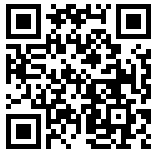


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# Impact of Instagram Influencers on Purchase Intention of Female Users

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## Abstract

Instagram is a popular social media platform for both influencers and users. The aim of this research is to understand the purchase intention of female Instagram users and its impact on their buying behavior. Methodology for this study is quantitative and a survey of 200 participants was conducted by using Google Forms. Out of which, only 178 responses were valid. The results showed that more than 80% of the respondents spend more than half an hour on Instagram and a significant number of participants admitted that their buying decisions are impacted by the Instagram influencers. The results revealed that female Instagram influencers give advertisers significant clues in the decision-making process when businesses engage customers through influencer marketing on Instagram. It furnishes marketers with additional data on step-by-step ideas to coordinate influencers and possible purchasers with the business owners and advertisers. This study signifies the role of Instagram in promoting brand marketing with the intention of influencers that impacts to boost the brand purchase.

**Keywords:** advertisers, brand marketing, influencer, Instagram, purchase behaviors

## Introduction

Due to the rapid development of Instagram (from 90 million active users in 2013 to 700 million active users in 2017), more and more organizations are considering Instagram as an effective advertising platform (Statista, [2022](#)). Over a half of the top brands post on Instagram and it has 10 times higher engagement than Facebook Leggett ([2017](#)), multiple times more than

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Pinterest, and 84 times higher than Twitter. Additionally, engagement per post on Instagram has increased to 416% during the last two years (Smith, [1973](#)).

In 2017, involving influencers for marketing was termed as the best promoting methodology of the year where 80 percent of merchandisers recommended that influencer marketing is successful (Johansen & Guldvik, [2017](#)). This pattern was implemented in Pakistan as this practice has benefited both the brands and influencers who are ready to collaborate, especially when it comes to fashion and lifestyle.

Research shows that Instagram appeals more to Millennials and Generation Z users who are believed to get bored easily by the traditional advertising methods and prefer more attractive and visual communication over text messages (Anderson et al., [2018](#)). Also, female Instagram users usually tend to consider the influencers they follow on Instagram as more reliable and consider the user-generated content as more solid and valid rather than the content disseminated by brands to enhance the sales (van der Waldt et al., [2011](#)).

The products recommended online result in influencing the 70% of purchasing decisions of females whereas products purchased through internet are consumed by 89% of customers (Fleishman-Hillard & Harris, [2010](#)).

As influencer marketing is becoming more effective, brand managers are forced by the social media influencers to look for new interactive techniques and methods for reaching their customers (Trad & Al Dabbagh, [2020](#)). The increasing utilization of Instagram for marketing gives good chances to companies to reach their target audience and can develop an interactive bond with their customers.

There are two ways in which influencer marketing operates namely, paid influencer marketing and earned influencer marketing (da Costa, [2019](#)). Subsequently, in influencer marketing reach, relevance and resonance leads to a trustworthy and transparent relationship with the consumers (Belleau, [2001](#)).

Purchase intention is a consumer conduct that indicates making plans or inclination to purchase something (Martins et al., [2019](#)). The research conducted on social media influencers demonstrates that influencers have a positive bond with their follower's trust which is linked with the higher

purchase intentions as products' reviews are available all over social media (Bahtar & Muda, [2016](#)).

Word-of-mouth (WoM) is a process in which information is distributed or exchanged from one individual to the other and none of them is a marketer. In the digital age where everyone has freedom to express their opinions, WoM can emphatically affect people in general but according to a research negative comments, online feedback or bad reviews leave a much stronger impact on users than the positive ones. This is termed as electronic word-of-mouth (e-WoM) which plays a significant part in influencing the user's buying decisions and can lessen the risks related to business (Kiss & Bichler, [2008](#)).

Many organizations are attempting to manage e-WoM by making virtual spaces on their own destinations where customers can leave comments and present their perspective about the products or services being offered (Vallejo et al., [2015](#)). Therefore, e-WoM is one of the impactful instruments to convey the messages. This is relatable about impact of influencers on female customers that they get convinced from the words of influencer to buy same products.

Source credibility is a process where buyers seek information and knowledge from different sources for a better understanding of the products or services (Ohanian, [1990](#)). The credibility of the source relies on the convincing power or ability as well as the quality of argument of the influencer. The positive reviews about products, brands or services recommend and advertised the products. Similarly, negative reviews about the products or services will guide customers towards the products accordingly. This is how customers can differentiate between valid and invalid products (Cheung & Lee, [2012](#)). The current study reveals that local celebrities operating in local culture can be effective and successful in influencing brand credibility (Sulehri et al., [2016](#)). Hence, the customers value the feedback of products by influencers to take right decisions of purchasing or not purchasing a product.

Previous researches show that the opinions of consumers about the source credibility are based on three elements, including trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise Source credibility indicates that customers feel that the risks of purchase decisions are less risky because of the review of

products from their admired influencers or bloggers (Djafarova & Rushworth, [2017](#)).

