



Received: February 2023 Accepted: May, 2023  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.58262/tmj.v11i1.1010>

## The Power of Personal Connections in Micro-Influencer Marketing: A Study on Consumer Behaviour and the Impact of Micro-Influencers

Dr Michael Gerlich<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

*In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, influencer marketing has snowballed into a big phenomenon when businesses around the world are trying to use influencers to promote their products and services. However, even though influencer marketing is a craze in the market, the engagement rate and conversion rates of micro-influencers with a smaller size of followers are higher than that of celebrities and mega influencers. It is important to understand the reasons why certain influencers are successful and others are not. Past research mainly focuses on micro-influencers as one group but does not differentiate between micro-influencers who are known personally by their followers and those who are not personally known. This is important as consumers are sceptical towards the product promotion not only of mega-influencers because they believe that influencers, in general, are using their base of followers to promote a product or service for money and fame. Therefore, consumers trust the words and opinions of micro-influencers, who provide information based on their own experience and expertise. It is worth investigating the underlying reason for the success of these micro and nano influencers. Is it the personal connection with the follower? Is it the engagement rate and the choice of products and recommendations? These are some of the points that have been investigated in this research. The objective of this research paper was to explore if followers who share a relationship with or know the micro-influencers personally make their purchase decisions based on the recommendations provided by the influencers. The research findings highlighted that when micro-influencers are known to their followers on a personal level, they wield more persuasive power over their followers.*

**Keywords:** digital marketing; influencer marketing; micro-influencer; marketing; social media marketing; consumer behaviour

### **Introduction**

The evolution of Internet technology combined with the emergence of social media platforms and the e-commerce market has contributed to the development of another phenomenon called influencer marketing, which has further been advanced by the circumstances created during the COVID-19 pandemic when people had to spend a considerable amount of time at home due to social restrictions and lockdown measures. The concepts of influencer marketing and social media go hand-in-hand because while influencers need the platforms and exposure that come alongside social media to become famous, social media platforms need influencers to retain their appeal to the public. Some of the popular social media platforms for influencer marketing include Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and even Snapchat. Haenlein et al. (2020) defined influencers as individuals who have achieved considerable fame

---

<sup>1</sup> SBS Swiss Business School, Management Department, Flughafenstr. 3, CH-8302 Zurich-Kloten. [m.gerlich@faculty.sbs.edu](mailto:m.gerlich@faculty.sbs.edu),  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4033-4403>

either as athletes, singers, actors or accomplished individual in a specific field. Influencers also include those who achieved fame within the platform itself because of their outstanding content and more than usual engagement with viewers. De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017) defined social media influencers as social media users with a significant base of followers and influence over them. According to Lou and Yuan (2019), social media influencers have some expertise in some specific domains, including food, travel, healthy living, lifestyle, fashion, and beauty. Using the influence they have on their followers, social media influencers promote different brands and services. Companies are inclined to start collaborating with influencers for various advertising and endorsement purposes. These companies understand the persuasive power of social media influencers, and therefore, they are investing an increasing amount of advertising budget in social media influencers for the promotion of their products and services via influencer marketing. According to De Veirman et al. (2017), even though influencer marketing can be compared with electronic word-of-mouth marketing, it does not include explicit recommendations. The influencer marketing industry was estimated to be worth \$6.5 billion in 2019, and with the growing popularity of influencer marketing, the demand for influencers is on the rise (Taillon et al., 2020).

## **Research Background**

Online traditional forms of advertising in which recommendations for using a product or service are presented more explicitly, influencer marketing involves presenting recommendations in the form of the editorial opinion of the social media influencers rather than paid advertising because of which viewers tend to rely on the endorsement of social media influencers. However, the impact of mega social media influencers with millions of followers is the same on viewers as paid advertising in traditional media. It is not a hidden truth anymore that social media influencers publish posts on a variety of topics for the sake of making an income. Micro-influencers with several followers ranging from 10,000 to 50,000 are no different. According to a report published by Vox, a micro-influencer can earn between \$40,000 and \$100,000 annually (NFI, 2022). Since viewers understand that some social media influencers are promoting a product or service in exchange for monetary payment, they tend to rely on the words of influencers with a huge fan following less compared to the smaller social media influencers with fewer followers as viewers can relate themselves more to the influencers with fewer followers than influencers with a huge number of followers (Taillon et al., 2020). However, the problem with using micro-influencers with less than 10,000 followers is the problem of identifying them. Research conducted by Software Advice revealed that 46% of marketers expressed encountering difficulty in identifying social media influencers (Datta, n.d.). The primary reason for such difficulty is problems involving privacy concerns and the inability of marketers to predict the actions of social media platform users. Even though predictive analytics tool is quite popularly used in businesses for demand forecasting, most marketers do not use predictive analytics to identify social media influencers. However, marketers can use predictive analytics to engage with social media users and the influencers they follow. Companies have come up with novel ideas for influencer marketing strategies. Micro- and nano-influencer-based strategies are gaining popularity on social media platforms. These strategies allow the followers to contribute to the existing content and also allow them to gain some overnight fame within the small community they are a part of. Nearly all current researches focus on micro-influencers as a homogeneous group that receives more trust from their followers than mega-influencers. Based on the author's permanent interaction with consumers, there was a growing suspicion that consumers might act differently when they have a personal connection to the micro-influencer. Does knowing the influencer personally make a



difference in the purchase decision? This is the underlying question that is being researched as a part of this work.

### **Research Objective**

Even though a significant amount of research has been done in consumer decision-making, hardly any research has been done in determining the influence of social media influencers on their followers when the followers know the influencers personally. Therefore, the objective of this research paper is to explore the extent of influence micro-influencers have on the followers who know them personally, either because these influencers are family members or friends. Since past studies did not research this topic, this research paper aims to focus on developing insightful views as regards the degree of influence micro-influencers have on their followers when the followers know them personally and hopes that the research findings of this research paper will fill in the gap existing in the literature currently.

### **Research Significance & Motivation**

As mentioned before, there is very thin literature available on the research topic when it comes to followers being influenced by the micro-influencers whom they know. So far, very little research has been conducted within the micro-influencer group, as current research considers the group homogeneous. Interaction with consumers, though, gave the impression that the group of micro-influencers is not homogeneous but should be divided into micro-influencers who are personally known to the follower and those who are not. This is very important for the companies to understand if they need to give more weightage to micro- and nano-influencer driven marketing campaigns when compared to macro- influencer driven campaigns. Further, with internet penetration getting deeper and deeper and the advent of artificial avatars for marketing, the topic of micro-influencer and nano-influencer categories is gaining traction. At the end of this research, an attempt would be made for the marketing companies to concentrate on certain themes that are important for designing any marketing campaign. This vacuum in the existing literature and the rapid transformation of social media marketing programs have been the underlying motivation for pursuing this research work. Since the research has been carried out with an academic purview, there are certain limitations to the research. These limitations have been mentioned at the end of the research.

### **Literature Review**

The purpose of this literature review is to highlight insightful reviews on the trend of micro-influencer marketing, the emergence of micro-influencers, and how family members and friends contribute to the purchase decisions made by consumers.

#### **Who are influencers?**

As mentioned earlier, social media influencers are ordinary people who gained popularity and fame by producing online content. There are various categories of influencers fall into starting from mega-, macro-, micro-, and nano-influencers, depending on the size of their followers. Micro-Influencers are influencers with several followers, between 1,000 and 100,000 but with a robust relationship with the followers (Gerlich, 2022). Micro-Influencers can potentially create 25% of 50% engagement per post (Gerlich, 2022). On the other hand, macro-influencers are those who have several followers ranging between 50,000 and 500,000. Macro-influencers generate a 5 to 10% engagement rate per post. Mega influencers are those who are athletes, actors, artists, and social media stars with about 500,000 followers. Mega influencers create a 2 to 5% engagement rate per post (Gerlich, 2022).

