



Influencer Marketing's effect on purchasing decisions in the health & fitness industry from
the perspective of a millennial

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation that I have submitted to Dublin Business School for the award of MSc Digital Marketing is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated, where it is clearly acknowledged by references. Furthermore, this work has not been submitted for any other degree.

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Abstract:

The types of advertising that millennials are being exposed to has altered in recent years. The rise of social media has led to influencer marketing becoming an extremely popular source of advertisement aimed at millennials. The research question : What are the desired characteristics of an influencer promoting products in the health & fitness industry to successfully impact millennials purchasing decisions? Four main objectives were devised to answer this research question. To examine the impact of influencers on millennials purchase decisions in the health and fitness sector. To investigate the key factors that determine millennials' level of trust in influencers in the health & fitness industry. To investigate the importance of attractiveness, expertise & qualification for the influencers ability to gain trust and therefore impact purchase decisions. To identify key factors / make recommendations necessary for a successful influencer strategy in the health and fitness sector, aimed at millennials.

A questionnaire was used to collect predominantly quantitative data from 100 respondents. A deductive approach was taken, and the data was analysed using a descriptive analysis. The data collected from the questionnaire was then analysed using the SPSS software. This allowed for a deeper analysis of the data. The key results : Influencers currently do have a considerable impact on millennials purchase decisions in the health & fitness sector. Influencers who promote several brands at once are not trusted by millennials. Physical attraction, a muscular build (expertise), and a qualification are all desirable characteristics for increasing trust between the millennial and influencer. However, having a qualification is the characteristic which increases trust the most. The Micro Influencer group

(10,000-50,000 followers) is the most trusted of out the influencer categories & Mega Influencers (1 million + followers) are the least trusted.

Recommendations have been made to health & fitness companies who are looking to incorporate influencer marketing with millennials as the key target audience. These recommendations are strongly backed up by the data collected. To answer the research question , the desired characteristics for an influencer promoting products in the health & fitness industry to successfully impact purchasing decisions : A Micro Influencer (1,000-10,000 followers) , has a qualification , is a logical fit with the brand and does not promote many products at once. There is further research required in this area. It is suggested that a qualitative study is conducted with the aim of discovering why certain factors lead to trust/distrust.

Introduction:

Social media has become increasingly popular over the last number years and as a result so to has the use of influencer marketing. Brown & Hayes (2008) defined an influencer as “ A third party who significantly shapes the customers purchasing decision but may never be accountable for it”. The industry is constantly expanding, and the overall value of influencer marketing has grown from \$1.76 billion in 2016 to \$13.8 billion in 2021 (Santora 2021). These figures emphasize the soaring popularity and value associated with influencer marketing. It is an undeniably lucrative industry and is currently showing no signs of slowing down. I have chosen to focus on the perspective of millennials for this study. Anyone in 2021 between the ages of 24 -40 is a millennial (Dimock 2019). I chose to focus on this group as they have grown up in the era of influencer marketing. Traditional marketing methods are no longer as effective on this cohort as they have grown up in a heavily social media influenced time.

The researcher believes there is currently a lack of research completed on the desired characteristics of an influencer promoting products in the health & fitness industry in order to successfully impact millennials purchasing decisions. With organisations investing large amounts of their budget into influencer marketing campaigns, it seems clear to me that they should have more information available on the factors which lead to positive/negative responses from the consumer when exposed to influencer marketing. The main aim of the study was to garnish a strong understanding of the factors that effect the ability of influencers to impact on millennials purchase decisions within the health & fitness industry and then be able to make clear recommendations to companies based off the findings. This is research that would be of huge value to any organisation within the health & fitness industry that incorporate influencer marketing. This led the researcher to develop five main research objectives :

1. To examine the impact of influencers on millennials purchase decisions in the health and fitness sector.
2. To investigate the key factors that determine millennials' level of trust in influencers in the health & fitness industry.
3. To investigate the importance of attractiveness, expertise & qualification for the Influencers ability to gain trust and therefore impact purchase decisions.
4. To identify key factors / make recommendations necessary for a successful influencer strategy in the health and fitness sector -aimed at millennials.

After careful consideration, the researcher decided that the use of a quantitative questionnaire would be the most optimal approach in his attempt to answer the research objectives. The questionnaire was shared across numerous social media platforms & WhatsApp groups to reach enough respondents (100). The questionnaire contained an introduction that clearly laid out its purpose and was conducted within all the appropriate ethical guidelines. There was a qualifying question included to ensure that only the people who fit the millennial age brackets data would be analysed. The findings were then established & analysed using descriptive statistics.

Investigating the key factors which affect millennials level of trust in influencers has enabled the researcher to make recommendations as to what type of influencer these health & fitness companies should hire to promote their brand. This means the influencer marketing budget can be fully utilised, save hugely on costs by avoiding investing in the wrong fit of influencer and avoid any unwanted damaging of the brand name due to these potential mismatches. Additionally, by partnering with an optimal fit of influencer, these companies

can then reap the rewards through highly successful influencer marketing campaigns. One of the fundamental aspects of my research involved examining the factors which cause millennials to trust or distrust the influencer. Being able to establish this allows me to make recommendations as to what type of influencers are optimal for health & fitness products when the target audience is millennials. The health & fitness industry was selected as this is one of the most prominent sectors in which influencers are hired to promote brands. The rapid rise of social media has led to a substantial transformation in many sectors, including the health & fitness industry. Some of the most popular social platforms such as Instagram, Tok-tok and YouTube became extremely popular, and this paved the way for fitness experts, wellness experts and food connoisseurs to enter the online influencing world and make themselves a living. In today's age, more than ever before people are using social media to access free workouts, seek nutritional recommendations and look for wellness advice. This in turn boosts the success of influencers within the health & fitness industry. (The Rise of the Fitness Influencers | Tech Talk, 2021) With the health & fitness industry continuing to grow and adopt the use of influencer marketing, it became clear that this research could provide great value to companies involved in the sector.

There is definite scope for future research to be conducted with regards to influencer marketing, millennials, and the health & fitness industry. Prior to initiating the research, it was clear that most past dissertations in this area were conducted in a qualitative manner. This further encouraged the researcher to focus on quantitative in his effort to get more conclusive results. Perhaps a future study could be conducted on influencers ability to impact purchase decisions in the health & fitness industry from the perspective of a different age cohort. There could also be a different industry used as the focus such as beauty or fashion, from the perspective of Millennials.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

For the literature review, the overall goal was to compile more information and develop a better understanding of the various factors relating to the research question – What are the desired characteristics of an influencer promoting products in the health & fitness industry to successfully impact millennials purchasing decisions? After careful consideration, he chose the following headings to focus on : Millennials, Social Media Marketing , Influencer Marketing, Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), Credibility/Trustworthiness, Attractiveness, and The Consumer Decision Making Process. The researcher chose these topics as each of them holds great relevance to the research question. The literature review begins with a focus on millennials. This will be paramount in gaining an understanding in to how the mind of the millennial works. This will lead in to an in depth look at social media marketing & influencer marketing, covering a wide range of areas. There was more of a focus placed on the influencer marketing section as this is clearly at the heart of the study. The next section of the review is crucial as it look at trustworthiness, credibility, and attractiveness. The factors which affect trust are paramount in the influencers ability to impact purchasing decisions. The review is then rounded off with a close look at the consumer decision making process.

Section 1 : Millennials

According to Dimock (2019) - president of Pew Research Center, for the millennial generation to maintain its analytical meaningfulness, it was decided that all people born between the years of 1981 and 1996 are to be officially considered a millennial. This translates to anyone aged 23 – 38 in 2019. Millennials have a tendency toward spending vast amounts of time on different social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, here they can monitor and follow their friends and Influencers. They also tend to use these platforms to boast personal achievements (Pandey, Chopra & Karve 2020). Millennials are considered to have grown up in an era of economic opulence, in terms of consumer safety they are more protected than any other generation and when it comes to decision making, they often will consult with their parents (Mcglynn, 2005). According to Stein (2013) “they are the most threatening and exciting generation since the baby boomers brought about social revolution, not because they’re trying to take over the establishment but because they’re growing up with one.”

The frequent use of the Internet, numerous social networks and inter-active technologies are causing millennials to be more involved in the formation and progression of both products and brands. They are a generation which insists on being involved in all the elements of a product, including its promotion. These consumers will respond positively if they find the digital message appealing and negatively if not (Smith, 2010). Millennials are a social group continuously developing due to the changes experienced in their lives from childhood on to adulthood. Technological integration, world events and social/economic changes have made them the group they are today. It is these mirrored life experiences that have caused them to share similar beliefs (Moreno, Lafuente, Carreón and Moreno, 2017). There is a distinct difference between generations and cohorts. Generations are determined simply by the year someone is born in and are generally around 20 years in length. Each

family will generally have three generations within it at any given time. Cohorts differ in that they are determined by notable life events that occurred when transitioning into an economic adult. This is usually between the ages of 17-23 and its length is subject to however long the event lasts (Debevec, Schewe, Madden and Diamond, 2013). Over time, marketers have begun to develop new strategies for targeting the group known as millennials. This group respond to adverts very differently to how their parents would as they have grown up in a heavily media filled world. This change in brand preference is due to a change in values and a desire for a less structured way of living (Naumovska, 2017). Using online reviews, millennials have the power to influence a huge number of purchasing decisions. They are viewed from the world as the early innovators of technology, and this includes online reviews. It is predicted that the effect that these consumer reviews can carry will only further be amplified as Generation Xers and Baby Boomers follow in the Millennials footsteps (Mangold and Smith, 2011).

It is clear from the research obtained, that millennials are a group which have grown up in a time where the internet and technology has continued to progress. They can be established as a relevant group to focus this study on as influencer marketing is something they would undoubtedly often be exposed to, and it is this new type of advertisement that they are accustomed to.

Section 2: Social Media marketing

Since January 2010, the number of publications using social media in their title has exceeded an amount of 110,000. Spanning the last 25 years, researchers have produced many differing definitions for social media. In this time, the overall understanding of what social media is and what it includes has changed (Aichner, Grünfelder, Maurer and Jegeni, 2021). Dewing (2012) defined social media as “a wide range of Internet - based and mobile services that allow users to participate in online exchanges, contribute user-created content, or join online communities.” Social media has been successful in transforming research methods, thus enabling brands to have clearer communication with their customers and improve their overall association toward them..... Companies are able to build channels of communication with customers, market products, improve faithfulness and boost brand equity (Saravanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi, 2012). When explaining Social Media marketing Zarrella (2009) said that the availability of modern web technologies has made the process of creating and distributing content much more manageable. A post, video or tweet can be created and put on view for millions of potential consumers almost for free. Gone are the days of advertisers being forced to pay distributors large amounts of money to implant their messages. People can now create their own unique content for their viewers.

There are many benefits that can result from social media marketing : Increased brand recognition, improve brand loyalty, opportunities for conversion, higher rates of conversion, improved brand authority, higher levels of inbound traffic, decrease in marketing expenditure, improved search engine ranking, better customer experiences and an improvement in overall customer insights (DeMers, 2014). Marketers find social media very appealing because when consumers respond positively regarding content or products it can

cause a powerful knock-on effect known as social media amplification. However, a challenge which arises is that when people are on social media, they view it as time to relax with friends and do not want to be bothered with ads (Chaffey and Smith, 2017). According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick(2019) social networks can provide personalised recommendations for its users based off actual personal experiences, these can be extremely influential. However, the effects can be both positive and negative depending on how the user reacts to the recommendation. Social networks such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn have seen a drastic rise in numbers since 2008. People use social media as a means of communication and peer recommendations which only enhances its importance.

Similarly, to all forms of advertising, when using social media, marketers must ensure the advertisements are both truthful and accurately depicted. Also, any offer that is contained in their advertisement must be clearly disclosed with all relevant material information (Steinman and Hawkins, 2010). When running marketing campaigns in which users have the capacity to post to social network sites, it is the duty of the marketer to closely monitor these pages and to remove and postings that are found to be in breach of the rules. If this is not upheld the marketer could face legal issues (Steinman and Hawkins, 2010). When it comes to influencer marketing on social media, there is one fundamental rule that must always be followed and that is they must declare when they have received payment or have been requested to sponsor the product/service. It is also a good idea for the influencer to proclaim when it is the opposite, and they are promoting the product solely by choice of their own with no monetary gains. Marketers should ensure that the influencers they hire put out a disclaimer as this will improve the credibility of both parties (Brown and Hayes, 2008). As of June 2018, Instagram elapsed a monumental milestone when it reached 1 billion active users. If you are an influencer on Instagram with one million followers, this confirms that you are in one of the top percentiles in terms of overall popularity on the platform, this being 0.001%.

Whilst this is undoubtedly impressive, it is worth noting that even with this following base you are still not being viewed by the other 999 million users (99.9%) (Levin, 2020).

