCH TRANSPARENCY DO YOU FEEL SOCIAL MEDIA ADS AND SPONSORED CONTENT HAVE?

Understanding their perceptions of transparency in social media ads and sponsored content is crucial. The data reveals 50% respondents express scepticism regarding the transparency of social media ads and

sponsored content, rating them as "not very transparent." Furthermore, 36% of respondents rate social media ads and sponsored content as "somewhat transparent, acknowledging some level of transparency and a smaller percentage of respondents, comprising 11%, rate social media ads and sponsored content as "very transparent.

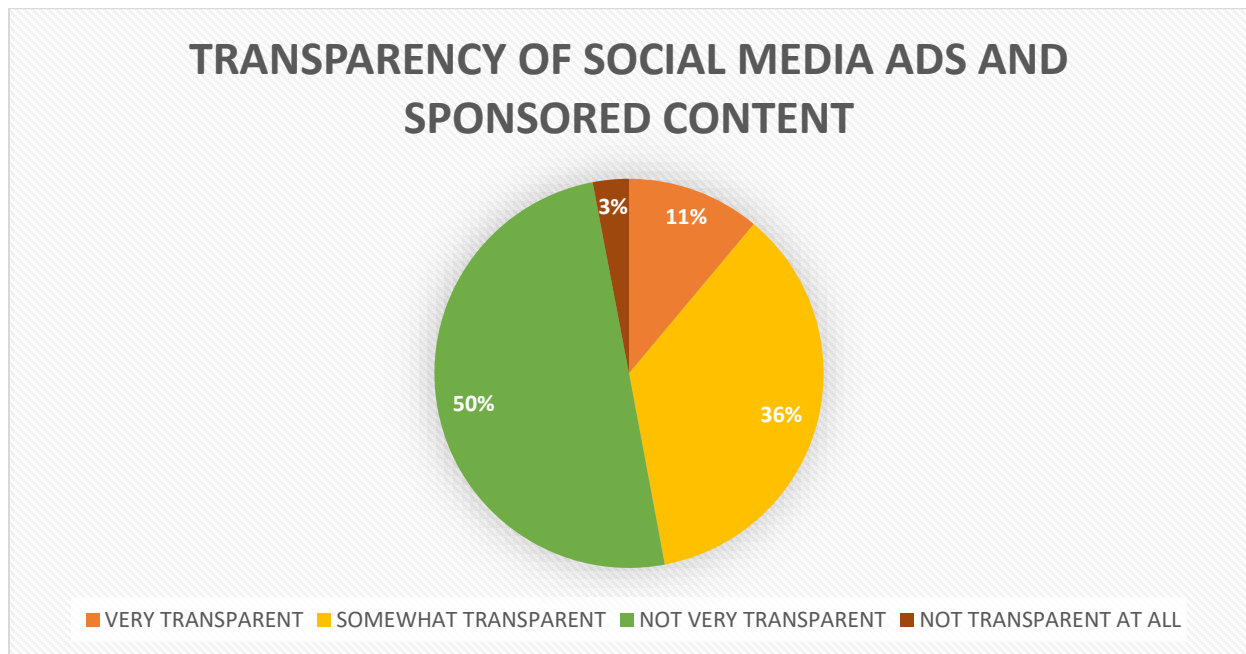


Figure 10

HOW MUCH YOU ARE SATISFIED WITH PRODUCT YOU BOUGHT AFTER GETTING INFLUENCED THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA? RATE YOUR SATISFACTION LEVEL ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5

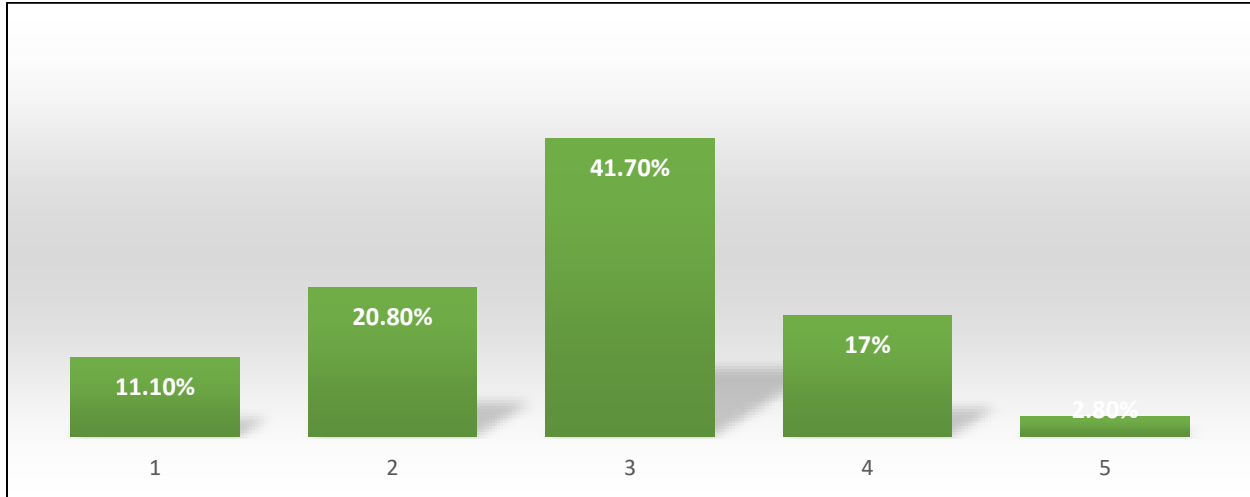


Figure 11

From figure 11, it shows that The majority of respondents, comprising 41.7%, rate their satisfaction level as a 3 on a scale of 1 to 5. This indicates a neutral stance or moderate satisfaction with the outcomes of social media influence on their purchasing decisions. Additionally, 23.6% of respondents rate their satisfaction level as a 4, indicating a relatively high degree of satisfaction with the outcomes of social media influence on their purchasing patterns. While 20.8%, rate their satisfaction level as a 2 and, 11.1% of respondents rate their satisfaction level as a 1, indicating the lowest level of satisfaction.

