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## **The Battle of Influencer: The Impact of Artificial Intelligence Generated and Human Influencers on Consumer Buying Decision**

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### **KEYWORDS**

*AI influencers, artificial intelligence, consumer buying decision, human influencers, virtual influencers.*

### **ABSTRACT**

The marketing of influencers is emerging as one of the very powerful ways to reshape the consumer buying decisions in today's digital economy and both AI-powered and human influencers are changing the way brands interact with their audiences. Even, human influencers continue to be the most dominated influencers due to their authenticity and emotional relatability, while the acceleration of virtual influencers are trending in digital commerce that hasn't been fully explored yet. This study aims to assess and contrast the impact that influencers generated by AI and human influencers on consumer buying decisions. A quantitative descriptive research method was used and structured questionnaires were used to obtain the data and sent by using social media platforms to 100 active social media users, who are representative of consumer who use technology. The collected data was analysed with the help of SPSS software using percentage analysis to understand the trends of awareness, trust and buying behaviour of consumers. The results revealed that human influencers are much better than AI influencers at building trust, making emotional connections and driving actual purchase among consumers. 68% of respondents said they were influenced by human recommendations, whereas only 12% said they were influenced by AI-based ones, surprisingly 54% consumers denied the exposure towards AI-generated influencers. AI influencers have the potential to be scalable and novel but their limited authenticity and perceived emotional disconnect restrict their persuasive power. These results highlight that marketers need to find a way to blend the realness of human influencers with the technology benefits of artificial intelligence in order to create hybrid campaigns that appeal to both the rational and emotive parts of making decisions among consumers. This study offers empirical evidence which uniquely adds value to the existing literature on consumer psychology in digital era and influencer marketing. It not only shows how human influencers always be important but it also shows the importance of understanding how AI-driven personalities can complement with human influencer to shape the future of digital commerce..

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Influencer marketing is one of the sectors of the global digital economy that is expanding at the quickest rate with a market

valuation of more than \$24 billion in 2024 and a projected value of \$33 billion by 2025 (Deloitte, 2026; Sprout Social, 2024; Influencer Marketing Hub,

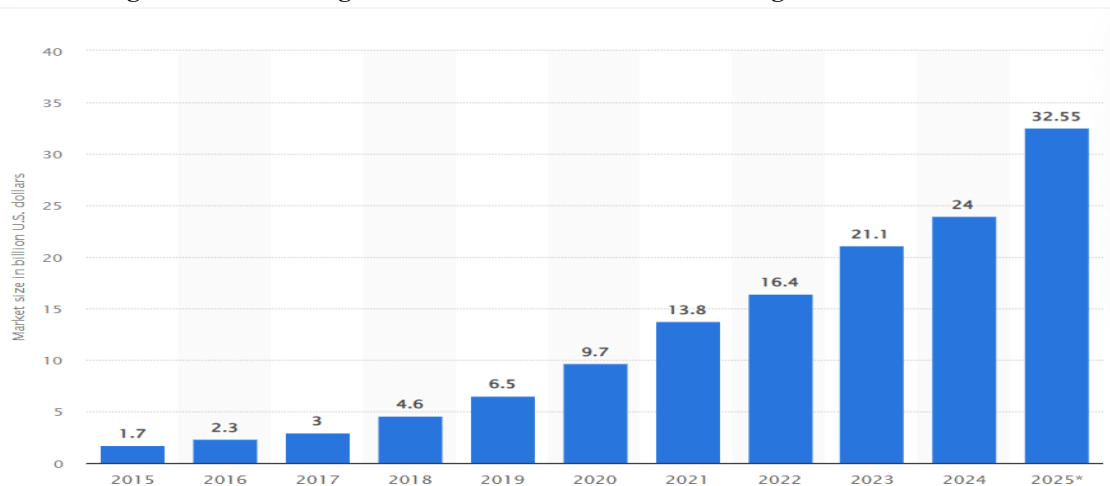
2024). As of the month of February in the year 2024, the marketing of influencers deliver quantifiable returns on consumer engagement and sales due to which 26% of global marketing firms and brands are now investing more than 40% of their marketing budgets in influencer campaigns (Hasan, 2025; Sprout Social, 2024). Influencer content actually drives nearly half (49%) of consumers' daily, weekly or monthly purchases, despite 16% of consumers ranking influencer marketing as having the greatest influence on their purchasing decisions as per survey responses in the 2024 Influencer Marketing Report's Buying Behaviours section (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2025). Furthermore, the fact that nearly 86% of consumers buy something who are inspired by an influencer are least once per year which confirms that influencers are not only trendsetters but also having strong influence of consumer buying behaviour (Geysler, 2025; Sprout Social, 2024).