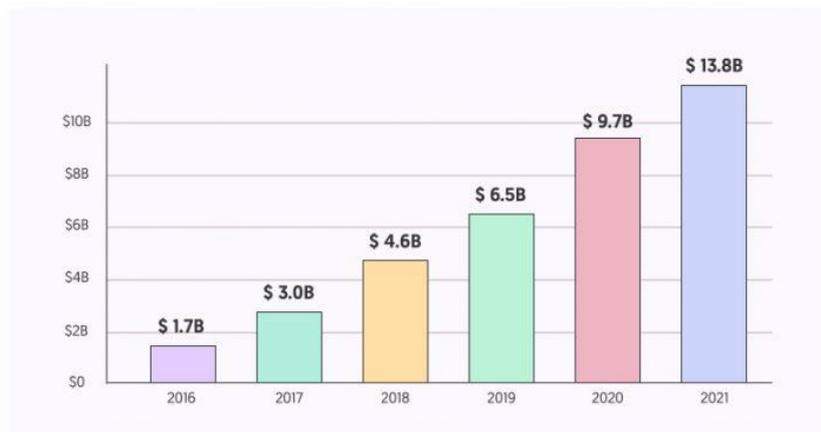
This section was intended to emphasize the sheer popularity of social media and the numerous benefits that result from using it correctly. The world of content creation has changed alongside the advancements in social media. Social media networks act as the very platform for which influencer marketing operates on and is therefore very important to this study to understand exactly how it functions.

Section 3 : Influencer marketing

Influencer marketing is an all-round new approach to marketing, it can be effective in facing the sales barriers that arise between potential customers and can direct the attention to those who can advise the decision makers. The people who fit in to this category are known as influencers and are a fundamental aspect of the entire sales approach (Brown & Hayes 2008). Influencer marketing can also be categorized as paying individuals to market your product across social media platforms. With its popularity undoubtedly increasing, those marketers who currently don't implement influencer marketing are looking to, and those who already do are seeking to increase its use. Surprisingly, there is not a huge amount of strategic information currently available that pertains directly to influencers (Campbell and Farrell, 2020). When providing a definition for influencer marketing, Brown & Hayes (2008) stated that "Influencer marketing encourages greater selectivity in targeting segments, increases understanding of each sector, demands more thought when deciding how and what to communicate, and massively reduces the waste and white noise level of badly thought-out blanket saturation onslaughts." Lin, Jan and Chuang,(2019) claimed that through social media becoming more popular, a new way of brands connecting with their consumers has arisen. When Influencer marketing is executed correctly, the person viewing it will not see it as an advertisement but more so a natural part of their existence.

It is estimated that influencer marketing will have grown to be worth \$13.8 billion by the year 2021. There was initially some worry that that there may be a fall due to the corona virus pandemic. However, there has been an increase. In 2016 the overall value was \$1.7 and in 2020 this grew to \$9.7 billion (Santora, 2021).

Estimated Influencer Marketing Growth (YOY)



Influencer
MarketingHub

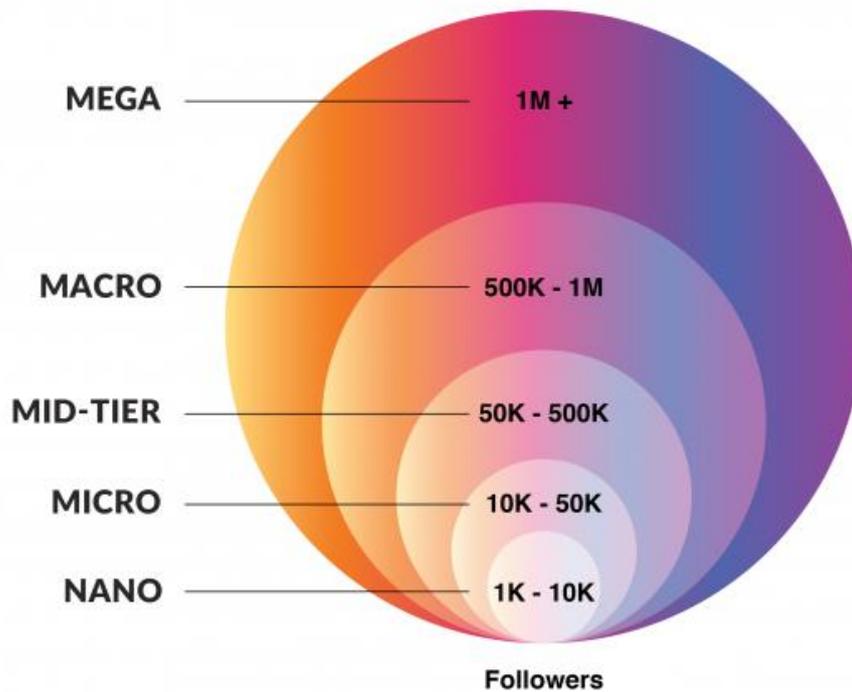
The wide range of areas that e-marketing can reach largely supersedes that of traditional marketing. Celebrities have always been a popular choice for marketers to use as a means of improving brand perception and generate more awareness. Influencers can impact the decisions of particular groups due to their perceived character and overall comprehension of the area. Due to this, we can make the conclusion that influencer marketing is the art and science of locating people with online influence to promote a brand in the form of paid content (Dukic, Clifford and Atkinson, 2019).

With the continued rise in popularity for the use of influencers, the aim for marketers is to acquire the best value from this group. “Nano influencers” have become increasingly popular. As all the various buzzwords are founded it can lead to a high level of confusion as to their meanings. Many marketers who are involved in compiling influencer marketing strategies struggle with questions such as what are the definitions of mega, macro, micro and nano influencers? Are they to be applied to all social media networks? Which metrics should

we pay the most attention to? Which category of influencer will be most effective for my marketing campaign? The tiers for influencers on Instagram are as follows : Nano – 1,000-10,000 followers , Micro – 10,000-50,000 followers, Mid-Tier Influencers – 50,000 – 500,000 followers, Macro Influencers 500,000 – 1,000,000, followers, Mega – Influencers 1,000,000 + followers (Influencer Tiers for the Influencer Marketing Industry, 2021).

Levin (2018) devised a formula to describe influence : “Audience reach x Affinity (Expertise, Credibility) x Strength of relationship with audience (engagement)”. He further elaborated on this by explaining that audience reach refers to the total amount of potential customers the influencer can be viewed by, i.e., subscribers/followers. Affinity refers to the importance of creating an overall liking toward your brand. This is achieved through a combination of both credibility and expertise. Lastly, the strength of the relationship between the influencer and the audience must be high. If there is no form of relationship present, the message will fall on deaf ears and have little to no impact. He concluded by stating that if this formula can be executed correctly, you are drastically increasing the likelihood of a successful influencer marketing campaign.

Instagram Influencer Tiers



mediakix

This section has given an in-depth description is to what influencer marketing is and how it functions. It also emphasized through statistics the massive value it has in the market. Lastly, it went on to describe the various types of influencers. This is very important as later we will be looking to determine which group is most suited with regards to our research question.

Section 4 : Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)

Electronic word of mouth can be defined as “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet” (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh and Gremler, 2004). It is a new form of communication that functions alongside the internet and new technology. It occurs only on platforms that are considered to be electronic or in some form computer related. Those of which can be accessed through the Internet. As a result of this, consumers are said to have participated in eWOM when they have made use of these platforms to share their opinions or experiences. They are also often used to lend advice to like – minded consumers on the quality of a company’s goods or services (Oraedu, Izogo, Nnabuko and Ogba, 2021). According to Keller and Fay (2016) for companies to successfully connect with influencers they must have the correct message. Influencers are often both well-educated and well-informed. They like to have as much information as possible. Companies should deliver information to influencers before it is readily available to the public so that they can spread it. They should also look to obtain the influencers opinions to engage with them meaningfully and learn from their expertise.

eWOM can be compared to individual selling in the way that it gives clear information, custom fitted solutions, intelligence, and concise tuning in, but has a lower distance between the origin of correspondence and the recipient, than marketer instigated interchanges (Hung and Li, 2007). eWOM can be categorized in to three different stages. 1. Creation 2. Exposure 3. Evaluation. Of course, it first must be created to begin the process. However, it is vital that the information is exposed to the consumer so that it can have an effect. Lastly, for there to be an overall impact, the consumer must take time to make an

overall evaluation of the information and make a decision. This essentially means that the consumer adopts three roles throughout this process, 1. Creators of eWOM 2. Deliverers of valuable information 3. Receivers (Valck and Rosario, 2021). Marketers have consistently been aware of the potential effects of word of mouth and effective word of mouth campaigning do not come easily. Word of mouth equity is an idea which seeks to understand which messages buyers are prone to pass on and the potential impact these messages could have. Equipped with this information, marketers can assess the overall effect of word of mouth on brand value and sales. This is information that is vital for any company seeking to efficiently use word of mouth and fully utilise their marketing investments (Bughin, Doogan and Vetvik, 2010). Through different social media platforms, marketers can acquire knowledge about the worries or demands of potential customers. This means that social media provides two vital benefits for marketers with regards to handling eWOM. 1. There is the potential for marketers to involve themselves in conversations to halt negative feedback spreading 2. They can actively start positive conversations amongst other people by providing concise content (Erkan, 2015).

Electronic word of mouth is clearly relevant to this study. The influencers themselves participate in it when promoting products and because of this the users also take part in the same process. When conducting influencer marketing campaigns, it is extremely important that marketers can generate positive eWOM. Partnering with the wrong influencer could in fact cause negative eWOM.

Section 5 : Credibility / Trustworthiness

The fact is that influencers have the ability to increase brand value , this means that the influencers overall credibility is the most important factor in ensuring marketing effectiveness (Keller 2005 cited in Lee and Kim, 2020). Umeogo (2012) defined source credibility as “a situation where message believability is dependent on the credibility status of the sender in the minds and eyes of the receivers.” Source credibility has a long history of being able to alter people’s thoughts on two very important factors which are trustworthiness and expertise. This is particularly relevant to health & safety messages. There is a logical reason for this and that is that an Influencers expertise, knowledge, or honesty is of great importance when it comes to the believability of information pertaining health. Misinformed information in this field could have disastrous results. (Hocevar, Metzger and Flanagin, 2017). Tabor(2021) claimed that for content to come across as genuine it must fit in with the Influencers content in a sensical manner. It must match up with the influencers personality. Users often consider influencers to be friends of theirs and use their channels as a well needed means of making a connection. It is vital that when forming a marketing strategy, you first gain an understanding into the engagement between influencers and their users. An example of when an influencer might be perceived as un-authentic is if they acquire numerous sponsorship deals with different brands over a very short period of time. Umeogo(2012) similarly stated that one of the main factors which bears an affect on source credibility with regards to marketing and endorsements is whether the person and the product can provide a logical fit. They went on to give the example that if the endorser was known to be a vegetarian that they would obviously not succeed in promoting meat products.

Companies often find themselves investing largely into likeability, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. There is an assumption that when these qualities are involved it is almost guaranteed to translate to positive outcomes. However, sometimes influencer/ celebrity

qualities may be undesirable as they are not a correct fit. This leaves marketers with the conundrum of selecting the appropriate influencer and avoiding the potential mistakes that can follow (Erdogan, 1999). When approached correctly, influencers can improve overall trust in brands they are endorsing. This brand communication is more likely to be successful when it comes across as natural rather than obviously being a method of advertising. Authenticity & spontaneity are two characteristics that influencers absolutely must have to be the most popular. The most favourable Influencers amongst their followers are those that appear real and spontaneous (Bakker, 2018). Research has shown that YouTube is the most trusted social site and is therefore the most likely to generate sales. The research stated that 27% said they had made buys on the site as a result of influencers. Instagram was not far behind as 24% made purchases because of influencers on the platform and then Tik Tok users number was reported at 15% (Pearse, 2020). There is a form of marketing where influencers go to a particular location and promote the product that way. This can occur when the product itself is known to be tied to that certain location. This can be extremely impactful as the influencer is able to produce both engaging and authentic content by being at the source location (Levin, 2020).

Credibility and trust are two of the most important factors which affect an Influencers ability to impact purchase decisions. It is clear from this section that to gain the trust of the consumer, the matchup between the influencer and the product must make sense. Expertise & authenticity are also vital in gaining trust. The research will look to investigate the factors which affect the levels of trust between the influencer and millennials.

Section 6 : Attractiveness

A study conducted by Kahle & Homer (1985) suggested that with regards to the Match-Up Hypothesis and Social Adaption theory, that physical attractiveness should be viewed as an information source. They gave the example that if someone of undeniable beauty was to endorse a beauty product, that as a result there would be an assumption that the product itself was linked to the cause of beauty. Whilst the messages linking to attractiveness are often viewed at a fast pace by the users, this does not mean that the information they perceive is necessarily substantiated.

The Match-Up Hypothesis lends to the idea that individuals have implied ideas of attractiveness that will affect how they responds to models in marketing. The idea contains two main notions : 1. There are numerous types of differing good looks, each of which are defined by features and how they are connected . 2. There is speculation surrounding what traits are connected to each type. Example : What lifestyle decisions are connected to what set of looks (Solomon, Ashmore and Longo, 1992). A study conducted by Lynch & Schuler (1994) showed that when the endorser was of a particularly muscular build, there was a definite increase in perceived expertise toward him in relation to promoting products of a fitness nature. The test went on to highlight that as muscularity level in the endorsers increased so to did the level of perceived expertise. They further went on to state that this link is clear evidence that when it comes to the subject of muscularity and perceived knowledge there is almost certainly some sort of stereotype at play, which can help explain these results. When the product is something that has no relation to the idea of attractiveness, according to the Match-Up Hypothesis , the attractiveness of the endorser plays little to no part in their

overall ability to successfully promote the product (Kahle & Homer 1985 , Kamins 1990 cited in Lafferty and Goldsmith, 2004).

