

Major Research Project

‘Examining the factors influencing purchase intention of healthy foods- A study of Social Media Influencers’

Submitted By

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work titled '**Examining the factors influencing purchase intention of healthy foods- A study of Social Media Influencers**' as part of a Major Research Project for 4th Semester in MBA (DSM, DTU) under the guidance of Mr. Yashdeep Singh is my original work to the best of my knowledge and has not been submitted anywhere else.

The report has been written by me in my own words and not copied from elsewhere. Anything that appears in this report that is not original has been duly and appropriately referred/ cited/ acknowledged.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Project Report titled — ‘Examining the factors influencing purchase intention of healthy foods- A study of Social Media Influencers’ is a work carried out by Ms. Sneha Singh who is a student of MBA 2022-24 batch at Delhi School of Management, DTU, Delhi. The project is submitted to Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the Degree of Masters of Business Administration.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It is a great pleasure for me to acknowledge the kind of help and guidance received during the research work. The project provided me with an excellent opportunity to explore the area of Influencer Marketing. I am highly indebted to Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University for giving me this opportunity to work on this project.

I would like to express my gratitude to all those who gave me the strength and possibility to complete this innovative work. I would particularly like to thank Mr. Yashdeep Singh (Assistant Professor, DTU), for giving me the freedom to work unbounded and innovatively.

Sneha Singh

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study examines the factors influencing purchase intention of healthy food products among consumers who follow healthy food promoting influencers on social media. The research explores how perceptions of these influencers' attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise impact consumers' likelihood to purchase recommended healthy food items. Additionally, the study investigates the role of consumer involvement with healthy food and Instagram use in purchase decisions.

The findings from this research will provide valuable insights for social media marketing strategies within the healthy food industry. Understanding how influencer marketing influences consumer behavior can inform the development of targeted campaigns that leverage influencer credibility and effectively promote healthy food choices.

This research goes beyond simply identifying the influence of social media influencers. It delves deeper by exploring the specific characteristics that resonate with consumers. The study investigates whether perceptions of an influencer's attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise have a differential impact on purchase intention. For instance, consumers may be more likely to trust recommendations from influencers who appear knowledgeable and experienced with healthy food, as opposed to solely focusing on physical attractiveness.

Furthermore, the research examines the role of consumer involvement in both healthy food and social media. Individuals who actively seek out information about healthy food choices and regularly engage with Instagram content may be more receptive to influencer marketing efforts. Understanding these factors can help marketers tailor their strategies to specific consumer segments within the health-conscious audience.

By analyzing the interplay between influencer characteristics, consumer involvement, and purchase intention, this study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how social media influencer marketing can be leveraged to promote healthy food choices. The findings can be valuable for social media marketers within the healthy food industry, content creators focused on health and wellness, and public health professionals interested in utilizing social media to encourage healthier eating habits.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

There is a complete change in social media as to how we communicate, exchange knowledge, and access media. It has grown to be an indisputable force in the contemporary world, drastically changing the way companies and brands engage with their target markets. Conventional marketing techniques are ineffective today since they formerly relied on one-way communication through print and television advertisements. Customers want authenticity and trust, and they are growing more dubious of traditional advertising.

Social Media Influencer use their online presence, which they have frequently developed through specialized areas of knowledge or experience, to create communities and position themselves as reliable sources of advice and information. Influencers are typically perceived by their fans as more approachable and personable than traditional celebrities. They establish a feeling of intimacy and connection with their audience by sharing details of their daily lives, perspectives, and experiences.

The impact of these online personalities has been recognized by brands from a wide range of industries, leading to huge increase in the industry in recent years. Through sponsored content, product placements, brand alliances, and social media endorsements, influencers can advertise goods and services. They are an effective marketing technique that can increase consumer engagement, product sales, and brand visibility due to their capacity to interact with a highly engaged audience.

In contrast to conventional mass media advertising, which aims to reach a wide audience, influencer marketing focuses on certain interest groups or demographics. Influencers build their online personas around specific niches, including fitness, travel, beauty, or, in the case of this study, health and wellness. Because of this, they are able to draw in a very keen audience that is actually engaged with the content they provide.

Unhealthy eating habits have raised more and more worries about public health in recent years. Influencers on social media, especially those that are wellness and health-related, can have a big impact

on changing consumer behavior by encouraging them to choose better foods. These influencers frequently post fitness regimens, present nutritious meals, and promote balanced living. Their ability to provide relatable content and impart what appears to be "insider" knowledge can inspire and drive their followers to make healthier lifestyle choices. Strategies to promote healthy eating changes through social media interaction can benefit from an understanding of the elements that make influencer marketing in this field effective.

Even if social media influencers have a lot of power, we still need to learn more about the mechanisms that underpin their effect. This study goes beyond merely identifying influencer marketing as a phenomenon and recognizing its impact on customer behavior. In the context of promoting healthy eating, it seeks to pinpoint the precise traits of influencers that most powerfully connect with customers.

The study determines whether influencers' beauty, dependability, and knowledge have affect consumers' intentions to buy healthy food items differently. For instance, rather than relying only on physical appearance, customers might be more inclined to believe recommendations from influencers who seem informed and experienced with healthy cuisine. Knowing how these different attributes work together and affect consumer choices might help the healthy food industry choose influencers for its marketing strategies.

The objective of the project is giving a more thorough reflection of how social media influencer marketing can be used to encourage the consumption of healthful foods. The study intends to provide a comprehensive picture of influencer marketing influence on behavior of consumer in healthy food industry by examining the relationship between influencer traits, customer participation with healthy food and Instagram, and purchase intention.

1.2. Problem Statement

The issue this thesis aims to investigate is what influences consumers' intentions to purchase healthful foods: In a study on social media influencers, the goal is to comprehend the significance of credibility—that is, the attributes (Attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness) of the influencer who promotes healthy food that enable her or him to effectively advocate items. Comprehending the consumers' purpose to purchase requires an understanding of their participation with healthy foods. In order to recognize the effects that the influencer has on the consumer's desire to buy, the mentioned questions (RQ) are proposed:

Do the attractiveness of healthy food-promoting influencers have an impact on user's purchase intention regarding healthy food that is endorsed?

Do the expertise of influencers have an impact on the user's purchase intention of healthy food?

Do the trustworthiness of influencers have an impact on users' purchase intention regarding healthy food?

1.3. Objectives of study

- To examine relationship between perceptions of healthy food influencer attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise, and user purchase intention for healthy food products.

1.4. Scope of the study

- The research will look at the different variables like attractiveness of the influencer, expertise of the influencer, trustworthiness and it's direct relation to purchase intention healthy food by the consumer.
- There will also be a study of indirect relationship between the expertise and the effects it has on trustworthiness.

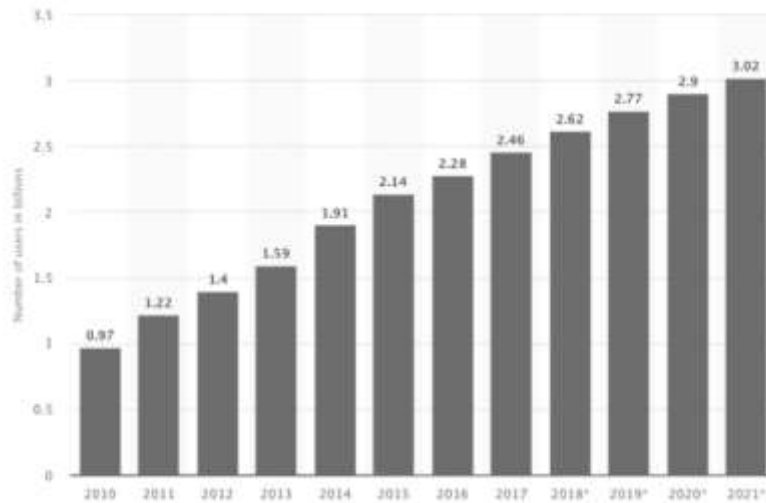
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Social Media Marketing

The increase of social media on internet has altered how businesses now interact with customers and build relationships (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). Brands are now able to collaborate with customers to develop better goods, and impactful values thanks to the shift from one-way to two-way interactive communication (Kim & Kol 2012. SM is a collection of web-based tools designed to promote communication, teamwork, and information exchange (Richter & Koch, 2007). The traditional media is being replaced by this form of media, which is growing exponentially (Bruhn, Schoenmueller, and Schäfer, 2012). In addition to social networkers, businesses and political bodies have also embraced it (Kim & Ko, 2012). According to recent industry statistics, there were 2.62 billion social media users and 4.02 billion internet users in 2017. The total amount spent on social media advertising accounted for 34.5% of all the digital advertising spending in 2017 (Hootstuit 2018, Statista 2019). Social media has represented a hybrid element within the marketing mix, as it takes in account elements of the conventional Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) tools—that is, businesses engaging with customers—with a more intense kind of word-of-mouth—that is, customers engaging with one another (Mangold and Faulds, 2009).