Para-social relationship which is mostly one-sided relationship, and it is an uneven relationship where one individual broadens profound energy, interest, and time and the other individual is ignorant about the reality. Such relationships are most common among the celebrities, organizations, and influencers (Rubin & McHugh, [1987](#)). In the digital age, para-social interaction is amended as different social networking sites allow influencers and fans to interact in a two-way communication. Also, female users believe that they develop a stronger para-social interaction when they experience a reciprocal relationship (Bond, [2016](#)).

The people on Instagram frequently interact with their favorite bloggers or influencers and take reviews and suggestions from them about the products they use (Dhar & Jha, [2014](#)). As the influencers become aware of the needs and wants of their followers, they use their ability of persuading them by using effective words and emojis. Also, they create a unique relationship with their followers by behaving like them and giving exposure of their lives to the followers, especially the females. Thus, the propensity for a greater consumer purchase intention is higher.

## Research Gap

It has become an important aspect for the marketers to identify the influencers, as with the use of social networking sites, advertising and promotional messages can circulate rapidly and be better elevated through influencer's suggestions to their followers.

Customers accept that the user-generated content has greater impact on purchase intention Sertoglu et al. ([2014](#)) which means influencers are a significant bridge for purchase intention or buying. In this backdrop, the research investigates the effect of influencers on purchase intention and how their credibility is perceived by female Instagram users as well as the relationship between the time spent on Instagram and its impact on purchase intention.

## Objectives

- To study the impact of Instagram influencers on the purchasing intention of Pakistani female users.

- To explore the source credibility and para-social interactions of influencers on consumer behavior.
- To examine the frequency of time spent by female users on Instagram and its impact on purchase intention.

### Literature Review

The platform of social media is widely used for promoting products, brands, or services as the number of users is increasing day by day. According to a research, brands use celebrity endorsements to get recognize and to enhance the probability of purchase, encourage brand loyalty, and to positively influence e-WoM (Bush et al., [2004](#)). A customer's positive opinion about an influencer is believed to have a significant impact on purchase intention (Nugraha et al., [2018](#)). Moreover, it is argued in various researches that the data and information shared by an influencer is considered more credible and accurate than those shared by a known personality (Rahmi et al., [2016](#)). Marketers and brands now believe that a company's success is dependent on influencers because of their great impact on followers, this one side social relationship with fans shows difference in customer behaviors.

Among other social networking sites, Instagram is quite possibly the quickest-developing social media platform in Pakistan. The previous literature on Instagram shows that the App has added more features which has eventually doubled its users in 2 years and more than 5 million people used those new features (Smith, [2019](#)). The concept of influencer marketing through Instagram is trending in Pakistan and worldwide. Several makeup and fashion brands have become aware of this new trend and began collaborating with the influencers (Paton & Kuchler, [2014](#)).

Many Instagram users and influencers are from the age group of 19-25 years and it is one of the most persuasive mediums for marketing and impacting females purchase intention. Although, many researchers have studied the influence of Instagram influencers on purchasing intention of consumers but the impact of influencers on purchase intention of females in Pakistan is well not reported despite the fact that Pakistan is Asia's quickly developing online business market (Hussain et al., [2017](#)). As of July 2020, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) states that there are 81 million 3G and 4G users in Pakistan (Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, [n.d.](#)). Additionally, there are approximately 83 million broadband clients in the country and cellphone users are around 167 million.

As per Hootsuite Data Reportal Online in 2020, there are 76.38 million web clients in Pakistan. As of January 2020, web penetration in Pakistan was 35 percent. Moreover, there are around 37 million web-based entertainment users in the country (Kemp, [2020](#))

The growth of Instagram has increased the effects of online suggestion and recommendation, as it has enabled the users to share their experiences and opinions not only with one person but thousands of followers at the same time (De Veirman et al., [2017](#)). With this interaction, para-social relationship is established and its impact on purchase intention of female social media users in Pakistan is yet to be researched.

A customer develops firm attitude towards an item after having a good experience or acquiring satisfaction with the product or service. Due to this, there are higher chances that the customer will repurchase that particular product Wu and Chan ([2011](#)) with a natural tendency to share the experience with family and friends that in return leads to increased sales (Hassan et al., [2018](#)).

Furthermore, source credibility and trustworthiness are considered as important elements in molding purchase intention for female customers. The female social media users consider fashion Instagram influencers as most trustworthy when the influencer resembles with them and has less or more followers (Baker, [2018](#)). Additionally, an influencer's attractiveness and other attributes also direct social media followers for impulsive buying; pursuing shopping unconsciously (Zhang et al., [2007](#)). It is interesting to know that there is a significant relationship between the audience's feelings about a post and their urge to impulsive buying. The more positive customers feel about the influencers content, the more will they be indulging in the impulsive purchase (Zafar et al., [2019](#)). Due to influencer marketing, the audience think about the products and services that the influencers advertize in their posts are used and enjoyed by them, so the audience wants to experience the same. By recommending and promoting products and services, the influencers stimulate the audience's engagement which in result influence the purchase intentions of the audience. The influencers truly expand the brand engagement when they suggest an item and the audience accepts the recommendation (Delbaere et al., [2021](#)). Thus, making influencer marketing an efficient new technique that the young audience prefers.