Influencers can often be said to create a link between external attractiveness and one's own regarded wellbeing. Often the message that ends up being portrayed is that a certain look cannot be achieved without listening to the proper guidance and as a result lead to purchasing of the endorsed items. The leading issue that arises here is that the message can be construed as saying without beauty you cannot find happiness. Young minds that are still only developing must be protected when it comes to these messages (Pilgrim and Bohnet-Joschko, 2019). Lyn Slater is a successful Influencer who boasts a following base of over 748,000 people on the Instagram platform. Hermes Beauty, La Prairie and Dior Parfums are just some of the well-known brands she partners with. The term "anti-ageing" is a term she vehemently disagrees with and will not produce sponsored posts for any brand who uses it. At the age of 68 she is an excellent example of Influencer marketing being a tool available to a wide range of ages (Flora, 2021).

Attractiveness is evidently another important factor in affecting the influencers ability to impact purchasing decisions. It appears that someone promoting beauty products will have more success if perceived to be beautiful and so on and so forth. This leads to the question of how relevant is attractiveness of the Influencer for endorsing products in the Fitness Industry? Is a muscular build of the Influencer going to have a positive effect on promotion and if so, to what extent?

Section 7 : Consumer behaviour/ Consumer decision making process

Consumer behaviour has long been a popular topic in the marketing world. If companies can understand the why consumers decide to behave in a certain way, they can then efficiently tailor their marketing strategies accordingly. This results in the main goal for the marketer, which is being able to positively influence consumers to purchase their products. Being able to understand purchase behaviour also leads into the psychology of the consumer mind and why the reasoning behind selecting certain products over others (Stankevich, 2017). For the consumer, there is a constant on-going task of making important decisions with regards to what products or services to purchase. Whilst these decisions are undoubtedly of huge importance to consumers, they are also hugely important to marketers. These are not easy decisions for the consumer to make as there are often a large number of substitute products/services available to choose from. There is no shortage of information available from sources such as advertisements and friends and the consumer often finds themselves uncertain on the potential future performance of the product. (Bettman, Johnson and Payne, n.d.)

Opinion leaders undoubtedly play a big role in affecting the consumer decision making process and affecting purchase decisions. It is for this reason that marketers often deliberately set out to locate influential individuals for their chosen products. Interestingly, it is often the case that advertisements are designed to target these influential people rather than everyday consumers. This is often the case when the advert contains a vast amount of specific information (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard and Hogg, 2006). Marketing strategies are often tactically used to attach a certain image or personality to the brand. This can be achieved through various methods such as packaging, marketing and particular groups of people using the product. People are said to make statements through their daily activities which are viewed as a way of knowing what kind of individual they are and what interests them.

Consumers will commonly associate themselves with brands/places/products/services when they believe it matches up well with their personality traits. They form the belief that by using them, there will be a knock-on effect whereby they reap the desired benefits associated with the product (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard and Hogg, 2006). A “DME” is known as a decision makers eco-system. Within a DME there are two separate categories of people, those who fit the category of an internal aspect of the decision makers group and then those who would be considered external. This has great relevance to influencer marketing as identifying the individuals who fit the external category of these eco-systems is considered to be a lot easier. Identifying an individual’s internal influences on their decision-making process is extremely difficult (Brown and Hayes, 2008). Brown & Hayes (2008) stated that “Those people that influence a decision early on have a greater impact on the outcome. Some influencers initiate the decision process by pointing out a latent pain in the firm. These influencers are in the best position to define the problem scope and thus to provide the solution.”

Conclusion:

From the research carried out, we can say without any doubt that along with the rise of social media marketing over the last number of years, there has been a huge increase in the overall level of influencer marketing (estimated to be worth \$13.8 billion by 2021). Millennials have grown up in a time of ever-changing technology and have been at the forefront for the explosion of influencer marketing, therefore making them an ideal candidate to focus on for this study. They have lived their lives in a very media heavy time and marketers are often developing new ways to successfully advertise to this ever-relevant group. Another fundamental aspect of the literature review revolved around the different factors which might affect an influencer's ability to impact purchase decisions. We also discovered the undoubted importance of eWOM (electronic word of mouth) and how influencers can be affective in spreading this positively. When an influencer promotes a brand, that message is there to see for all their followers which naturally has a knock-on effect to their friends and family. It is imperative that these are positive messages being spread and not negative. This again is further proof of the relevance of this study; health & fitness companies must partner with suitable influencers to lead to positive eWOM and selecting incorrect fits will lead to negative eWOM which can be hugely detrimental to a company's brand image. The ability of the influencer to come across as trustworthy & credible is clearly of huge importance in affecting their ability to impact the consumers purchasing decisions. Expertise & authenticity being two of the key components in establishing overall credibility. The attractiveness of the Influencer also appears to be a relevant factor but interestingly only in scenarios where attraction is related to the product being advertised.

The researcher believes that the current state of the literature reviewed to be very well informed and highly relevant to the research question. What are the desired characteristics of

an influencer promoting products in the health & fitness industry to successfully impact millennials purchasing decisions? With the aim of answering this question the researcher constructed 4 main research objectives.

1. To examine the impact of influencers on millennials purchasing decisions in the health and fitness industry.
2. To investigate the key factors that determine millennials' level of trust in influencers in the health & fitness industry.
3. To investigate the importance of attractiveness, expertise & qualification for the influencers ability to gain trust and therefore impact purchasing decisions.
4. To identify key factors / make recommendations necessary for a successful influencer strategy in the health and fitness sector -aimed at millennials.

Methodology

Introduction

The methodology section will showcase the methods and techniques which the researcher used to both conduct and analyse the research along with the philosophies from which they are derived.

The initial layout of this chapter will cover the entire Research Design which is based off of Saunders (2007) research onion. Within this area is research philosophy, research approach and research strategy. Next this section will cover the time horizon, data collection/analysis along with the techniques and procedures used and a section on ethics to highlight the steps used to ensure all participants privacy was always protected.

Research Philosophy

Following Saunders et al (2007) research onion model, the researcher begins at the first stage, which is research philosophy. This is a largely important section as the philosophy sets out the reasoning as to why a certain method of data collection is the optimal choice to be used according to the situation. Crossley & Jansen (2021) claim that research philosophy can be separated into two distinct areas, which are ontology & epistemology. They described ontology as the what and how of what people perceive – meaning what people actually understand about reality. Whereas epistemology more focuses on accumulating knowledge and gaining a better idea of reality as a whole. Within research philosophy there are predominantly two main approaches being positivism and interpretivism. When describing positivists Weber (2004) stated that “Positivists supposedly believe that reality is separate from the individual who observes it. They apparently consider subject (the researcher) and object (the phenomena in the world that are their focus) to be two separate, independent things. In short, positivistic ontology is alleged to be dualistic in nature.” He further claimed that “Interpretivists believe that reality and the individual who observe it cannot be separated.”

The research method selected is that of a questionnaire with a collection of predominantly quantitative data. The aim was to carry out research that is valid and representative and ultimately quantifiable. Therefore, the underlying philosophy to my research is in the form of positivism. Positivism has some limitations. One of them being that science has not developed at a fast enough speed with regards to knowledge on the human brain. If science was further along in this area, then there would be a greater understanding of brain processes and therefore have a better grasp on the human and social aspect. (Gavrilov, 2020) However, it must be noted that there are also advantages associated with the use of positivism. As it is associated with quantitative data, the research is therefore believed to be

more credible than that of qualitative. Another benefit of positivism is that there is usually a well thought out structure in place. This naturally leads to less mistakes and therefore more accurate results (Johnson, 2021). The next section will cover the research approach that was taken.

Research Approach

There are two main research approaches commonly used: deductive and inductive. When describing the inductive approach Reichenbach stated that “ the principle of induction as the means whereby science decides upon truth. To be more exact, we should say that it serves to decide upon probability. For it is not given to science to reach either truth or falsity...but scientific statements can only attain continuous degrees of probability whose unattainable upper and lower limits are truth and falsity” (Popper, 2005). According to Popper (2005) the deductive approach can be described as a testing of theories. It begins with a new thought , a thought which has yet to be verified. Next there must be a hypothesis and a theoretical system in place. By use of deduction, you can then draw conclusions. It is important then to view the different conclusions together to make comparisons. The comparisons you are seeking to identify are derivability, compatibility, incompatibility, and equivalence.

As a questionnaire has been used in collecting mainly quantitative data, the predominant research approach used was deductive. Most of the questions are that of a closed off nature. However, there is also an opened-ended question within the questionnaire. This was to give the respondents the opportunity to provide the researcher with with potentially valuable information based off their personal opinions. This open-ended question will yield qualitative data and an inductive approach was used to analyse the data - just for this one question. It is for this reason that I am therefore using a combination of both deductive and inductive but with a larger focus on deductive. The next section will look at the research strategy that was chosen.

Research Strategy / Questionnaire design

The next layer of Saunders (2016) research onion is the research strategy. For this study, the researcher believed a quantitative questionnaire would yield the most valuable results by yielding predominantly quantitative data. The quantitative questionnaire is an extremely popular method for conducting research within the business world as you can easily attract a high number of respondents. Initially, it is not uncommon for the researcher to view a questionnaire as easy to construct. However, much time and effort must be placed on compiling the correct questions that will yield valuable data. The questions must keep the attention of the respondents, they must be concise and should not confuse the participants (Priola, n.d.). The questionnaire layout is also a crucial part of the process. To yield the most valuable data, the questions must flow easily for the respondents. Most importantly, the researcher designed the questions in conjunction with answering the four main research objectives. He also made sure to avoid the use of loaded questions. Elsher (2021) stated that “The loaded question fallacy is a question containing an implicit assumption – that is unverified or controversial – putting the person being questioned in a defensive and unfavourable position”. Avoiding these types of questions was fundamental in the aim to garnish honest & unbiased data. Throughout the process of constructing the questions he also made sure to avoid including any leading questions to the best of his ability. Leading questions are designed to skew the answers in the direction that the researcher desires and are therefore biased in nature. Overall, the construction of the questionnaire was a hugely important element in creating an effective research strategy. The next section of methodology will look at the choices that were selected in his research.

Research Choices

This is the fourth layer of Saunders (2016) research onion. There are three choices available for which approach the researcher can decide to take : mono , mixed, or multiple. The decision the researcher is faced with here is deciding to use quantitative method/methods , qualitative method/methods, or a combination of the two. For mono methods, only one data technique and one analysing procedure will be used. It must be fully qualitative or quantitative in terms of matching procedure with analysis (Saunders and Tosey, 2013).

According to Saunders & Tosey (2013) “a mixed methods design combines both qualitative & quantitative data collection techniques and analysis procedures”. They elaborated further claiming that there is a mixed method simple design and a mixed method complex design. The simple design involves using both a qualitative collection / analysis approach then proceeded by a quantitative collection/ analysis approach. The mixed method complex design would involve using quantitative analysis techniques on qualitative information and vice versa.

There is also the option available to use multiple methods. For multimethod quantitative , the researcher will use several different quantitative data collection techniques (e.g questionnaire & group observation) and follow this with the appropriate analysis. For multimethod qualitative, the researcher will use several qualitative data gathering methods (interviews & focus group) followed by the analysis (Saunders and Tosey, 2013).

The researcher incorporated a mixed methods design. This may appear contradictory as mixed methods by definition requires more than one method of data collection to be in use, whereas the researcher has used one method (questionnaire). He conducted research online in an effort to decipher what method is the correct category for one method of data collection that yields both quantitative & qualitative data. There is no correct answer as there are many

differing opinions. However, the researcher is satisfied that because he collected both quantitative and qualitative data, that this research falls under mixed methods.

Rationale for mainly quantitative :

Bagdonienė and Zembytė (2005) stated that “ Quantitative research applies such data collection methods and procedures that enable to evaluate the collected data with numbers. This research can be characterized by higher data volume than qualitative research , and by descriptive or causative nature”. At the very beginning of the research, he was contemplating between the choice of using in depth interviews to gather qualitative data or a questionnaire for quantitative data. Advantages of in-depth interviews : -The participant is known to the interviewer. – The flow of the conversation tends to be easy. Disadvantages associated with in depth interviews :-Due to lack of clear structure, the interviewer may end up influencing answers. – Analysis of the data can prove to be very difficult (Bagdonienė and Zembytė, 2005).

Once the objectives were finalised it started to become clear to the researcher that a quantitative approach would yield the best results. The focus of the study is on the perspective of millennials. By using a questionnaire to collect quantitative data it allowed the researcher to question a large sample size of the population. Whereas with interviews, he felt that the data would be in-conclusive due to the small sample size. A small sample size conducted through interviews ran the risk of collecting a wide range of mixed data that ultimately would be useless. By focusing mainly on quantitative data, he was able to unbiasedly formulate statistics based off the perspective of millennials . An open-ended question was included at the end of the questionnaire with the hope of gathering rich qualitative data. The rationale here was that the combination of predominantly quantitative

data and a small amount of qualitative would give the researcher the best opportunity to answer the research objectives .