2.1.1. The mostly used social media platforms and the users

Figure 2.1.1.1 depict the global population's usage of social media from 2010 to 2016, with a forecast for 2021. There are expected to be 2.77 billion users in 2019 according to estimates. Nielsen (2009a) reports that 70% of internet users have faith in other users' reviews on social media sites.



Source: Statista 2019

Figure 2.1.1. Number of users of social media in entire world from 2010 to 2021 (in billions)

2.1.2. Main SM platforms in India

India boasts a vibrant social media landscape, with a rapidly growing user base. Understanding the key platforms is crucial for any marketing strategy.

Facebook: According to a study by Kemp (2023), Facebook remains the dominant social media platform in India, with over 448 million active users as of January 2023. Research by Singh et al. (2020) highlights its use by businesses for brand awareness, customer engagement, and targeted advertising campaigns due to its extensive user base and demographic targeting options. (Kemp, 2023 & Singh et al., 2020)

YouTube: A report by Kepios (2023) estimates over 467 million YouTube users in India. Research by Jaiswal (2019) emphasizes its popularity for consuming educational content, entertainment, and product reviews. Brands can leverage YouTube for video marketing campaigns, influencer partnerships, and tutorials to reach a wide audience. (Kepios, 2023 & Jaiswal, 2019)

WhatsApp: Kemp (2023) reports that WhatsApp boasts over 544 million users in India, making it the most widely used messaging app. While not traditionally a marketing platform, research by Goyal et al. (2020) suggests businesses can utilize WhatsApp for customer service, targeted communication, and building communities. (Kemp, 2023 & Goyal et al., 2020)

Instagram: Over 280 million Instagram users in India. Research by Kaur et al. (2021) highlights its popularity for sharing photos and stories, particularly among younger demographics. Brands can utilize Instagram for influencer marketing, product launches, and visually engaging content to connect with a vibrant audience. (Kemp, 2023 & Kaur et al., 2021). India is a hub for influencer marketing, and Instagram is a prime platform for such campaigns. Studies by Ailawadi & Pauwels (2020) demonstrate the effectiveness of influencer marketing on social media, with Indian users particularly receptive to recommendations from trusted influencers (Ailawadi & Pauwels, 2020). Partnering with relevant influencers can help brands expand reach, build trust, and drive engagement. Research by Desai & Purohit (2021) emphasizes the importance of user engagement on Instagram India. Platforms like Instagram Stories offer interactive features like polls and quizzes, which foster a sense of community and brand connection (Desai & Purohit, 2021). Brands can leverage these features to spark conversations with their audience and build deeper relationships.

2.1.3. Social Media's Importance

Rewards for business social media marketing are frequently linked because businesses are now attempting to "connect with their customers" rather than "sell their product." (2009, Gordonhamer). Businesses were first hesitant to adopt technology, but with the emergence of social media and all of its benefits for consumers and businesses, technology is now seen more as chance than a threat (Kim & Ko, 2012). Due to the prevalence and capabilities of social media, companies have come to understand the value of using it as marketing tool to attract new customer base and reduce negative brand views (Arum & Sung, 2018; Kim & Ko, 2012). In this situation, businesses can obtain a competitive edge through social media by enticing clients to learn more about and become intimately involved with the brand (Li et al., 2007). (Arum & Sung, 2018). As a result, compared to traditional marketing, this form of marketing needs less work and investment expenditures (Bruhn et al., 2012), is easier to acquire and access consumer-to-consumer communication (Godes and Mayzlin, 2004), and requires less time. Lastly, SMM enables businesses to foster community development, networking, and conversation in order to develop brand loyalty (McKee, 2010).

2.2. Influencer marketing

It's time for businesses to better target their audience with their communication strategy by including influencer marketing. Though influencer marketing (IM) is used by businesses for a long time, integrating social media is comparatively new development. According to Brown and Hayes (2008), influencer marketing refers to tactics and endeavors carried by people who possess authority and/or influence over the target market's present or prospective clients. The main goal of this kind of marketing is to reach consumers by leveraging influencers to spread a brand's message. As of 2017 (Smart Insights). In order to create impact, instant messaging (IM) requires users to be more proactive and dynamic in creating and disseminating marketing messages, in contrast to traditional marketing (Gretzel and Yoo, 2013). Social media influencer marketing has altered how businesses choose their communication tactics (Palmer et al., 2014). Managers' and marketers' influence over brand management has decreased as a result of the social media platforms' explosive expansion in recent years (Berthon et al., 2007). Companies don't have control over brand communication since customers can converse and exchange content with hundreds or even hundreds of thousands of other consumers (Bruhn et al 2012). Influencer marketing is, in fact, well-known for being an effective way to connect with, interact with, and affect the buying intentions of the target audience (eMarketer, 2017). These days, businesses are using influencer marketing to sell their products due to the rise in social media users. This includes the introduction of products (34,2%) and content creation (35,4%). Further research also revealed that 80% of internet marketer agreed that social media influencers have the ability to greatly increase the visibility of their websites by endorsing them as possible endorsers (Forbes, 2017).

2.3. Influencer marketing and healthy food

Their study demonstrates that users perceive recommendations from credible influencers is trustworthy, which leads to increased interest and purchase intention toward healthy food products. This aligns with the Promotion of Healthy Food Model, which suggests that increased attention to healthy foods through positive marketing messages can influence consumer behavior (Añaña & Barbosa, 2023).

Social media platforms like Instagram offer fertile ground for influencer marketing campaigns focused on healthy eating. These influencers, who showcase healthy lifestyles through content that is relatable and inspiring, can serve as role models and encourage users to adopt healthier food choices. However, it's important to go beyond aesthetics. Influencer marketing campaigns for healthy eating should also emphasize the benefits of a balanced diet and a holistic approach to well-being (Yao et al., 2020).

2.4. Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory (SLT) predicts what socialization agents are used to predict consumer actions and perceptions (Bush et al., 1999). As per the social learning hypothesis, a person who interacts with socialization agents directly or indirectly develops motivation and subsequently exhibits a positive attitude. This theory has been used as a paradigm to study consumer consumption behavior that is impacted by a variety of agents, including peers, family, and celebrities, in sectors including communication and advertising (Martin & Bush 2000; North & Kotzé, 2001; Clark et al, 2001). Furthermore, according to SLT, people acquire attitudes and behaviors through a variety learning experiences, that often take place in wide range of settings based on the interactions and influences they interact with (King and Multon, 1996). Moreover, it's suggested that the theory provide a basis for comprehending socialmedia influencer, who are new autonomous thirdparty advocates. From this angle, SLT shows how a person's purchasing intention is greatly influenced by their attitude well ,the efficacy of socialmedia. The authors focused on ascertaining the significance of aforementioned elements in shaping customer attitudes and purchase intentions. Only two criteria, in the authors' opinion, had a major affect on the attitudes and consumer's purchase intention. First, it was evident that there was little relation between consumers' opinions & buy intents and the authority of social media influencers sources. Secondly, source attractiveness model did not influence purchase intentions, in line with earlier research (Ohanian, 1991; Till and Busler, 1998). Nonetheless, users' favorable sentiments were largely generated by SMIs' attractiveness. Thirdly, a significant relationship between customer attitude and product match-up purchase intention was verified. According to the product match-up theory, endorsements carrying messages linked to the product should be consistent in order to get a successful advertising result (Kamins and Gupta, 1994).

2.5. Source credibility model

Source credibility is explained as the believability of a spokesperson or endorser in an advertisement, their expertise, and trustworthiness (Baker and Churchill, 1977 ; Ohanian,1990). According to this model, an influencer's perceived level of knowledge, reliability (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Hovland et al., 1953; Ohanian, 1990), beauty, and familiarity all affect how successful a message is (La-Ferle & Choi, 2005; Arai, Ko, & Ross, 2014; Solomon, 2014). Through a process known as internalization, knowledge from a reliable source can affect attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and/or views (Erdogan, 1999). When a recipient acknowledges the source's impact on their values and attitude, this process takes place. According to earlier studies, highly trustworthy endorsers are frequently more successful than less credible sources at generating attention, changing attitudes toward the stance espoused, and improving recall (Craig and McCann, 1978; Sternthal, Phillips, and Dholakia, 1978). For many years, businesses have believed that using reliable sources is crucial to their marketing communication plans. However, a 1999 study by Lafferty and Goldsmith found that consumer views toward a brand are greatly influenced by the corporation's legitimacy rather than the endorser.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, which impacts ideas, view, attitude, and action, is the primary factor determining source credibility, with probability of serving as its attribute of faith (Friedman et al., 1978; Arai et al., 2014; Jin & Phua, 2014). (Ohanian, 1990; Liu & Brock, 2011; Tzoumaka, Tsiotsou, & Siomkos, 2016). Ohanian (1991), in , confirmed that a customer's intention to purchase a product that has been recommended is independent of the product's credibility. Finally, asserts that reliable sources have greater persuasive power than unreliable ones (McGuire, 1969).