Recent studies showed a major role of para-social interactions on influencer marketing. This is because consumers recognize influencers as relatable due to the influencer's active social presence and engagement with them on social media. This firm identification then leads toward the buying intention for the suggested products. Another study showed that the para-social interaction serves an interceding job, it is suggested that some people should utilize their knowledge of using products instead of illusory attachment with influencers. Influencers can deliver an intervening job to make customer longing for products by increasing the product absorption thus, leading towards the buying decision (Kim, [2020](#)).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study supports the two-step flow theory of communication that narrates the influence of social media on the attitudes and behaviors of consumers through opinion leaders. The two-step flow theory highlights the significance and role of marketing influencers through digital platforms to reach target audience and shape consumer behavior by brief descriptions. Thus, influencers or opinion leaders endorse their idea and review a product for marketing purposes and recommend purchasers to buy the best option in clothe, make up, perfume or any of the products The speedy uploading of marketing content on social media platforms grabs the attention of consumers and compels them for buying products (Trusov et al., [2010](#)).

The economy is getting a boost due to female influencers and more women are emerging as business entrepreneurs through social media. This increasing influence has led consumers to buy products after watching posts of common influencers instead of celebrities' ads from TV (Jamal, [2020](#)).

If an influencer is attractive, more active on Instagram, has a good followers' ratio, expertise, and is considered trustworthy then these factors can certainly influence the behaviors, attitudes, and purchase intention of consumers. The source credibility of an influencer is also connected to the para-social relationships according to the preliminary literature. A study revealed that para-social interaction by means of social media influencers could improve customers purchase intentions (Chung & Cho, [2017](#)).

Some customers take the peripheral route where they make buying decision based on their liking towards the influencer or blogger. The validity and credibility of an influencer is built on trust, experience, and attraction. It is proclaimed that the credibility of an influencer relies upon



the convincing strength as well as the informational message's strength of persuasion of the argument (Spry et al., [2011](#)). According to the source credibility theory where consumers consider the suggestions and reviews about items and services as valid on Instagram, positive relationship works toward those brands being upheld. Similarly, when the reviews are considered as unauthentic and incredible, a negative relationship builds toward that brand and influencer.

### **Research Questions**

RQ1: What is the relation between the time spent by female users on Instagram and their purchase intention?

RQ2: What is the impact of Instagram influencers and their source credibility on female consumers purchase intention?

### **Hypotheses**

H1. The greater the female users spend time on Instagram, the more their decisions are influenced by the influencers.

H2. The Instagram influencers and their source credibility are positively associated with female users purchase intention.

### **Methodology**

The study employs a quantitative methodology to examine the connection between Instagram influencers and consumers purchase intention. The specific data collection instrument used in this research is questionnaire-based interview particularly an online survey. According to the survey design, the questions involved were kept clear, brief, and specific (Adams, [2007](#)). The questionnaire begins with 2 questions used as screening questions to ensure that the participants who use Instagram and follow at least one or two influencers were part of the study. Moreover, the survey consisted of 4 parts and in the first section of the survey, the participants need to fill in the demographic information. From part 2 till part 4, questions related to the dependent and independent variables were asked. Likert scale was mostly used along with the dichotomous scale. All the statements were measured on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 represents “*Strongly Disagree*” and 5 represents “*Strongly Agree*”. The questionnaire was exposed to a pre-test before the launch. Thus, the pilot study authenticated the validity and reliability of the questionnaire.

Pakistani females aged between 18-40 years who have an Instagram account, are its active users, and follow at least two Instagram influencers are the sample of this research. This dissertation uses a non-probabilistic convenience sampling, as this technique aids in getting a sample of helpful components where the detriment of examining units is passed on to the researcher.

### Data Analysis

In total, 200 responses were submitted in the statistics software SPSS. The first 50 responses were examined to review the validity and reliability of questionnaire for the pilot study. Out of 200 responses 178 were valid. To measure the scale of reliability, Cronbach's alpha test was conducted.

**Table 1**

*Reliability Statistics*

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.820	.728	21

The results revealed that the level of reliability is significant as the value of Cronbach's alpha is .820.

When asked about the use of Instagram, 175 out of 178 respondents answered "Yes" and only 3 of the participants were not using the app. This indicated that most of the females at this time are the users of Instagram. The screening question helped in analyzing the valid responses.

It was noticed that only 14% female users of Instagram are not following any influencer and 86% are following the content creators and getting their recommendations on different brands and products.

