

# Research Portfolio - Influencer Marketing Project



**12/05/2023 // Prepared by Samuel Gray**

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# Executive Summary

This Influencer marketing project seeks to explore the potential of leveraging influencers to connect with Gen Z consumers effectively. The primary objective is to measure the impact of influencer marketing on Gen Z's brand awareness, attitudes toward products and brands, as well as their likelihood to make a purchase. To achieve this, a multi-faceted research approach was implemented, involving secondary data, qualitative studies, and an influencer survey.

The secondary data research focused on LeBron James, a prominent influencer and sports star. LeBron utilizes social media to help build his brand and influence markets. Insights from this analysis highlighted the significant financial impact of LeBron's collaborations with large companies, particularly Nike. Notably, LeBron James contributed a substantial amount to Nike's revenues. Emphasizing the lucrative nature of influencer partnerships. The secondary research uncovered the authenticity and personal connection that LeBron establishes through his social media. In turn, it showcases a unique approach to influencer marketing.

Qualitative research sought to find factors influencing individuals' decisions to follow social media influencers. With 19 participants predominantly female, the study revealed that authenticity, relatability, and professionalism were key factors in influencer-consumer relationships. Participants expressed a preference for entertaining and informative content, shedding light on the impact of influencer authenticity and relatability on consumer behavior. The findings emphasized the role of influencers in creating genuine connections with their audience.

The survey involved 208 participants and aimed to understand the factors influencing Gen Z's purchase intention and interest in products promoted by influencers. The survey revealed high internal consistency for key constructs, indicating that influencers perceived as expert, enjoyable, inspiring, and authentic garnered more attention. This helped prove our secondary research findings of high value in authenticity and personal connection. Other notable findings included Gen Z's preference for entertaining content and a statistically significant difference in purchase intention between genders. The survey also provided valuable insights into content characteristics influencing Gen Z consumers' purchase decisions.

# Secondary Data Research

**How LeBron James Has Used Social Media to Build his Brand and Influence Markets.**

LeBron James is one of the most influential people in modern day sports. With 4 NBA championships, 4 NBA MVP awards, 158 million followers on Instagram and millions of more followers across various platforms, LeBron has proven to be one of the most influential all stars of the 21st century. However, how well does LeBron bring in cash for these sizable companies dishing out millions, even billions of dollars to the superstar?

Nike signed with LeBron James back in 2003 right after he got drafted. After LeBrons success in the league for over 20 years he was signed to an extension for more than 1 billion dollars earlier this year which is one of the largest deals to be announced in history between a company and an influencer. Shortly after his signing Nike decided to start the LeBron brand, similar to the Jordan brand. The LeBron brand helps to make 11% of what Nike makes from the Jordan brand. However, the LeBron brand makes around \$347,222 every 5 hours which is over \$1.5 million a day. These are massive numbers in terms of the contract they have with the superstar. This means that LeBron is making approximately \$550 million a year for the company and only receiving around \$30 million and an incentives deal based on in-game performance.

With a brief look at LeBron's instagram page today, it blends content of his down-to-earth day-to-day and celebrity life seamlessly. Examples of this include posts about his wife's personal skincare brand, to posts about his Lobos 1707 tequila, a Lifewtr collaboration, or him wearing his newest shoes. A key to LeBron's success is that he's not afraid to use his platform, and use it personally. LeBron fans aren't just interested in LeBron either, they also interact and see LeBron as a father, a music fan, a husband, and a hard worker. They buy into him not only as a brand or celebrity, but also as a person with normal interests and proclivities. Very few celebrities can boast collaborations with Nike, Coca-Cola, and Beats by Dre while maintaining the down-to-earth authenticity and realness factor of a regular person.

In an article posted by Forbes back in 2019 titled “LeBron James’s 54 Million Instagram Followers Get A ‘Master Class’ In Authentic Leadership” by Carmine Gallo, it talks about how LeBron’s massive Instagram following has been his most useful weapon in getting his global following as huge as it is today. What a lot of experts believed when this article came out was how authentic his posts were. “That’s all me, right from my phone,” he told New York Times, Which is something that is rare in today’s social media world. A lot of the world’s top social media influencers are told a lot of what to share to the world by others as well as many of their Instagram and TikTok posts are a lot of advertisements. LeBron, come to think of it, doesn’t really have many ads on his personal pages, which is something I think is pretty unique and authentic. He obviously is a celebrity with many endorsements that don’t go unnoticed outside of his personal pages. That also doesn’t mean LeBron is the only one that runs his social media like this, but he is certainly one of the top five most notable ones. He shares pictures of his family, teammates and close friends, even drinking tequila and wine. The point is he is giving his huge fanbase a look into his day to day life and it is just another way for him to connect with and continuously expand his fanbase.

