

What Singaporeans think about Social Media Influencers

Social Media Influencers have attracted more attention than ever over the past 12 months. On the one hand their popularity is becoming more widely acknowledged, especially after events such as the boxing match between KSI and Joe Weller (which has drawn an audience of around 20 million viewers both live and after the event). On the other, bad behaviour from some has drawn huge criticism across the board (such as accusations towards Daryl Aiden Yow of claiming others' photos as his own).

Given these events, how relevant, if at all, are Social Media Influencers to Singaporeans today? And, for the brands that support them, how cautious are Singaporean consumers on the endorsements made by their favourite stars?

PRCA and YouGov have come together to look at just this. We have surveyed a representative sample of Singaporean consumers in order to:

- Understand more about how influential they really are, across demographics (age, gender), sectors, and different platforms.
- Test the temperature of Singapore when it comes to an Influencer's endorsement – finding out more about the perceived relationship between the Influencer and the brands they endorse, how their fans would like to see that relationship explained, and the impact between an Influencer's reputation and their relationship.

Method

Results for this whitepaper come from an online survey by YouGov.

In total, 1,056 Singaporean adults were interviewed online between 10th and 13th August 2018. They were sampled and weighted to be representative of the Online Singaporean population. Of these, 429 follow Social Media Influencers.

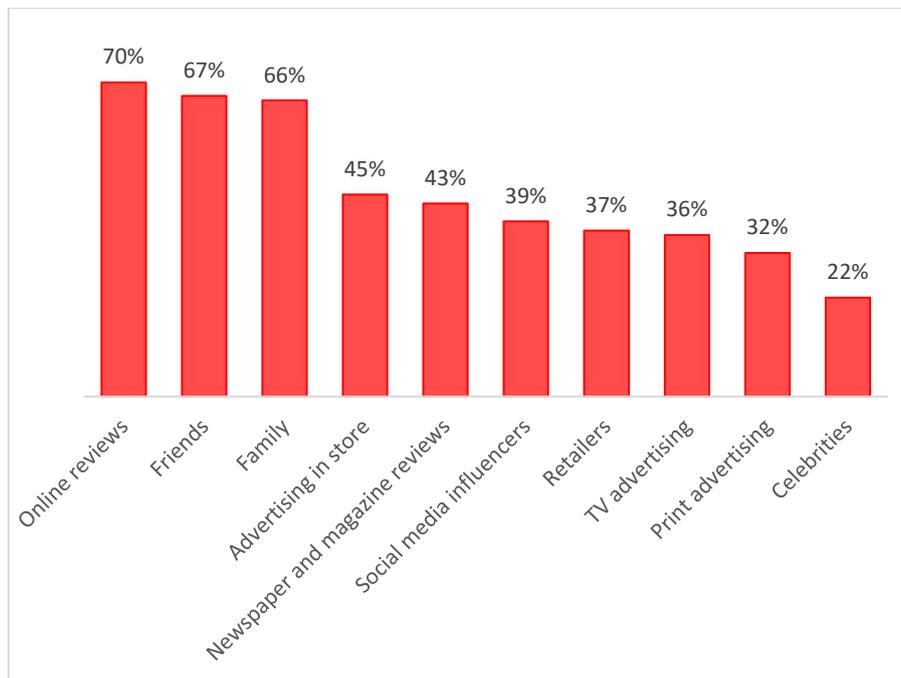
How influential are the Influencers?

Before jumping into *who* is influenced, let's first turn to how wide the impact of Influencers are, compared to other sources.

Asked who or what influences people across a number of sectors, 2 in 5 (39%) of the online Singaporean public said that Social Media Influencers have ever had an impact on a decision to purchase a product.

Putting this into context, Social Media Influencers are reaching fewer people in the population than online reviews (70%), friends & family (67% and 66%), in-store advertising (45%) and newspaper / magazine reviews (43%).