WHICH KIND OF CONTENT YOU ENGAGE MORE ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

From figure 12, the data indicates that photos and videos are the most engaging type of content for respondents, accounting for 74 % of total engagement. While articles and blogs represent 14% of engagement. Similarly, polls and quizzes account for smaller portion. Other categories such as giveaways and contest, live streams/webinars and other collectively make up only a minor percentage

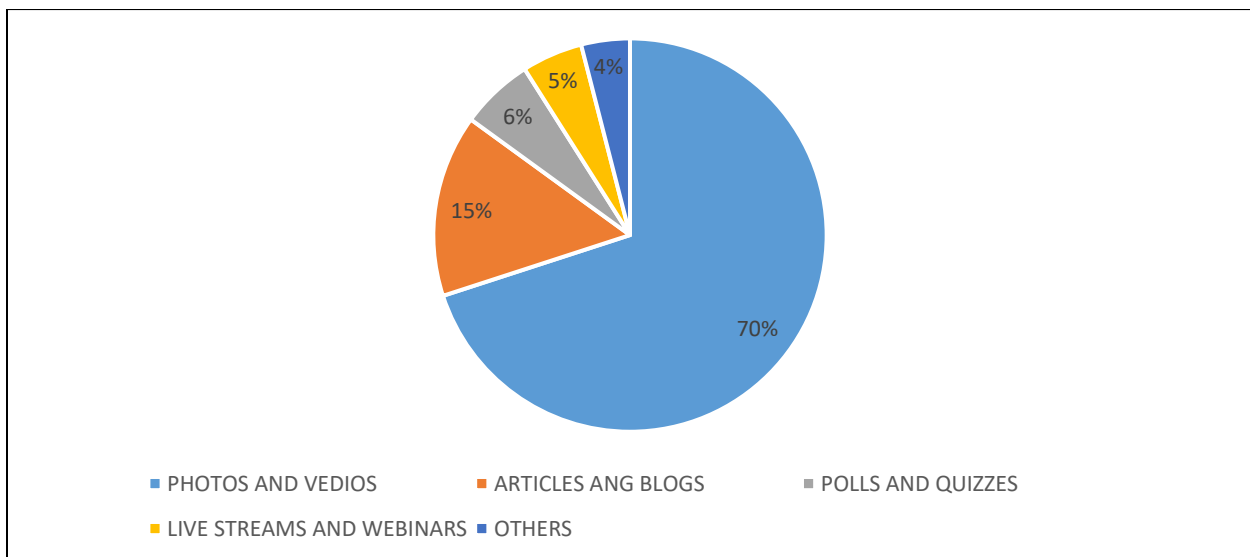


Figure 12

VII. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For a research paper several suggestions and recommendations can enhance future studies. It would be beneficial if the students adopt a more mindful approach toward purchasing decisions. The study indicates that significant number of students are influenced by social media trends and promotional content, often leading to impulsive buying. From a marketing perspective, marketers and brands should focus on maintaining transparency and authenticity in their promotions. Further, the study may expand the geographical scope beyond Lucknow to compare consumer behavior across different regions. Researchers can also explore the long term psychological and financial effects of social media influence.

VIII. LIMITATIONS

The findings are based on a narrow outlook with a sample size of 50 students. And also, the data collected through self-reported surveys may be subject to respondent bias, as participants may provide socially desirable responses or inaccurately recall their social media usage and purchasing behaviours. This could affect the reliability and accuracy of the findings. The research design, which relies on a single snapshot in time, limits the ability to establish causal relationships or temporal trends between social media influence and purchasing patterns among college students.

IX. CONCLUSION

This research delves into the complex dynamics of social media influence on the purchasing patterns of college students, revealing a detailed landscape shaped by various factors and behaviours, with a sample size of 50 respondents. The findings highlight the pervasive role of social media in the lives of college students, with a significant portion spending considerable time on these platforms daily. Instagram emerges as the dominant social media platform, followed by a diverse array of platforms like Facebook and Snapchat, indicating the varied preferences and habits of college students in engaging with digital content. Moreover, the research sheds light on the frequency and types of social media-influenced purchases, with a considerable percentage of

respondents making purchases based on social media recommendations, primarily clothing, fashion, beauty, and skincare products. This underscores the substantial influence wielded by social media in shaping consumer behaviours and preferences among college students. However, trust in social media influencers and promoted products remains varied, with factors such as reviews and ratings, brand reputation, and influencer credibility playing pivotal roles in fostering consumer confidence. Despite this, concerns regarding transparency in social media ads and sponsored content persist, highlighting the importance of clear disclosure and ethical practices in engendering trust and credibility among consumers. In conclusion, this research underscores the complexity of social media influence on the purchasing patterns of college students and the imperative for marketers to prioritize transparency, authenticity, and consumer trust in their digital marketing strategies. By understanding the preferences, behaviours, and motivations of college students in the digital landscape, brands can develop targeted approaches that effectively leverage social media influence to drive positive outcomes, enhance consumer experiences, and foster long-term brand loyalty within this demographic. Additionally, educators and policymakers can play a crucial role in promoting media literacy and responsible digital citizenship among college students, empowering them to navigate the digital landscape with confidence and discernment.

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