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A STUDY ON IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF THE YOUNGSTERS IN SENAPATHY GRAMA PANCHAYATH, IDUKKI DISTRICT

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Abstract

Social media is interactive digitally-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation or sharing exchange of information, ideas, career interests, and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks.Some of the most popular social media websites, with over 100 million registered users include Facebook, TikTok, WeChat, Instagram, Zone, Weibo, Twitter, Baidu Tieba, and Linked-in. Depending on interpretation, other popular platforms that are sometimes referred to as social media services include YouTube, Quora, Telegram, WhatsApp, LINE, Snapchat, Pinterest, Reddit, Discord, VK, Microsoft Teams, and more. Youngsters are the backbone of any nation and they are the major contributors in the economy. The buying behaviour of the youngsters is very complex and is influenced by the number factors which vary from individual to individual.The factors include Psychological Factors,Social Factors, Cultural Factors,Personal Factors and Economic Factors. The major findings of the study are instagram is the most influential social media platform , Clothing and fashion are the most preferred product category, Advertisement is the highest motivational factor for online shopping, *YouTubers are the most trusted influencers , Personal experiences share by influencers are most important factor to trust a social media influencer, Mediocore respondents have regretted on influencer-recommended purchase, Nearly half of the respondents believe social media influences their purchases and Three-fifth of the respondents have a positive attitude towards online shopping.*

Keywords: Social media, buying behaviour, youngsters, influencing factors of buying behaviour

1.1. Introduction

People were communicating with other people without a language in olden days. There is a massive change in the method of communication in modern days. Social media have become a convenient way to communicate among all age clusters. The Internet and particularly social media have modified the shoppers and marketers communicating medium. Thanks to the internet technology, which helps the consumer to search the product on the web, view the review and ranking of existing customers for the product before they purchase the product. Consumers use the technology nowadays too much for online marketing. Consumer purchase decision is influenced by social media through group communication. The web platform is a new method for developing the business and thus Social media modifies the communication methods between sellers and buyers. Communication through social media is a new platform to exchange information about product and services. The analysis of consumer behaviour is the core activity for selling product and service since most consumers are using the internet and on-line social media tools. Social media become an important media to introduce and market products and also to do surveys. Nowadays social media is an important marketing tool for promotional activities. Hence it becomes necessary to perceive how social media is affecting consumer behaviour. There has been tremendous growth in the use of social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook over the past decade.

Youngsters are the backbone of any nation and they are the major contributors in the economy. The buying behaviour of the youngsters is very complex and is influenced by a number of factors which vary from individual to individual. Attracting youngsters are difficult task for social media marketers. Social media sites such as Facebook, YouTube, twitter, and many others are popular internet sites where people especially youth interact freely, sharing and discussing information about each other and their lives, products or services, using multimedia mix of personal words, pictures, videos and audio. Popular Social Media Network Used by the Young Digital Customers are Face book ,Instagram, You tube ,Twitter ,Snap chat ,LinkedIn and WhatsApp. The influencing factors for buying decision include Psychological Factors (Motivation ,Perception ,Learning, and Attitudes and Beliefs), Social Factors (Family,Reference Groups,Roles and status), Cultural Factors (Culture ,Subculture ,Social Class) , Personal Factors (Age ,Income ,Occupation ,Lifestyle) and Economic Factors (Personal Income ,Family Income ,Income Expectations ,Consumer Credit ,Liquid Assets of the Consumer ,Savings).

1.2. Statement of the problem

In today's world youngsters start their day with smart phones and they are easily attracted towards recent updates and advertisements in social media. Social media platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, You Tube, Facebook etc. influence youngsters a lot and also make purchase very easy through online. Hence the aim of this study is to examine how social media will influence the buying decisions of the youngsters in Senapathy grama panchayath and also analyse the factors affecting their buying behaviour through social media platforms.

1.3. Significance of the study

The study is significant as it provides valuable insights on the buying behaviour of youth in Senapathy grama panchayath, which is crucial demographic information for business and marketers. This study also examines the impact of social media on consumer behaviour, and the factors influencing the buying behaviour which is a growing area of research in marketing and consumer behaviour. The findings of the study will provide valuable insights that can guide businesses, marketers, and future researchers in understanding the evolving behaviour of young consumers in the digital marketplace.

1.4. Objectives of the study

- To identify the perception of youngsters towards online shopping.
- To examine the influencer's role in the buying behavior of youngsters in Senapathy grama panchayath.