Expertise

Expertise, is another facet of source credibility (Van der Waldt et al., 2009). According to additional research, this factor is degree to which an innfluencer is regarded as a source of reliable affirmation

(Erdogan, 1999). Additionally, it was found that a celebrity who is seen as an authority is more appealing (Aaker and Myers, 1987).

Therefore, it is suggested in the current study that when it comes to healthy food goods, the credibility and knowledge of the source matter when it comes to influencers.

Based on the above the mentioned hypothesis was formed:

H1: There is a significant effect of perceived trustworthiness of the influencer on the purchase intention of good food products.

H2: There is a significant effect of perceived expertise of the influencer on purchasing intention for healthy food products.

2.6. Source Attractiveness Model

Rest of the writers have emphasized significance of the source attractiveness in influencing the endorser's likeability and, thus, raising the efficacy of the endorsement (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). Liu et al. (2007) discovered that the likability and resemblance of a celebrity endorser are the two aspects of their appeal that are most likely to impact a consumer's buy intentions (Gupta, 2017). It encompasses more than just physical attractiveness when it comes to the virtues that people view in a celebrity endorsement (Erdogan, 1999). The model demonstrates how a consumer's perception of an endorser's physical attributes might influence that consumer's behavior.. Because of this, selecting the most attractive celebrity endorsers is based on their physical appeal, which has the added benefit of their celebrity status (Singer 1983). According to a study by Kohle and Homer (1985), which altered a celebrity's likeability and physical attractiveness before measuring participants' attitudes and purchase intentions regarding the same product, people who were exposed to attractive celebrities liked the product more than those who were exposed to unattractive celebrities. The findings also showed that beautiful celebrities outperform unattractive celebrities in persuading consumers to make a purchase, while unlikeable celebrities generate

more intentions to buy than like celebrities. Overall, the data points to a positive correlation between good perceptions of companies and advertising and the attractiveness of celebrity endorsers. There is a lot of disagreement over whether a consumer's physical appearance influences their desire to make a purchase, and the study only considered the physical appeal of celebrity endorsers—not internet influencers. It is suggested in the current study that attractiveness is not particularly relevant in relation to healthy eating since the decision-making process follows a core route and an influencer's attractiveness is not expected to affect the decision. Considering this, the following theory is put forth.

H3: There is no significant impact of perceived attractiveness on purchase intention on healthy food products.

2.7. Relationship of expertise of the influencers with trust of the consumers

Individuals who have built a reputation and audience online, can have a persuasive effect. However, the effectiveness of influencer marketing hinges not just on popularity, but also on the expertise the influencer projects. Research suggests a strong positive correlation between influencer expertise and consumer trust (Shanlax et al., 2022). Studies support a positive correlation between influencer expertise and consumer trust. Credible information (demonstrated expertise) fosters positive consumer perception (Agrawal, 2016). Consumers act as rational information processors, seeking reliable sources before trusting recommendations (Shu, Q., Shen, L., & Wang, Y., 2018). Expertise builds trust by establishing the influencer's authority on the subject. Consumers are more likely to believe an influencer has their best interests in mind if they possess in-depth knowledge about the product or service (Bhattacharya, C. B., & Mukherjee, S., 2008). Expertise signals credibility, making consumers feel confident in the influencer's ability to provide accurate and unbiased information. This fosters a sense of security and trust in the influencer's endorsements.

Consumers are more likely to trust and be persuaded by healthy food influencers who they perceive as credible sources of information on nutrition and healthy eating (Tanwar et al., 2022). Expertise in this context translates to the influencer demonstrating a strong understanding of healthy food principles,

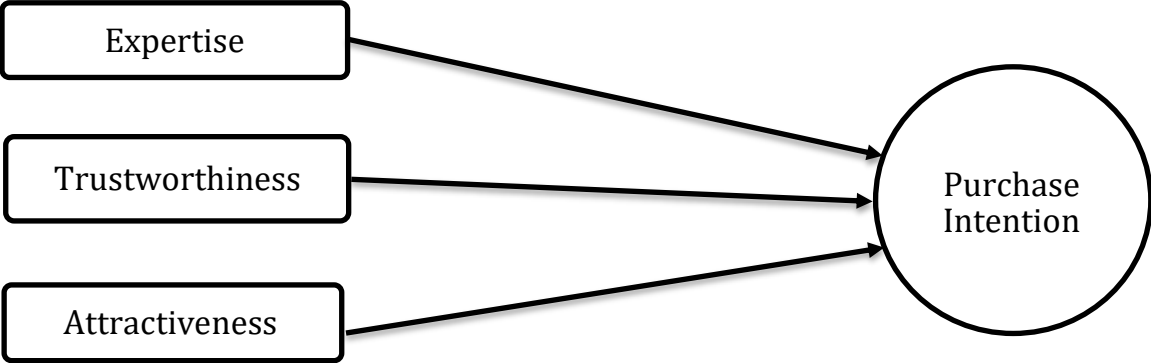
dietary needs, and potentially even the science behind healthy eating. This perceived knowledge allows consumers to feel confident in the influencer's recommendations regarding healthy food products or dietary approaches. Feeling confident in the information translates to a higher likelihood of considering or incorporating the influencer's suggestions into their own diets (Chetioui et al., 2020).

For example, imagine an influencer promoting a new line of superfood snacks. A consumer is more likely to trust the recommendation of a registered dietitian or a certified health coach who has a proven track record of following and promoting healthy eating habits compared to an influencer with no background in nutrition. This underscores the importance for brands in the healthy food space to partner with influencers who possess genuine expertise in healthy food and nutrition.

By partnering with knowledgeable influencers, healthy food brands can leverage the power of influencer marketing to promote healthy choices in a credible and impactful way.

H4: The perceived expertise of the influencers has notable relationship with trustworthiness of consumers.

2.8. Conceptual Framework



Independent Variables:

Attractiveness: Measures your perception of the physical attractiveness of the healthy food influencers users follow on Instagram.

Trustworthiness: Measures user's perception of the honesty, believability, and dependability of these influencers.

Expertise: Measures user's perception of these influencers' knowledge and experience with healthy food products.

Dependent Variable:

Purchase Intention: This variable measures your likelihood of buying healthy food products based on the recommendations of the influencers you follow on Instagram.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

The link between the independent variables—attractiveness, credibility, trustworthiness, and involvement—and the dependent variable—consumer purchase intention—will be investigated using quantitative study design techniques. The following dimensions are part of the research design:

3.1.1. Study Setting

Since the data were collected in natural environments, a field study is the appropriate study setting. An information gathering tool was the questionnaire. The data was provided just as it was, with no plans to alter it. If a respondent chose not to participate, they were under no obligation to do so.

3.1.2. Population and Sampling Design

The study's population consists of Indian social media users who are mostly ranging from 18 to 40 of age. There will be 101 responders in the sample. The sample will be made up of Indian consumers of different brands that represent a range of age groups, genders, occupations, and educational backgrounds. Convenience sampling techniques will be used to minimize study biases and prevent data tampering.

3.1.3. Unit of Analysis

The research intends to study the impact on the purchase intention of the users because of influencer marketing. Therefore, the unit of analysis will only be individuals.

3.1.4. Measurements

A Likert scale (5 Point) will measure the influence of influencer marketing on the purchase intention of the users. Respondents should answer using a scale from 1 to 5, with (1 = strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree) higher scores representing a higher influence of influencer marketing on purchase intention.

Attractiveness scale: 4 items will measure the attractiveness scale: beautiful/handsome, attractive, charming, and appealing. The Cronbach Alpha is used which ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater internal consistency and examining how reliable the study is.

Trustworthiness scale: 3 items will measure the trustworthinessness scale: sincere, honest, dependable. The Cronbach Alpha is used which ranges from 0 to 1.

Expertise scale: 4 items will measure the credibility scale: knowledgeable, reliable source, and qualified. The Cronbach Alpha is used which ranges from 0 to 1

Purchase Intention scale: 3 items will measure the purchase intention of the users: endorsement, recommendation, and advertisement. For consumer attitude as well, Cronbach Alpha is used which ranges from 0 to 1.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1. Data Collection

The study gathered quantitative primary data and tested its hypotheses by administering an online survey using Google Sheets. The survey asked respondents about their attractiveness, reliability, influencers' expertise, and their involvement with healthy food. The poll link was distributed individually via messaging apps like WhatsApp and Messenger as well as on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

4.2. Data Analysis

Age		Frequency	Percent
	18-24	46	45.5
	25-34	51	50.5
	35- 44	3	3.0
	Below 18	1	1.0
	Total	101	100.0

Source: SPSS

Table 4.2.1. Age

Table 4.2.1. represents the age of the respondents where the majority of the respondents were between 25-34 years old (51 respondents), followed by 46 respondents between 18-24 years old. Only 3 respondents were between 35-44 years old and 1 respondent was below 18 years old.

Gender		Frequency	Percent
	Female	57	56.4
	Male	44	43.6
	Total	101	100.0

Source: SPSS

Table 4.2.2. Gender

Table 4.2.2 represents the gender of the respondents where the majority of the respondents were between females i.e. 57 followed by 44 male respondents.