A couple of other great and unique things LeBron does to enhance his marketability is how he embraces his image. Everyone around the world recognizes both the logo and who people refer to as “King James” and one of his consistent core messages is “Inspire Greatness”. With him being the best player in our recent generation, he has inspired millions upon millions. He also always preaches that he’s more than just a basketball player, which at times has gotten some backlash. But overall, He’s not wrong. “The Philanthropist, The Businessman, The Man, and The Athlete.” He uses each of these titles and pushes each to a certain degree on his social media as well as some of his endorsement deals.



One big difference you'll see between many secondary data, especially with this specific topic, is that a lot of articles can be very biased. For example, The article "Badass Brand Breakdown: LEBRON JAMES" is one that was referenced here and the first sentence is literally, "So, let's get this out of the way: LeBron James is my favorite basketball player." Immediately you know you are going to get extremely heavy bias. Granted, a lot of what was said in the article was accurate with evidence, but compared to the Forbes article, it is far less neutral. This is a problem you can run into commonly when conducting secondary research, especially one where the topic in choice has a lot of different viewpoints from many different perspectives. LeBron obviously has many fans, but there are also millions who don't like him whatsoever for a variety of different reasons, and then there are also ones that are nurtural about him.

In conclusion, LeBron James is a modern American icon who has been able to have massive endorsements and partnerships on social media, while still being trusted and authentic. There are also many other reasons as to why he is so successful though, including his massive reach, engagement, his influence beyond sports, consistency, and his involvement with current trends. He has utilized these strengths to his advantage to build a media empire that will likely be large enough to expand to his children, who are rising basketball talents themselves.



The sample consisted of 19 participants, predominantly female (78.95%), and a smaller male participation (21.05%). The survey revealed that a significant portion of the participants (84.21%) had been influenced to buy a product by a social media influencer. Amongst the social media platforms, Instagram was the most popular coming in at about 95% of participants following influencers on the platform. However, TikTok (73.68%) and Twitter (42.1%) also had large followings. This shows that there is a diverse social media following that participants engage in. Finally, the analysis shows that on a daily basis our participants engaged in social media around 3-4 hours (47.37%) or, 1-2 hours (31.58%).

# Qualitative Research

For Q4, in response to; “What are the qualities you look for when you follow a social media influencer?”, participants widely respected several key themes when choosing to engage and follow social media influencers. Authenticity was a significant factor for 19.57% of participants, who valued influencers who were genuine, honest and trustworthy. In turn, Relatability and similarity were major factors for 17.39% of participants, who sought influencers with similar interests and styles. Positivity (19.57%) and Humor (17.39%) were also highly respected qualities amongst participants. However, the most common theme was professionalism (26.09%).