The acceleration of AI-driven virtual influencers has began the process of reshaping the strategies of marketing (Huang & Rust, 2026) Virtual influencers are digitally-generated avatars that use artificial intelligence technology to make content that is well-curated, visually appealing and consistent with the brand (Kapoor et al., 2025). One of the most cited example is Lil Miquela, acknowledged as the the world's first virtual influencer and she has 2.4 million followers on Instagram, even though she doesn't exist in real life. She works with well-known global brands including Prada and Calvin Klein which makes her one of the most recognizable AI-generated personalities in the digital world. Similarly, KYRA (Kyraonig) India's first virtual influencer having 241k followers on Instagram and she works with major brands like Titan Eye Plus and boAt which shows that virtual influencers are becoming more popular not only in other countries but also in India (Kumar & Singh, 2025). These kinds of collaboration highlight the acceptance of rising virtual influencers by brands who deals with luxury, tech, lifestyle as well as seeking innovation and futuristic branding (McKinset & Company, 2026).

Along with AI influencers, human influencers dominate this field because of their capacity to build parasocial connections, cultivate trust and share meaningful experiences that emotionally engage audiences. Their perceived authenticity, attractiveness and credibility serve as important indicators of consumer trust and buying intention (Lou & Yuan, 2025; Carrillo Durán, García & López Cortés, 2024; Jain, 2024; Si, 2024). They are particularly successful in sectors like fashion, entertainment and beauty where emotion and lifestyle branding are crucial because of these relational dynamics (De Veirman, 2025; Martin et al., 2023; Lee & Park, 2022). In addition, human beings who influences consumer buying habits has the capacity to change their messaging styles, storytelling and visual appeal which make consumers more connected to and relatable to the brand which is what consumer constantly demands from brand communication (Farrel 2026; Si, 2024; Jain, 2024).

While both AI and human influencers are changing digital marketing but still there remains unexplored areas like their impact on consumer buying behaviour (Dwivedi et al., 2025). Human influencers are still great at building trust, emotional relatability and authenticity which makes them powerful to drive impulse and lifestyle-based buying of products and services. AI-generated influencers, on the other hand, have benefits like scalability, cost-effectiveness and consistency which may work better for purchases that are based on logic or technology (Lee & Park, 2022; Martin et al., 2023; Si, 2024). However, questions persist about whether artificial intelligence generated influencers serve as a complement rather than substitute of human influencers (Kapoor et al., 2025). This question emphasizes the requirement for empirical research to be carried out in order to explore the influence of artificial intelligence-based influencers and human influencers on consumer buying decision. Therefore, this research is beneficial to those marketers who seeks effective marketing strategies that aligns with the evolving psychology of consumer decision-making (Hasan, 2025).

**Figure 1: Size of the global market for influencer marketing from 2015-2025.**



Source: Statista (2025)

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

As the result of acceleration of social media platforms, the way in which individuals communicate with brands has been transformed. In today's world influencers are important and act as a middleman who help individuals to make buying decisions. The rise of AI-generated influencers is changing the way influencer marketing works. AI-based avatars like Lil Miquela and Shudu are different from real human influencers because they are designed in such a way which imitate human engagement, promote brands without any human involvement and offer scalability and novelty but their effectiveness remains contested. Sands et al. (2022) found that consumers perceived human influencers to be more trustworthy than influencers that were generated by AI ones, though they could make more stronger word-of-mouth intentions and also demonstrated that AI influencers could exert a higher impact on individuals who have a high requirement for uniqueness. Similarly, Gerlich (2025) observed that AI influencers were more effective in product items such as electronics and sports related goods in which objectivity and precision are important, whereas human influencers dominated those sectors which were driven emotionally such as fashion and beauty.