About age distribution, most of the respondents belonged to 18-24 years of age (77% of the whole sample population) followed by the age group 25-30 years of age (18%). The age group 30-35 only represents 4% of the participants. There is only 1 response from the age group of 35 or above. The results show that 95% of female Instagram users are Millennials or Gen Z.

The sample is also described as being highly educated for 58.4 % of the respondents have at least a bachelor's degree. Additionally, 21.3%

respondents have done their intermediate (HSSC), 3% respondents have matriculation degree and only 1% is below the Matric level (SSC).

The data about the time respondents spend on Instagram everyday showed that 28% respondents spend between 1-2 hours, 24% spend between 2-4 hours, 21% spend between 30 minutes to 1 hour, 19% respondents spend more than 4 hours, and only 5% spend less than 30 minutes per day on the app.

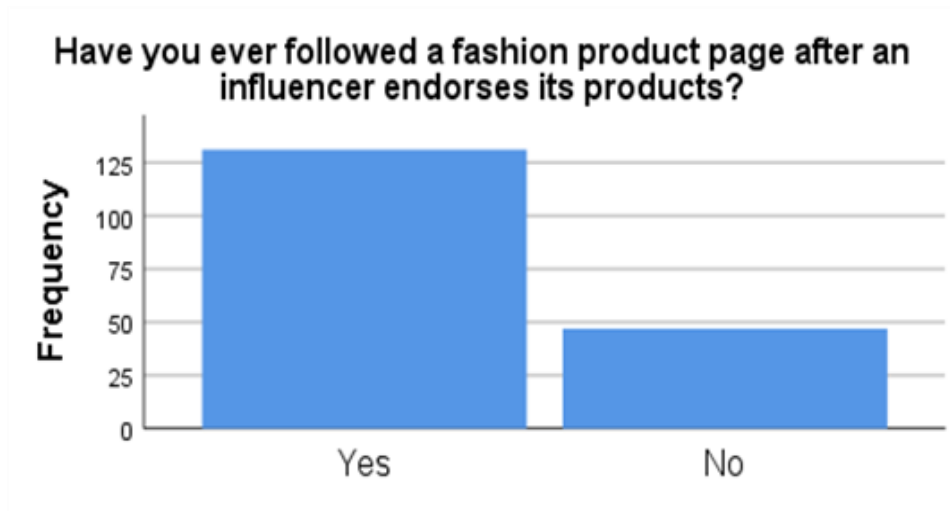
The results revealed that 36% participants follow 1-3 influencers, 28% followed more than 24% followed 3-and only 11% users followed 5-7 influencers.

When asked about following a fashion product page on Instagram after an influencer recommended and used its products, 73.6% participants responded “Yes” whereas 26.4% responded “No” thus, confirming that they never followed a brand page after an influencer endorsed its products.

The results revealed that female Instagram influencers give advertisers significant clues in the decision-making process when businesses engage customers through influencer marketing on Instagram. It provides marketers with additional data on step-by-step ideas to coordinate influencers and possible purchasers with the business owners and advertisers

**Figure 1**

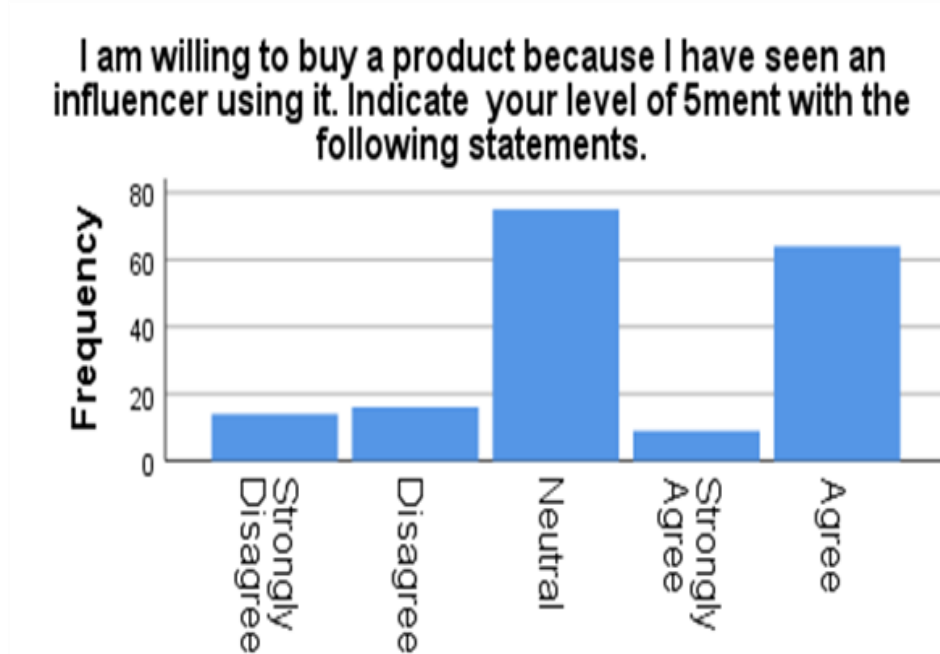
*Endorsing a Product*



About buying a product after seeing an influencer using it, the respondents were approached to demonstrate their level of agreement with it. Around 42.1% respondents were neutral regarding it whereas 36% respondents agreed on buying the products after seeing an influencer using it thus, their choices and decisions are influenced by the content creators. The findings revealed that 9% respondents disagreed, 7.9% strongly disagreed and 5.1% respondents strongly agreed of buying the recommended products. Overall, 41.1% respondents agreed on buying products that the influencers use.