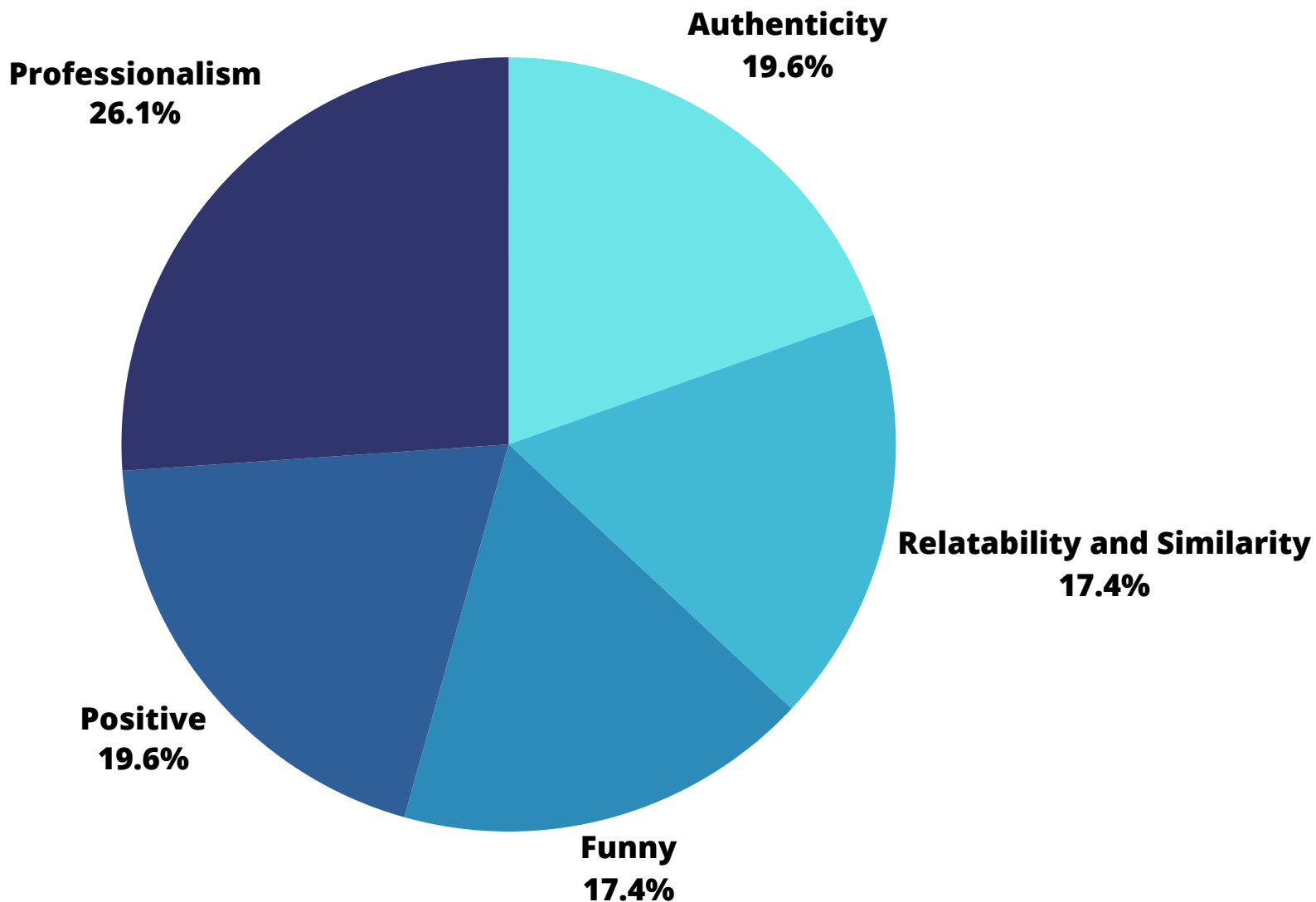
For Q5, in response to; “What content do you enjoy viewing from the social media influencers?”, participants revealed that their preferences for specific types of content from social media influencers. Entertaining and interactive content (33.33%) was the most popular category, showing that respondents like interacting with funny engaging content, such as stories and games. Informative content (25%) was also highly valued, indicating participants appreciation of tutorials, DIY projects, tips, and recipes. Day in my life content (16.67%), product-oriented content (16.67%), Discount codes (16.67%), all had equal importance. Finally, Collaboration-themed content (2.78%) seemed to have the least amount of interest.

Overall, the analysis revealed an inter-rater reliability of 84.21% for Q4 and a 82.46% for Q5. This indicated a substantial agreement between coders. These statistics highlight the accuracy and findings of our survey and surely help to prove the reliability and importance of these common themes.