Influences on purchasing



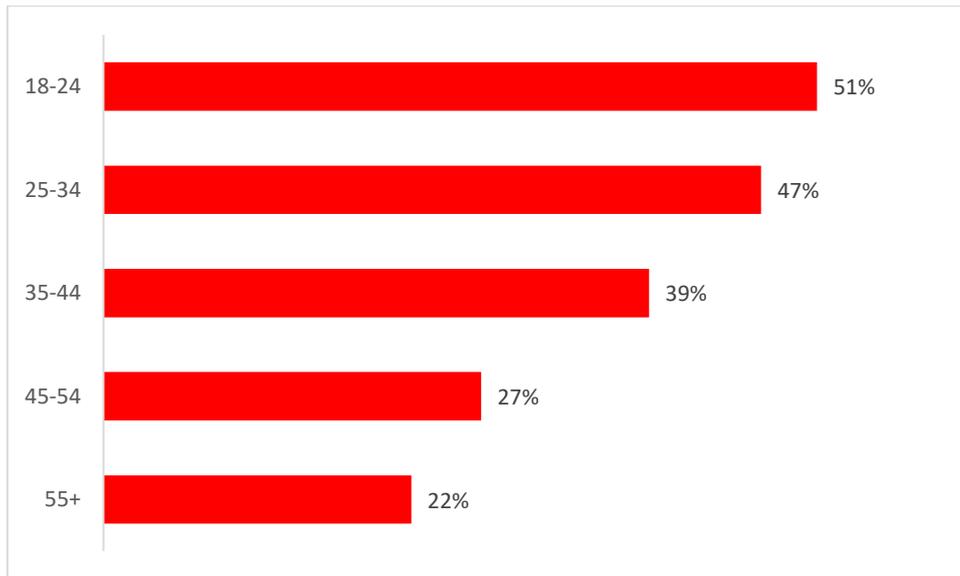
Base: All who have ever purchased category, n=380 (Automotive) – 1,029 (Groceries)

Question: Which of the following people or things have ever influenced your decision to purchase a product at all, or to choose one product over another, in each of the following categories? (Categories combined)

Who is influenced?

As is widely expected though, Influencers have a larger impact on certain age groups – with half of those aged 18-34 having been persuaded by them at some point, dropping to 1 in 5 of those aged 55+.

Influencer persuasion (over any product category) by age



Base: All who have ever purchased category, n=380 (Automotive) – 1,029 (Groceries)

Question: Which of the following people or things have ever influenced your decision to purchase a product at all, or to choose one product over another, in each of the following categories? (Categories combined)

Women are also more likely to have been persuaded by Influencers across any product type – 46% having been so compared with 37% of men.

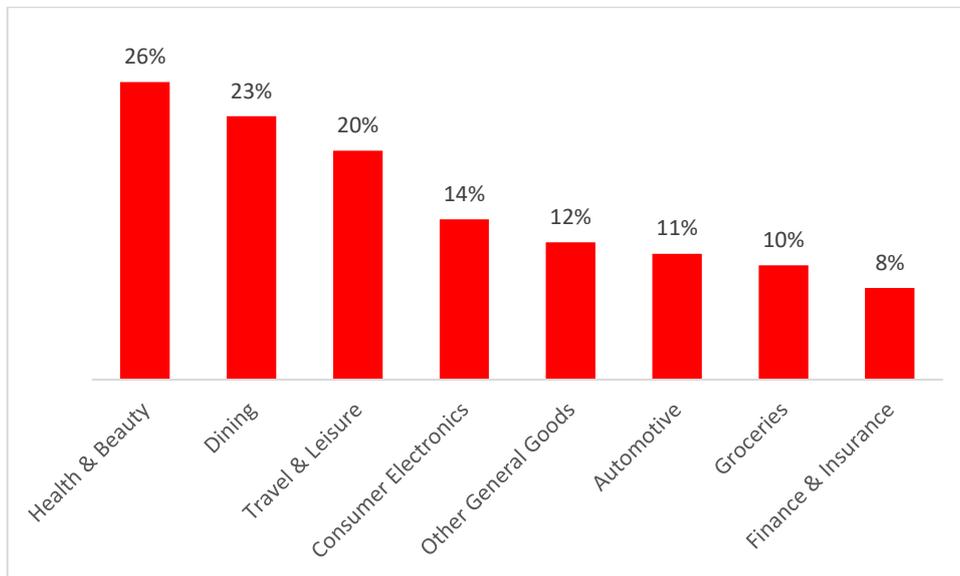
Do Influencers cross all product types?

As with Influencers having more sway over certain demographics - younger people and women – they also have a stronger hold over certain product types.

Those who had ever purchased a category were asked what has ever influenced their decision. Purchasers of Health & Beauty, Dining and Travel & Leisure are the hottest categories for Influencers, with 1 in 5 or more having ever been persuaded.