Occupation		Frequency	Percent
	Employed	35	34.7
	Others	1	1.0
	Self- Employed	4	4.0
	Student	61	60.4
	Total	101	100.0

Source: SPSS

Table 4.2.3. Occupation

Table 4.2.3. represents the occupation of the respondents where the majority of the respondents were either students i.e 61 or employed 35, with only 4 being self employed and 1 having some other occupation

		Frequency	Percent
	Bachelor's Degree	27	26.7
	Doctrate	3	3.0
	High School	4	4.0
	Master's Degree	66	65.3
	Other	1	1.0
	Total	101	100.0

Source: SPSS

Table 4.2.4. Education

Table 4.2.4. represents the educational level of the respondents where the majority i.e. 66 of the respondents were at masters degree level, 27 respondents were at bachelor’s level, 4 at highscool level and 3 at doctrate level.

		Frequency	Percent
	No	83	82.2
	PCOS	9	8.9
	Asthma	4	4.0
	High Blood Pressure	3	3.0
	Leucoderma	1	1.0

	Urticaria	1	1.0
	Total	101	100.0

Source: SPSS

Table 4.2.5. Diagnosed Disease

Table 4.2.5. represents the disease diagnosed of respondents where the majority i.e. 83 of the respondents reported they had no history of disease, 9 women had PCOS, 4 had asthma, 3 had high blood pressure and one of the each respondent had leucoderma and urticaria.

		Frequency	Percent
	Sometimes	50	49.5
	Everyday	18	17.8
	Never	15	14.9
	Twice a week	11	10.9
	Once a week	6	5.9
	4 days	1	1.0
	Total	101	100.0

Source: SPSS

Table 4.2.6. Exercise

Table 4.2.5. represents number of times the respondents exercised in a week where majority i.e. 50 respondents didn't disclose particular number of days but responded with sometimes, meanwhile 18 of them exercised everyday, 15 have never exercised, 11 exercise twice a week and 6 exercise once a week.

	R-square adjusted
PI	0.523

TR	0.708
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Source: Smart PLS Analysis

Table 4.2.7. R-Square Analysis

Table 4.2.7. represents the R-square adjusted, R-square adjusted is a statistical measure used in regression analysis, specifically to assess how well a model explains the variance in the dependent variable. It's a refinement of the traditional R-square statistic. R-square adjusted tends to be a more reliable indicator of a model's fit, especially when comparing models with different numbers of independent variables.

Here, The R-square adjusted value for Purchase Intention is 0.523. An R-square adjusted value of 0.523 indicates a moderate relationship between the independent variables i.e. Trustworthiness (TR), Attractiveness (AT), Expertise (EX) and the dependent variable Purchase Intention (PI).

Whereas, the R-square adjusted value for Trustworthiness (TR) is 0.708. An R-square adjusted value closer to 1 indicates a stronger relationship between the dependent variable (in this case, TR) and the independent variable Expertise (EX).

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
AT	0.875	0.878	0.914	0.727
EX	0.926	0.926	0.948	0.819
PI	0.951	0.955	0.969	0.911
TR	0.849	0.854	0.908	0.768

Source: Smart PLS Analysis

Table 4.2.8. Construct Reliability and Validity Test

Table 4.2.8 represents the construct reliability and validity test which have been further explained:

Cronbach's Alpha: The measure of internal consistency. It assesses how well the items within each construct have a correlation with each other. Generally, a Cronbach's alpha value above 0.7 is considered acceptable, indicating a reliable scale. In this analysis, all constructs (AT, EX, PI, TR) have Cronbach's alpha value ranging from 0.849 to 0.951, suggesting high internal consistency among the items within

each construct.

Composite Reliability (rho_a): Measures the internal consistency of a construct by considering both the shared variance among items and the measurement errors. Similar to Cronbach's alpha, a value above 0.7 is typically considered acceptable. In this analysis, all constructs have composite reliability values ranging from 0.878 to 0.955, indicating good internal consistency.

Composite Reliability (rho_c): Measure of internal consistency, calculated using a different formula than rho_a but with a similar interpretation. In this analysis, all constructs have composite reliability values ranging from 0.908 to 0.969, further confirming good internal consistency.

Average Variance Extracted (AVE): Measures the amount of variance captured by the construct relative to the amount due to measurement error. AVE values above 0.5 are considered acceptable, indicating that the construct explains more variance than measurement error. In this analysis, all constructs have AVE values ranging from 0.727 to 0.911, indicating that they explain a substantial amount of variance in the measured constructs.

Overall, the Construct Reliability and Validity Test results demonstrate that the constructs (AT, EX, PI, TR) in the research model exhibit high internal consistency and validity. This suggests that the measurement items effectively capture the intended constructs, providing a reliable basis for further analysis and interpretation of the research findings.

	AT	EX	PI	TR
AT	0.853			
EX	0.565	0.905		
PI	0.566	0.680	0.955	
TR	0.533	0.843	0.675	0.876

Source: Smart PLS Analysis

Table 4.2.9. Discriminant Validity- Fornell-Lacker Criterion

For discriminant validity to be supported, the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct should be greater than the correlations between that construct and other constructs.

Looking at the table, in each case, the square root of the AVE for a construct is higher than the correlations between that construct and other constructs. This suggests that discriminant validity is supported for all constructs in the model (Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F., 1981).

For the construct AT (Attitude), the square root of its AVE (0.853) is higher than the correlations between AT and other constructs (0.565, 0.566, 0.533), indicating that AT is sufficiently distinct from other constructs in the model.

For EX (External Influence), the square root of its AVE (0.905) is higher than the correlations between EX and other constructs (0.565, 0.680, 0.843), supporting discriminant validity. For PI (Purchase Intention), the square root of its AVE (0.955) is higher than the correlations between PI and other constructs (0.566, 0.680, 0.675), indicating discriminant validity.

For TR (Trust), the square root of its AVE (0.876) is higher than the correlations between TR and other constructs (0.533, 0.843, 0.675), suggesting discriminant validity.

Therefore, based on the Fornell-Larcker criterion analysis presented in the table, the model demonstrates adequate discriminant validity among the constructs AT, EX, PI, and TR.

	Estimated model
SRMR	0.064
d_ULS	0.428
d_G	0.290
Chi-square	173.739
NFI	0.866

Source: Smart PLS Analysis

Table 4.2.10. Model Fit

The table provided shows the results of the model fit indices for the estimated structural equation model (SEM) using SMART PLS. Model fit indices are used to assess how well the hypothesized model fits the observed data. Here's the interpretation of each index:

SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual): SRMR is a measure of the average discrepancy between the observed correlations and the correlations predicted by the model. A lower SRMR indicates better model fit. A good fit typically falls below 0.08, although some researchers suggest a more stringent cutoff of 0.05 for SRMR. In this case, the SRMR value is 0.064, suggesting a relatively good fit as it is close to zero.

d_ULS (d-value for Unweighted Least Squares): The d_ULS index measures the degree of discrepancy between the reproduced covariance matrix and the original covariance matrix. Smaller values indicate better model fit. A d_ULS value of 0.428 suggests a reasonable fit.

d_G (d-value for Geomin-Quadrado): Similar to d_ULS, the d_G index also measures the discrepancy between the reproduced covariance matrix and the original covariance matrix. Smaller values indicate better fit (R. J. T. Mendes Leal Ferreira, 2000). Values below 0.5 are often considered indicative of a good fit. Here, the d_G value is 0.290, indicating a relatively good fit.

Chi-square: Chi-square is a traditional measure of fit, but it is sensitive to sample size, often resulting in significant values even for small deviations from the model (Jreskotchko, LR., 1979). A higher Chi-square value indicates poorer fit. In this case, the Chi-square value is 173.739, which may or may not be significant depending on the degrees of freedom and the chosen significance level.

NFI (Normed Fit Index): NFI assesses the relative improvement of the model over a baseline model (usually an independence model). NFI values range from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating better fit. NFI values range from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating better fit (Bentler, B. R., & Bonnet, D. G., 1980). A commonly used guideline is that NFI values above 0.9 suggest a good fit, although some researchers may consider values above 0.95 as indicative of excellent fit. An NFI value of 0.866 suggests a good fit, with the model explaining a significant portion of the variance compared to the baseline model.

	Path coefficients
AT -> PI	0.241

EX -> PI	0.287
EX -> TR	0.843
TR -> PI	0.305

Source: Smart PLS Analysis

Table 4.2.11.Path Coefficient (Beta)

- AT -> PI (Attractiveness to Purchase Intention): The path coefficient (beta) for this relationship is 0.241. This indicates the strength and direction of the relationship between attractiveness and purchase intention. A positive coefficient suggests that as attractiveness increases, purchase intention tends to increase as well. However, the magnitude of 0.241 suggests a relatively weaker relationship compared to other paths.
- EX -> PI (External Influence to Purchase Intention): The path coefficient for this relationship is 0.287. A positive coefficient suggests that as external influence increases, purchase intention tends to increase as well. The coefficient of 0.287 suggests a moderate positive relationship.
- EX -> TR (External Influence to Trust): The path coefficient for this relationship is 0.843. A positive coefficient suggests that as external influence increases, trust tends to increase as well. The coefficient of 0.843 suggests a strong positive relationship, indicating that perceived expertise strongly influences trust.
- TR -> PI (Trust to Purchase Intention): The path coefficient for this relationship is 0.305. A positive coefficient suggests that as trust increases, purchase intention tends to increase as well. The coefficient of 0.305 suggests a moderate positive relationship.