**Figure 2**

*Buying a Product after Seeing an Influencer Using it*

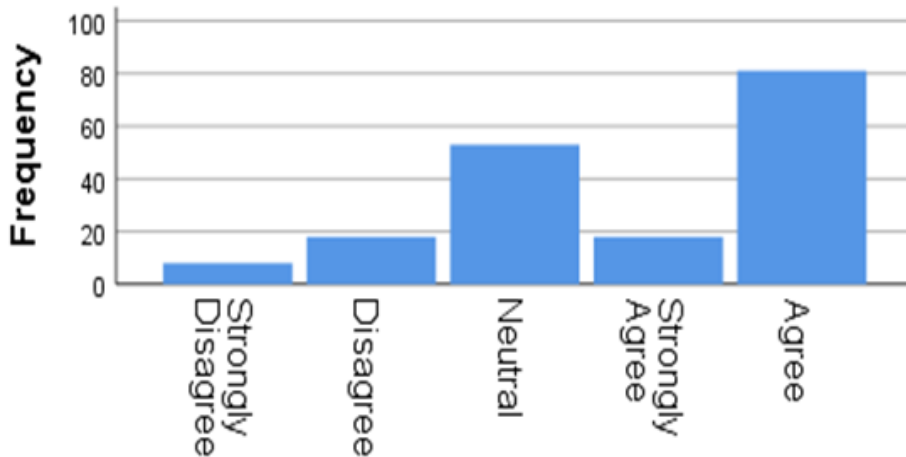


Instead of buying from an unknown and unauthentic brand, 45.4% respondents agreed on buying from the recommendation of an influencer, 29.8% are neutral, 10.1% strongly agreed, 10.1% disagreed, and 4.5% strongly disagreed. Total 55.5% females agreed to buy products on the recommendation of an influencer rather than buying from an unknown brand. It shows that majority of females trust influencers when making purchase decisions.

**Figure 3**

*Recommendation by an Influencer or an Unknown Brand*

**I would purchase from a fashion brand recommended by an influencer rather than an unk2wn brand.**



About 38.2% respondents agreed on buying from brands and pages which are followed by the influencers. The 30.9% of respondents were neutral, 16.9% disagreed, 9.0% strongly agreed, and 5.1% strongly disagreed. A total of 47.2% of participants agreed that they would buy from brands and pages followed by the influencers. Hence, proved that following the choices of influencers have an impact on the purchase decisions of Pakistani female Instagram users.

A question was posed to the sample whether the users buy products on the recommendation of micro or macro influencers. Macro influencers appeared to be the choice of most of the participants as 71.3% responded in their favor and 28.7% respondents chose micro influencers. The results revealed that the ratio of followers of an influencer has a huge impact on females.

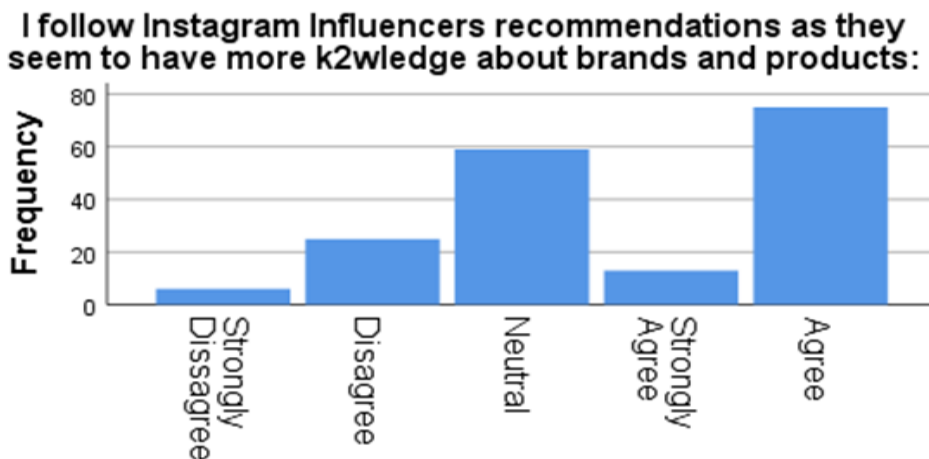
Participants were asked if they find influencers recommendations about products as trustworthy. About 50.6% were neutral, 29.8% agreed on having trust on influencers, 10.1% disagreed, 5.1% strongly disagreed, and 4.5% strongly agreed. Overall, 34.3% participants agreed on trusting influencers recommendations about the products.