Human influencers, who are often considered opinion leaders, create authenticity and emotional connection which in turn make consumers more likely to trust a brand and buy from that particular brand. Garg and Bakshi (2024) pointed out that especially credibility traits of beauty vloggers' such as 'trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness' affected the consumer behaviour in which trust was found to be partially affected the credible traits of beauty vloggers' and buying intention of consumers. In addition, consumer behaviour was also influenced by frequent parasocial communication which is done by beauty vloggers if they perceived them as reliable providers of knowledge. Similarly, Liu and Zheng (2024) discovered that "informative value of influencers' content, authenticity and homophily" were positively influenced their parasocial interactions which subsequently impacted consumers buying intention and evaluation of brand credibility. Together these researchers collectively validated that authenticity and parasocial interaction were foundational factors which explained why human influencers remained persuasive in digital marketing.

Perceived authenticity was repeatedly shown to be an essential determinant in shaping the effectiveness of influencers. Abdelsattar et al. (2024) examined no significant difference between artificial intelligence and human influencers regarding the symbolic product recommendations. Human influencers were better at making recommendations for utilitarian items but when it came to giving suggestions for stigmatized items, artificial intelligence influencers were better at making recommendations for these items. Furthermore, perceived authenticity caused differences in how effectively human and artificial intelligence influencers work for recommending symbolic products. This outcome matched with the results of Jayasingh et al. (2025) who found that factors such as credibility, informative value and human-likeness influenced the engagement of consumers and buying intention of those brands which were promoted by AI-generated influencers.

Research on human influencers also showed how relatability, trust and attractiveness affected consumer outcomes. The idea that trustworthiness and inspirational capacity challenged the notion authenticity was always best, as was challenged by Andonopoulos, Lee, and Mathies (2023) who stated that although authenticity increased trust, even inauthentic influencers could motivate buy intentions for hedonistic products. Similarly, Gurung, Shah and Gurung (2023) showed that consumer purchasing intentions across brand categories were directly impacted by both attractiveness and trustworthiness. This was furthered by Akand (2024) who demonstrated that influencer authenticity and credibility were critical determinants across industry which exerts strong influence the perception and behaviour of consumers.

Although existing studies have examined AI-generated and human influencers separately, limited research directly compares their impact on consumer buying decisions within the same social media context. Most previous studies focus on trust, authenticity, and attractiveness, but less attention has been given to how consumers respond differently to AI-based and human influencers for products promoted online. Therefore, this study addresses the gap by comparing both types of influencers and their influence on consumer buying decisions.

### Objectives of Study

The purpose of this research is intended to explore how both AI-powered influencers and human influencers influence the consumer buying decision. The following is a list of objectives:

To analyse the impact of AI-generated influencers on consumer buying decisions for products which is promoted in social media platforms.

To explore the impact of human influencers on consumer buying decisions for products which is promoted in social media platforms

to compare the impact of AI-based versus human influencers on consumer buying decision.

### Research Methodology

In order to investigate the influence of AI-generated and human influencers on consumer buying decision, a quantitative



research methodology was utilized. A descriptive survey study design was used in order to systematically examine the consumer trust, their purchasing behaviour which was affected by AI-based and human influencers and comparison between AI-generated and human influencers. The data was gathered from a selection of 100 respondents that were chosen using a simple random sampling technique. Respondents were chosen from active users on social media platforms, including Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and WhatsApp, as these platforms exhibited the highest levels of consumer involvement in previous research. Structured questionnaires were designed as the primary research instrument. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions which covered dimensions such as the social media platforms frequently used by consumers, whether they came across AI-generated influencers, consumer purchasing decisions towards AI-generated and human influencers, consumer trust towards both types of influencers and a comparison of which influencer's recommendation consumers followed. Additionally, for the purpose of conducting a percentage-based analysis of the collected data, the SPSS software was used.

### Findings of Study

The demographic profile of respondents indicates a youth-oriented consumer base, with 54% aged 21–30 years old and 26% aged 31–40 years which highlights the dominance of digitally engaged generations in influencer-driven industries. Only a small percentage (9%) are older aged consumers which shows that they interact less with social media influencers. The survey is male dominated (70%), though female respondents (30%) still contribute valuable perspectives. A considerable number of the respondents are postgraduates (51%) or graduates (32%) which shows educated and digitally literate audience.