1.5. Scope of the study

The study is limited to people aged 18 to 30 in the geographical area of Senapathy Grama panchayath, Idukki district.

1.6. Research methodology

1.6.1. Population

The population of the study consists of younsters aged 18 to 30 in all 13 wards of Senapathy Gramapanchayath in Idukki district.

1.6.2. Sampling

The convenient sampling method was used for selecting sample from the population.

1.6.3. Sample size

Sample size of the present study is 50 younsters .

1.6.4. Research nature

The study is descriptive and analytical in nature.

1.6.5. Tools used

The data have been analysed using statistical and mathematical tools like percentage, and weighted averages and tables and figures are used for presentation.

1.6.6. Sources of data

Both primary and secondary sources are used for data collection. The primary data collected with the help of a structured questionnaire distributed to the respondents in Senapathy Gramapanchayath. This questionnaire includes questions on demographic information (age, gender, education, income), social media usage (frequency, duration, platforms used), buying behaviour (purchasing decisions, product preferences, brand loyalty), and influence of social media on buying behaviour (awareness, attitudes, intentions). Secondary data are collected from different books, journals and other publications, and websites.

1.7. Limitations of the study

The present study endured the following limitations.

- As the study is confined only to Senapathy Gramapanchayath, which may not fully represent broader consumer behaviour trends.
- Sample size is 50 which is not enough to study the awareness of consumers of the entire panchayath.
- As the sampling technique is convenient sampling, it may result in personal bias. So, a perfect result cannot be achieved.

1.8. Chapterisation

The study is presented in three chapters-introduction, analysis and findings.

Introduction chapter includes introduction, statement of the problem, significance of the study, scope of the study, objective of the study, research methodology, research design, sources of the data, tools used, limitations of the study , and chapterisation.

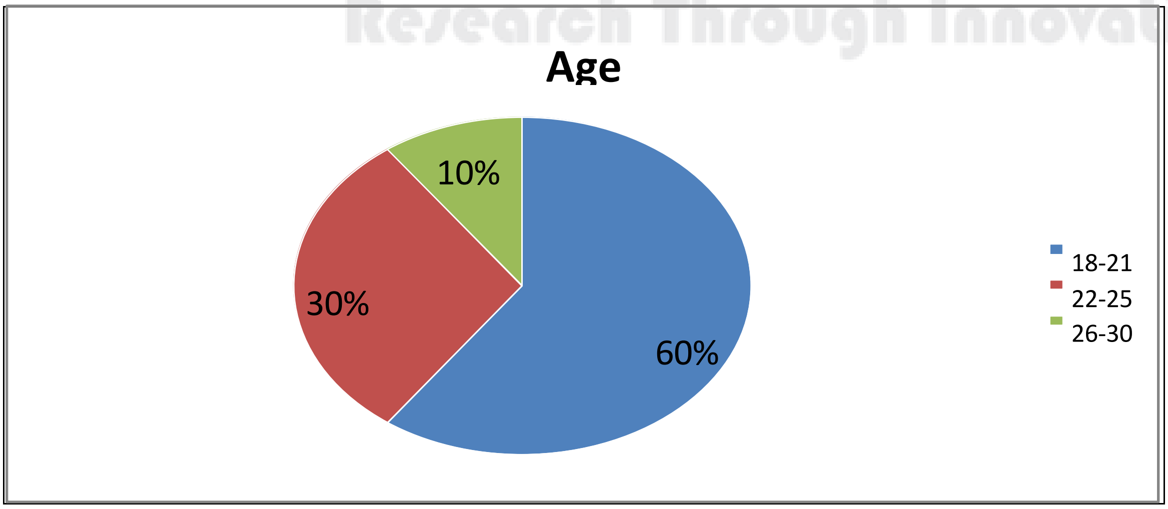
Analysis chapter shows the detailed analysis of the collected data and its interpretation.

Findings chapter describes the major findings of the study and conclusion.

2. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data analysis and interpretation have a pivotal role in the research process that help to derive meaningful insights from collected data. Interpretation of the data follows the analysis, where insights are drawn by linking the results to the research objectives,which helps to evaluate consumer perceptions, identify influencing factors, and assess the role of social media influencers in shaping purchasing decisions.

Figure 2.1 Age of the respondents



Source: Primary Data

The age wise composition of the respondents is depicted in the Figure 2.1 which showed that 60 percentage of the respondents come under the age category of 18-21 years, 30 percentage are under 22-25 years category and remaining 10 percentage are under 26-30 years category.