According to Kay, Mulcahy, and Parkinson (2020), the influence of social media influencers is not limited to only the actual followers following the account of the influencers; influencers can also connect with the followers of their followers who share the content posted or promoted by the influencers, thereby extending the potential outreach of influencers significantly. The difference between traditional celebrities and social media influencers lies in how influencers gain fame to be considered a brand for promotion. Traditional celebrities, such as athletes, actors, or actresses, gain fame by pursuing acting, sports, music, or politics, thereby getting a significant base of followers because of their work, media relations, and interviews. On the other hand, social media influencers gain fame and develop their brand by posting their content on social media platforms (De Veirman et al., 2017). According to Booth and Matic (2011), social media platforms like YouTube and Instagram encourage consumers to promote themselves as a brand and gain fame, and due to this, a large number of consumers have turned into influencers endorsing brands. The followers of the influencers feel a close connection with the influencers when the influencers share a large part of their lives online (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

### **Social media platforms catering to different categories of audience**

Even though all the social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, are known for influencer marketing, they cater to different categories of audiences, specifically in terms of age and viewer characteristics. Users on Twitter and Facebook are usually in their 40s, while Instagram caters to the needs of consumers in their 30s. TikTok, on the other hand, attracts more young viewers in their teens and 20s (Haenlein et al., 2020). It is to be noted that the younger population precisely has consumption patterns different from their predecessors as they are more sceptical of traditional forms of advertising. Influencer marketing targets the younger population specifically.

Facebook has the biggest size of all social media platforms, with the largest user base exceeding 2.4 billion active users. On average, Facebook users make five visits per session, which is the highest in terms of the monthly sessions of users. Facebook also boasts the highest percentage of weekly user postings and the highest total usage of approximately 13 hours monthly. However, Facebook has witnessed a significant decline of 26% in its engagement between 2017 and 2019 (Haenlein et al., 2020). Additionally, since the age group of Facebook users falls relatively on the higher side, the cost for influencer marketing on Facebook is one of the lowest among all platforms at \$395. Less than 25% of marketing managers consider Facebook as the most effective platform for influencer marketing. On the other hand, Twitter, which was founded 15 years back, has a cost per post higher than that of Facebook at \$422, even though Twitter has the lowest number of active users of only 390 million and the lowest monthly usage of approximately 2.5 hours (Haenlein et al., 2020). The higher cost for marketing on Twitter compared to Facebook can be explained by the homogeneous base of users on Twitter for some specific content posted on the platform.

According to Haenlein et al. (2020), behind the lukewarm appeal of Facebook and Twitter as platforms for influencer marketing lies the reasons these platforms are used by users. Facebook functions primarily as a social networking tool to stay connected with family and friends, while Twitter serves as a source of news. The reasons for which these platforms are used by users determine the reasons the users visit the sites. Compared to Facebook and Twitter, Instagram and YouTube function more as social media platforms catering to the entertainment and time pass needs of users. Therefore, YouTube and Instagram attract more influencers to promote



their products and services. Instagram and TikTok also stand out in regard to the younger population of users, who get specifically influenced by influencer marketing. TikTok witnessed a 15-fold increase in engagement between 2017 and 2019, while the combined base of users for Instagram and TikTok is approximately 2 billion (Haenlein et al., 2020). Additionally, TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube are platforms based on rich, attractive content formats comprising videos and images, which function as better platforms for influencer marketing than platforms like Twitter, where the content is text-based. Also, since the purpose of these three social media platforms is to provide entertainment to the users, it becomes easier for influencers to achieve a significant number of followers in a short period.

### **COVID-19 pandemic and Micro-influencer marketing**

Even though influencer marketing was in place before the COVID-19 pandemic, social restrictions protocol and lockdown measures during the pandemic gave influencer marketing a new dimension altogether. During the pandemic, when people spent an increased amount of time on social media platforms to stay connected with the outside world, a new consumer behavioural trend emerged, with customers beginning to rely more on the e-commerce market (Taylor, 2020). The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic made many companies shrink their marketing budget, and as a result, companies began to look out for cheaper marketing options. This was when the influencer marketing trend snowballed into a grand phenomenon, with a large number of businesses hiring social media influencers for marketing purposes, as influencer marketing was a cheaper option than the traditional form of advertisement. Brands started relying on social media platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook, to promote their products and create brand awareness. For example, amid the pandemic, the fashion brand Banana Republic started using Instagram for the promotion of its products by using micro-influencers. Micro-influencers were used to promote Banana Republic products by creating hashtags, including #brholiday and #brmakeitmatter (Sinha & Fung, 2021). Apart from the promotion of products, political campaigns and advocacy groups also used micro-influencers to reach out to local followers. Some examples of using micro-influencers in the campaigns involve Democrats like Andrew Young, Bernie Sanders, and Kamala Harris and Republicans like Donald Trump (Sinha & Fung, 2021). Since micro-influencers serve a specific target market, by using the micro-influencers, brands and political campaigns were not only able to save costs on marketing budget but were also able to create higher engagement with the target market.

### **Important characteristics for garnering the attention of viewers**

Some of the characteristics important for attracting the attention of viewers by social media influencers include attractiveness, source credibility, likability, and similarity or relatability. Many research studies (Amos, Holmes, & Strutton, 2008; Till & Busler, 2000) have demonstrated the importance of the attractiveness of social media influencers in their persuasive impact. Source credibility is another factor that determines the effectiveness of endorsement on social media platforms. A credible influencer leaves a positive impact on the minds of the consumers, who make purchase decisions based on the trust they place in the words of the influencer. Trustworthiness and expertise are two factors that define source credibility (Wang, Kao, & Ngamsiriudom, 2017). When influencers are considered experts in a specific line of products or services, they tend to be more persuasive and drive consumer purchase decisions. Likability is also another factor that determines the persuasion factor of a social media influencer. The likability factor is influenced not only by attractiveness but also by how the influencer presents himself or herself to the viewers. Similarity refers to the extent to which a

viewer can relate to the influencer. According to Taillon et al. (2020), when followers find a perceived similarity to the influencer, they develop a more positive perception of the influencer. The perceived similarity determines the relatability factor between social media influencers and their followers. According to Senft (2008), social media influencers appear more real because the power of their influence stems from the content they produce, which is based on their personal lives. Increased perceived similarity can also determine the purchase decisions of the followers. Micro-influencers project themselves through their Instagram or TikTok accounts to a specific lifestyle by creating an image in a specific category of expertise, thereby establishing a perceived similarity with people who follow or want to follow that specific lifestyle (Gupta & Mahajan, 2019).

### **The credibility of Social Media Influencers**

Despite the craze on influencer marketing, research shows that influencer marketing does not always succeed in achieving the desired objective, which is to make the consumers take their purchase decisions based on the influencer endorsement. A report published by Stackla showed that only 23% of people believed in the content promoted by celebrities or social media influencers (Walsh, 2018). Alternatively, 60% of people stated that their purchasing decisions are influenced by the content promoted by their friends or family members (Walsh, 2018). Additionally, the credibility factor of the influencers has been affected by the proliferation of fake followers. According to Dahl, fake followers and fake likes are purchased by some social media influencers (Gerlich, 2022). The fake accounts of these fake followers do not belong to genuine users. These fake accounts are generated automatically and are known as bot accounts created to generate fake follower bases and fake likes. As of 2018, 5000 fake followers could be purchased by social media influencers for as little as \$29 and 50,000 followers for \$119. Same way, 500 likes can be purchased by social media influencers for \$14, and 20,000 likes can be purchased for \$1325 (Gerlich, 2022). The proliferation of fake followers and fake likes has intensified mistrust among consumers towards anything promoted by influencers they do not know personally.