**Figure 4**  
*Trust on Influencers*



Around 42.1% of participants agreed and 7.3% strongly agreed that they follow influencers as they have more knowledge about brands and products. Whereas, 7.3% and 3.4% disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively. These results showed that majority of the female users consider influencers as knowledgeable.

**Figure 5**  
*Respondents Attitude towards Knowledge of Influencers*



About 39.3% participants agreed on buying products that the influencers personally recommended in their stories, 17.4% disagreed, 7.9% strongly agreed, and 6.2% strongly disagreed. The responses indicated that the

influencer's personal experience with a brand or product has a direct impact on buying choices of followers.

**Figure 6**

*Impact of Influencers Personal Experience on Followers' Decision*

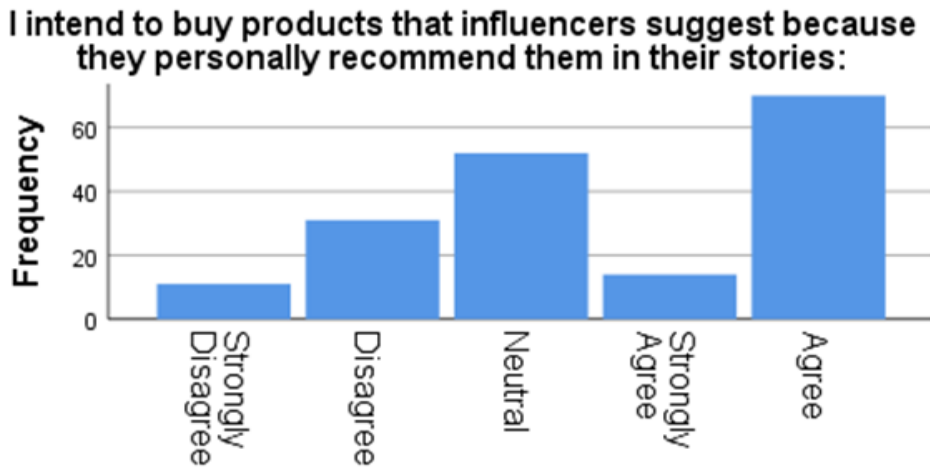
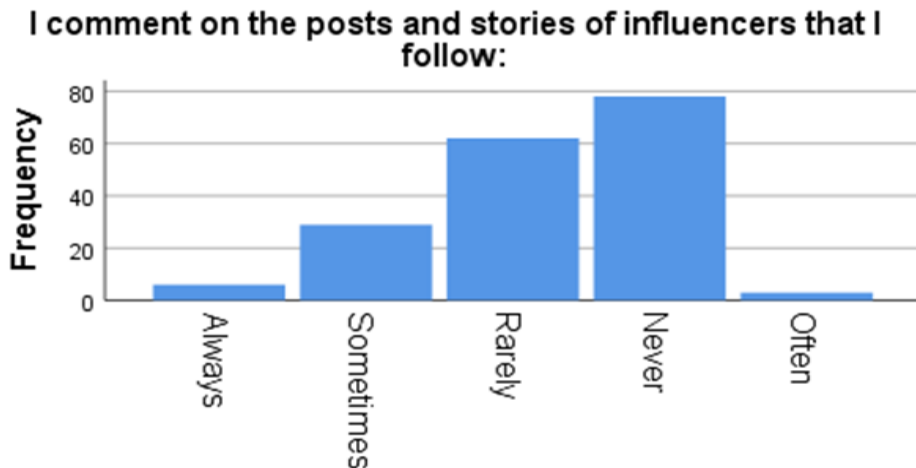


Figure 6 shows that 43.8% respondents never comment on the stories or posts of influencers, 34.8% rarely comment, 16.3% comment sometimes, 3.4% always interact with their favorite followers, and 1.7% often comment.