4.3. Hypothesis Analysis

H1: The perceived trustworthiness of the influencer has a significant effect on the purchase intention of healthy food products.

The path coefficient for TR -> PI is 0.305, indicating a positive relationship between trust and purchase

intention. Since the coefficient is positive and significant, it supports the hypothesis that perceived trustworthiness influences purchase intention for healthy food products.

H2: The perceived expertise of the influencer has a significant effect on purchase intention for healthy food products.

The path coefficient for EX → PI is 0.287, suggesting a positive relationship between expertise and purchase intention. Although the coefficient is positive, it's relatively weaker compared to other paths. However, it still supports the hypothesis that perceived expertise influences purchase intention for healthy food products.

H3: The perceived attractiveness of the influencer has a significant effect on purchase intention on healthy food products.

The path coefficient for AT → PI is 0.241, indicating a positive relationship between attractiveness and purchase intention. However, since the hypothesis states that there is no significant effect, the observed positive relationship contradicts the hypothesis. Therefore, based on the path coefficient provided, we do not accept hypothesis 3. This suggests that perceived attractiveness does have a significant effect on purchase intention for healthy food products, contrary to the initially hypothesized null relationship.

H4: The perceived expertise of the influencers has a significant relationship with the trustworthiness of the consumers.

The path coefficient for EX → TR is 0.843. This high positive value indicates a strong and significant relationship between the perceived expertise of influencers and the trustworthiness of consumers. A coefficient of this magnitude suggests that an increase in perceived expertise leads to a considerable increase in trustworthiness among consumers.

Therefore, based on the path coefficient provided, we can conclude that hypothesis 4 (H4) is supported.

The analysis demonstrates a significant relationship between the perceived expertise of influencers and the trustworthiness of consumers, indicating that consumers are more likely to trust influencers whom they perceive as more knowledgeable or expert in their domain.

4.4. Findings and Recommendations

4.4.1. Findings

This study examined the influence of influencer characteristics on consumer purchase intentions for healthy food products. The data, collected through a reliable online survey distributed via social media and messaging apps, revealed interesting insights into what makes influencer marketing for healthy food effective.

All Three Influencer Characteristics Positively Affect Purchase Intention:

- **Trustworthiness (TR):** The strongest positive influence on purchase intention (PI) was perceived trustworthiness. This suggests that when consumers believe an influencer is a genuine and reliable source of information, they're more likely to be persuaded to purchase the healthy food products the influencer promotes.
- **Expertise (EX):** Expertise in healthy food and nutrition also had a significant positive effect on PI. Consumers are more receptive to recommendations from influencers they perceive as knowledgeable about healthy eating.
- **Attractiveness (AT):** While attractiveness played a positive role in purchase intention, its effect was slightly weaker compared to trustworthiness and expertise. This suggests that consumers prioritize an influencer's credibility and knowledge over pure physical appeal when making purchase decisions about healthy food.

Expertise Fosters Trust:

The study also revealed a strong positive relationship between perceived expertise and perceived trustworthiness. In simpler terms, consumers are more likely to trust influencers who they believe are

knowledgeable about healthy food. This highlights the importance of partnering with influencers who have established expertise in the health and nutrition domain.

4.4.2. Recommendations

These detailed findings offer valuable guidance for marketers crafting influencer marketing campaigns for healthy food products.

- **Prioritize Expertise:** Seek out influencers who possess genuine knowledge and experience in healthy eating. Registered dietitians, chefs specializing in healthy cuisine, or individuals with well-documented journeys towards healthy eating habits can be ideal choices. Partnering with such influencers builds trust and positions them as credible sources of information for consumers.
- **Seek Qualifications:** Prioritize influencers with established expertise in healthy food and nutrition. Look for registered dietitians, chefs specializing in healthy cuisine, or individuals with documented experiences transitioning to healthy eating habits. These qualifications establish credibility and position them as trustworthy sources of information for consumers.
- **Content Focus:** Encourage influencers to create content that showcases their expertise. This could include:
 - Educational videos explaining healthy food choices and meal planning.
 - Live recipe demonstrations featuring healthy ingredients and preparation techniques.
 - Debunking common myths and misconceptions surrounding healthy eating.
 - Sharing personal journeys towards healthy eating habits, emphasizing the positive impact on their well-being.
- **Transparency Builds Trust:** Maintain transparency and ethical practices in your influencer marketing campaigns. Disclose any sponsorships or partnerships related to the healthy food products being promoted. This transparency fosters trust with consumers, making them more receptive to the influencer's message.
- **Clear Disclosures:** Ensure complete transparency in your influencer marketing campaigns. Disclose all sponsorships or partnerships related to the healthy food products being promoted. This

builds trust with consumers and reduces skepticism towards the influencer's message. Consider using platform-specific tools for sponsored content disclosure.

- **Authentic Advocacy:** Encourage influencers to be genuine and authentic in their endorsements. Consumers can easily detect inauthenticity, so it's crucial for influencers to genuinely believe in the healthy food products they're promoting.
- **Focus on Long-Term Relationships:** Build long-term relationships with a select group of credible influencers. This allows for deeper collaboration, fostering a sense of trust and shared goals between the influencer and the brand.
- **Consider Attractiveness, But Strategically:** While attractiveness plays a role, it's not the most crucial factor influencing purchase intention. However, partnering with influencers who resonate with the target audience (e.g., similar age group, interests, lifestyle) can still be beneficial. This relatability can create a stronger connection with consumers, potentially influencing their purchase decisions.
- **Target Audience Resonance:** While attractiveness plays a role, prioritize influencers who resonate with your target audience. Consider factors like age group, interests, and lifestyle when selecting influencers. This relatability can create a stronger connection with consumers, making them more likely to be influenced by the influencer's message.
- **Focus on Overall Appeal:** Look for influencers who possess a combination of attractiveness, healthy lifestyle, and a genuine passion for healthy food. This holistic approach creates a more impactful and believable image for promoting healthy food products.
- **Avoid Superficial Focus:** Don't solely rely on physical appearance when selecting influencers. Consumers are increasingly savvy and prioritize authenticity over superficiality.

4.5. Limitation of the Study

While this study offers valuable insights into the influence of influencer characteristics on consumer purchase intention for healthy food products, it's important to acknowledge some limitations:

The study relied on a sample size of 101 participants, which may not be large enough to generalize the findings to the entire population. Additionally, the focus on social media and messaging app distribution might skew the demographics towards younger and more tech-savvy individuals. Further research with a larger and more diverse sample could provide more comprehensive results.

The study relied on self-reported data, which can be susceptible to biases. Participants might not always accurately report their purchase intentions or influencer perceptions. Employing additional research methods, like observing actual purchase behavior, could provide a more objective perspective.

The study focused on healthy food products in general. Investigating the influence of influencer characteristics on specific healthy food categories (e.g., organic produce, plant-based alternatives) could reveal more nuanced insights.

Participants might have been influenced by social desirability bias, potentially over-reporting their preference for trustworthy or knowledgeable influencers, even if that wouldn't always translate to real-world behavior.

The study design couldn't control for all external factors influencing purchase decisions, such as brand reputation, price point, or in-store promotions for competing products.

These limitations highlight the need for further research to strengthen the understanding of influencer marketing effectiveness in promoting healthy food choices.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has provided valuable insights into influences of influencer characteristics on consumer purchase intentions for healthy food products. A comprehensive analysis of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness as influencer traits, this research sheds light on the dynamics driving consumer behavior in the context of healthy food marketing.

The findings indicate that all three influencer characteristics - trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness - positively affect purchase intention. Among these, trustworthiness emerges as the most influential factor, followed closely by expertise. Consumers prioritize influencers who they perceive as genuine, reliable sources of information about healthy eating habits.

Furthermore, the research shows a strong positive relationship between perceived expertise and perceived trustworthiness. Consumers trust influencers that demonstrate knowledge and experience in healthy food and nutrition. Therefore, marketers should prioritize partnering with influencers who possess genuine

expertise in the domain, such as registered dietitians or individuals with documented experiences transitioning to healthy eating habits.

Based on these findings, several recommendations emerge for marketers crafting influencer marketing strategies for healthy food products. It is essential to prioritize expertise and transparency, ensuring that influencers create authentic and educational content that resonates with consumers. Long-term relationships with credible influencers can foster trust and credibility over time.

In summary, the study underscores the importance of influencer characteristics in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors towards healthy food. By leveraging the expertise and credibility of influencers, marketers can create more impactful and persuasive campaigns aligning with consumers and drive purchase intentions in competitive healthy food market.