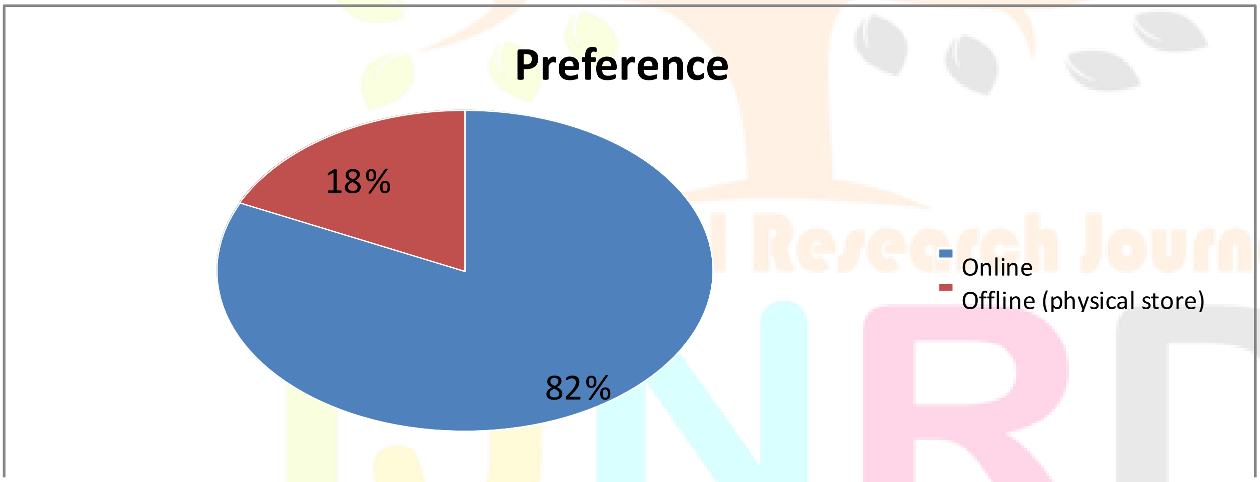
Table 2.1 Highest education qualification of the respondents

Education	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	0	0
Secondary	0	0
Higher secondary	6	12
Graduate	39	78
Post graduate	4	8
Other	1	2
Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 2.1 describes the highest education qualification of the respondents. It revealed that 78 percentage of the respondents are graduates, 8 percentage of respondents have attained postgraduate qualifications, 12 percentage of respondents have completed higher secondary education and 2 percentage of respondents have other educational background.

Figure 2.2 Preferred shopping platform



Source: Primary Data

Figure 2.2 represents the preferred shopping platform of the respondents, where 82 percentage of respondents prefer online shopping and only 18 percentage prefer offline (physical store) shopping.

Table 2.2 Frequency of online shopping

Frequency of online shopping	Frequency	Percentage
1-2 times in a month	26	52
3-4 times in a month	13	26
More than 5 times in a month	11	22
Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

The Table 2.2 represent the frequency of online shopping among respondents,which revealed that 52 percentage of respondents shop online for 1-2 times in a month, 26 percentage of respondents shop for 3-4 times in a month and 22 percentage of respondents shop online for more than 5 times in a month.

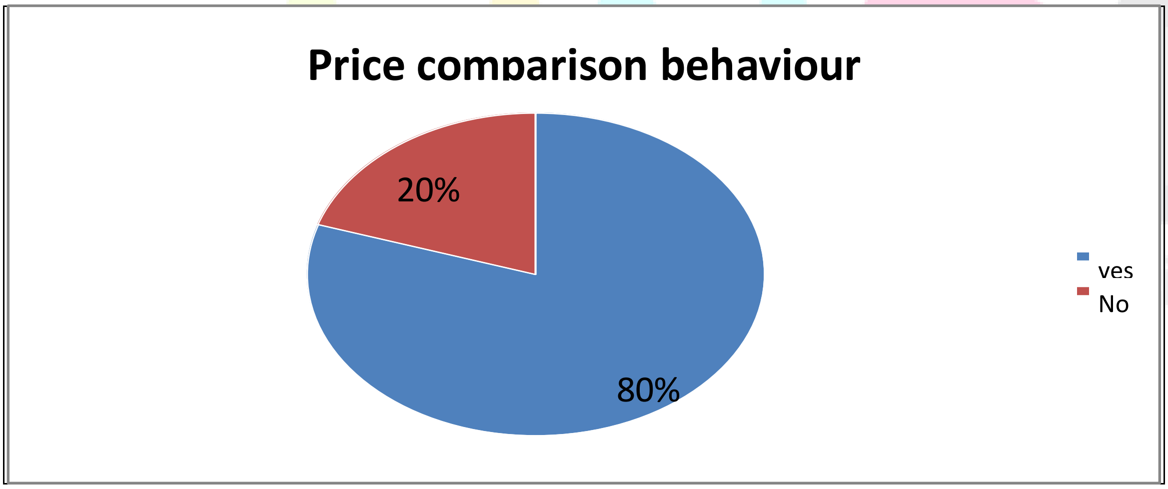
Table 2.3 Key factors influencing online shopping decision