Conclusive research :

The two main types of research are conclusive & exploratory. The research is of a conclusive nature. Dudovskiy(n.d.) defined conclusive research as “ conclusive research design, as the name applies , is applied to generate findings that are practically useful in reaching conclusions or decision-making “. Within the conclusive design the research is descriptive. Descriptive research looks to discover the what of something instead of the how or why (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007 cited by Nassaji 2015). The researcher is using predominantly quantitative data collection and analysis methods and the research is deductive, all of which fit in to the conclusive design. With conclusive findings, the researcher believes he will be able to make strong recommendations which can be supported by the data. The next section will cover the time horizon in which the research took place.

Time Horizon

This is the fifth layer of Saunders (2016) Research Onion. According to Melnikovas (2018) “this layer defines the time frame for the research – cross sectional or short-term study, involving collection of data at a specific point of time; longitudinal – collection of data repeatedly over a long period of time in order to compare data”. When the aim of the research is to solve a problem at a particular period, this is likely to be cross-sectional. Some of the more likely methods used being surveys or case studies. If the research problem is one that requires collection of data over a long-time range, it fits under longitudinal. Examples of these being experiments, grounded theory, action research and archive research (Saunders and Tosey, 2013). This research undoubtedly fits under cross-sectional. The data in which was required and collected to answer the research objectives was perfectly suited to a short time frame and any sort of extended collection of data was not necessary. The researcher was careful to create the questionnaire early in the research process so to give himself the best opportunity to reach as many respondents as possible. In the next section we will look at the sampling & population selected for this research.

Sampling & Population

The population at which this research is focused on are millennials. It was decided to choose millennials as they have grown up in the same era as when Influencer marketing really exploded. They have also grown up at a time where social media continuously gained popularity and would be very familiar with the various social network platforms. Millennials as an entire population have purchasing power worth over a trillion dollars and make up over 21% of total consumer buys (Donawerth, 2021). With so much potential consumer purchasing on the line, their frequent use of social media and their strong familiarity with influencers, it is abundantly clear that collecting the research from the millennial's perspective is extremely valuable.

With regards to sampling there is probability sampling & non-probability sampling. Acharya, Prakash, Saxena and Nigam (2013) stated that "Probability samples are the gold standard in sampling methodology and for ensuring generalisability of the study results to the target population. By probability sampling, we mean each individual in the population has an equal chance of being selected in the study". They further went on to describe nonprobability sampling as when the likelihood that someone will be chosen is completely unknown and as a result there is selection bias. The researcher chose to use probability sampling. This is undoubtedly the most suited method of sampling to the research that was conducted. By using probability sampling he was able to make accurate inferences about the millennial population. It also allowed the researcher to avoid sampling bias and acquire more reliable results .

Materials / Apparatus

An online questionnaire was used as the data collection method for this study. The software tools used to analyse the quantitative data collected was SPSS & IBM. This is one of the most popular tools associated with analysing, particularly when the data collection method has been a questionnaire. This software tool enabled the researcher to analyse the data in the form of descriptive statistics.

Procedure

For the questionnaire, the researcher was eager to get as many respondents as possible to get an accurate representation of the population. He set himself a minimum target of 100 respondents, a goal which was reached. He began spreading the questionnaire through the use of numerous WhatsApp groups that he is a member in. All of which contained people within the sufficient age category to qualify as a millennial. He decided to send it in to his college WhatsApp group as there is close to 40 students in there who he believed would be happy to help. He also shared the questionnaire within private groups on numerous social network sites such as Instagram, Facebook & LinkedIn. Whenever sharing the questionnaire, he always made sure to attach a polite message explaining the purpose of it and how he would greatly appreciate their time to fill it out. He purposely shared the questionnaire in areas where he believed people would be using Instagram and be familiar with influencers. He also was able to convince his personal trainer to share the questionnaire on his Instagram page. He was very satisfied with this as most of his followers would be millennials and have a keen interest in the health & fitness industry. The questionnaire was created on google documents. he found this to be a very useful choice as the responses are recorded clearly and in an organised fashion alongside visual graphs, some of which he used in his findings.

Prior to releasing the questionnaire to the public, the researcher conducted a pilot test to highlight any mistakes. The pilot was administered to five respondents. Several grammatical mistakes were notified and rectified. Pilot tests are important with regards to questionnaires, as a fresh set of eyes can notice errors or areas that could use improvement.

Method of data analysis

The data analysis section is of great importance as the data is only valuable once analysed correctly. The researcher chose to a descriptive analysis which was then presented in the form of descriptive statistics. A descriptive method was decided as the most optimal approach to analysing the data as it yielded the researcher the data necessary to answer the research objectives. For the data analysis, the SPSS software was used. The researcher selected this software as it is easy to use, is renowned for providing efficient quantitative data analysis, graphs are available for selection and there is a very low likelihood of errors occurring.

Ethics

Resnik (2020) claimed that “ since research often involves a great deal of cooperation and coordination among many different people in different disciplines and institutions, ethical standards promote the values that are essential to collaborative work, such as trust, accountability, mutual respect, and fairness”. The researcher made sure to comply with all ethical guidelines and data protection laws whilst conducting the research. Two ethical issues considered to be of great importance with regards to questionnaires are confidentiality & informed consent (KELLEY, 2003). At the start of the questionnaire, he included a paragraph which outlines the reasoning for the survey. He also made it clear that it is entirely their decision as to whether to participate and that their data would be always protected. He also made sure that all research was conducted in accordance with DBS college ethical guidelines.

Findings

Introduction

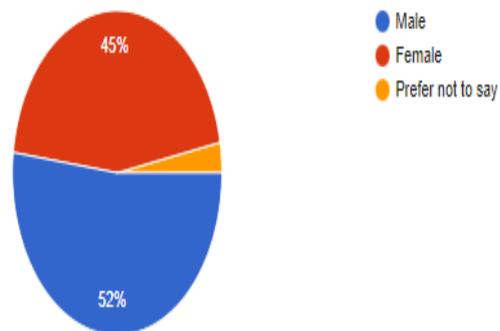
The purpose of this section was to objectively report the most relevant data that has been collected. The researchers aim with this section was to put forward the data which they believed would be most relevant in answering the overall research objectives. The discussion section will later be used to discuss interpretations, implications, limitations and make conclusions from the data. The data is put forward in a clear fashion with the use of graphs and tables. The questionnaire was conducted on google forms and graphs from which are presented throughout this section. The software SPSS was also used to gain a deeper analysis of the data and to create graphs/tables from that can also be found in this section. The results are predominantly in the form of descriptive statistics as this is most suitable approach to answering the research objectives. These results have been formed using SPSS and include frequencies as well as data being analysed from both the male and female perspective. Similarities and differences between the two genders were noted where relevant.

Total participants / Gender

Prior to conducting the research, a target population of 100 participants was set . The researcher chose this amount on the basis that it would give him a large enough sample of the millennial population so to acquire the most accurate data possible. There was a total of 100 participants. 52 identified as male, 45 identified as female and 3 preferred not to say.

What gender do you identify as?

100 responses



Gender

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	2		
	Label	<none>		
	Type	String		
	Format	A17		
	Measurement	Nominal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	Female		45	45.0%
	Male		52	52.0%
	Prefer not to say		3	3.0%

		Age				
Gender			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	Valid	24-29	33	73.3	73.3	73.3
		30-35	7	15.6	15.6	88.9
		36-40	2	4.4	4.4	93.3
		Other	3	6.7	6.7	100.0
		Total	45	100.0	100.0	
Male	Valid	24-29	41	78.8	78.8	78.8
		30-35	7	13.5	13.5	92.3
		36-40	3	5.8	5.8	98.1
		Other	1	1.9	1.9	100.0
		Total	52	100.0	100.0	
Prefer not to say	Valid	24-29	1	33.3	33.3	33.3
		Other	2	66.7	66.7	100.0
		Total	3	100.0	100.0	

Amongst the 100 respondents 45 were female, 52 male and 3 preferred not to say. The researcher has broken down the ages into subcategories of 24-29, 30-35 , 36-40 and other. Other would indicate that the respondent is not within the appropriate age bracket to be considered a millennial and their responses are therefore ignored for the purpose of this research.

Female : There were 33 respondents that fit in to the 24-29 bracket. This accounts for 73.3% of the total female respondents. There were 7 respondents who were in the 30-35 age bracket. There were 2 respondents in the 36-40 bracket and there were 3 respondents in the other bracket.

Male : There were 41 respondents that fit in to the 24-29 bracket. This accounts for 78.8% of total male respondents. There were 7 respondents who fit in to the 30-35 bracket. There were 3 respondents who fit in to the 36-40 bracket and there was 1 respondent who selected other.

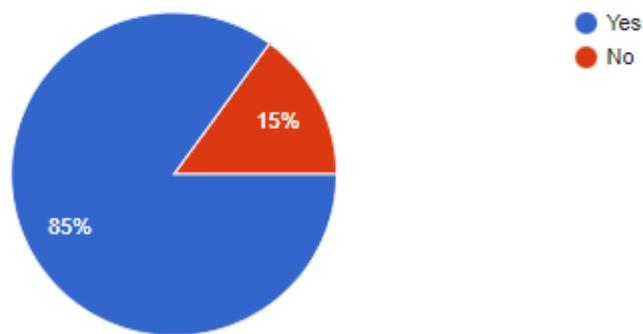
Prefer not to say: There was 3 respondents in total who selected not to disclose their age. 1 of them was in the 24-29 bracket and the other 2 selected other.

After analysing this data, the researcher has decided not to focus on particular age brackets within millennials when analysing the rest of the data. Had the respondents been more spread out across the age brackets he would have considered a different approach but 73.3% of female respondents were 24-29 & 78.8% of male respondents were also 24-29. This means only a very small percent of respondents fit in to the other age brackets and therefore it would not make sense to conduct analyses separately per each age bracket. Also, the focus of the study is on the perspective of millennials, which is anyone aged 24-40 and is therefore fully covered. The female & male data has been analysed both together and separately using SPSS. Both relevant similarities and differences in the data between the two gender groups was noted throughout the section. The rest of the findings have been broken up into sections with the research objectives acting as headings. The researcher has categorized the relevant data to each section. This data will be presented here but will later be used to answer the research objectives in the discussion section.

Objective : **To examine the impact of influencers on millennials purchase decisions in the health and fitness sector.**

Do you follow any Influencers on social media who promote health & fitness products/services?

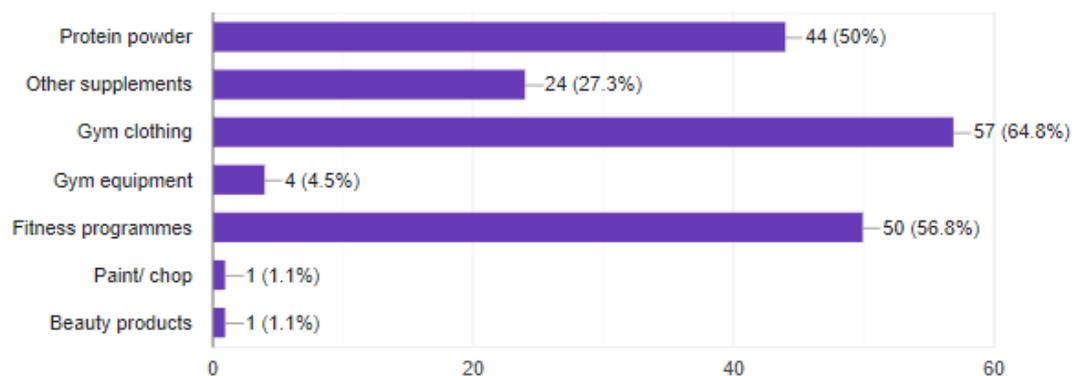
100 responses



85% of respondents chose yes to following any influencers on social media who promote health & fitness products/services. 15% selected no. This was not a qualifying question as millennials opinions who do not follow influencers on social media are still relevant to the study, but it was also important to identify what percentage were following.

If yes to the above question ; What do they predominantly promote? (Can tick multiple)

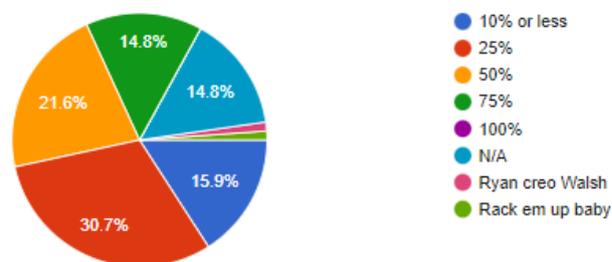
88 responses



If the respondents answered yes to the previous question, they were asked to identify what the Influencers were promoting. They were given several options for multiple choice and then also had the option of typing an answer themselves. 44 respondents (50%) selected protein powder and 24 respondents (27.3%) selected other supplements. Gym clothing was the most popular with 57 respondents (64.8%). Gym equipment received a low number of respondents totalling 4 and 2 respondents chose to write their own answers.