### **Why is less better for credibility and authenticity?**

Even though mega influencers with the largest number of followers can reach out to a greater number of people compared to micro-influencers, the sceptical nature of the younger population of users, who are the primary target for influencer marketing, has made companies look out for micro-influencers with the smaller size of followers. Companies reach out to micro-influencers because of the relatability factor, as sceptic viewers rely on the content promoted by smaller influencers than the ones promoted by mega influencers. According to Ehlers (2021), when the popularity of an influencer grows and more brands show interest in working with the influencer, the influencer begins to post more sponsored content, which reduces the credibility factor of the influencer, and the followers begin to distrust the influencer's authenticity. According to Bucher (2012), the toughest part for any influencer is to continue to engage the audience with content that the audience will not only like but will also find trustworthy. A study conducted by Morning Consult highlighted that 88% of participants spoke about the importance of influencers being authentic and genuinely caring about the products or services they promote (Ehlers, 2021). According to Hunter (2016), as soon as social media influencers start promoting commercial products, followers develop the perception of the influencers losing their authenticity because they are promoting the products in exchange for money and fame rather than for the sake of the greater good of the community. According





to Calfee and Ringold (1994), about 70% of general consumers in the USA are sceptical about product promotion or advertising by marketers because they believe that the sole purpose of any marketer is to make the viewers buy things they do not want. Since micro-influencers have smaller audiences, they are less likely to promote sponsored content, and that is why their credibility factor is high among their followers. When micro-influencers promote a product or service, their followers trust their endorsement because the followers trust the words of the micro-influencers. Because of this reason, even though the outreach of micro-influencers is comparatively less than macro-influencers, their engagement with their followers is high. A study conducted by Social Bakers highlighted that compared to macro-influencers, micro-influencers have a 60% more engagement rate (Ehlers, 2021). The conversion rate of micro-influencers is also higher than that of macro-influencers, which helps brands in boosting their online sales. However, Kay et al. (2020) revealed that when the number of followers increases for a social media influencer, their engagement with their followers declines.

That micro-influencers are more effective in influencing the purchase decisions of followers than macro-influencers is supported by the persuasion knowledge model that describes that the knowledge or responses of people to persuasive marketing content is determined by the realization of the consumers of the intent of the marketer (Stubb & Colliander, 2019). When a consumer is exposed to the promotions of a product or service by both the micro-influencer and macro-influencer, the consumer is more likely to interpret that the macro-influencer is trying to persuade people by using their popularity and fame than the micro-influencer. Therefore, consumers are less likely to trust the endorsement of a macro-influencer than that of a micro-influencer (Kay et al., 2020). This shows that the authenticity of the promoted message is a determining factor for the viewers who get influenced by social media influencers. However, the paradoxical fact is that when an influencer begins to garner more followers, the influencer becomes more crafty in producing the content by becoming more careful in selecting and sharing personal moments from his or her life. The influencers then infuse emotional stories and well-groomed pictures and videos with the original content to conjure up a product that evokes emotions in the minds of the viewers, thereby making the followers engaged with the content. This makes authenticity a choreographed projection produced with the purpose of a strategic form of self-presentation so that the produced content sells in the market (Gaden & Dumitrica, 2014).

### **Contribution of family members and friends to purchase decisions of consumers**

As mentioned at the very beginning of this research paper, even though a substantial amount of research has been done in identifying factors that contribute to consumer decision-making, little to no research has been done to understand the extent of influence micro-influencers have on their followers when the followers know them personally. However, in the absence of literature directly dealing with micro-influencers' influence on their followers when they are known to the followers personally, the researcher has taken into consideration the influence of family and friends on the consumer decision-making process to establish what is the crux of this research paper. For a long time, marketers have paid attention to the influence families have on the consumer decision-making process. According to Sudeepa Sharma, the family is the very unit that influences the purchasing decisions of consumers because many of the items of consumer spending, including shelter, food, and transportation, are consumed collectively within the family, and therefore, one of the primary objectives of the consumer purchase decision is how the product or service being promoted fulfils the needs and wishes of the family members (Kumar & Rao, 2019). Additionally, most of the families share similarities in

financial affordability. For example, rich families may have the affordability to splurge on luxurious goods or services and do not have price sensitivity as middle-class consumers. On the other hand, middle-class and lower-middle-class families focus on utility items that will help them in executing their daily routines (Kumar & Rao, 2019). Therefore, when micro-influencers are known to the followers personally or when followers share a personal relationship with micro-influencers, the followers tend to trust the words of the influencers. A study conducted in the U.K. asked questions to 1000 UK consumers who belonged to the age group between 18 and 40 years and found that family and friends have more influence on consumers over their purchase decisions than celebrities (Degun, 2017). Furthermore, marketers are also aware that families have a significant influence on the purchase decisions of consumers, and hence marketers target family members of different age groups to evoke their buying needs. For marketers, the knowledge that micro-influencers have more influence on their followers when the followers know them personally is a tool for increasing their brand awareness and converting the feelings of the consumers for product sales. For example, for generations, the T.V. advertisement theme of Amul butter has centred around family members sharing a relationship based on their common fondness for butter (Kumar & Rao, 2019). Marketers for consumer merchandise thus can utilize the micro-influencers for the promotion of the products and services among the families and extended social circle of the micro-influencers. Family members also contribute to consumer scepticism towards paid advertising. Researchers (Kumar, 2018) have found that scepticism is an outcome of interaction among socialization agents, including peer groups, family members, and mass media. According to Moschis and Churchill Jr (1978), family communication is an important factor that enhances the knowledge and skills of consumers about products and services in the marketplace, which in turn may contribute to the development of scepticism towards paid advertising.

Iyengar, Han, and Gupta (2009) conducted a study to evaluate the extent to which friends influence consumer purchase decisions and found that friends significantly impact the purchase decisions of consumers. Some previous studies (Belk, 1988; Wernerfelt, 1990) show that the social identity of consumers is defined by their purchasing behaviour, preferences, tastes, and attitude. According to Berger and Heath (2007), while social identity is determined by consumer tastes, the inferences made from one's preferences are determined by group membership. For example, people share or do not share tastes based on how much their selection of a product is indicative of their social identity, and this social identity puts people into different groups.

### **Use of Artificial Intelligence in Identifying Micro-influencers**

As mentioned earlier, it is a problem for digital marketers to identify micro-influencers among millions of influencers available on social media platforms. Therefore, the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning can be useful in this regard. AlAnezi and Almutairy (2021), in their research paper, showed that one important measure that can help in the process of identifying an influencer is by calculating the influencer engagement rate. The purpose of the engagement rate measure is to evaluate the extent to which an influencer can lure potential customers. The existing engagement rate measures take into consideration information, including the number of followers, comments, or posts made or received by an influencer. AlAnezi and Almutairy (2021) Proposed a new measure that carefully analyzes the reaction of potential customers to an advertisement post made by an influencer. This new approach will only work on advertisement posts of influencers. With the help of machine learning approaches, required information can be generated to calculate the new engagement rate





measure. The machine learning approaches will be used in two phases. Firstly, classification will be used to classify a specific post as an advertisement, and then a machine learning based sentiment analysis approach will be used to determine the polarity of the comments received on an advertisement post. This new approach can be used successfully across various social media platforms. AlAnezi and Almutairy (2021) tested this new approach to calculating the engagement rate measure of Instagram influencer accounts and found that this new approach suggests potential influencers who are more aligned with the business requirements of digital marketers.