Factors	Rank 1 (5)	Rank 2 (4)	Rank 3 (3)	Rank 4 (2)	Rank 5 (1)	Total	Rank
Convenience	15	5	10	9	11	154	2
Discount and offers	17	14	10	7	2	187	1
Variety of choices	8	14	8	12	8	152	3
Product review and ratings	11	6	11	10	12	144	5
Easy return and refund policies	5	15	11	9	10	146	4

Source: Primary Data

Table 2.3 represents the key factors influencing online shopping decision. *Discounts and offers* ranks **first** with a total score of **187**, indicating that it is the most significant factor influencing online shopping decisions. **Convenience** ranks **second** with a score of **154**, highlighting that ease of shopping plays a crucial role in consumer preference. **Variety of Choices** holds the **third** position, showing that access to a wide range of products is also valued by shoppers. **Easy return and refund policies (fourth rank**) and **product review and rating (fifth rank**) are comparatively less influential but still important considerations.

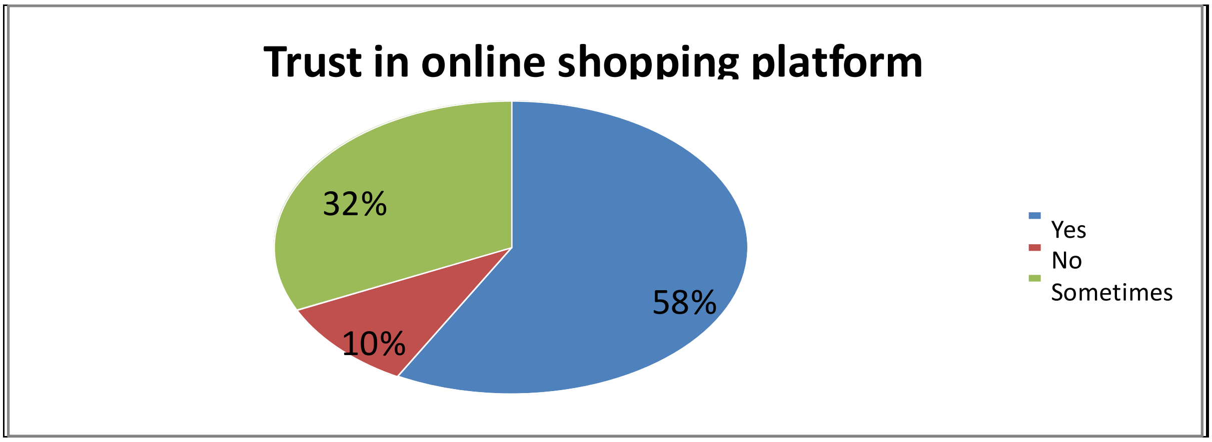
Figure 2.3 Price comparison behaviour



Source: Primary Data

Figure 2.3 exhibits the price comparison behaviour of the respondents showed that 80 percentage of respondents compare prices online before making a purchase while 20 percentage of respondents do not engage in price comparison.