S. No.	Particulars	Component	Respondents (in number)	Respondents (in %)
	Age	Below 20 years	11	11%
		21-30 years	54	54%
		31-40 years	26	26%
		41-50 years	5	5%
		Above 50 years	4	4%
	Gender	Male	70	70%
		Female	30	30%
	Qualification	Below class 10th	0	0
		10 <sup>th</sup> standard	2	2%
		12 <sup>th</sup> standard	8	8%
		Graduate	32	32%
		Postgraduate	51	51%
		Others	7	7%

The findings, therefore, predominantly capture the mindset of consumers who are socially engaged and aware which represents the very segment most targeted by both AI and human influencers in India.

### Discussion and Conclusion

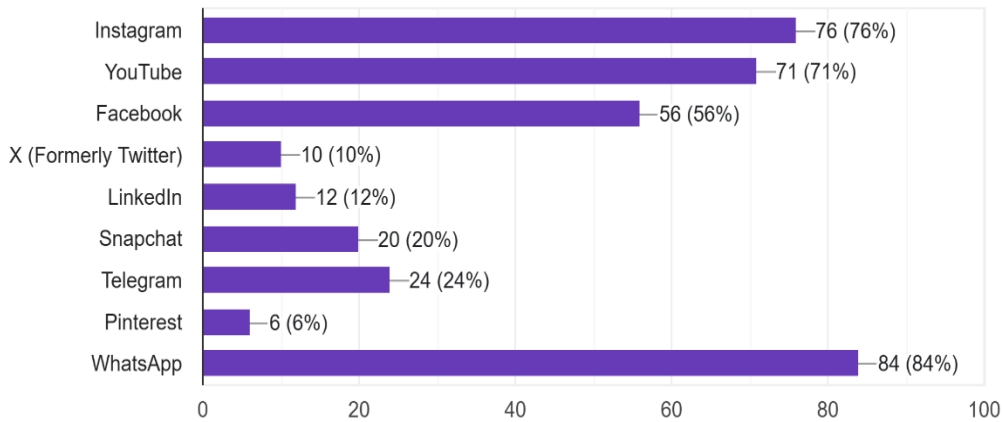
#### Chart 1

*Social media platforms frequently used by consumers*



Which social media platforms do you use frequently?

100 responses



The findings of the study provide substantial evidence into consumer involvement with various social media platforms. WhatsApp (84%), Instagram (76%) and YouTube (71%) emerge as the most frequently used social media platforms among the 100 consumers surveyed, followed by Facebook (56%), Telegram (24%) and Snapchat (20%). Interestingly, social media platforms that are usually considered less commercial such as X (formerly Twitter) (10%), LinkedIn (12%) and Pinterest (6%) show comparatively lower engagement rates among consumers. These usages of patterns indicate that social media platforms which offers high visual content and interactive features are having a greater likelihood of attracting consumers' attention and drive purchasing decisions when influencers are involved in social media sites. This trend is crucial for those marketers who use human influencers and AI-generated influencers because the platform that is chosen for use has a direct impact on reach, relatability and conversion. The findings underline the strategic necessity of coordinating influencer marketing with the social media platforms that consumer use the most to maximise the impact on their buying behaviour. These insights contribute to the ongoing trending conversation on digital consumer psychology and the dynamic role of technology-enhanced influence in shaping modern consumption.

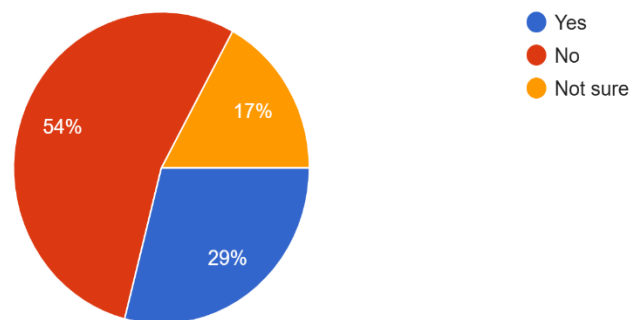
**Influence of AI-generated Influencers on Consumer Buying Decisions**

**Chart 2**

*Consumer awareness towards AI-generated influencers*

Do you ever come across Artificial Intelligence (AI) generated influencers (like Lil Miquela, Imma, Shudu)?