Leonardi et al. (2020) performed a regression with Support vector machines for personality traits and developed a different algorithm based on community-based values, including self-direction, security, achievement, power, hedonism, tradition, conformity, universalism, and benevolence, among others. This functions as a gravitational field for clustering words pertaining to a similar type of semantics. Leonardi et al. (2020) used this approach for various classifiers to map micro-influencers and the relevant traits and values associated with them. To know if micro-influencers use recurring lexical expressions related to various topics, Leonardi et al. (2020) employed a pre-trained word embeddings model called GloVe, which helped the researchers identify the words under the human values (such as honest, forgiving, friendship, helpful, meaningful, love, listed under the human value of benevolence, for example). The pre-trained word embeddings and fine-tuning them when needed helped the researchers attach different scores to the text sources, thereby finding more examples of micro-influencers for classification purposes.

## **Methodology**

A mixed methodology has been used for data collection using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative research methodology refers to an interpretive research approach that captures subjective viewpoints by collecting non-numerical data, such as literature reviews, interviews, services, observation, or focus groups. On the other hand, a quantitative methodology tries to obtain objective insight by using numerical, mathematical, or statistical data. This research work involves collecting numerical data by circulating and also substantiating the survey outputs with focused interviews.

The existing research attempts to identify the degree to which people are influenced by micro-influencers, especially if the micro-influencers are known to them. A qualitative methodology of interviews has been chosen, obtaining a subjective viewpoint of the degree to which micro-influencers are able to influence the purchasing decisions of the followers if the followers know the micro-influencers personally or do not know them personally. The quantitative methodology of the online survey has been chosen to add objectivity to the research study, thereby increasing its credibility.

## **Design and Procedure**

To fulfil the objective of understanding how micro-influencers influence the purchasing decisions of the followers who know them personally or the followers who do not know them personally, data was captured using online surveys and a literature review. The primary criterion for the selection of literature was the language of the literature. The literature needs to be published in the English language. Although the researcher gave preference to collecting information only from peer-reviewed journals, the availability of research studies on the influence of micro-influencers is very thin and therefore, information was captured from

legitimate newspapers and online articles as well. The databases used for the collection of data included Google Scholar and Google search engine. Both past, as well as latest research studies were included in the research. Even though the researcher aimed to collect data directly relevant to the topic at hand, when direct data was not available, the researcher used information that was partially relevant to the topic. For example, even though the primary objective was to find out if micro-influencers known to the followers (friends or family members) impact their purchase decisions, there is no relevant research study that highlighted the connection between the two variables, and hence, the researcher collected data related to the influence of friends and family on the consumer purchase decisions. Within the research realm, this could act as a good proxy. The findings gleaned from the literature that discussed the impact of family and friends on consumer purchase decisions were not directly relevant to this research paper but were partially relevant to drawing conclusions in favour of the hypothesis.

An online survey was conducted between December 2021 and February 2022. Social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook were used to promote the survey as a paid advertisement. A survey questionnaire comprising seven multiple-choice questions was presented to the participants. Only seven questions were asked to make sure that participants did not find the questionnaire too lengthy and lost interest while completing the survey. To reduce the risk of ambiguity, the questions formulated for the survey questionnaire were straightforward.

The questionnaire began by asking the participants if they followed more than ten social media accounts if they considered the opinion of micro-influencers they know personally or do not know personally if they get influenced by micro-influencers they know personally or do not know personally when they posted comments or promotions on their account. If the participants answered negatively about their being influenced by micro-influencers in making a purchase decision, they were presented with further multiple-choice options to identify the reason for their not being influenced by micro-influencers. If the participants answered affirmatively about being influenced by micro-influencers in making a purchase decision, they were presented with further multiple-choice options to know the reason why they were influenced.

The main logic behind such questions was to make sure that the responses captured:

1. Frequency of usage and no. of accounts followed
2. Consideration of opinion of micro-influencers (both personally known and not known categories)
3. Reasons for consideration of opinion (if opinions are considered)
4. Getting influenced by the recommendation of the micro-influencers
5. Reasons for NOT getting influenced.

It was discussed with the supervisor, and the questions asked were deemed to be a good fit to complete the research objective.

Unlike the previous study (Gerlich, 2022), in which the study participants were exclusively asked to choose micro-influencers they did not know personally (acquaintances) or with whom they did not have a personal relationship (family or friends), in the present study, the study participants were asked to choose micro-influencers they knew personally or shared a personal relationship with. This requirement was made in order to make sure that the study did not collect any data that fell outside of the scope (i.e. participants inadvertently choosing micro-influencers they did not know personally). The definition of "people been known personally"

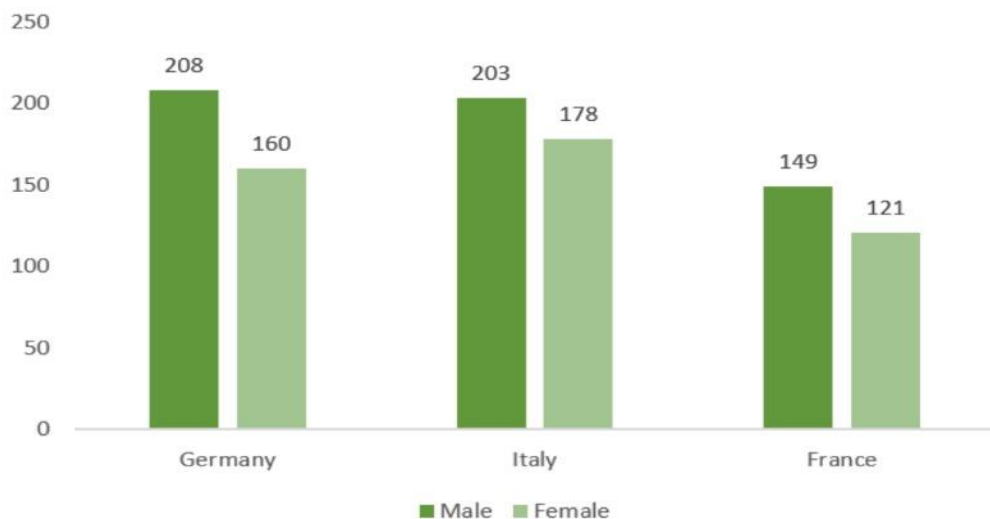


is not limited to friends and family (as often referred to in the literature) but as well acquaintances and role models they know personally from their job, University, sports, etc. This leads to the general hypothesis: "Micro-influencers who are personally known by their followers have a substantially higher impact on the purchase decision than micro-influencers who are not personally known by their followers".

### Data Collection

A total of 1019 participants from Germany, Italy, and France took part in the survey. The highest number of participants came from Italy, followed by Germany and France. The selection of the countries, as well as the research design of this research paper, was based on the research design of Gerlich (2022). The objective was to achieve a wide range of perspectives from survey participants. The primary criterion used for the selection of participants was the age group, as the researcher wanted to include young adults in the survey because young adults are the primary users of social media platforms. Another selection criterion was that participants were required to use social media for at least an hour every day, viewing different posts produced by influencers on Instagram and Facebook. The education level of respondents was also captured to check if education level can skew the results. All the participants were aged between 18 and 35 years. 55% of the participants were male, while 45% of the participants were female. Figure one below illustrates the participant demographics:

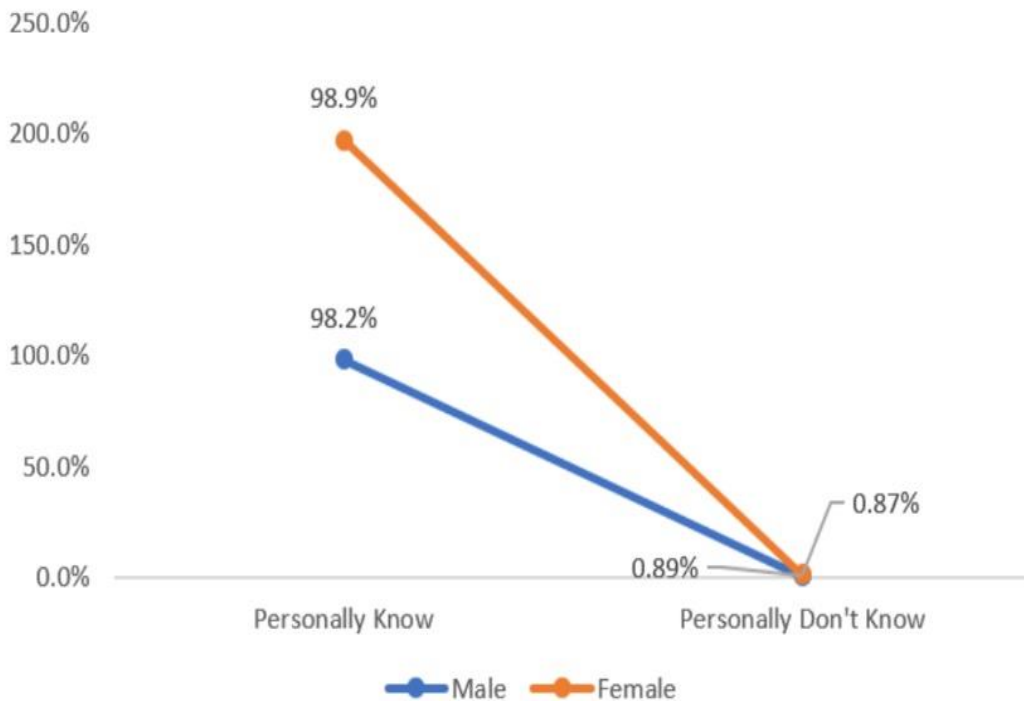
**Figure 1:** Country and gender of the survey participants



### Data Analysis

In the current research, the researcher tried to find out if the survey participants were influenced more by the opinions of personally known micro-influencers. The survey results showed that 98.9% of female participants and 98.2% of male participants were influenced by the opinions of micro-influencers they knew personally. On the other hand, the survey participants were influenced least when they did not know the micro-influencers personally. As can be seen in figure 2 that only 0.87% of female participants and 0.89% of male participants were influenced by the opinion of micro-influencers they did not know personally.

**Figure 2:** Influence level of micro-Influencers the participants knew personally or did not know personally



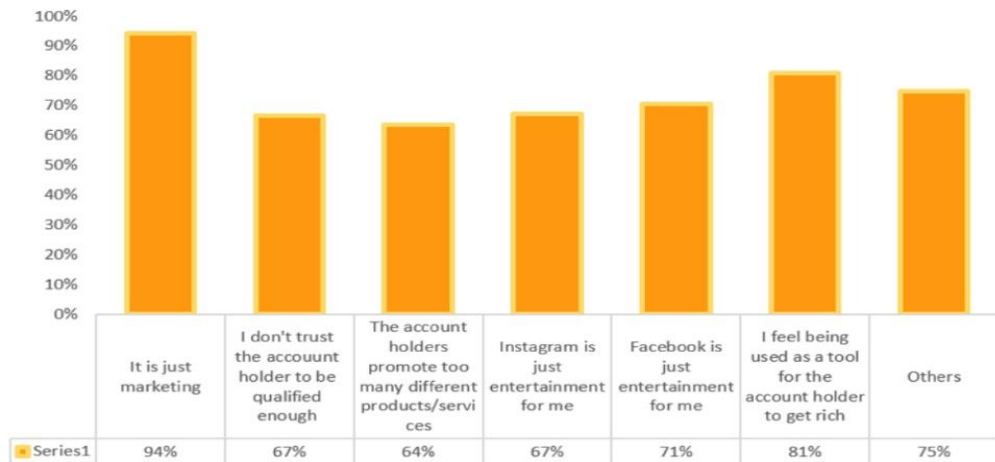
One interesting revelation from the survey outcome is that even though the highest percentage of both male and female participants get influenced by the opinion of micro-influencers when they personally know them, men tend to be influenced significantly more than women when the micro-influencers they know personally post comments or promotions on their account.

On the other hand, the influence level decreased when questioned about being influenced by unknown micro-influencers. The majority of participants (98%), both male and female, did not get influenced by micro-influencers they did not know personally.

Further probing was conducted to check on the reasons for respondents were not getting influenced by the unknown micro-influencers. The participants were presented with multiple-choice options (multiple answers were allowed). 94% of participants replied that the reason for not being influenced by the posted promotions or comments of the micro-influencers is that they know that it is a marketing gimmick. 67% of participants stated that they don't trust the account holders to be qualified enough to give their opinions on a product or service. 64% of the participants believed that the micro-influencers promoted too many different products or services, which reduced their credibility. 67% of participants stated that Instagram is just entertainment for them, and therefore, any type of posted comments or promotions did not make any impact on them. 71% of participants stated that they used Facebook just for the sake of entertainment, with the posted comments or promotions of micro-influencers having little influence on them. 81% of participants expressed that they felt they were being used as a tool for micro-influencers to obtain fame and money. Figure 3 summarizes the additional responses of the participants.

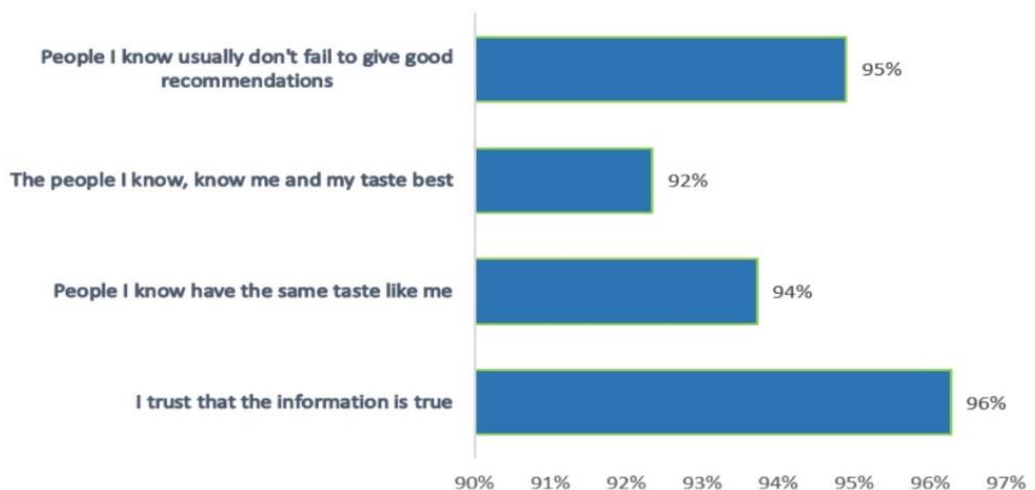


**Figure 3:** Reasons for the participants not being influenced by micro-influencers



The survey participants who expressed that they were influenced by the micro-influencers they knew personally when influencers posted comments or promotions were further presented with additional response options for their affirmative response. This was done to check the response themes of the respondents on having a positive influence. 95% of the participants stated that they believed in the posted comments or promotions of micro-influencers they knew because influencers they knew personally did not fail to give good recommendations. 92% of the participants stated that micro-influencers they knew personally knew their taste best as reasons for trusting the promotions. 94% of the participants with an affirmative response to being influenced by micro-influencers they knew personally stated that those micro-influencers have the same taste as them. 96% of the participants stated that they believed in the promotions and posted comments of the micro-influencers they knew personally because they trusted that the information presented was true. Figure 4 below summarizes the additional responses.

**Figure 4:** Reasons for the participants being influenced by micro-influencers they knew personally





Since 80% of the survey participants had higher education, the responses were not analyzed separately based on the education level of the participants, as the outcome was skewed.

Further, a chi-square independence test was done for both the cases of reasons behind being influenced and reasons behind not being influenced across the response categories of gender, geography and education level. The chi-square test of independence allows us to draw conclusions about a population based on a sample. Specifically, it allows us to conclude whether two variables are related in the population, i.e. their responses will not be the same. For instance, the theme-based response for a certain category, say the gender, would be different if the variables are related and so on.