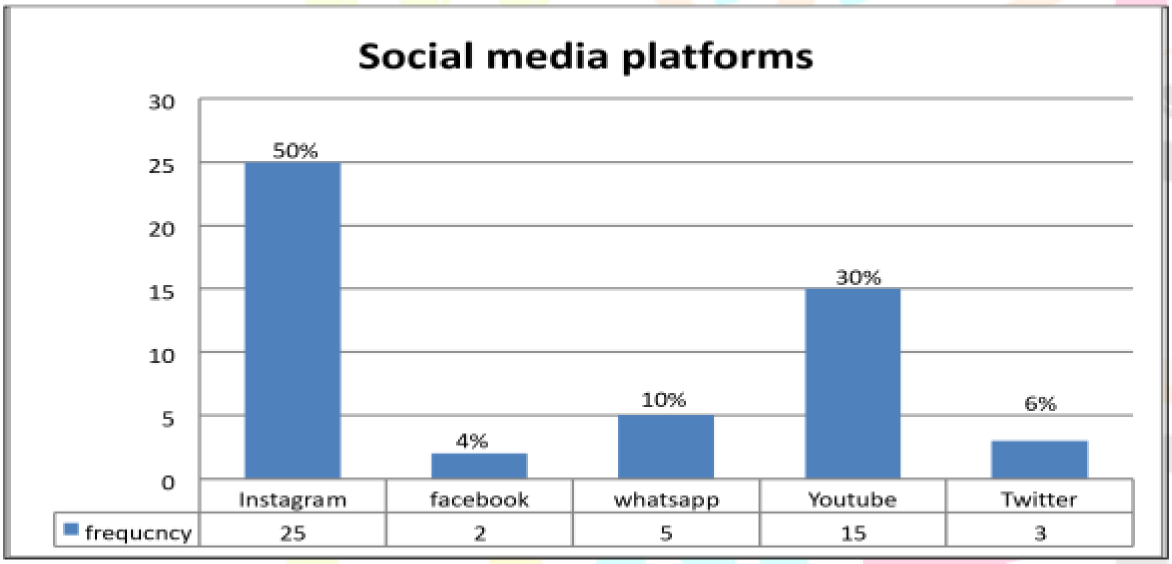
Figure 2.4 Trust in online shopping platforms



Source: Primary Data

Figure 2.4 expound the trust of the respondents in online shopping platforms where, **58 percentage** of respondents trust online shopping platforms, **32 percentage** of respondents trust online platforms **sometimes**, suggesting they may have concerns about specific aspects and **10 percentage** of respondents expressed **no trust** in online shopping platforms.

Figure 2.5 Most influencing social media platforms



Source: Primary Data

Figure 2.5 expatiate the social media platforms that have most influence among the respondents. It showed that **Instagram** is the leading platform, by **50 percentage** of respondents distantly followed by **You-tube** of 30 percentage of the respondents,10 percentage of the respondents are influenced by WhatsApp and 6 percentage respondents are influenced by Twitter and least 4 percentage by Facebook.

Table 2.4 Product categories purchased through social media

Product categories	**Rank 1 (5)**	**Rank 2 (4)**	**Rank 3 (3)**	**Rank 4 (2)**	**Rank 5 (1)**	**Total**	**Rank**
Clothing and fashion	24	10	8	7	1	199	1
Electronics	6	11	9	7	17	132	5
Home accessories	7	14	12	9	8	153	2
Beauty and cosmetics	8	9	12	7	14	140	3

Foods and beverages	9	5	10	17	9	138	4

Source: Primary Data

Table 2.4 describes the categories of products purchased by the respondents through social media. Clothing and Fashion ranks **first** with a total score of **199**, indicating that fashion products are the most popular purchase category through social media platforms. Home accessories rank **second** and beauty and cosmetics rank third forms closely, reflecting the influence of aesthetic appeal and influencer recommendations in these segments. Foods and beverages ranks fourth and electronics ranks fifth show relatively lower scores.

Table 2.5 Motivation for shopping through social media

Motives	**Rank 1 (5)**	**Rank 2 (4)**	**Rank 3 (3)**	**Rank 4 (2)**	**Rank 5 (1)**	**Total**	**Rank**
Attractive advertisements	17	14	8	5	6	189	1
Recommendation from influencers	12	7	8	11	12	146	3
Recommendations from friends	6	11	18	9	6	152	2
Exclusive social media discounts	7	8	9	15	11	135	5
Easy checkout options	8	10	7	10	15	136	4

Source: Primary Data

Table 2.5 illustrates the motivating factors of the respondents for shopping through social media. *Attractive advertisement* ranks **first** with a total score of **189**, indicating that visually appealing and engaging ads are the most powerful driver for social media purchases. *Recommendations from friends* ranks second with **152points**, highlighting the strong role of personal referrals. *Recommendations from influencers* ranks third with **146 points.** *Easy Checkout options* with point **136 points** and *exclusive social media discounts* with **135 points** are ranked lower.