# Qualitative Research

## Influencer Characteristics: Results



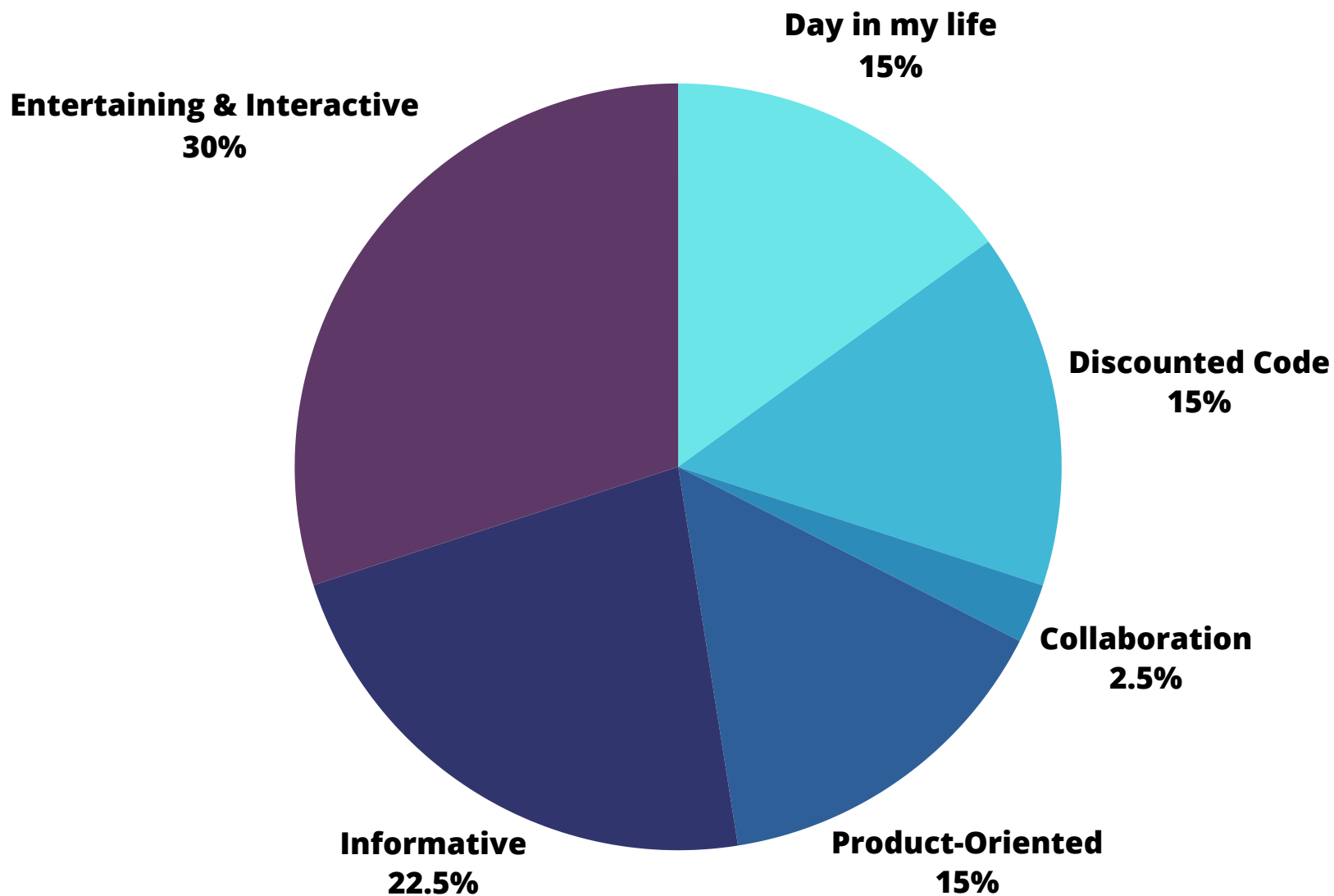
# Qualitative Research

## Characteristics of Influencer: Results

Question 4: What are the qualities you look for when you follow a social media influencer?			
Category	Frequency & Percentage	Description	Substantiating Example
Theme 1:Authenticity	Frequency = 9 Percentage = 19.57%	Influencers who are trustworthy, real, honest, and genuine, and who produce wholesome, original content.	"I tend to dislike influencerswho seem disingenuous or'fake'." "I look for genuine content, no facetune or photoshop."
Theme 2:Relatability & Similarity	Frequency = 8 Percentage = 17.39%	Influencer who sharessimilar interest, style, age,and other demographics to the follower, and whom followers can relate themselves to.	"Same interest or values, if we have similar style." "I look for someone who can connect with me. I look for someone who is around the same age as me or older..."
Theme 3:Funny	Frequency = 8 Percentage = 17.39%	Influencers who are humourous, funny, or who like to produce entertaining content.	"Be dynamic, funny and entertaining." "Fun and entertaining but not too crazy "
Theme 4:Positive	Frequency = 9 Percentage = 19.57%	Influencers who are upbeat and like to produce positive, and aspirational content.	"...kind to their followers, uses their platform to bring awareness to current issues" "...advocate for healthy living, inspirational"
Theme 5:Professionalism	Frequency = 12 Percentage = 26.09%	Influencers who produce high-quality content and communicate well with their followers.	"...with good communication, and decent content editing and producing."