#### Case I – reasons behind being influenced

Reasons for being influenced in purchase decisions	Theme
I trust that the information is true	Trust
People I know have the same taste like me	Taste
The people I know, know me and my taste best	Awareness
People I know usually don't fail to give good recommendations	Credibility

These themes were tested across the response categories of gender, geography and education level to check the independence. The null hypothesis was :

**H0:** *The category and the theme for being influenced are not related in the population; The proportion of responses within the category is the same for all themes*

**H1:** *The category and the theme for being influenced are related in the population; The proportion of responses within the category is not the same for all themes*

On performing the chi Square independence test, it was found that:

	Gender	Geography	Education
Chi Square	0.35	0.23	0.24
Degrees of Freedom	1.00	2.00	1.00
P Value	0.45	0.11	0.37

Since none of the p-values for the test are less than 0.1, i.e. none of the values are significant at 90% significance level. Therefore we cannot reject the null hypothesis, and it can be inferred that across the population, the responses will be the same in each category.

Similarly, the chi-square independence test was performed for reasons not being influenced.

#### Case II - reasons behind NOT being influenced

Reasons for not being influenced in purchase decisions	Theme
I know it is just marketing	Marketing
I don't trust the account holder to be qualified enough	Qualifications
The account holders promote too many different products/services	Confusion
Instagram/ Facebook is just entertainment for me	Entertainment
I feel being used as a tool for the account holder to get rich	Feeling of being used

Similar to the last case, the null and alternate hypothesis was stated, and the results were:

	Gender	Geography	Education
Chi-Square Value	30.87	12.73	54.89
Degrees of Freedom	1.00	2.00	1.00
P Value	1.00	1.00	1.00



Again based on the p values, the null hypothesis can't be rejected, and therefore it can be assumed that within the categories, the responses would be the same on the reasons for not being influenced.

These themes are further substantiated in the interview scripts that have been recorded by the respondents. The excerpts of the script from a couple of respondents along with the theme are:

1. *Trust*: "I do not trust influencers anymore that I do not know personally. Influencers get paid for their promotions and would sell anything for money."
2. "I trust people I know personally. Most of them share the same taste and likes with me."
3. "I feel betrayed by influencers whom I trusted years ago when I thought they were honest, and now I see that they just promote for money".
4. *Influence*: "Some years ago, I was not aware that influencers had an impact on my decision-making, now I know that, and I do not like that. It is ok to be influenced by friends and families or role models, but not by strangers. Even when they are celebrities."
5. "Influence can be positive and negative. Influence from people I know well is positive. Influence from people I do not know personally is bad. I do not know their real motivations."

**Honesty**: "I trust the people I know to be honest and not to lie to me to make money. All the big influencers are not honest and get paid to advertise a product. For me, that is the same when I see in a journal ad a football player advertising a shampoo."

*Entertainment*: "When I like a post on social media, I like the entertainment but not the promoted product".

"For me, big influencers are fun to follow. It is entertaining and interesting. But I would not buy something just because they promote it."

## Discussion

The objective of this research paper was to find out if micro-influencers have an influence on the followers when they are known to the followers personally. The hypothesis was that when micro-influencers are known to the followers personally, they tend to have more influence over the purchase decisions of the followers. The researcher adopted a mixed methodology combining both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The researcher relied on a literature review and surveyed findings to develop an understanding of the hypothesis. 55% of the participants in our study were male participants, and 45% were female participants. The survey findings revealed that 98.9% of female participants and 98.2% of male participants were influenced by the opinions of micro-influencers when they knew the influencers personally. On the contrary, the participants were not influenced by micro-influencers when they did not know the influencers personally. This finding goes in line with the findings of the literature review that showed that family members influence the consumer purchase decision significantly as family units share the resources within their financial means and since most of the families share similarities in financial affordability and have similar tastes in terms of the merchandise they consume when micro-influencers share a relationship with their followers, they tend to be more persuasive to the followers (Degun, 2017; Kumar & Rao, 2019).

Another important observation was that male participants were more influenced by the micro-influencers when they posted comments or promotions, indicating that male participants made their purchase decisions based on the recommendations provided by the micro-influencers

they trusted. On the other hand, only 9.37% of female participants were influenced by the posted comments or promotions of micro-influencers they knew personally. This brings into question the gender difference in consumption patterns. According to Kraft and Weber (2012), while shopping, women look for products that are useful for the long term, while men look for products that will fulfil their immediate short-term needs. Because of the way men and women shop, they respond differently to advertising or product promotions. Since men are solution-oriented, they look for greater functionality of a product and the benefits associated with it to resolve an immediate or short-term need, but women not only take into consideration the functionality of the product but also the longevity, elegance, and impression it may create while responding to a product promotion (Spasova & Taneva, 2021). Lokithasan et al. (2019), in their study, found that men tend to purchase video games recommended by male influencers as these influencers have tested the video games and provided useful information. Women, on the other hand, are more likely to buy beauty and fashion products promoted by female influencers because they trust the information provided by these female influencers. This indicates that depending on the product being promoted by the micro-influencers, who were known to the survey respondents, men and women survey participants responded differently to the product promotion of micro-influencers.

When the survey participants replied that they were not influenced by the promotions of the micro-influencers, they were further inquired about the reasons for their not being influenced. One of the reasons cited by the survey participants was that they knew that the promotion was a marketing gimmick. By marketing gimmick, what the survey participants meant was that the promotion was a paid advertisement that the micro-influencers were a part of in exchange for the money they received from the marketers and the fame they earned from such advertisements. This finding aligns with the revelation made by the literature review that showed that how people will respond to a paid advertisement is determined by how consumers perceive the marketer's intent (Stubb & Colliander, 2019). Past research showed that most of the time, consumers are not influenced by the claims made by paid advertising and that consumers consider paid promotions as a sort of aggrandized marketing attempt to sell the products (Obermiller, Spangenberg, & MacLachlan, 2005). Consumers are aware that marketers apply various strategies to sell products and exaggerate the attributes of a product or service when needed, to boost sales. Therefore, when consumers perceive that marketers intend to boost sales through paid promotion, they are less likely to trust the claims made by the advertisement.

Another reason cited by the survey participants was that they did not consider the micro-influencers to be qualified enough to give a recommendation for a product or service. This finding also aligns with the literature review that reveals that when micro-influencers can prove their expertise in a specific product or service, they can influence their followers (Wang et al., 2017). This suggests that knowledge or expertise regarding a product or service is a crucial selling point of a micro-influencer. If micro-influencers cannot present their expertise on the product or service they are trying to sell convincingly, their persuasion of their followers fails to meet the desired objective.

Another reason cited by the survey participants for not getting influenced by the promotions of the micro-influencers was that they believed that the micro-influencers promoted too many different products or services, which reduced their credibility. This again goes in line with the findings observed in the literature review. The literature review showed that even though celebrities are popular and have more followers, people get influenced more by social media



influencers rather than celebrities when it comes to making purchase decisions. Even among social media influencers, micro-influencers have more engagement and conversion rates compared to mega influencers because people find micro-influencers more credible than mega influencers. The primary reason for people to find micro-influencers more credible than celebrities or mega influencers is that people believe that micro-influencers are recommending a product or service based on their expertise and experience rather than because of money and fame. Therefore, as soon as the popularity of micro-influencers begins to rise and they gain more followers and endorse more products or services, their credibility factor declines because people then judge their promotion as an attempt to sell products or services in exchange for money and fame.