Table 2.6 Whether Follows social media influencers

Whether Follows influencers	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Yes	42	84
No	8	16
Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

The data from above table shows that **84 percentage** of respondents follow social media influencers whereas only **16 percentage** of respondents are **not following influencers**.

Table 2.7 Frequency of purchases made from influencer's recommendations

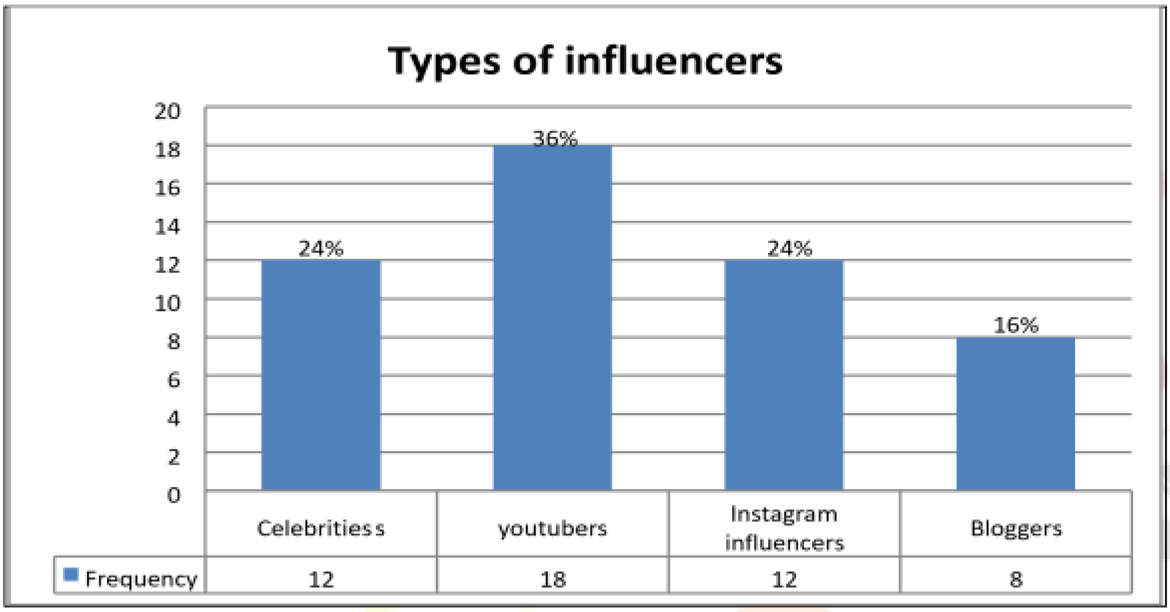
Frequency of purchase	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
More than once in a week	5	10
Once in a week	11	22
Once in a month	10	20
Once in 3-6 months	10	20

Rarely/never	14	28
Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 2.7 describes the frequency of purchases made by the respondents from the influencer's recommendations. The data from table revealed that 28 percentage of the respondents purchase products **rarely or never** on the recommendation by influencers **,22 percentage** purchase **once in a week**, while **20 percentage each** make purchases **once in a month** or **once in 3-6 months** and only **10 percentage** reported purchasing influencer-recommended products **more than once in a week.**

Figures 2.6 Most trusted type of influencers



Source: Primary Data

Figure 2.6 describes the type of influencers most trusted by the respondents. **YouTubers** are the most trusted influencers, with **36 percentage** of respondents favouring them. **Celebrities and Instagram influencers** each account for **24 percentage** indicating that their visual appeal, social status, and trend-setting influence also play a significant role in driving purchases. **Bloggers** are trusted only by **16 percentage** of the respondents.

Table 2.8 Factors affecting trust in influencers

Factors	**Rank1 (5)**	**Rank2 (4)**	**Rank3 (3)**	**Rank 4 (2)**	**Rank 5 (1)**	**Total**	**Rank**
Personal experience shared by influencer	13	14	9	8	6	184	1
Number of followers	5	7	11	12	15	125	5
Consistency in content quality	14	8	11	8	9	160	3
Expertise in specific area (fashion, tech, fitness, etc)	12	12	11	6	9	162	2
Collaboration with reputed brands	9	8	11	14	8	146	4

Source: Primary Data

Table 2.8 depicts the factors affecting the respondent's trust in influencers. *Personal experience shared by the influencer* ranks first with a total score of **184,** highlighting that consumers trust influencers who provide genuine insights and relatable experiences, **Expertise in specific areas** (e.g., fashion, tech, fitness) is ranked **second, Consistency in content quality** ranks **third**, **Collaboration with reputed brands** ranks **fourth,** and

Number of followers ranks **last**, indicating that consumers prioritize content authenticity and influencer expertise over popularity.