On the flip side, Influencers have had less persuasion (possibly due to a lack of trying) over consumers of the more mundane – Finance & Insurance and Groceries for example.

Influencer persuasion by product category



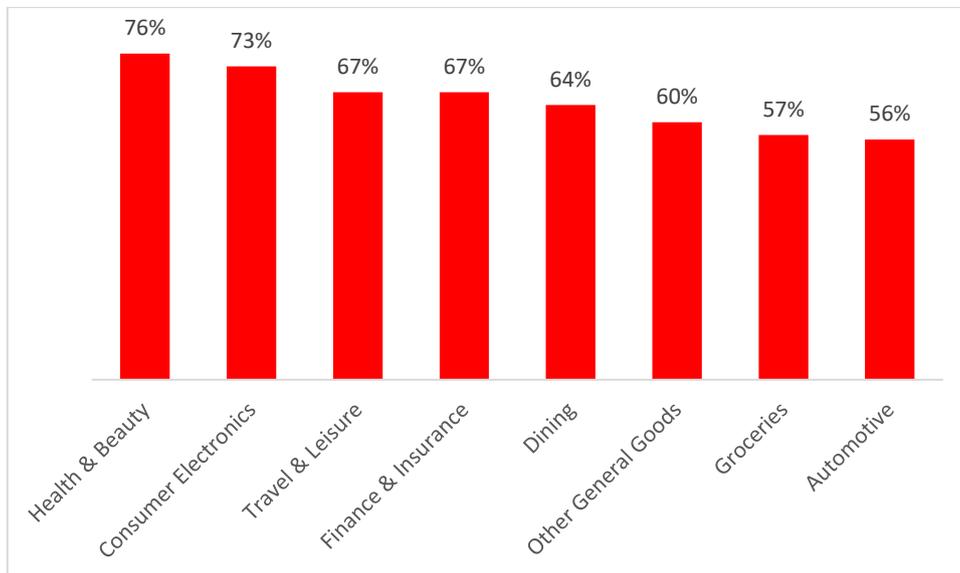
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Question: Which of the following people or things have ever influenced your decision to purchase a product at all, or to choose one product over another, in each of the following categories?

The amount of importance Singaporeans put on Influencers' recommendations also varies by product type. Those who have ever been influenced in a category were asked how important or unimportant Influencer recommendations are.

As with the reach of Influencers above, Health & Beauty comes out top with 3 in 4 consumers who have been influenced stating their endorsements are somewhat or very important. Interestingly though, Consumer Electronics, which ranks 4th in terms of how far reaching the influence is, ranks almost as high as Health & Beauty here, with those being influenced very likely to rate that influence as very or somewhat important.

Importance of Influencer endorsement, by product



Base: All who have ever been influenced by a Social Media Influencer by category, n=38 (Automotive) – 238 (Health & Beauty)

Question: How important or unimportant are recommendations by social media influencers on your choice of products to purchase in each of the following categories? (Net: Somewhat / Very important)

Which platforms work best?

With a growing number of social media channels, and digital budgets which will never grow at the same rate, which channels should brands and agencies invest in to get the most out?

Facebook, Instagram and YouTube are the top 3 channels that are followed by those following influencers across all sectors but interestingly, the order of importance between these three changes.

The wisest investment across the board seems to be Facebook, however, with the notable exceptions of Health & Beauty and Travel and Leisure – the two more photogenic categories having more of a following on Instagram.

Top 3 platforms for following Influencers, by product

	Facebook	Instagram	YouTube
Health & Beauty	52%	62%	57%
Consumer Electronics	61%	42%	58%
Travel & Leisure	57%	61%	56%
Automotive	56%	38%	59%
Groceries	56%	40%	41%
Dining	58%	56%	45%
Finance & Insurance	51%	20%	31%
Other General Goods	51%	44%	45%

Base: All who have ever been influenced by a Social Media Influencer by category, n=38 (Automotive) – 238 (Health & Beauty)

Question: Still thinking about social media influencers across these product types. Which of the following platforms do you follow social media influencers?

What do Singaporeans think about paid endorsements?