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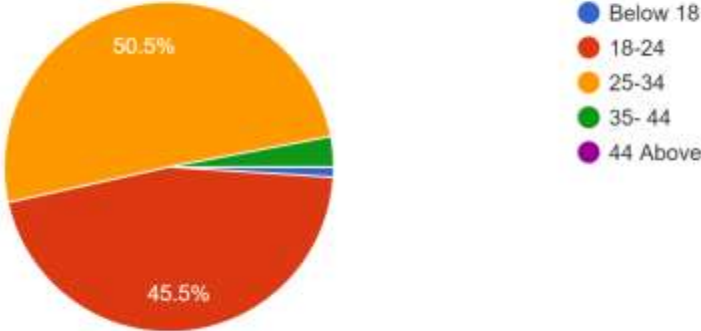
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6.1. Annexure

Responses from google form

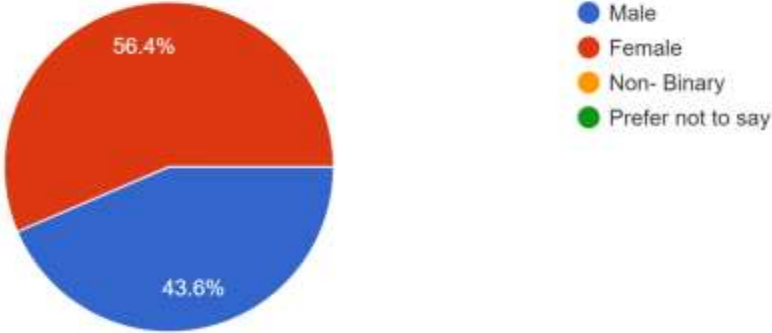
Age

101 responses



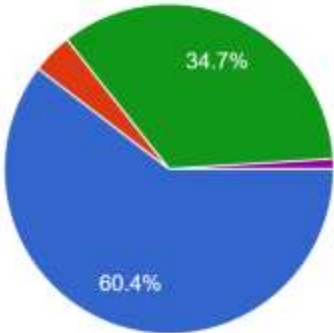
Gender

101 responses



Occupation

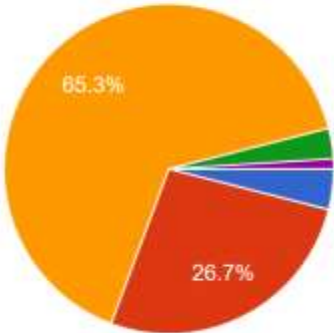
101 responses



- Student
- Self- Employed
- Unemployed
- Employed
- Others

Education Level

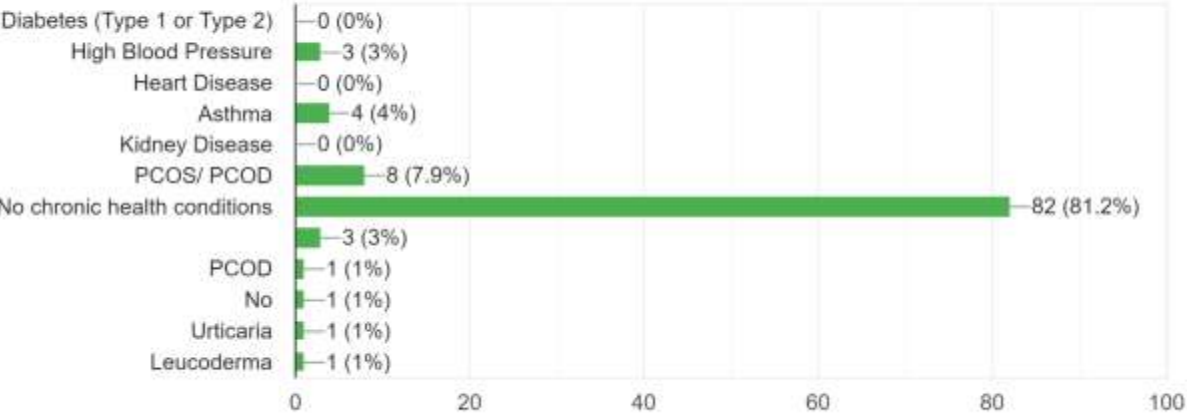
101 responses



- High School
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctrate
- Other

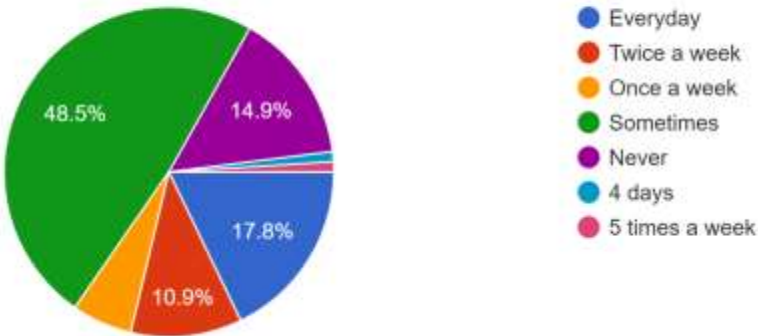
Have you ever been diagnosed with any of the following chronic health conditions by a doctor?

101 responses



How frequently do you exercise?

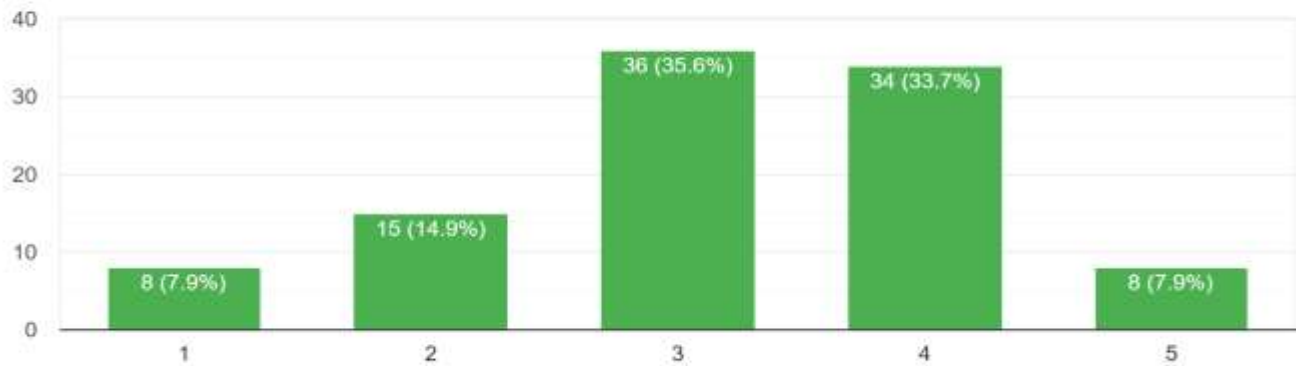
101 responses



Please rate each statement on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represents strongly disagree and 5 represents strongly agree.

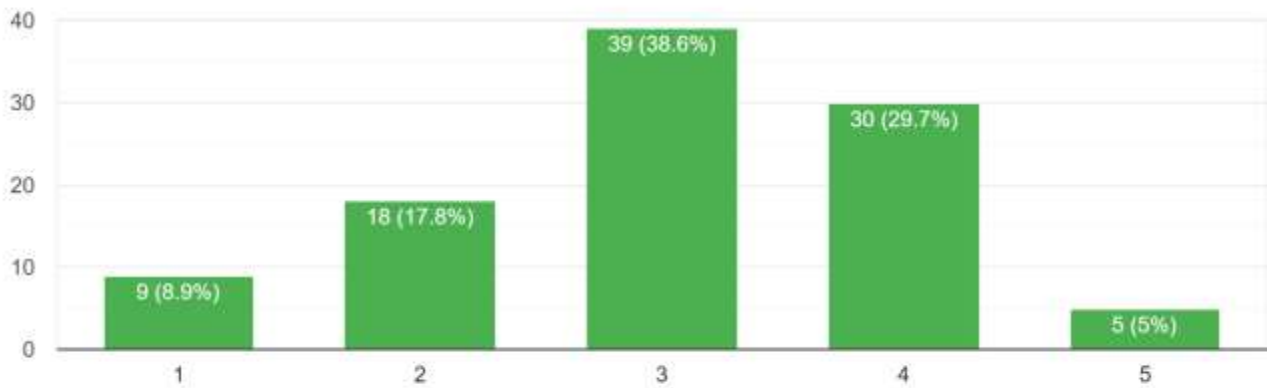
The healthy food promoting influencers you follow are attractive.