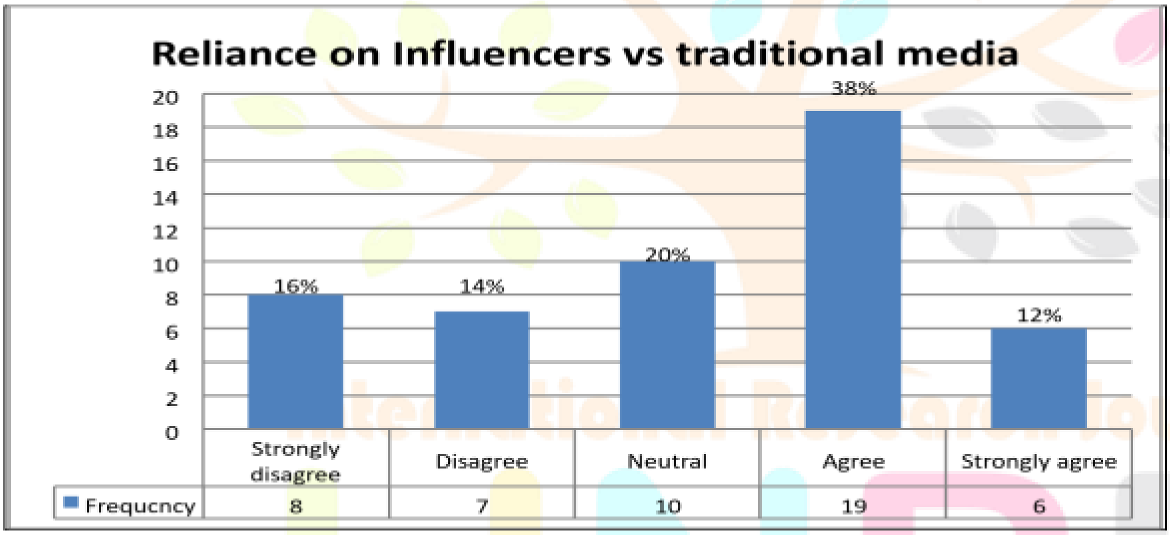
Table 2.9 Importance of influencer authenticity

Influencer authenticity	Frequency	Percentage
Not at all important	5	10
Slightly important	10	20
Moderately important	13	26
Very important	18	36
Extremely important	4	8
Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 2.9 shows the importance of influencer authenticity among the respondents. The table showed that 36 percentage of the respondents consider influencer authenticity to be **very important**, while **26 percentage of respondents rate** it as **moderately important,20 percentage** of respondent's rate authenticity as **slightly important**, and **10 percentage of** respondents believe it is **not important at all.** Only **8 percentage** place the highest value on authenticity.

Figure 2.7 Reliance on influencers vs. traditional media



Source: Primary Data

Figure 2.7 represents the respondent's reliance on influencers against traditional media. The figure revealed that 38 percentage of the respondents have agreed that influencers significantly impact their purchasing decision. Meanwhile, 12 percentage of respondents have strongly agreed about the impact of influencers. 20 percentage of respondents have neutral opinion indicating some uncertainty or balanced views. Notably, 14 percentage of respondents have disagreed and 16 percentage of respondents have strongly disagreed about the impact of influencers in purchasing decision.

Table 2.10 Regret over purchases influenced by influencers

Regret over purchases influenced by influencers	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	31	62
No	19	38
Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 2.10 shows the respondent's regret over purchases influenced by influencers. The above table revealed that 62 **percentage** of respondents have experienced **regret** after purchasing products recommended by influencers. Only **38 percentage** reported **no regret**, suggesting that while some consumers are satisfied with their influencer driven purchases.

Table 2.11 Perceived role of social media in purchasing decisions

Perceived role of social media	Frequency	Percentage
Significant	24	48
No	12	24
Maybe	14	28
Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 2.11 describes the perceived role of social media in purchasing decision of the respondents. The table showed that **48 percentage** of respondents believe that social media plays a significant **role** in influencing their purchasing decisions. **28 percentage** of respondents chose **maybe,** indicating some uncertainty and **24 percentage** of respondents believe social media has **no role** in their buying behaviour.