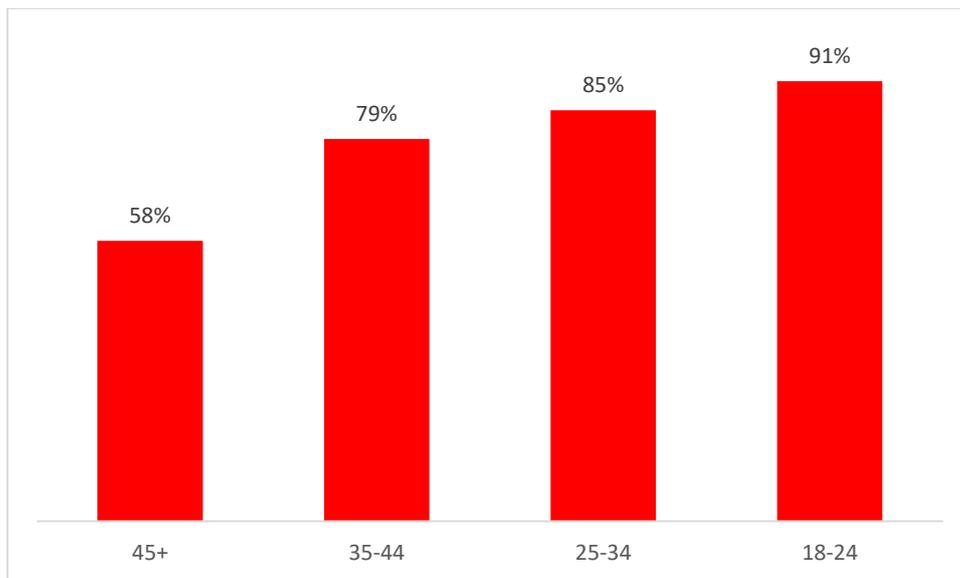
Now knowing who follows influencers over which categories – and how important their endorsements are over different categories and channels, it is now time to turn to the endorsements themselves – whether Singaporeans are aware that endorsements may be paid and – more importantly – whether they care.

Are Singaporeans aware of paid endorsements?

Singaporean consumers are savvy. And this only increases among the younger age groups.

Of those who follow Influencers, the vast majority – 83% - are aware that they are often paid by a company to endorse their products. This is highest among the youngest group, with 91% of 18-24s aware before taking the survey falling to 58% of those aged 45+.

Awareness that endorsements can be paid, by age



Base: All aware that Influencer endorsements can be paid or sponsored by a brand, by age, n=55 (45+) – 160 (25-34)

Question: Influencers on social media are often paid by a company to endorse their products, or post content they have created. Before taking this survey, were you aware of this?

Women are also more likely to be aware of this (86% compared with 78% of men).

Does it bother them?

On the whole, Singaporean Influencer followers aren't *hugely* concerned about the paid endorsements, but there is some level of concern apparent.

Just 1 in 6 (18%) say they are bothered a lot by paid endorsements among their Influencers, a further quarter (27% say they are not bothered at all leaving the majority (55%) stating they are a little bothered.

There are discrepancies with age again, with those aged 18-24 most likely to say they are not bothered at all (35%), while those aged 35-44 are the most likely to be bothered a lot by it (27%).

How should Influencers approach paid endorsements?

While they may be split about the extent to which paid endorsements bother their followers, Singaporeans are united that their Influencers should be open and transparent about the endorsements.

More than 4 in 5 followers think that, regardless of whether an endorsement is paid for or not, it is important that:

- Influencers only endorse brands that they genuinely trust and believe in themselves (88%)
- They are transparent about their relationship with brands that are paying or sponsoring them (87%)
- They clearly state when their relationships are paid for / sponsored (84%)

How does reputation impact an Influencer's power?

With some rocky press over the past year with a number of Influencer's hitting the headlines due to racist comments or inappropriate behaviour, has this had an impact on the following of Influencers from Singaporeans?

The majority (71%) seem to think it has – agreeing that in the past 12 months they have become warier of the content of Influencers' posts. Interestingly, this remains around the same level regardless of age of the follower. It is stronger among women, however, with 3 in 4 (76%) agreeing compared with 2 in 3 (65%) men.

Brands should be aware of the reputation of their intended Influencer as well. 3 in 4 (76%) followers also agreed that the reputation of the Influencer can impact their intention to purchase a product their endorsing – so if the reputation of the Influencer turns sour, that could have a direct impact on the brands they endorse.