If yes , when buying products in this industry, what percent of the time would you say is due to an Influencers recommendation?

88 responses



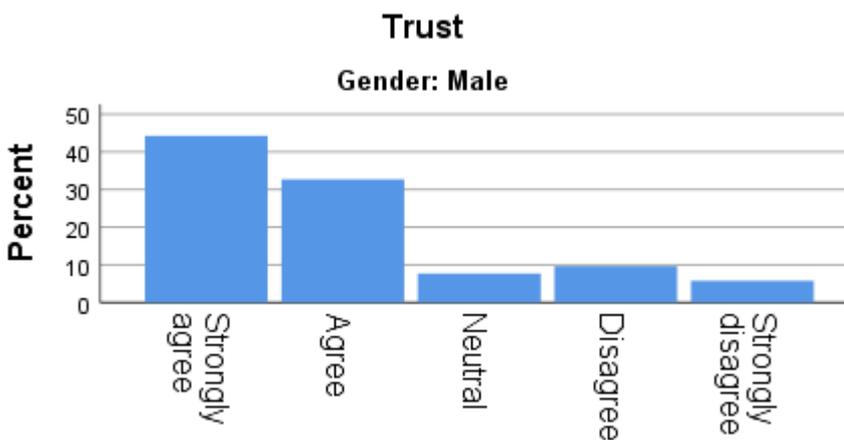
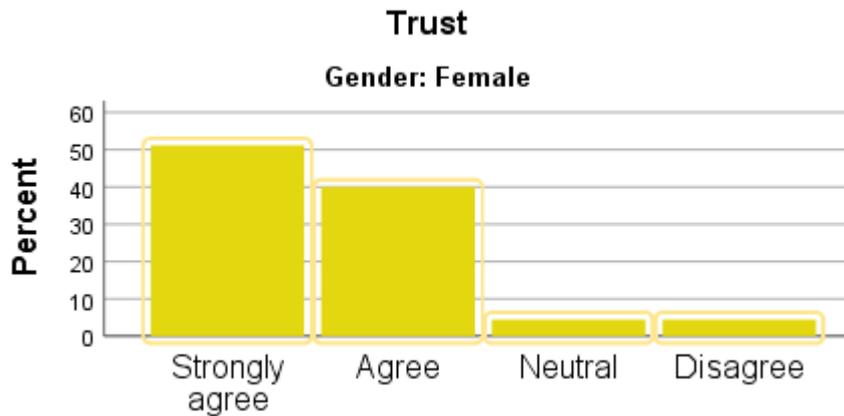
The question was : when buying products in the health & fitness industry, what percentage of the time would you say is due to an influencers recommendation.15.9% of respondents said 10% or less. 30.7% of respondents said 25% of the time. 21.6% of respondents selected 50% of the time. 14.8% said 75% of the time. 14.8 % selected N/A as they had not purchased products in the industry.

Objective : To investigate the Key Factors that determine millennials' level of trust in influencers in the health & fitness industry

This section will contain data that the researcher believe is most relevant to answering the objective : To investigate the key factors that determine millennials level of trust in influencers in the health & fitness industry. This will then be further analysed in the discussion section.

The following statement was put forward to the respondents in the questionnaire : Perceiving the influencer to be credible/trustworthy is an important factor in their ability to positively influence your purchase decisions.

		Trust				
Gender			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	Valid	Agree	18	40.0	40.0	40.0
		Disagree	2	4.4	4.4	44.4
		Neutral	2	4.4	4.4	48.9
		Strongly agree	23	51.1	51.1	100.0
		Total	45	100.0	100.0	
Male	Valid	Agree	17	32.7	32.7	32.7
		Disagree	5	9.6	9.6	42.3
		Neutral	4	7.7	7.7	50.0
		Strongly agree	23	44.2	44.2	94.2
		Strongly disagree	3	5.8	5.8	100.0
		Total	52	100.0	100.0	
Prefer not to say	Valid	Agree	1	33.3	33.3	33.3
		Strongly agree	1	33.3	33.3	66.7
		Strongly disagree	1	33.3	33.3	100.0
		Total	3	100.0	100.0	



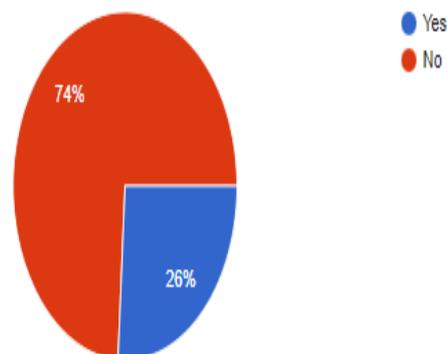
Out of the total 100 respondents 47 strongly agreed and 36 agreed with the statement. That means 83% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed .Of the 45 females that answered the question, 23 selected strongly agree (51.1%). 18 selected agree whilst 2 picked neutral, 2 picked disagree and 0 female respondents selected strongly disagree. Out of the 52 male respondents, 23 selected strongly agree (44.2%). 17 male respondents chose to agree (32.7%). 4 respondents were neutral, 5 selected disagree and 3 strongly disagree. Of the 3 respondents whose gender is unidentified , 1 selected strongly agree, 1 selected agree and 1 strongly disagree. The male & female data here would be considered correlating data due to the similarities. This data is highlights that a very large percentage of both male & female

either strongly agree or agree with the statement and very few respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with it.

Question : Would you trust an influencer promoting health & fitness products who is known to be promoting several brands at the one time

Would you trust an Influencer promoting health & fitness products who is known to be promoting several brands at the one time?

100 responses



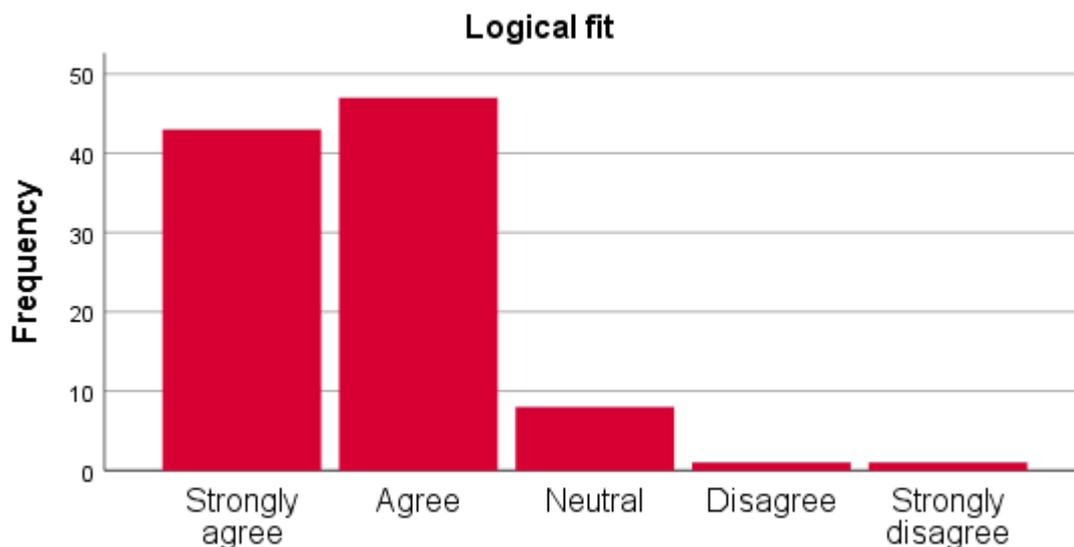
Brands

Gender			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	Valid	No	37	82.2	82.2	82.2
		Yes	8	17.8	17.8	100.0
		Total	45	100.0	100.0	
Male	Valid	No	35	67.3	67.3	67.3
		Yes	17	32.7	32.7	100.0
		Total	52	100.0	100.0	
Prefer not to say	Valid	No	2	66.7	66.7	66.7
		Yes	1	33.3	33.3	100.0
		Total	3	100.0	100.0	

Out of the total 100 respondents, 74% selected no and 26% yes. 37 of the 45 female respondents selected no (82.2%) and 8 selected yes (17.8%). 35 of the 52 male respondents selected no (67.3%) and 17 selected yes (32.7%). There is a difference noted in the data here between the two genders. 15% more female respondents are less likely to trust an influencer

promoting several brands at the one time in comparison to men. Of those who preferred not to state their gender, 2 selected no and 1 selected yes.

Statement : It is important to you that there is a logical fit between the influencer & the health/fitness product when establishing credibility.



Of the 100 respondents, 43 of them strongly agree whilst 47 agree. 8 of the respondents were neutral on the statement, 1 chose to disagree and there was 1 who selected strongly disagree. From those who preferred not to state their gender, 2 selected strongly agree whilst 1 picked agree. There are no key differences to note between the two gender groups bar the fact that 1 male respondent selected strongly disagree & 1 male respondent selected disagree whereas 0 female respondents chose either of those options.

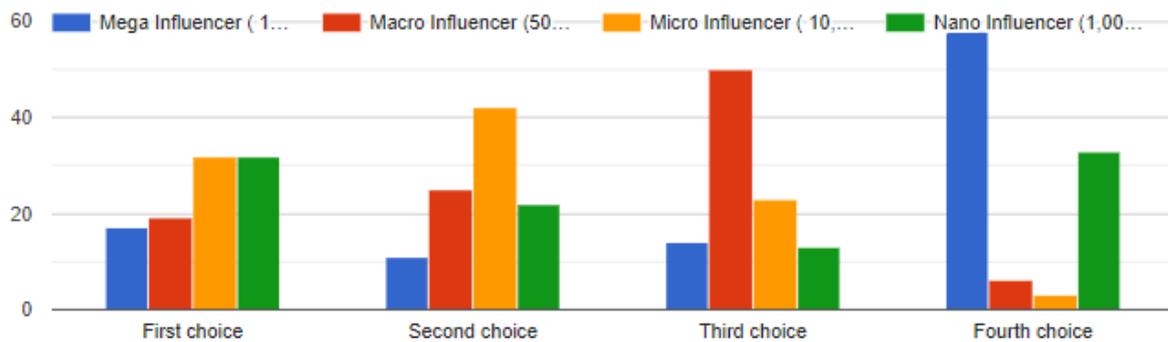
Q: Rank in order, the categories of influencer which you find most trustworthy / credible.

Mega Influencer = 1 million + followers

Macro Influencer = 500,000 – 1,000,000 followers

Micro Influencer = 10,000 – 50,000 followers

Nano Influencer = 1,000 – 10,000 followers



First choice : Out of the total 100 respondents 32 selected Nano influencer as their first choice & 32 respondents selected Micro influencer as their first choice, making these the highest two selections for first choice. 19 respondents selected Macro Influencer. Mega influencer was the least popular selection for first choice with 17 selections.

Second choice : Micro influencer was the most popular second choice with 42 votes. Next was Macro influencer with 25 selections. Nano influencer received 22 votes whilst Mega influencer was the least popular selection for second choice with 11 votes.

It is worth noting that for third & fourth choice it is a negative to be receiving the most votes and a positive if you are getting fewer votes as it is a scale which is judging trust / credibility.

Third choice : Macro Influencer received the most votes for third choice with a total of 50. Next was Micro Influencer with 23 votes. Mega Influencer received 14 votes whilst Nano Influencer had a total of 13.

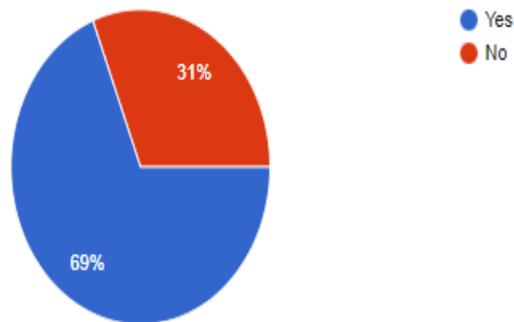
Fourth choice : Mega Influencer was the most selected fourth choice with a total of 58 votes. This is the most votes for any one group within this question. Nano Influencer was next with a total of 33 selections. Macro Influencer received only 6 selections here and Micro Influencer received the fewest with a total of 3.

There was only one noteworthy difference between the male & females. 11 females chose Nano influencers as their first choice which is 24% of female respondents whilst there was an increase seen with men choosing Nano influencer 21 times for their first choice equating to 40%. This is an increase of 16%. The rest of the data was all extremely similar between the two gender groups.

Objective :To investigate the importance of attractiveness, expertise & qualification for the Influencers ability to gain trust and therefore impact purchase decisions.

The more physically attractive the influencer, the better they will be at positively impacting your purchase decisions

100 responses



Physically attractive

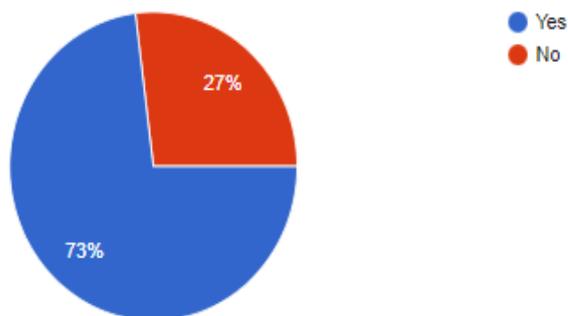
Gender			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	Valid	Yes	31	68.9	68.9	68.9
		No	14	31.1	31.1	100.0
		Total	45	100.0	100.0	
Male	Valid	Yes	37	71.2	71.2	71.2
		No	15	28.8	28.8	100.0
		Total	52	100.0	100.0	
Prefer not to say	Valid	Yes	1	33.3	33.3	33.3
		No	2	66.7	66.7	100.0
		Total	3	100.0	100.0	

Statement: The more physically attractive the Influencer , the better they will be at positively impacting your purchase decisions.