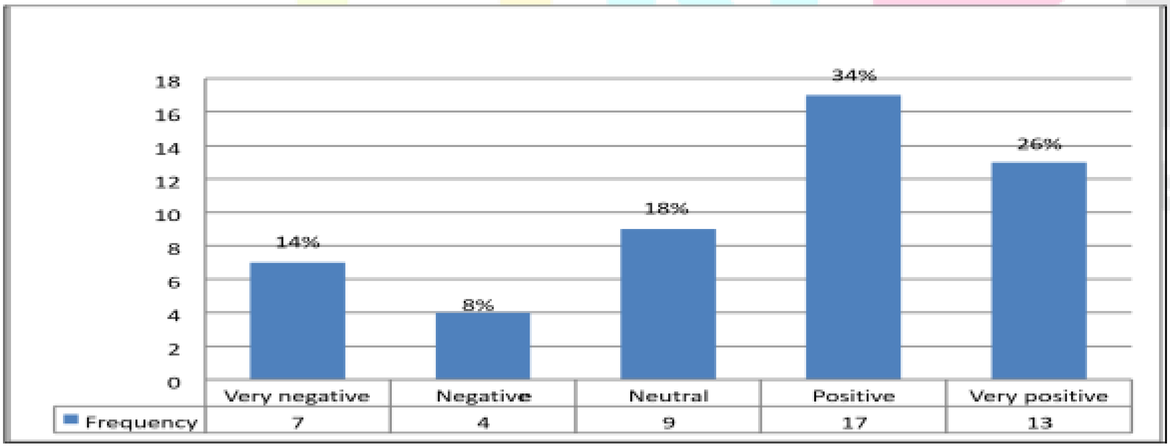
Table 2.12 Likelihood of future purchase on social media

Likelihood of future purchase	Frequency	Percentage
Very unlikely	7	14
Unlikely	3	6
Neutral	13	26
Likely	13	26
Very Likely	14	28
Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 2.12 illustrates the respondent's likelihood of future purchase in social media. The table showed that 28 percentage of respondents are **very likely** to continue shopping through social media platforms., 26 percentage respondents each are **likely** to continue shopping through social media platforms and **Neutral response** message that they are undecided or may require stronger incentives like discounts, reviews, or influencer trust to become regular social media shoppers. **Both unlikely** and **very unlikely** respondents indicating some consumers still hesitate to embrace social media platforms for shopping.

Figure 2.8 General perception of online shopping



Source: Primary Data

Figure 2.8 depicts the respondent's general perception towards online shopping. The figure revealed that **34 percentage** of respondents have a **positive** attitude towards online shopping,**26 percentage of respondents** expressed a **very positive** attitude, further reinforcing that a significant portion of participants strongly prefer online shopping. **18 percentage** of respondents hold a **neutral** stance, suggesting they may shop online occasionally but are neither strongly in favour nor against it. **22 percentage** of respondents have an unfavourable view of online shopping.

3.FINDINGS

The findings highlight consumer preferences, shopping patterns, influencer impact, and social media platform influence. The conclusion summaries the overall outcomes of the study, emphasising the changing trends in consumer behaviour and the growing role of social media in shaping purchasing decisions.

Major Findings of the Study are;

- Most of the respondents prefer online shopping with a frequency of 1-2 times in a month.
- Discounts and offers are the most influential factor of online shopping.
- Most of the respondents compare prices online before making a purchase decision.
- Instagram is the most influential social media platform and Clothing and fashion are the most preferred product category of the respondents.
- Advertisement is the highest motivational factor of the respondents for online shopping**.**
- Majority of the respondents follow social media influencers and YouTubers are the most trusted influencers
- Personal experiences share by influencers are most important factor for the respondents to trust a social media influencer with high authenticity.
- Mediocore respondents have regretted on influencer-recommended purchase, but Majority of the respondents are likely to continue online shopping.
- Three-fifth of the respondents have a positive attitude towards online shopping.

Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed that online shopping, particularly driven by discounts, product reviews and attractive advertisements, plays a major role in consumer decisions. Instagram emerged as the most influential platform, while YouTubers were identified as the most trusted influencers. Despite the growing reliance on social media for shopping, a notable number of respondents reported regretting on purchases influenced by influencers, emphasising the need for authenticity and reliable product information. Overall, businesses should focus on enhancing their digital presence, fostering trustworthy influencer partnerships, and delivering transparent product information to improve customer satisfaction and boost sales.

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