**Figure 7**

*Para-Social Relationship*

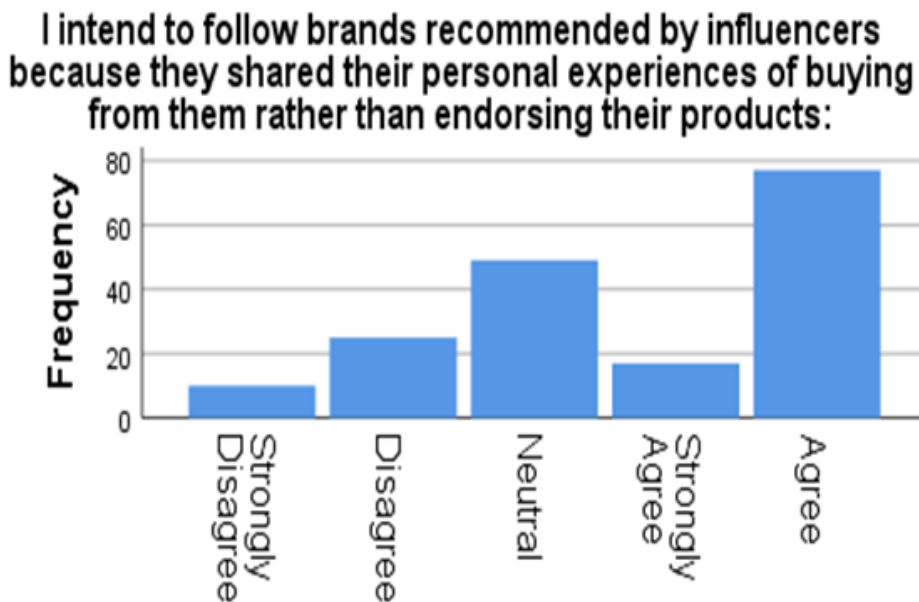


On the statement about buying products because of the connection with the influencers, 41.0% participants were neutral, 26.4% disagreed, 23% agreed, 7.9% strongly disagreed, and 1.7% strongly agreed. The results showed that connection with an influencer has no impact on buying decisions of female Instagram users.

About 43.3% respondents agreed that they would follow brands recommended by influencers because of sharing their own personal experiences on social media rather than endorsing the products only. In this regard, 27.5% were neutral, 14% disagreed, 9.6% strongly agreed, and 5.6% strongly disagreed.

**Figure 8**

*Intent of Following the Brands*



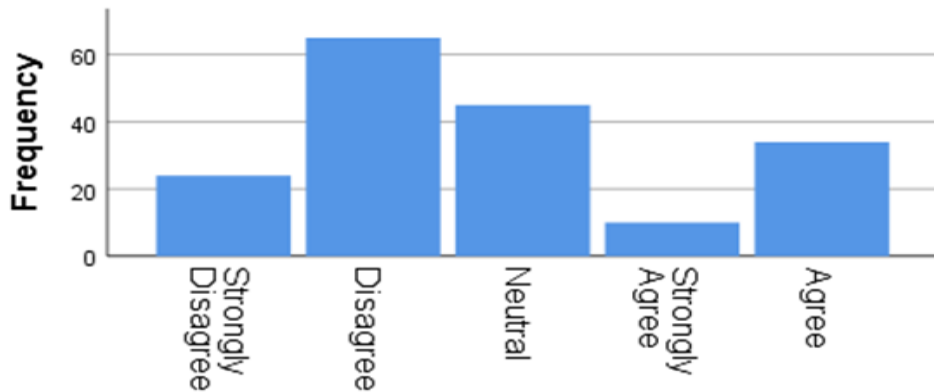
Around 36.5% respondents disagreed with the fact that they follow influencer based on the number of their followers, 25.3% were neutral, 19.1% agreed, 13.5% strongly disagreed, and 5.6% strongly agreed.



**Figure 9**

*Followers Ratio*

**I follow influencers based on the number of their followers**

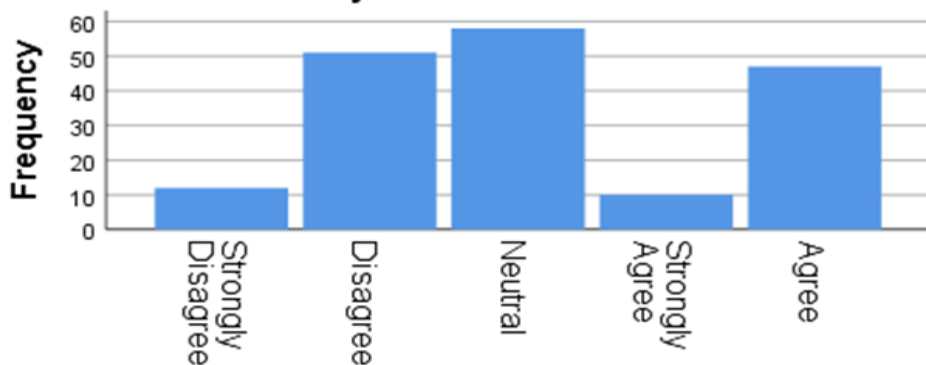


A total of 26.4% respondents agreed and 5.6% strongly agreed that they would recommend an influencer to someone else based on their increased number of followers whereas 36.2% were neutral, 28.7% disagreed, and 6.7% strongly disagreed.