69 of the 100 respondents selected yes and the remaining 31 selected no. The results from the two genders were very similar as 68.9% of males chose yes & 71.2% of women also selected yes. From the unidentified gender 1 person selected yes and 2 selected no.

If an Influencer promoting health & fitness products has a muscular build, would you believe them to have some expertise in the industry?

100 responses

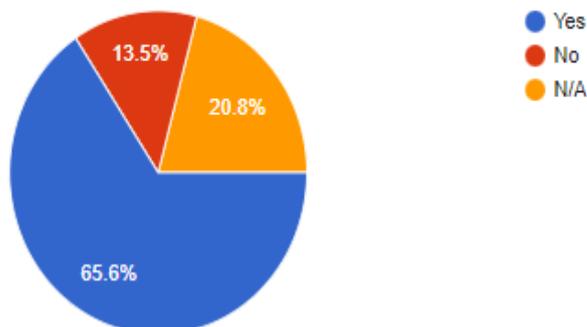


Statement : If an Influencer promoting health & fitness products has a muscular build, would you believe them to have some expertise in the industry ?

73 respondents selected yes & 27 selected no. 31 out of 45 females said yes (68.9%). 41 of 52 males selected yes (78.8%). From the unidentified gender 1 person said yes and 1 said no.

If yes to the above : Would this expertise increase your level of trust in the Influencer?

96 responses

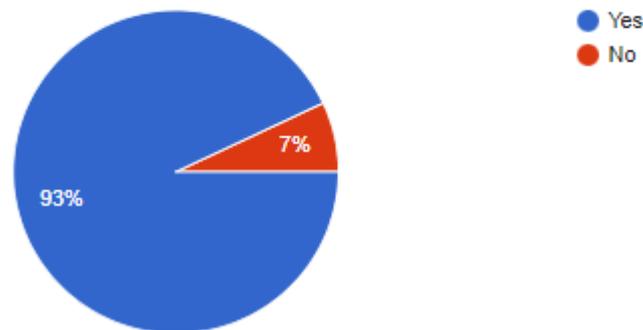


Statement : Would this expertise increase your level of trust in the Influencer?

63 out of the total 100 respondents selected yes. 13 respondents selected no. 20 selected N/A as they had answered no to the previous question & 4 respondents did not answer. There was nothing to note of difference between the two genders.

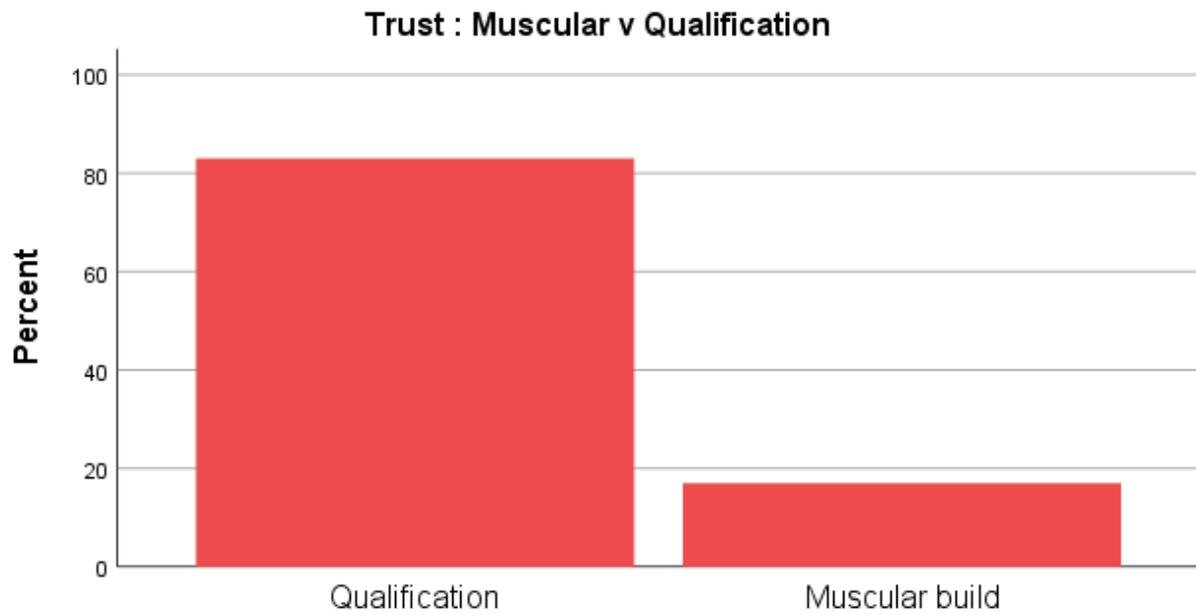
If an Influencer promoting health & fitness products has a qualification in the area, would your trust in them increase?

100 responses



Statement : If an Influencer promoting health & fitness products has a qualification in the area, would your trust in them increase?

93 of the total 100 respondents selected yes and 3 selected no. The data from the female & male genders was correlating once again. 43 of total female respondents selected yes (95.6%) and 2 female respondents selected no (4.4%). For males 49 respondents selected yes (94.2%) and 3 selected no (5.8%). Of the unidentified gender 1 selected yes and 2 selected no.

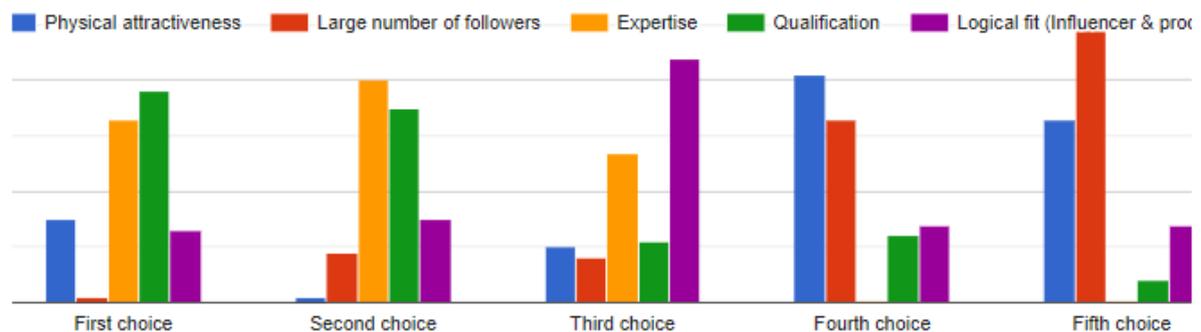


Question : In terms of trusting the Influencer in this industry, which of the following is more important to you?

83 of the 100 respondents selected qualification & 17 selected muscular build. The data between the two genders was again correlating. 36 female respondents selected qualification (80%) & 9 chose muscular build (20%). 44 of the male respondents selected qualification (84.6%) & 8 chose muscular build (15.4%). Of the unidentified gender all 3 selected qualification.

Rank the following on what would lead to you trusting and Influencer promoting health & fitness products.

Rank the following on what would lead to you trusting an Influencer promoting health & fitness products



First choice : Out of the total 100 respondents' qualification was the most popular first choice with 38 opting for it. Expertise received the second most votes with 33. Next was physical attractiveness with 15. A logical fit (between Influencer & product) received 13 selections and 1 person selected large number of followers.

Second choice : Expertise was the most popular for second choice receiving 40 votes. Next was qualification with 35 respondents. A logical fit received 15 votes, a large number of followers 9 and physical attractiveness 1.

Third choice: Logical fit received the most votes here with 44 followed by expertise with 27. 11 respondents chose qualification whilst 10 picked physical attractiveness. 8 people selected large number of followers.

Fourth choice : 41 voted for physical attractiveness and 33 people voted for large number of followers. 14 people voted for logical fit and 12 selected qualification. There was 0 voted here for expertise.

Fifth choice : Large number of followers received the most votes here with 49. 33 people selected physical attractiveness. 14 respondents opted for logical fit whilst 4 selected physical attraction. There were 0 votes for expertise.

It is worth noting that it is positive to receive votes in the first & second choice & negative in the fourth and fifth choice as this is a scale determining trust factors.

Themes:**Not logical fit****Promoting too many products****Money incentive**

Non authentic

The influencer isn't known for being a "health" influencer (i.e. they are a beauty or fashion influencer) and suddenly starts plugging fitness products

When they rave about a product and you never see them wear outside of that promotion.

When they give codes i.e. they get a cut

The brand

Promoting several products. Never see them using the product only use it for adds

If they are promoting conflicting products at the same time

If they are known to be in an un-naturally good physical condition i.e. steroid use

Some male influencers who have physiques that are simply NOT achievable with some training and protein powder! Very common in Ireland unfortunately.

Dishonesty, when they don't give any disadvantages of products it's seems unrealistic,

Promoting different brands at the one time

Serial promoter

Promoting multiple conflicting brands, promoting products they blatantly don't use, constant as constant and no organic content

If they promote many products at the same time.

If they are promoting different brands of the same product at different times saying they are the best and always use them

Too staged, not genuine, too posey

Promoting numerous products

promoting too many brands at the one time

Get Ryan Greg Walsh in

Promoting a wide range of products at once

Adverts that have calmly been written by the actual brand

the influence doesn't have experience in the area

promoting too many different products

followers to which they have no interaction and honestly - if you use their discount code or whatever you know it doesn't mean as much to them, they just don't seem as genuine. Someone that promotes multiple products in the one Market / someone who doesn't practise what they preach

promoting several brands in a short time period

Promoting too many products

When they are on the juice!

promoting too many brands

When they just keep talking about it and also promoting other products

Multiple products at same time - constant switching between the brands

Show them doing all the chop they can get their hands on. Fizzy cup every few months then, just being good skins

Lack of qualification, ethics and expertise.

Less likely to trust it if I see the brand promoted by loads and loads of Big influencers (i.e. Fyre, Snow Whitening). Also if it seems completely misaligned with the influencers brand or just appears generally sketchy (i.e. Kardashians shilling for weight loss pills)

N/a

too many followers

That they're just promoting it for money

Generally don't trust them. They're being paid to promote a product.

if they are promoting too many brands

promoting brands that aren't a logical fit with them

When they collaborated with brands just to make money and you know the brand isn't great or of good quality

If they sound like they're reading a script and not from personal experience or if they're promote let a different product every other post/ story

Selling out, excessive posting, lack of information on products and reason for sponsorship

If the influencer is sponsored by the company providing the promoted product, I would highly distrust the review or promotion of that product.

When they "over promote" a product or multiple products to the point that their platform is over saturated with the products exposure.

Promoting brands that have very poor ethical standards

Hearing stories about them through word of mouth

Q: In your own words, what are some of the factors that would cause you to distrust an Influencer promoting health & fitness products.

This was an open-ended question that was included in the questionnaire to collect qualitative data from the respondents on what factors cause them to distrust Influencers within the health & fitness industry.

The above image does not contain all 100 responses but was included to provide a few of the examples of the answers given. All 100 responses were recorded and analysed.

The researcher analysed the 100 responses looking for patterns and noticed 3 themes that were occurring the most frequently. 1. Not a logical fit. 2. Promoting too many products. 3. Money incentive. The researcher then calculated the total for each theme.

Promoting too many products : This received the most responses with a total of 28.
 $28/100 = 28\%$.

Money incentive : This received the second most responses with a total of 15.
 $15/100 = 15\%$.

Not a logical fit : This received a total of 6 responses. $6/100 = 6\%$.

Finding's conclusion :

This section has been used to highlight the most important data gathered from the questionnaire. The data is presented through the use of graphs and tables that have come from both google forms where the questionnaire was created and the SPSS software. SPSS was used to create a descriptive analysis of the data, using many frequencies to do so. The findings have been laid out by the researcher in an organised fashion under the headings of the research objectives that they are most relevant to. The next section is the discussion and will be used to discuss the findings that have been collected by the researcher.

Discussion

Introduction :

This is the final section and has a very important purpose with regards to the overall study. Section 1 was used to gather existing literature on the topic, broken down into sections of : Millennials, Social Media Marketing , Influencer Marketing, Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), Credibility/trustworthiness, Attractiveness, and the Consumer decision making process. The researcher has used this section to analytically consider the findings from the previous section, making comparisons with the existing literature, identifying limitations & making recommendations. The researcher has used this section to tie in the findings with the literature, highlighting the patterns that have been identified . One of the key aims at the beginning of the study was to provide answers to the overall research objectives : To examine the impact of influencers in millennials purchase decisions in the health and fitness sector. To investigate the Key Factors that determine millennials' level of trust in influencers in the health & fitness industry. To investigate the importance of attractiveness, expertise & qualification for the Influencers ability to gain trust and therefore impact purchase decisions. To identify key factors / make recommendations necessary for a successful influencer strategy in the health and fitness sector -aimed at male millennials.