100 responses



An interesting dimension of this survey is that it investigates consumer awareness about AI-generated influencers which is a quickly growing trend in digital marketing. When asked to consumers whether they have ever seen AI influencers like



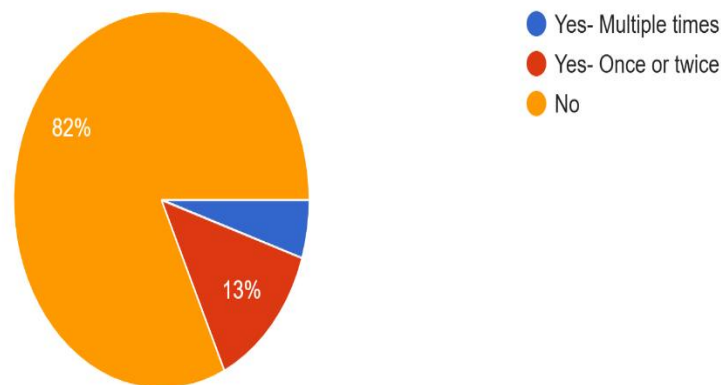
Lil Miquela, Imma or Shudu, surprisingly, the majority of consumers i.e., 54% deny any exposure to AI influencers, while 29% of consumers affirm awareness and 17% consumers remain unsure about them. These results highlight an observation, while the growing use of AI-generated personalities by reputed brands, a significant portion of consumer population either remains uninformed or fails to recognize them as artificial personalities. This lack of awareness may significantly influence the effectiveness of artificial intelligence influencers in driving consumer buying decisions, especially when it come to perceived authenticity and trustworthiness. As AI influencers become more sophisticated and popular, it is essential have a deeper understanding of their impact on digitally native and less tech-aware audiences which helps shape future marketing strategies and ethical norms in the world of influencers. Therefore, it is recommended that brands and marketers should invest money in educating consumers worldwide about the presence and purpose of AI influencers by using transparent disclosures and engaging content strategies. Awareness campaigns, storytelling elements and behind-the-scenes content can help fill the knowledge gap which build trust and create a stronger emotional connection between AI personalities and consumers.

**Chart 3**

*The purchasing frequency of consumers towards product promoted by AI influencers*

Do you ever purchased product promoted by an AI influencer?

100 responses



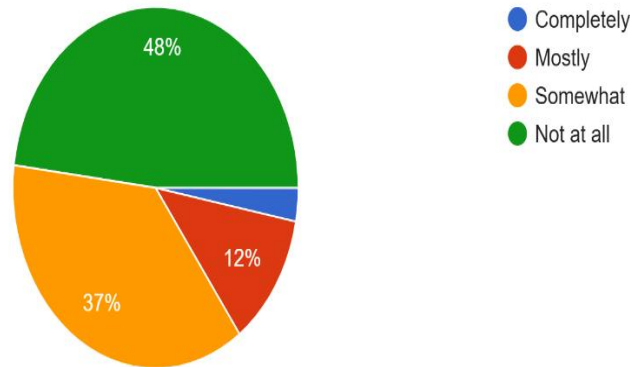
Despite the growing presence of AI-generated influencers in the digital marketing, their actual influence on consumer buying behaviour seems to be limited at present. According to the results of survey conducted, a majority of respondents i.e., 82% never buy a product that is promoted by AI influencers like Lil Miquela, Imma or Shudu etc, while only 13% of consumers purchase those products once or twice and only 5% of consumers make purchases several times. These results clearly indicate that there is a considerable engagement gap between the AI influencers and the action of consumers. While AI influencers may be able to capture curiosity and digital presence but their conversion power remains weak, possibly due to factors such as lack of authenticity, emotional disconnect or consumer trust issues in AI-generated endorsements. These results show that AI influencer marketing needs to be improved immediately to develop trust and emotional connection with consumers. Brands should work on making AI avatars more credible, relatable and transparent. Furthermore, policy frameworks that encourage clear disclosure of AI-generated information play a pivotal role in managing consumer expectations and ethical advertising.