The survey participants of this study also cited the reason for using Facebook and Instagram as a medium of entertainment only, and therefore, the products or services being promoted on these platforms do not impact them or make them buy things. This finding takes us back to the original objective of launching Facebook in 2004. The original purpose of Facebook was to connect people with friends, colleagues, family members, and people whom they do not know. Apart from connecting people, Facebook has also been a channel for people with low self-esteem and loneliness to spend considerable amounts of time on this platform (Limniou, Ascroft, & McLean, 2021). Facebook also serves as a medium for social comparison where people get motivated by the lifestyle of each other and emulate the living style of others. With time, Facebook launched a lot of video streaming facilities in which people can spend hours watching videos posted by influencers on T.V. or news channels. Instagram, on the other hand, is more image focused as Instagram allures people with colourful pictures and videos (Limniou et al., 2021). Launched in 2010, Instagram encourages photo sharing and video sharing, and therefore, it has become an important marketing tool for displaying products with appealing visualization. To this date, Instagram, which is primarily used by the younger generation, is an attractive medium for young mobile users to capture photos or pictures and share them with others (Ting et al., 2015). Therefore, even though Instagram is a great marketing tool for brands to promote their products and services, most users use Instagram for entertainment purposes by posting and sharing pictures and videos with friends and family members.

The survey participants of our study also shared that they felt they were being used as a tool for gaining money and fame by the micro-influencers. This also goes in line with the literature review findings that showed that the marketer's intent is the determining factor for the viewers if they want to be persuaded by the paid advertising or not. Since the primary objective of most marketers remains to sell products to the viewers even if they do not need the product, viewers are sceptical about the intentions of the marketers. Therefore, if the viewers feel that the micro-influencers are getting paid for promoting a product or service, they grow scepticism of the claims made by the micro-influencers about a certain product or service. In the end, when micro-influencers promote a product or service in exchange for money, they just want to use these social media platforms as a monetizing tool for their earnings and the fame that comes along with it.

When the survey participants answered that they were influenced by the product promotions of the micro-influencers they knew personally, they were further presented with questions to determine the reasons for their being influenced by the micro-influencers. One of the reasons cited by the participants for trusting the promotions of the micro-influencers they knew personally is that they believed that the micro-influencers knew about their tastes and preferences. The participants also mentioned that they shared the same taste as the micro-

influencers they follow. This aligns with the findings of the literature review that stated that the social identity of people is defined by their tastes and preferences, and a common social identity puts people in specific groups identified by their predilection for a specific type of product or service. For example, people with a common preference for Harley Davidson motorbikes share a common social identity, and as such, because of their consumption preference, they form a group based on their predilection for a unique bike. Social media influencers promote products or services in a specific line of business. For example, some social media influencers promote the lifestyle of veganism, some promote the lifestyle of yoga or healthy eating, some give fashion or makeup tips for amateurs, and some others help their followers cope with grief or life problems. People who follow the influencers have a penchant for a certain lifestyle that is being promoted by the influencers. The homogeneity in lifestyle preferences binds the social media influencers and their followers in a bond identified by shared tastes, and this indicates why the survey participants believed that the micro-influencers they knew personally knew about their tastes and preferences and shared the same taste as them.

The survey participants also stated that the micro-influencers they knew personally never failed to give good recommendations. This again aligns with the literature review findings that revealed that friends and family members influence consumer purchase decisions. The survey participants trusted that the micro-influencers they knew personally or shared a relationship with gave good recommendations because they know about the taste and preferences of their audience, and hence, they suggest products or services they know will be useful to the audiences.

The issue of micro-influencers losing their credibility when their number of followers increases could be analyzed further with the use of data analytics and artificial intelligence that can help companies do target marketing by focusing on micro-influencers as targets and getting them convinced of the product and service offerings. Once the micro-influencers get convinced of the product and service offerings, they can promote the products on social media. This way, micro-influencers can maintain their integrity and give their honest feedback on the product or service after their personal experience of using it. The companies do not have to pay the micro-influencers for marketing because the micro-influencers will not be able to know that they are being targeted for marketing by the companies.

## **Limitations**

This research study has some limitations. The first limitation was that the sample population selected for the survey was limited to only participants from three countries. Even though the study outcome did not showcase any significant difference among the participants based on countries, thereby eliminating cultural influence, if any, on the study outcome. Another important point to note is that all three countries are members of the European Union and share a similar western culture. If the participants were selected from a more culturally diverse mix of eastern and western countries, the cultural influence might have played a role in the study outcome.

Another limitation of the study outcome is that the sample population of participants with primary education was significantly lower compared to the population of participants with higher education. Therefore, the research study failed to show the influence of education on the research outcome as the study outcome was skewed towards people with higher education in all measures, making it difficult to evaluate if education played a role in the research outcome.





Another limitation of the study was the age group, as the survey participants selected belong to the age group of 18 and 35 years. This is a significant limitation because the literature review showed that the majority of users on Facebook are in their 40s. Hence the limitation of the age group prevented the research from including the perspectives of older age groups.

The final limitation was that the survey was promoted on two social media platforms, including Facebook and Instagram. The inclusion of another popular social media platform like TikTok could have generated a different outcome.

## Conclusion

Influencer marketing got to a new level when social restrictions and lockdown measures forced companies to shrink their marketing budget and look out for cheaper marketing options. Influencer marketing emerged as a new marketing phenomenon, with marketers beginning to promote their products and services increasingly through social media influencers, specifically micro-influencers. Research has shown that micro-influencers with a smaller size of followers have more engagement and conversion rates than celebrities or mega-influencers. It is because consumers are sceptical towards paid advertising, and whenever celebrities or mega influencers promote various types of products, consumers consider the promotion as a marketing gimmick that the endorsers are being paid for. Therefore, they do not consider such promotions authentic. Since micro-influencers produce content in a specific line of lifestyle that they have expertise in, their followers follow their advice because of their perceived expertise, but when micro-influencers achieve increasing popularity and the number of followers, their authenticity diminishes in the eyes of their followers, who then begin to question the genuinity of their promoted products.

The objective of this research paper was to evaluate if micro-influencers influence the purchase decisions of the followers who know the influencers personally or share a relationship (family members) with them. The researcher conducted a survey which showed that the majority of the participants trusted the opinions and promotions of the micro-influencers they knew personally but did not get influenced by micro-influencers they did not know personally. The literature review showed that consumers make their purchase decisions influenced by the words of advice of family members and friends. Consumers' scepticism towards paid advertising is also an outcome of interaction among family members. Therefore, the survey finding that participants get influenced by the promotions and opinions of micro-influencers they know personally aligns with the revelation of the literature review. The chi-square test further substantiated the finding that irrespective of the number of responses within the category, the theme-based responses will be almost the same, and there is no interdependence.

Based on the research findings and analysis of the literature review, it can be concluded that people tend to trust the words of micro-influencers if they know them personally. In other words, if the micro-influencers are family and friends of the followers, they tend to have more persuasive power over their audience. Since it is through family interaction that people develop scepticism towards paid advertising, it also makes sense that when it comes to enhancing knowledge and expertise of a product or service, consumers rely on the words of advice of family members and friends.

Furthermore, the solution to the problem of micro-influencers losing their credibility can be solved using data analytics and A.I. that companies can use to conduct target marketing on micro-influencers so that they end up using the product and service and then promote the

same on their social media accounts after they experience using it. It will not turn into a paid promotion either, as micro-influencers will not be able to know that they are being targeted for marketing by the companies. The whole promotion will remain organic, which will boost the confidence of the followers.