The objectives will each contain their own section within the discussion where they will be examined in conjunction with the findings and the existing literature. The information quantities will vary in this section as some of the research objectives require more discussion than others. The researcher used a questionnaire to garnish mainly quantitative data . There was a total of 100 respondents. The researcher used predominantly descriptive statistics in their findings. One key advantage of this is that these types of statistics allow for

conclusions to be made as they are backed up by the data. It also put the researcher in a position to make recommendations based off the research. This was vital as one of the key objectives of the study was to identify key factors / make recommendations necessary for a successful influencer strategy in the health and fitness sector -aimed at millennials.

By using descriptive statistics, the researcher was able to remove any ambiguity and confidently put forward recommendations. This section also highlights both the strengths and limitations of the research, along with the implications this research has and any scope for future research that is recommended. The goal was to answer the research question : What are the desired characteristics of an Influencer promoting products in the health & fitness industry in order to successfully impact millennials purchasing decisions? Through analysing the findings from the questionnaire & comparing & contrasting it with existing literature, the researcher was able to make valuable recommendations. These recommendations are of great importance to any companies that partner with or are seeking to partner with health & fitness influencers and have millennials as their target audience. Following on from the discussion there is a conclusion where the researcher reflects on the overall research and emphasizes the answer to the research question. It will emphasize the importance of the research and contain a summary of the key findings.

Objective 1 : To examine the impact of influencers on millennials purchase decisions in the health and fitness sector.

Discussion : The respondents were asked if they follow any Influencers on social media who promote health & fitness products. This was not a qualifying question, but it was still important to uncover how many Millennials were following Influencers promoting products from this industry. 85% of the respondents voted for yes. This statistic shows that these Influencers are popular amongst Millennials in terms of following. The respondents were then asked : when buying products in the health & fitness industry, what percentage of the time would you say is due to an influencers recommendation? This question was pivotal in answering this research objective. 15% selected 10% or less, 30.7% selected 25% of the time, 21.6% chose 50% of the time, 14.8% said 75% and 14.8% selected N/A. These statistics clearly emphasize the impact influencers have on millennials purchasing decisions in the health & fitness sector. The discussion for this objective is kept brief but contains all that is required in answering the objective.

Limitation / Future study : There is no existing literature on the impact of Influencers on millennials purchase decisions in the health & fitness sector. However, the researcher felt it was an important objective with regards to answering the research question. It is recommended that future studies are conducted on this area as the results to this question can fluctuate as time goes on.

Objective 2 : To investigate the Key Factors that determine millennials' level of trust in influencers in the health & fitness industry

Discussion : The following statement was put forward to the respondents in the questionnaire : Perceiving the influencer to be credible/trustworthy is an important factor in their ability to positively influence your purchase decisions. This question was situated toward the beginning of the questionnaire. Whilst it is not a factor that determine millennials level of trust in influencers, it is still relevant to ascertain the level of importance which this group place on trust. Out of the total 100 respondents 47 strongly agreed and 36 agreed with the statement. This means that 83% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed . This is consistent with existing literature which states that Millennials are a group that due to their life experiences, have shared beliefs (Moreno, Lafuente, Carreón and Moreno, 2017). This 83% statistic is very important as it reaffirms the value of the research. Finding the Influencer to be credible/trustworthy is important to the majority of millennials (83%) and investigating the key factors which determine this trust is therefore undeniably important. The male & female groups here showed correlating data. A large percentage of both male & female either strongly agree or agree with the statement and very few respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with it.

Question : **Would you trust an Influencer promoting health & fitness products who is known to be promoting several products at the one time?** Out of the 100 respondents 74 people selected no whilst the other 24 chose yes. There was a slight difference in the data between the two genders as 82.2% of females said no whereas 67.3% of men said no. This shows that whilst the majority of both genders agree that they would not trust an Influencer who is promoting several products at the one time , in this case women place a higher importance on it as a factor. It is also very worth noting that in the open-ended question included at the bottom of the questionnaire, the participants were asked what are

some of the factors that would cause you to distrust an Influencer promoting health & fitness products? The researcher then analysed the data and one of the most recurring themes was “Promoting too many products” with a total vote count of 28 out of 100. This is all consistent with the existing literature that Influencers are often perceived as un-authentic if they obtain numerous sponsorships deals with varying brands over a short period of time (Tabor 2021).

Recommendation : The researcher recommends that health & fitness companies hiring Influencers to promote their brand conduct research on the influencers social media accounts to see if they are promoting many products at once or many varying brands. The research shows that 74% of millennials will not trust an Influencer who is promoting several products. Companies that are targeting females must be even more conscious of this as 82.2% of them wont trust the Influencer if serial promoting is taking place. It is therefore vital not to link your brand with these Influencers as not only will it be a waste of money but could also result in people viewing your brand as un-authentic. If you create a good long-term partnership with an influencer, you could discuss the prospect of them only promoting your products within that industry as that will benefit both you and the influencer as trust improves.

Discussion : Statement : It is important to you that there is a logical fit between the Influencer and the health/fitness product when establishing credibility.

Of the 100 respondents 43 strongly agreed with the statement and 47 agreed with it. This means that 90% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. This statistic emphasizes that a logical fit between the Influencer & the product is one of the most important factors that determine millennials level of trust in Influencers within the health & fitness industry. In the responses to the open-ended question about what causes millennials to

distrust Influencers , “not a logical fit” was one of the featured them with 6 respondents. The questionnaire contained a question which asked the respondents to rank physical attractiveness , logical fit , large number of followers, expertise & qualification in order of importance with regards to establishing trust. A logical fit (between influencer & product) received 13 votes for respondents first choice and 15 votes for their second choice. All this data combined clearly highlights the importance of a logical fit being in place between Influencer and product. This research matches up with the existing literature on the topic. For content to seem genuine it must fit with the Influencers content in a way which makes sense and must match up with the Influencers personality (Tabor 2021). This concept was further re-enforced in the literature. One of the main factors which has an effect on source credibility with marketing & endorsements is whether the person can provide a logical fit between themselves and the product (Umeogo 2012).

Recommendation :

The research recommends that companies only hire influencers who have a logical fit with their brand/product. A massive 90% of Millennials vote that they either agree or strongly agree with a logical fit being an important factor to them when establishing credibility. This makes a logical fit one of the most important factors with regards to influencers establishing trust. Companies must do their homework on the influencer before hiring them. This involves combing through their social media accounts to see if they are an appropriate matchup for their product. It is recommended that health & fitness companies do not hire Influencers who have no connection to the industry. If there is not a logical fit, then the potential customer will not trust what the Influencer is saying and therefore will not purchase. However, if your company can find an Influencer who is clearly health & fitness orientated and is a natural match with your brand, then trust can be established, and they can positively impact purchasing decisions.

The respondents were asked to rank in order the categories of Influencer they find most trustworthy/credible.

- Mega Influencer = 1 million + followers
- Macro Influencer = 500,000 – 1,000,000 followers
- Micro Influencer = 10,000 – 50,000 followers
- Nano Influencer = 1,000 – 10,000 followers

Discussion: The results yielded from this question were very interesting. Nano Influencer received 32 votes and Micro Influencer also received 32. This made them both the most popular selection. Next was Macro Influencer with 19 votes and lastly came Mega Influencer with 17 selections. To decide which is the most trusted influencer category between Nano & Micro the researcher analysed the respondents second choices. Micro Influencer received the most votes with 42 and Nano Influencer received 22. In terms of the respondents fourth choice Mega Influencer received the most selections with 58. Nano Influencer received 33 votes ; Macro 6 & Micro had 3. This data lets the researcher conclude that the most trusted Influencer group by Millennials is the Micro Influencer (10,000-50,000 followers) . The second most trusted is Nano Influencer (1,000 – 10,000 followers). Third is Macro Influencer (500,000 – 1,000,000 followers) and it is worth noting that there is only a very small gap in levels of trust between Nano & Macro. The least trusted group is the Mega Influencer (1 million + followers). There is currently a lack of literature on comparing the levels of trust regarding the different Influencer groups. The researcher believes that highlights the importance & value of these statistics.

Recommendation : These results are very interesting. They show that Millennials find Influencers with a relatively small number of followers to be more trustworthy than those with a huge number of followers. This research can be of great value to health & fitness companies targeting millennials. Influencers with large numbers of followers (Mega) are more expensive to hire than ones who have a more modest following (Micro & Nano). By hiring Micro/Nano Influencers over Mega, companies can save hugely in costs , boost the reputation of their brand by it being affiliated with trusted Influencers and expect to see excellent returns on their investment There was not enough of a difference between data with regards to the two gender groups to warrant specific recommendations to each gender. Whilst Nano Influencers is a good option, it is particularly recommended to partner with Micro Influencers as they are the most trusted and have a very respectable following of 10,000-50,000. They will be able to positively impact the Millennials purchasing decisions as there is a large presence of trust established.

Limitations / Future Study : The purpose of this research is to establish the desired characteristics of an Influencer promoting products in the health & fitness industry in order to successfully impact millennials purchasing decisions. This research is not concerned with establishing the reasons why certain factors increase trust and why other factors lead to distrust. However, the researcher believes there is scope for future study into this area. It would be interesting to try and discover things such as why millennials trust Influencers with 10,000-50,000 followers over those with 1,000,000 plus or why is a logical fit necessary to establish trust? There is definite scope for a qualitative study into these factors in the future.

Objective : To investigate the impact attractiveness, expertise & qualification have on the Influencers ability to impact purchasing decisions.

Discussion : A statement was provided to the respondents with the option of selecting yes or no : The more physically attractive the Influencer, the better they will be at positively impacting your purchasing decisions.

69 of the 100 respondents chose yes and 31 selected no. There was no sizeable difference between the two gender groups. 69% of the respondents opting for yes shows that the majority of the time physical attractiveness is a desirable Influencer characteristic for impacting purchase decisions. However, 31% selecting no also indicates that it is not an essential trait.

Statement on the questionnaire : If an Influencer promoting health & fitness products has a muscular build, would you believe them to have some expertise in the industry ? Of the 100 respondents 73 selected yes and 27 no. This shows a 73% majority of respondents associates a muscular build with expertise in the health & fitness industry. These findings show that there is a clear link between having a muscular build with establishing expertise in the health & fitness industry. This matches up with existing literature. A study conducted by Lynch & Schuler (1994) showed findings that stated when the endorser had a noticeably muscular build, there was an increase in perceived expertise with regards to promoting fitness products. The study further showed that as muscularity level increased so did perceived expertise as a result. The researchers' findings is in agreement with this literature. The follow up question asked the respondents if the expertise would increase their level of trust in the Influencer. Out of 100 respondents 63 selected yes, 13 no and 20 chose N/A. These stats show that there is clearly a link between perceived expertise and establishing trust. When a

product has nothing to do with attractiveness, according to the Match-Up Hypothesis, the endorsers attractiveness plays no role in their ability to promote the product (Kahle & Homer 1985 , Kamins 1990 cited in Lafferty and Goldsmith, 2004). In this instance, the muscular build appearance of the influencer clearly plays a pivotal role with the health & fitness industry as the two are clearly linked.

Statement : If an Influencer promoting health & fitness products has a qualification in the area, would your trust in them increase? This question was devised with the intention of discovering how important is having a qualification for an influencer in establishing trust and therefore being able to impact purchasing decisions. The results from this question were the largest landslide to come out of the entire questionnaire as 97 people voted for yes and 3 voted for no. This statistic is extremely important to the research as it emphasizes that an Influencer having a qualification is an undeniably desirable characteristic to gain trust from millennials. The data between the two gender groups were once again correlating with 95.6% of females selecting yes and 94.3% of males choosing yes. There is currently no existing literature on Influencers with qualifications.

The research has established that both a muscular build and a qualification are desirable characteristics of health & fitness influencers, from the perspective of millennials. However, further research was conducted to determine which the respondents value more by putting them up against each other. This can yield very valuable information . For example : A health & fitness company is looking to partner with an influencer to endorse their product. They have narrowed it down to two candidates. One of which has a muscular build but no qualification. The other has a qualification but no muscular build. This is data which can greatly assist in making these decisions.

The respondents were asked : **In terms of trusting the Influencer in this industry, which of the following is more important to you?** The two options were muscular build & qualification. The findings showed that 83% of respondents selected qualification whilst the remaining 17% chose muscular build. The data between the two genders was once again correlating. From these findings the researcher can conclude that whilst having a muscular build is a positive characteristic for influencers in the health & fitness industry, having a qualification is much more effective in obtaining trust from the millennial group and therefore being able to positively impact their purchasing decisions. There is no current literature on Qualification v Expertise. However, Levin (2018) defined influence as “Audience reach x Affinity (Expertise, Credibility) x Strength of relationship with audience (engagement). He emphasises the importance of creating a positive image of the brand through credibility & experience. Two factors the researcher has already established are important for Influencers to have.

The respondents were also asked : **Rank the following on what would lead to you trusting and Influencer promoting health & fitness products.** The options: Physical attractiveness , large number of followers, expertise, qualification & logical fit. This was a way of putting them up against each other in an effort to establish which of these characteristics was the most effective in creating trust between the influencer & millennial. Unsurprisingly, qualification was the most popular first choice receiving 38% of the votes, and expertise was second most popular with 33%. Based off the entire scale and not just votes for first choice, physical attractiveness & a logical fit (between influencer & product) ranked similarly with large number of followers being the least popular overall.