**Chart 4**

*Consumer trust towards product promoted by AI influencers*

How much do you trust AI influencers when they promote products in social media platforms

100 responses



The results of this research indicate that there is a substantial discrepancy in the level of trust that exists between customers and AI influencers who are active on social media sites. When the researcher asked the consumers about their level of trust in products that are promoted by AI influencers, surprisingly, 48% of consumers do not trust them at all and 37% consumers say they just trust them very little. On the other hand, only 12% of consumers show moderate trust, while only 3% demonstrate complete trust in those products that are promoted by AI influencers. These findings highlight that day-by-day AI influencers becoming more popular but they fail to connect emotionally like human influencers and lack of perceived authenticity that drives the confidence in consumers and influences their purchasing decision. There are a few reasons for this skepticism, such as a lack of real-life experience, emotional intelligence and the fact that AI-driven endorsements seem fake to consumers. To overcome this barrier, brands need to change their marketing strategies by focusing on hybrid campaigns that link AI influencers with credible human counterparts or by investing money on hyper-realistic AI personas with transparent disclosures and storytelling depth. Moreover, consistent ethical branding, capabilities of user to interact with AI influencers and personalised content delivery could help consumers in establishing confidence on those products which is promoted by AI influencers. As artificial intelligence continues to evolve in the world of influencer marketing, bridging the trust gap remains the most important thing to do to reach its full potential in shaping the future of consumer behaviour.

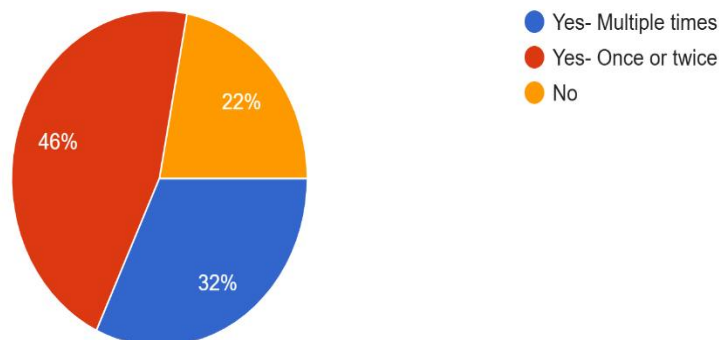
### **Influence of Human Influencers on Consumer Buying Decisions**

**Chart 5**

*The purchasing frequency of consumers towards product promoted by human influencers*

Do you ever purchased product promoted by human influencers?

100 responses

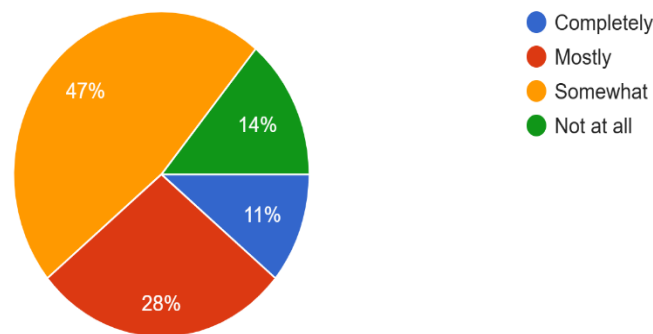


Human touch is still better than artificial intelligence when it comes to influencing consumer wallets. The findings of this research reveal that human influencers continue to be dominant in shaping the purchasing behaviour of consumers. As per the data collected, 78% of consumers admit that they purchase products recommended by human influencers on different social media sites, which includes 46% consumers who purchase products only once or twice and 32% consumers who buy products multiple times. In contrast, only 22% of consumers report no such buying experience. These figures sharply contrast with chart no.3 related to AI influencers, where most of the consumers have never bought anything recommended by AI influencers. The results clearly suggest that human influencers enjoy significantly higher credibility and persuasive power in influencing purchasing decisions among consumers. Consumers may believe more in those products promoted by human influencers on social media sites due to some qualities such as perceived authenticity, emotional relatability and the ability to share personal experiences that AI influencers currently lack. For marketers, these insights reveal the importance of using human influencers to promote products on different social media platforms, especially when targeting the consumer segments who are trust sensitive and emotionally driven. However, it also provides opportunities for innovation by making AI influencers more human-like or blending with real personalities in branded or co-branded campaigns which help marketers begin to bridge the perception gap. Ultimately, the study reaffirms that artificial intelligence may be the future but the influence of human still has a great impact on consumers at present.