## Bibliography

- AlAnezi, M., & Almutairy, M. (2021). Influencer Engagement Rate Under Scalable Machine Learning Approaches. In G. Meiselwitz (Ed.), *Social Computing and Social Media: Applications in Marketing, Learning, and Health* (pp. 3-14). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77685-5\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77685-5_1)
- Amos, C., Holmes, G., & Strutton, D. (2008). Exploring the relationship between celebrity endorser effects and advertising effectiveness: A quantitative synthesis of effect size. *International journal of advertising*, 27(2), 209-234. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2008.11073052>
- Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the extended self. *Journal of consumer research*, 15(2), 139-168. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209154>
- Berger, J., & Heath, C. (2007). Where consumers diverge from others: Identity signaling and product domains. *Journal of consumer research*, 34(2), 121-134. <https://doi.org/10.1086/519142>
- Booth, N., & Matic, J. A. (2011). Mapping and leveraging influencers in social media to shape corporate brand perceptions. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 16(3), 184-191. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13563281111156853>
- Bucher, T. (2012). Want to be on the top? Algorithmic power and the threat of invisibility on Facebook. *New Media & Society*, 14(7), 1164-1180. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444812440159>
- Calfee, J. E., & Ringold, D. J. (1994). The 70% Majority: Enduring Consumer Beliefs about Advertising. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 13(2), 228-238. <https://doi.org/10.1177/074391569401300204>
- Datta, A. (n.d.). *Finding social media influencers with predictive analytics*. Aviana Global Technologies. <https://avianaglobal.com/finding-social-media-influencers-with-predictive-analytics/>
- De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: the impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. *International Journal of Advertising*, 36(5), 798-828. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035>
- Degun, G. (2017). *Family and friends have 'more influence' over purchase decisions than celebs*. Haymarket Media Group Ltd. <https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/family-friends-more-influence-purchase-decisions-celebs/1447024>
- Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, C. (2017). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 68, 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.11.009>
- Ehlers, K. (2021). *Micro-Influencers: When Smaller Is Better*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2021/06/02/micro-influencers-when-smaller-is-better>
- Gaden, G., & Dumitrica, D. (2014). The 'real deal': Strategic authenticity, politics and social media. *First Monday*, 20(1), 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v20i1.4985>
- Gerlich, M. (2022). Micro-influencer marketing during the COVID-19 pandemic: New vistas or the end of an era? *Journal of Digital & Social Media Marketing*, 9(4), 354-370. <https://www.ingentaconnect.com/contentone/hsp/jdsmm/2022/00000009/00000004/art00007>
- Gupta, S., & Mahajan, R. (2019). Role of micro-influencers in affecting behavioural intentions. *International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering*, 8, 189-192. <https://doi.org/10.35940/ijrte.D1045.1284S519>



- Haenlein, M., Anadol, E., Farnsworth, T., Hugo, H., Hunichen, J., & Welte, D. (2020). Navigating the New Era of Influencer Marketing: How to be Successful on Instagram, TikTok, & Co. *California management review*, 63(1), 5-25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0008125620958166>
- Hunter, A. (2016). Monetizing the mommy: Mommy blogs and the audience commodity. *Information, Communication & Society*, 19(9), 1306-1320. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2016.1187642>
- Iyengar, R., Han, S., & Gupta, S. (2009). Do Friends Influence Purchases in a Social Network? *Harvard Business Review*. [https://www.hbs.edu/ris/Publication%20Files/09-123\\_0218aa20-e683-49b2-a886-837c09b552d5.pdf](https://www.hbs.edu/ris/Publication%20Files/09-123_0218aa20-e683-49b2-a886-837c09b552d5.pdf)
- Kay, S., Mulcahy, R., & Parkinson, J. (2020). When less is more: the impact of macro and micro social media influencers' disclosure. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 36(3-4), 248-278. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2020.1718740>
- Kraft, H., & Weber, J. M. (2012). A look at gender differences and marketing implications. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 3(21), 247-253. [https://ijbssnet.com/journals/Vol\\_3\\_No\\_21\\_November\\_2012/26.pdf](https://ijbssnet.com/journals/Vol_3_No_21_November_2012/26.pdf)
- Kumar, A. (2018). Consumer Skepticism towards Advertising on Television Media. *Journal of Accounting & Marketing*, 7(2), 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.4172/2168-9601.1000267>
- Kumar, B. A., & Rao, A. V. S. (2019). Family Purchase Decision Making - A Review. *Osmania Journal of Management*, 40-50. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333811715>
- Leonardi, S., Monti, D., Rizzo, G., & Morisio, M. (2020). Mining micro-influencers from social media posts. In *Proceedings of the 35th Annual ACM Symposium on Applied Computing* (pp. 867-874). Association for Computing Machinery. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3341105.3373954>
- Limniou, M., Ascroft, Y., & McLean, S. (2021). Differences between Facebook and Instagram usage in regard to problematic use and well-being. *Journal of technology in behavioral science*, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41347-021-00229-z>
- Lokithasan, K., Simon, S., Jasmin, N. Z. B., & Othman, N. A. B. (2019). Male and female social media influencers: The impact of gender on emerging adults. *International Journal of Modern Trends in Social Sciences*, 2(9), 21-30. <https://doi.org/10.35631/IJMTSS.29003>
- Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media. *Journal of interactive advertising*, 19(1), 58-73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2018.1533501>
- Moschis, G. P., & Churchill Jr, G. A. (1978). Consumer socialization: A theoretical and empirical analysis. *Journal of marketing research*, 15(4), 599-609. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224377801500409>
- NFI. (2022). *How Much Do Influencers Make? – Everything You Need To Know*. Nashville Film Institute. <https://www.nfi.edu/how-much-do-influencers-make>
- Obermiller, C., Spangenberg, E., & MacLachlan, D. L. (2005). Ad skepticism: The consequences of disbelief. *Journal of advertising*, 34(3), 7-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2005.10639199>
- Senft, T. M. (2008). *Camgirls: Celebrity and Community in the Age of Social Networks*. Bern: Peter Lang. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343786951>
- Sinha, I. J., & Fung, T. (2021). How social media micro-influencers are disrupting the business of youth fashion. *Rutgers Business Review*, 6(1), 44-50. <https://rbr.business.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/documents/rbr-060104.pdf>
- Spasova, L., & Taneva, T. (2021). Influence of Gender on the Advertising Responses of Young People for Products of Mobile Operators in Bulgaria. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 120, 04002. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202112004002>
- Stubb, C., & Colliander, J. (2019). “This is not sponsored content”–The effects of impartiality disclosure and e-commerce landing pages on consumer responses to social media influencer posts. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 98, 210-222. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.04.024>

- Taillon, B. J., Mueller, S. M., Kowalczyk, C. M., & Jones, D. N. (2020). Understanding the relationships between social media influencers and their followers: the moderating role of closeness. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 29(6), 767-782. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-03-2019-2292>
- Taylor, C. (2020). *Is COVID Making Marketing Influencers More Influential?* Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/charlesrtaylor/2020/07/30/is-covid-making-marketing-influencers-more-influential>
- Till, B. D., & Busler, M. (2000). The match-up hypothesis: Physical attractiveness, expertise, and the role of fit on brand attitude, purchase intent and brand beliefs. *Journal of advertising*, 29(3), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2000.10673613>
- Ting, H., Ming, W. W. P., de Run, E. C., & Choo, S. L. Y. (2015). Beliefs about the use of Instagram: An exploratory study. *International Journal of business and innovation*, 2(2), 15-31. <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Hiram-Ting/publication/272026006>
- Walsh, M. (2018). *The Real Problem With Influencer Marketing: You're Focusing On The Wrong 'Influencers'*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescommunicationscouncil/2018/10/05/the-real-problem-with-influencer-marketing-youre-focusing-on-the-wrong-influencers>
- Wang, S. W., Kao, G. H.-Y., & Ngamsiriudom, W. (2017). Consumers' attitude of endorser credibility, brand and intention with respect to celebrity endorsement of the airline sector. *Journal of Air Transport Management*, 60, 10-17. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jairtraman.2016.12.007>
- Wernerfelt, B. (1990). Advertising content when brand choice is a signal. *Journal of Business*, 63(1), 91-98. <http://web.mit.edu/bwerner/www/papers/AdvertisingContentWhenBrandChoiceisaSignal.pdf>