Recommendation : Based off the findings, the researcher recommends that health & fitness companies targeting millennials should actively seek out influencers with a qualification in the industry. The 97% vote towards trusting an influencer with a qualification

was the most positive result seen out of the entire research and this cannot be ignored. A muscular build can also be successful in increasing perception of expertise and therefore most of the time trust. Ideally, partnering with influencers who obtain the characteristics of both a qualification & a muscular build could prove to be very successful but if the choice is between one or the other, it is heavily recommended to hire the influencer with a qualification.

Limitations / Future research : The findings show that having a qualification is an extremely important characteristic for influencers in the health & fitness industry – from the perspective of millennials. There is currently no existing literature on the relationship between influencers with qualifications and establishing trust. The researcher recommends that there is more studies carried out on this in the future. A study into why certain factors establish more trust than others would be very interesting. This research is not concerned with the why, but the researcher believes there is scope for future research on the topic. A limitation with this research is in certain areas of it there is no previous literature to compare the findings with. This does however strengthen the value of our research as in many aspects it is the first of its kind.

Objective : To identify key factors / make recommendations necessary for a successful influencer strategy in the health and fitness sector -aimed at millennials.

This is arguably the most important and purposeful objective of the research. The research question is : What are the desired characteristics of an Influencer promoting products in the health & fitness industry in order to successfully impact millennials purchasing decisions? Equipped with all the necessary findings, the researcher can now fully illustrate the recommendations necessary for a successful strategy in the health & fitness industry – aimed at millennials. The value of this research is centred around being able to confidently make these recommendations based off comparisons with existing literature and of course the new research findings from the questionnaire. The researcher felt it was important to have a full section dedicated to this so to avoid there being any ambiguity in the recommendations.

The respondents were provided the statement : Perceiving the influencer to be credible/trustworthy is an important factor in their ability to positively influence your purchase decisions. The findings showed 83% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. This shows that the Influencer establishing trust from the millennial is imperative in their ability to have a positive impact. The researcher will make recommendations on what is the optimal influencer to hire for health & fitness companies targeting millennials. The recommendations will revolve around the key factors which affect trust : promoting several brands at once, logical fit, category of influencer , physical attraction , expertise (muscular build) & qualification. The decision to pursue a mainly quantitative approach to collecting & analysing the data is reinforced as correct here as strong recommendations are available due to the research statistics. The findings showed that the data from the male & female groups were almost always correlating and any differences were

only slight. This led to the researcher to make recommendations to millennials as a whole group as the data shows there is no gender split required.

Recommendation 1 : Companies in the health & fitness industry targeting millennials must at all costs avoid partnering with influencers who are known to promote several brands at the one time. From the questionnaire, 74% of the respondents claimed that they would not trust an influencer who is serial promoting. It was also a recurring theme in the open-ended question with 28% mentioning it in some capacity with regards to distrust. To protect the integrity of your brand and its public image it is imperative to not partner up with these types of Influencers. A successful Influencer marketing campaign is one which will bring positive attention to your brand whilst increasing sales. Partnering with a serial promoter will achieve none of these things and must be avoided at all costs.

Recommendation 2 : From the findings 90% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: It is important to you that there is a logical fit between the influencer and the health/fitness product when establishing credibility. The researcher recommends that companies in the industry make certain that there is a logical fit between their brand & the influencer they partner with. Partnering with an influencer who doesn't logically fit will diminish the brand's reputation. As this is the health & fitness industry, it is recommended to partner with influencers who clearly have a link to this sector. For example, a fitness influencer would be a recommended choice as a logical fit whereas a Gaming Influencer with no link to the industry would not be.

Recommendation 3 : The four categories of Influencer are Mega (1 million +), Macro (500,000 – 1,000,000), Micro (10,000-50,000) & Nano (1,000 – 10,000). The respondents were asked to rank these categories in order of trust. The findings showed that Micro & Nano were the most trusted with Mega being the least. Whilst the difference in trust

between Micro & Nano was only marginal, it is recommended to partner with Micro influencers. They proved to be the most trusted category of Influencer and they also have 10,000-50,000 followers which is a considerable larger audience reach than Nano influencers. It is recommended to avoid partnering with Mega influencers. These are the least trusted group and because of their large following base they are the most expensive to hire. A common misconception companies may have faced is believing that the more followers the better, but this lack of trust will likely damage the brand and be very costly in doing so. Based off the findings, it is recommended to pair with Micro Influencers. Their price demands will be reasonable as they do not have many followers but more importantly, they are trusted by their audience which will lead to them being able to positively impact their purchase decisions. When devising an influencer marketing strategy, selecting an influencer from the Nano tier is finding the best overall value for your money.

Recommendation 4 : The following recommendations are centred around the factors of physical attraction, expertise & qualification. Only 69% of respondents agreed with the statement : The more physically attractive the influencer, the better they will be at positively impacting your purchasing decisions. The researcher recommends to the health & fitness companies targeting millennials that they do not place much importance on physical attraction when looking for influencer to partner with. Whilst 69% is still a majority, it ranks low relative to the other factors which have been researched. The influencer being attractive may result as a positive, but it should not be a deciding factor in the decision on what influencer to partner with. The findings showed that there is a direct connection between a muscular build and perceived expertise (73% of respondents) with regards to influencers in the health & fitness industry. The findings also showed that 97% of respondents agreed that a qualification would lead to them trusting the influencer. These stats show that both a muscular build & qualification are favourable for influencers in gaining trust within the

industry. However, it is clear from the findings that a qualification is more valued by millennials than a muscular build (expertise). It is recommended that health & fitness companies make an influencer having a qualification to be their most sought-after characteristic when deciding who to partner with. As there are so many influencers available to choose from, companies are naturally going to be faced with decisions on who to partner with and these can be made based off their characteristics. It is recommended that qualifications be valued over both attractiveness and expertise. In a scenario where one influencer is both physically attractive & is perceived to have expertise, but their competition has a qualification, it is recommended to partner with the latter. This is because the findings have shown there is a clear link between having a qualification and trust.

Overall Recommendation :

To health & fitness companies looking to employ influencers with millennials as the primary target, it is recommended that you partner with Micro Influencers (10,000-50,000 followers) who have a qualification and are a logical fit with the brand. There have been other factors examined throughout the research and they too can positively affect trust (physical attractiveness, expertise (muscular build)). However, the recommendation put forward is one which the researcher believes is both the most optimal for gaining trust for the influencer from millennials & also the best value for money. It is recommended to always avoid partnering with influencers who promote several products at once as this will cause people to distrust your brand. Careful due diligence must be taken before deciding what influencer to partner with. It is recommended to avoid partnering with Mega Influencers (1 million + followers). The research indicates that they are not trusted, and they will be expensive to hire. It could also lead to a knock-on effect of negative eWOM with potential to be hugely damaging due to their large following base. It is also recommended to trial run hiring Nano Influencers (1,000 – 10,000 followers) for promoting the product. Whilst they don't have the

largest following base, the research shows that they are very trusted. They will not require a large portion of your marketing budget and positive eWOM would be very beneficial for the promotion of the brand.

Conclusion

The main purpose of the study was to answer the research question : What are the desired characteristics of an Influencer promoting products in the health & fitness industry in order to successfully impact millennials purchasing decisions? Within the study four main objectives were devised.

To examine the impact of influencers in millennials purchase decisions in the health and fitness sector.

To investigate the Key Factors that determine millennials' level of trust in influencers in the health & fitness industry.

To investigate the importance of attractiveness, expertise & qualification for the Influencers ability to gain trust and therefore impact purchase decisions.

To identify key factors / make recommendations necessary for a successful influencer strategy in the health and fitness sector -aimed at male millennials.

Answering these objectives was fundamental in successfully answering the research question. A carefully thought-out questionnaire was used to extract mainly quantitative data from 100 respondents. The research showed that Influencers currently are having a relatively large impact on influencing millennials purchase decisions in the health & fitness sector. However, it is suggested there is further research conducted in this area as it is subject to fluctuate over time.

Investigating the key factors that determine millennials level of trust in influencers in the health & fitness industry was hugely important in answering the research question. The research first highlighted that there being trust between the Influencer & millennial was an important factor in influencing purchasing decisions. It also indicated that influencers who

promote several products at one time are distrusted amongst millennials. From the research it is also concluded that a qualification is the most desired characteristic of an influencer with regards to establishing trust and therefore being able to impact purchasing decisions. A logical fit between the influencer & the product is the next most desired characteristic followed by expertise (a muscular build). In terms of the different categories of influencers, Micro Influencer (1,000-10,000 followers) is the most optimal. This is due to the fact that they are the most trusted of the groups and have a respectable number of followers. To answer the research question : The desired characteristics of an Influencer promoting products in the health & fitness industry to positively impact Millennials purchasing decisions are : A Micro Influencer (1,000-10,000 followers) , has a qualification , is a logical fit with the brand and does not promote many products at once. Whilst the factors listed all have a positive effect on impacting purchasing decisions, the research has been able to determine where they rank in order of importance to the millennials. This is extremely valuable data to any health & fitness companies seeking to partner with influencers , with the main target audience being Millennials. This research can be used by these companies to hire the most optimal influencer for their brand. This will allow them to incorporate successful influencer marketing campaigns which will boost their profits and improve brand image. The researcher has also provided precise recommendations on how this research should be adopted.

It was also interesting to note that in the areas where the research was able to be compared with existing literature, the information was consistent with each other.

The researcher is satisfied that the decision to use a quantitative approach was correct for this research. Collecting quantitative statistics puts great weight behind the validity of the recommendations. However, there is definite scope for future research. It is the researchers hope that this study will lead to future studies in influencer marketing. A qualitative study

with the aim of understanding why certain factors lead to trust or distrust could be both very interesting and valuable. Influencer marketing is undoubtedly continuing to grow and equipped with the research conducted in this study, health & fitness companies can now partner with influencers who will positively impact purchasing decisions toward their brand.

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Appendices (see next page)

Influencers ability to impact purchase decisions in the health & fitness industry - from the perspective of a millennial

Dear participants,

You have been invited to take part in this survey which looks to investigate the ability of influencers to impact purchase decisions in the health & fitness industry. The focus of this study is from the perspective of millennials, so please only take part if you are within the age category of 24-40. This study has been designed and conducted by William Synnott, an MSc Digital Marketing student of Dublin Business School. Your participation in this survey is voluntary and should take no longer than 7 minutes to complete. All answers submitted will be anonymous, no personal data will be collected and all privacy concerns have been adhered to. I request that you please answer all questions genuinely. Thank you very much for your participation.

*Required

What gender do you identify as? *

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

Please select the appropriate age range *

- 24-29
- 30-35
- 36-40
- Other

Do you follow any Influencers on social media who promote health & fitness products/services? *

- Yes
- No

If yes to the above question : What do they predominantly promote? (Can tick multiple)

- Protein powder
- Other supplements
- Gym clothing
- Gym equipment
- Fitness programmes
- Other...

Have you ever purchased a health & fitness product due to an Influencer promoting it? *

Yes

No

If yes, in terms of the consumer decision making process - where did they impact? (can tick multiple)

Introduced you to the product

Highlighted problems in a rival product

Provided information on an alternative product

Acted as the final deciding factor in your purchase decision

N/A

Other...

If yes, when buying products in this industry, what percent of the time would you say is due to an Influencer's recommendation?

10% or less

25%

50%

75%

100%

N/A

Other...

Perceiving the Influencer to be credible/trustworthy is an important factor in their ability to positively influence your purchase decisions *

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Would you trust an Influencer promoting health & fitness products who is known to be promoting several brands at the one time? *

- Yes
- No

It is important to you that there is a logical fit between the Influencer & the health/fitness product when establishing credibility? *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Rank in order, the categories of Influencer which you find most trustworthy/credible. *

	Mega Influencer (...)	Macro Influencer (...)	Micro Influencer (...)	Nano Influencer (1,...)
First choice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Second choice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Third choice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fourth choice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The more physically attractive the influencer, the better they will be at positively impacting your purchase decisions *

- Yes
- No

If an Influencer promoting health & fitness products has a muscular build, would you believe them to have some expertise in the industry? *

- Yes
- No

If yes to the above : Would this expertise increase your level of trust in the Influencer?

- Yes
- No
- N/A

If an Influencer promoting health & fitness products has a qualification in the area, would your trust in them increase? *

- Yes
- No

In terms of trusting the Influencer in this industry, which of the following is more important to you? *

- Muscular build
- Qualification

Rank the following on what would lead to you trusting an Influencer promoting health & fitness products *

	Physical attract...	Large number ...	Expertise	Qualification	Logical fit (Infl...
First choice	<input type="radio"/>				
Second choice	<input type="radio"/>				
Third choice	<input type="radio"/>				
Fourth choice	<input type="radio"/>				
Fifth choice	<input type="radio"/>				

In your own words, what are some of the factors that would cause you to distrust an Influencer promoting health & fitness products? *

Long-answer text