**Figure 10**

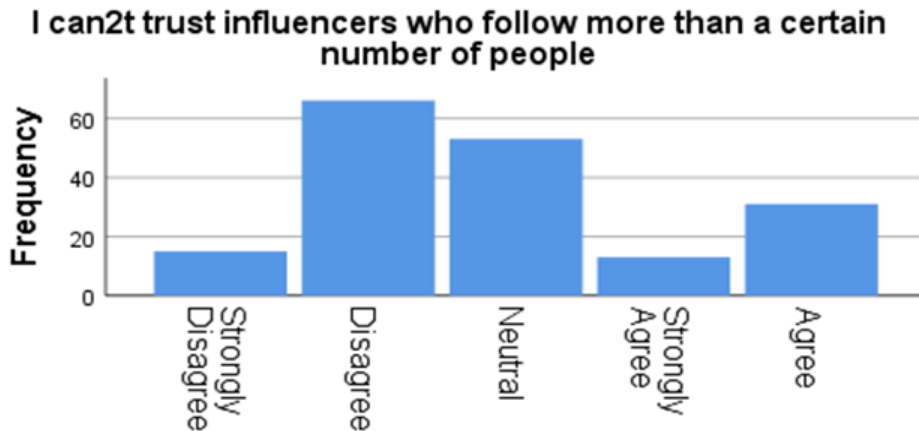
*Suggesting an Influencer to Others*

**I will recommend the suggestion of an influencer to someone else if they have more number of followers.**



Checking the following count of an influencer, 37.1% disagreed on trusting influencers based on their following, 29.8% were neutral, 17.4% agreed, 8.4% strongly disagreed, and 7.3% strongly agreed.

**Figure 11**  
*Credibility of an Influencer*



### Hypotheses Testing

*H1. The greater the female users spend time on Instagram, the more their decisions are influenced by the influencers.*

Acknowledging the nature of the study, Pearson bivariate correlation analysis was applied to figure out the hypothesized relationship between purchase intention and time spent by female users on Instagram.

**Table 2**

*Relation between Purchase Intention and Time Spent on Instagram*

		Purchase Intention	Time Spent on Instagram
Purchase Intention	Pearson Correlation	1	.410**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	<i>N</i>	178	178
Time Spent on Instagram per day	Pearson Correlation	.410**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	<i>N</i>	178	178

**Note.** \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results of bivariate correlation analysis showed that the hypothesis of correlation was approved as  $p < 0.05$ . The values showed that the data is significant at 0.01 level.

*H2. The Instagram influencers and their source credibility are positively associated with female users purchase intention.* Statistical technique of Pearson bivariate correlation was used to analyze the connection between variables purchase intention and source credibility.

**Table 3**

*Relation between Source Credibility and Purchase Intention.*

		Purchase Intention	Source Credibility
Purchase Intention	Pearson Correlation	1	.676**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	178	178
Source Credibility	Pearson Correlation	.676**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	178	178

The results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between purchase intention and source credibility ( $p=.676$ ). This revealed that an increase in source credibility would prompt an increase in the purchase intention. This study shows that the female customers who spent more than four hours per day on Instagram about a brand, are more influenced to buy it. However, who watch Instagram less than 4 hours per day are less likely to be influenced to purchase a product. This means that there is a strong correlation between decisions of female users and the time they spent on watching Instagram and it has ( $p,0.01$ ) significance.

### Conclusion

This research investigated the impact of Instagram influencers on purchase intentions of female users and the influence of Instagram usage on their buying decisions. A valuable observation discovered first was that the usage of Instagram has a significant relationship with changing behaviors of female users. The more time they spend on Instagram, the more they are exposed to the influencers content which in turn impact their buying behavior.

Another important finding was that the credibility of an influencer significantly influences the purchase intention of female users of Instagram in Pakistan. One of the major factors of influencer credibility was trustworthiness.

The study discovered evidence of Instagram's influence through the analysis of its usage patterns. Furthermore, if there were any remaining doubts about Instagram's suitability for promoting products and brands, the results showed that consumers are willing to use Instagram to learn about products and brands. It is a new platform for discovering new brands and products. This means that Instagram could prove to be a beneficial source for a marketer to promote his product or brand.

As the results were significant and positive, the hypotheses are confirmed. These insights and results will add more knowledge to the influencer marketing literature and more explicitly to influencer marketing campaigns.

It is concluded that the customers typically assess products using Instagram as a social showcasing tool. Hence, opting a social media platform, especially Instagram, ends up being a valuable way for businesses to develop themselves as female consumers are effectively associated with it.

The research contributes to a theoretical understanding that the influencers on social media are modern day opinion leaders working in a digital environment to provide information and influence their followers. The findings helped in giving a deeper understanding regarding influencers impact on female users purchase intention in Pakistan.

### **Recommendations**

The future study can investigate the influencer marketing impact in generating brand loyalty. Another limitation of this research is that only a specific social media platform (Instagram) was the focus of the study, in future other social media platforms could be considered to study the impact of influencers. As fake accounts and posts are all over social media, they are becoming a major problem for both the users and influencers. Therefore, another study on analyzing the effect of fake followers on influencers credibility could be a very useful topic for future research.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors of the manuscript have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

## Data Availability Statement

The data associated with this study will be provided by the corresponding author upon request.

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