101 responses



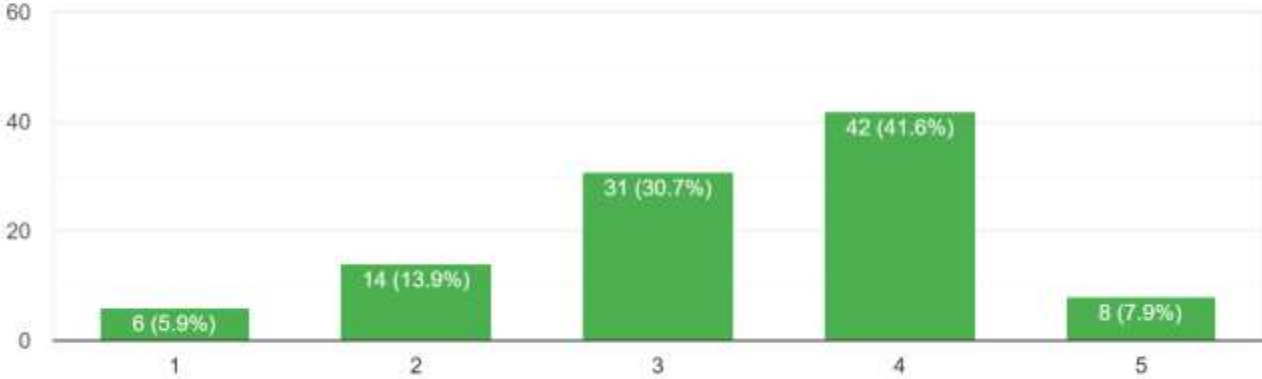
You find these influencers beautiful/handsome.

101 responses



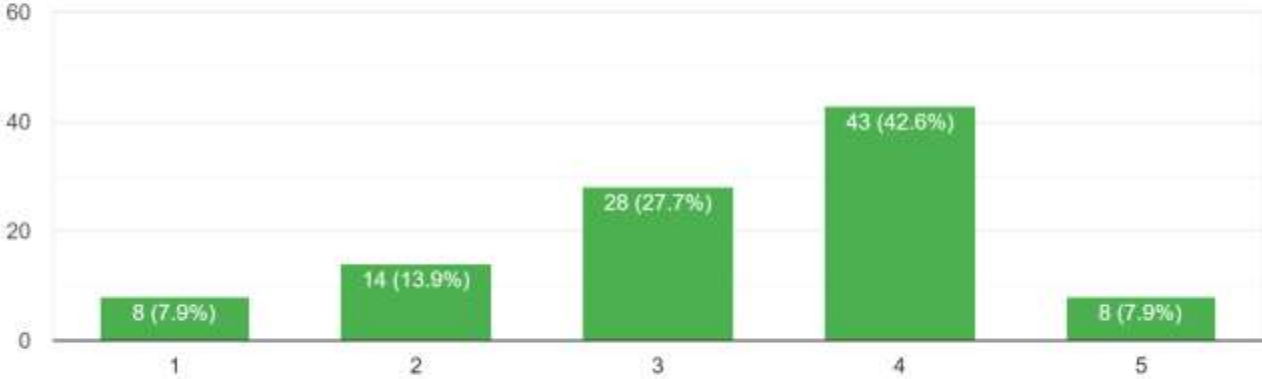
You find the overall physical appearance of the healthy food influencers you follow to be appealing.

101 responses



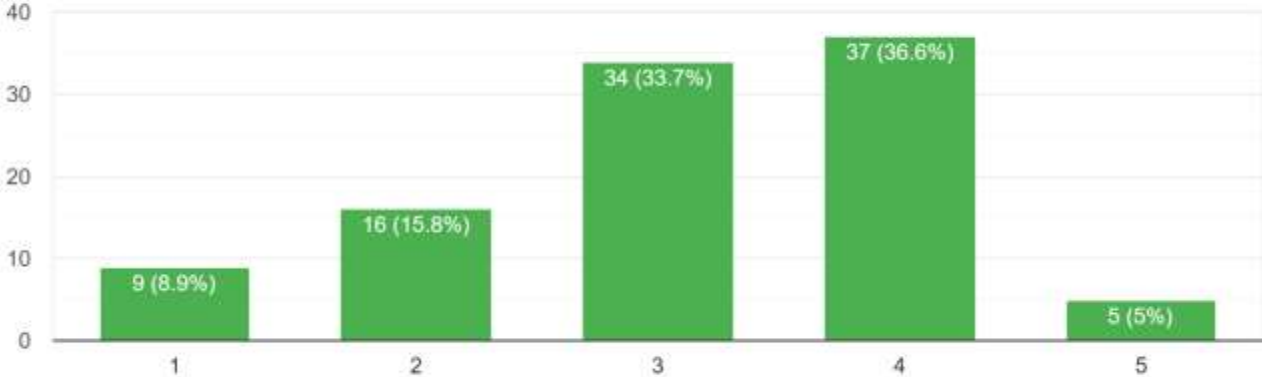
The healthy food promoting influencers you follow have a very charming overall look.

101 responses



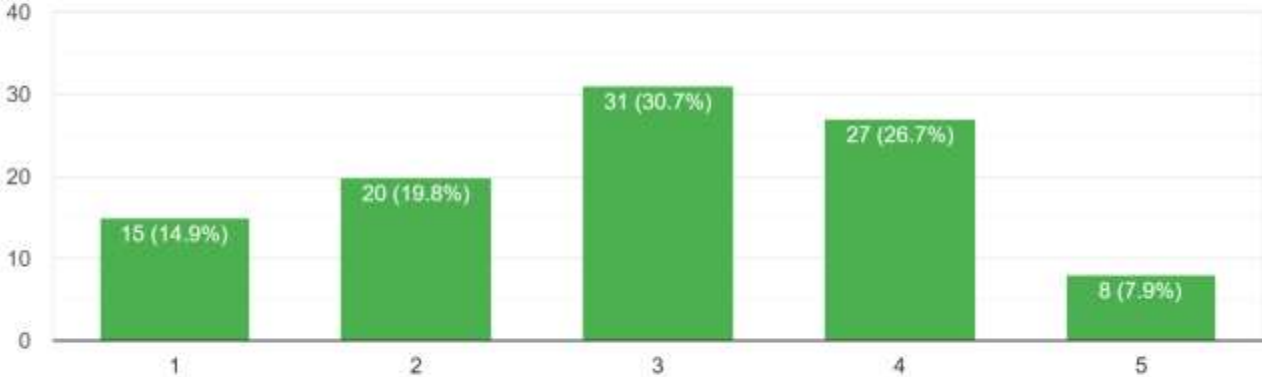
The healthy food promoting influencers you follow are dependable.

101 responses



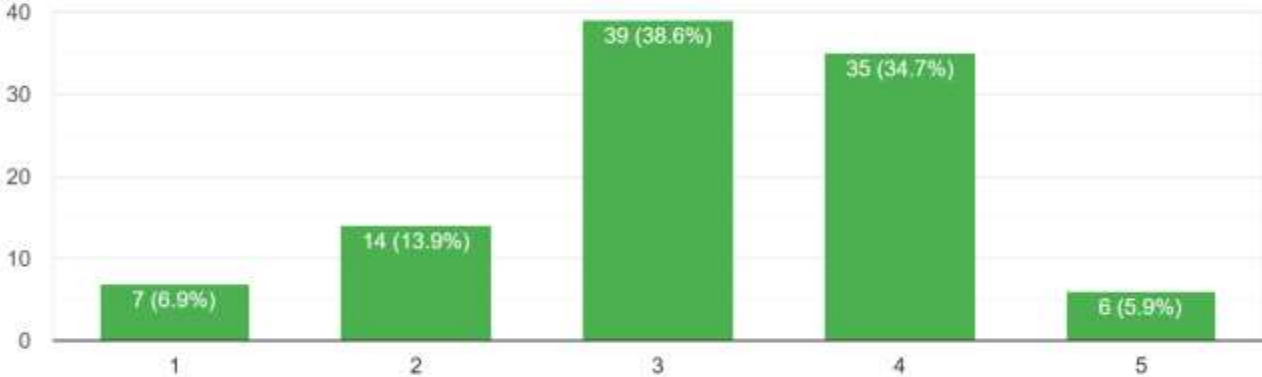
You believe the influencers you follow to be honest.

101 responses



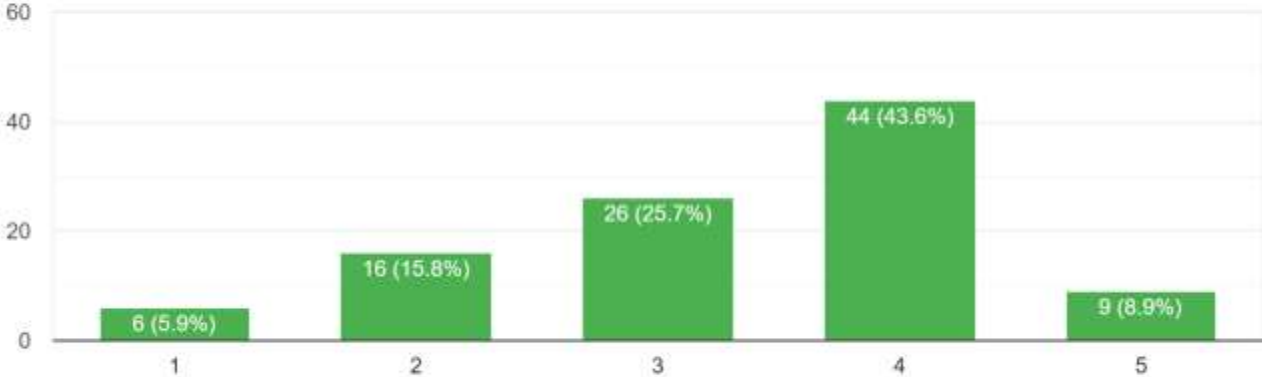
The influencers followed by you appear sincere.