### Chart 6

*Consumer trust towards product promoted by human influencers*

How much do you trust human influencers when they promote products in social media platforms  
100 responses



The survey shows that consumers still trust human influencers strongly but not completely which highlights that consumers prefer real over robotic. As 28% of consumers say they “mostly” trust those products promoted by human influencers on various social media platforms, while 11% say they “completely” trust them. However, the majority of consumers i.e., 47% “somewhat” trust them and 14% of consumers express no trust at all in human influencers. These results indicate that when it comes to effectiveness, human influencers outperform AI influencers in influencing purchasing behaviour but consumer trust in them is nuanced and conditional which is shaped by different factors such as credibility, transparency and perceived authenticity. This limited trust creates both opportunities and challenges. It shows that human influencers are superior in creating emotional and relatable content, on the other hand it highlights the rising demand for authenticity, ethical collaborations and honest reviews of products. Brands and influencers need to move beyond scripted promotions and adopt storytelling that shows real experiences, values and vulnerabilities. Additionally, integrating consumer feedback, live sessions and transparent brand partnerships can help build trust and engagement even more in consumer segments. Trust is what sets apart the best influencers in a crowded field and those who earn it, whether they are human or the future of digital commerce will be shaped by artificial intelligence.

### Compare the Influence of AI-based Versus Human Influencers on Consumer Buying Decision

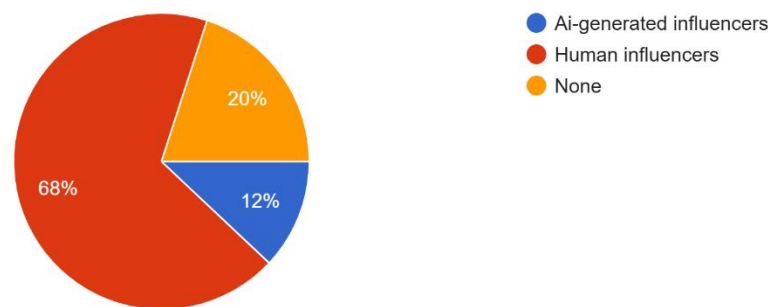
#### Chart 7

*Influencer preference in product recommendation*



Whose recommendation would influence you more to buy a product

100 responses



The final findings of this study significantly support that human influencers are the most powerful force in changing consumers' mind on social media platforms. When asked the consumers whose recommendation would more likely influence their buying decision, a majority of consumers i.e., 68% are more inclined to buy something if a human influencer recommends it, while only 12% say they are more likely to buy something if an AI-generated influencer recommends it and 20% of consumers say they trust neither. This big difference reveals a very important truth that while AI influencers are very advanced in today's world but they lack the emotional intelligence, relatability and human nuance that generate trust and drive the purchase decision of consumers in real-world. These results show that human influencers have a psychological advantage over AI influencers because human influencers connect with consumers emotions through their real facial expressions and personal experiences. However, only 12% of consumers support AI influencers, though small but still not insignificant, as it signals that there is a niche but growing interest in digital personalities, especially among young consumers who are already comfortable with technology and always like to try new things. To bridge the gap, marketers need to hybridize their influencer campaigns in a smart way by using AI's reach and accuracy while building trust through human storytelling. As AI continues to evolve, its effect depends not only on algorithms but also on how well it can connect, influence and convert in a world that is driven by human emotions.

### 3. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTION

There are certain limitations associated with the research. First, the research is limited to a sample size which restricts the generalisability of the findings to large populations. Subsequent research may broaden the investigation in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding. Secondly, the study examined at different types of product instead of focusing on single industry segment. Future research can examine the consumer responses within a specific industry such as fashion, beauty, textiles etc or conduct comparative analysis across different industries to evaluate the effectiveness of AI and human influencers varies by sector. Lastly, this study employed a quantitative survey methodology which is not capable of capturing the psychological and deeper emotional dimension of consumers. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods, such as interviews and focus groups, could be included into future studies in order to create a blended approach for deeper understanding of psychological and deeper emotional dimension of consumers.

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