101 responses



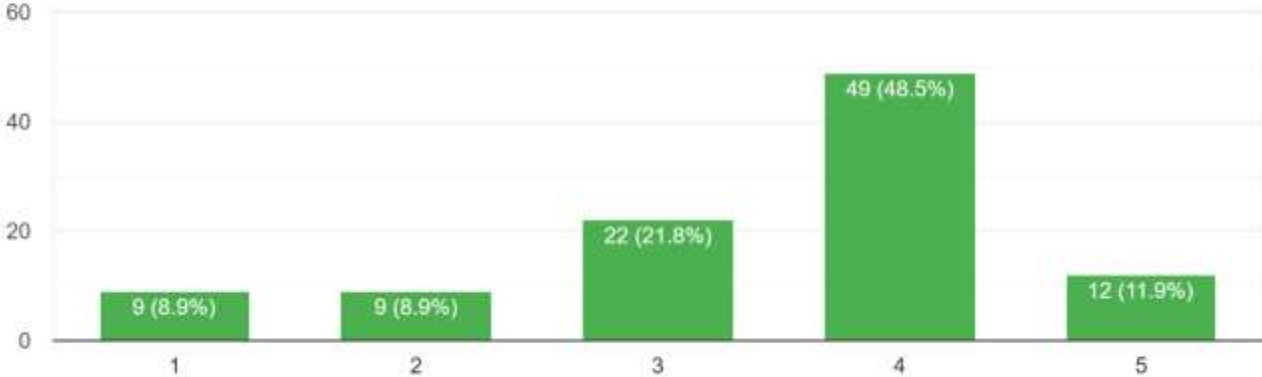
The influencers you follow seem experienced with healthy food.

101 responses



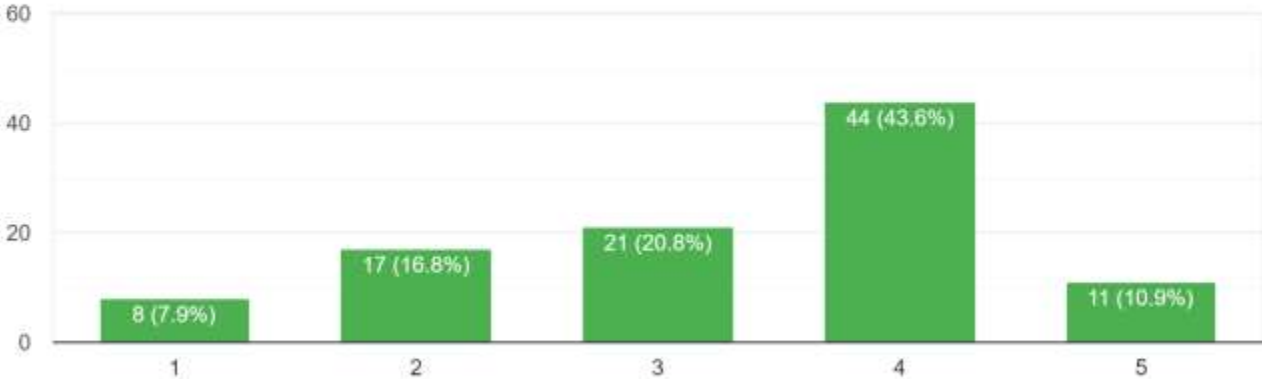
The influencers followed by you appear knowledgeable about healthy food products.

101 responses



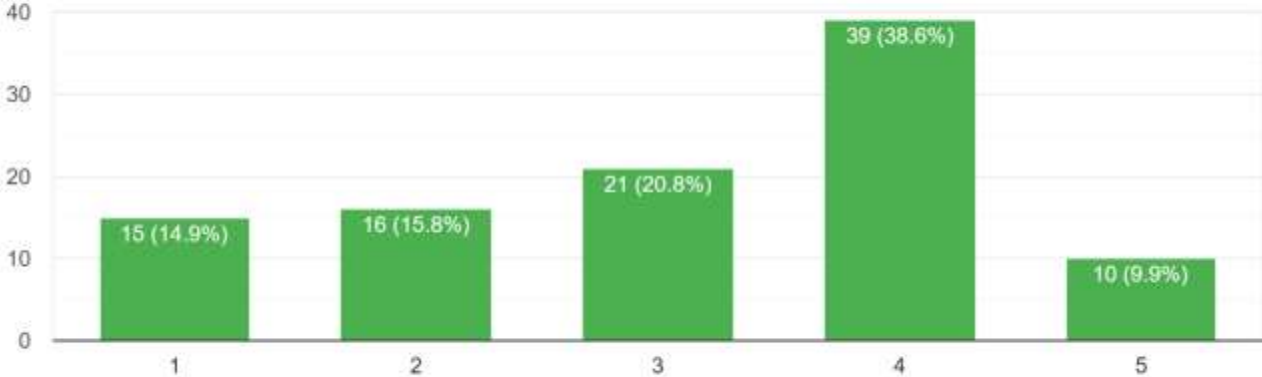
The information these influencers share about healthy food seems up-to-date and based on reliable sources.

101 responses



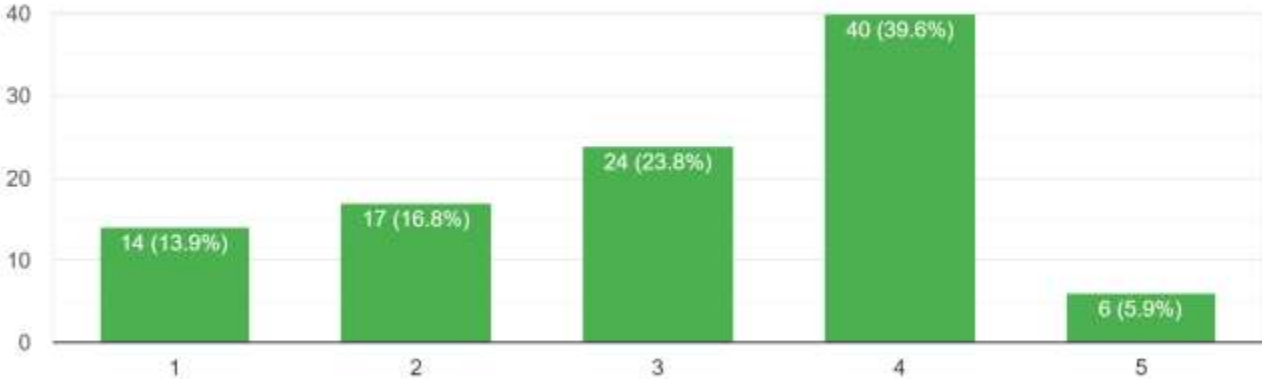
The influencers you follow seem qualified to recommend healthy food products.

101 responses



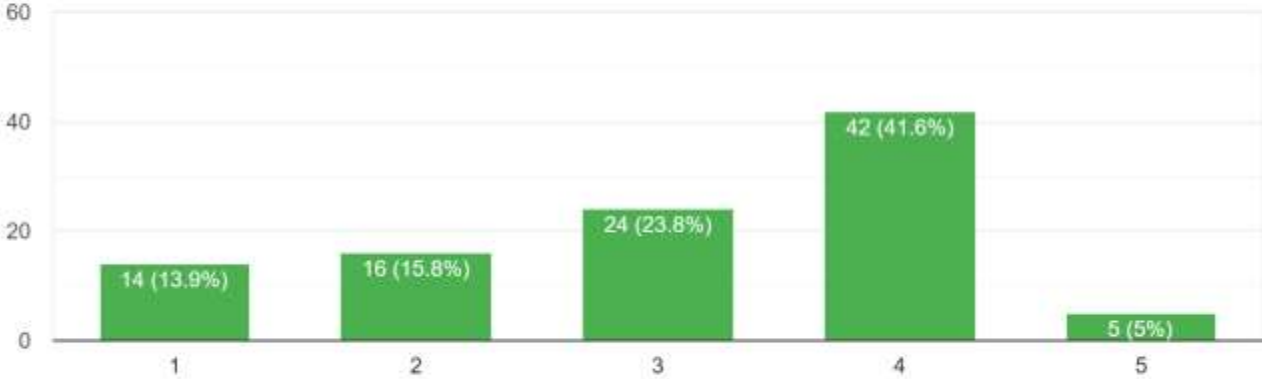
If you were to buy healthy food products, you would consider the products endorsed by the influencers followed by you.

101 responses



You are likely to buy healthy food products recommended by the influencers followed by you.

101 responses



You intend to buy healthy food products that were advertised by the influencers followed by you.

101 responses