# Qualitative Research

## Types of Content: Results



# Qualitative Research

## Types of Content: Results

Question 5: What content do you enjoy viewing from the social media influencers?

Category	Frequency & Percentage	Description	Substantiating Example
Theme 1:Day in my life	Frequency = 6Percentage = 16.67%	Content that people shareabout their daily life, such as vlogs and day in the life videos.	"I enjoy seeing quick day in my life.""The influencers I follow post about their everyday life or home decor ideas."
Theme 2:Discounted code	Frequency = 2Percentage = 16.67%	Content that includes a promotional incentive like discounted code.	"When they offer discount codes as well as product, they find helpful to areas I am interested in."
Theme 3:Collaboration	Frequency = 1Percentage = 2.78%	Content that includes a collaboration between influencers and brands.	"I enjoy collaborations between influencers and brands..."
Theme 4:Product-oriented	Frequency = 6Percentage = 16.67%	Content that promotes products or helps viewer to get a better look at a product such as product reviews and shopping hauls.	"I also am influenced by Tik Toks or youtube videos showing hauls or new products I may want to buy or wouldn't have been exposed to otherwise. "
Theme 5:Informative	Frequency = 9Percentage = 25%	Content that are informative and educational such as tutorials, DIY, tips, recipes, etc.	"...informative tips and tricks."
Theme 6:Entertaining & Interactive	Frequency = 12Percentage = 33.33%	Content that are funny, entertaining, interactive, and etc.	"I enjoy the content that is interactive, such as stories.""Usually montages of funny things and games."

# Quantitative Research: Influencer Survey Descriptive Statistics

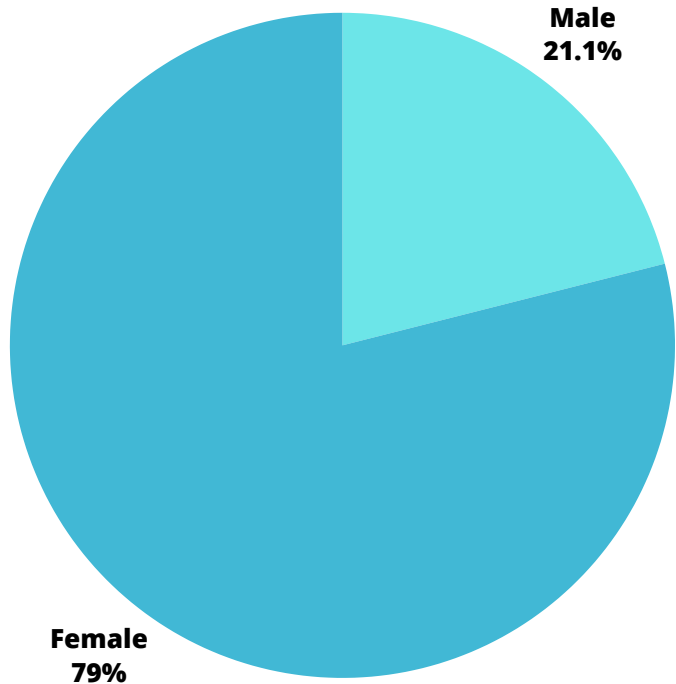
In this study, a total of 208 participants from MKT 340 sessions were surveyed to figure out the factors influencing Gen Z's purchase intention and interest in products promoted by social media influencers. The sample successfully passed initial screening questions, providing a proven dataset for analysis. The sample demographics include a well balanced gender distribution, with 55.29% male and 44.71% female respondents. The majority of participants identified as White (88.46%), with diverse representation in other ethnic categories. Educational backgrounds vary, with 91.35% having some college education, and the remainder being high school graduates and postgraduates. The survey covered a range of social media platforms, with high engagement on Instagram (89.42%) and YouTube (46.63%). The participants predominantly spent 1 to 2 hours (38.94%) on social media daily and followed 1 to 10 influencers (54.81%).

The reliability of the measurement constructs was evaluated through Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The results indicate high internal consistency for key constructs, with expertise scoring  $\alpha = 0.93$ , enjoyability  $\alpha = -1.12$ , inspiration  $\alpha = 0.95$ , authenticity  $\alpha = 0.97$ , and similarity  $\alpha = 0.88$ . Descriptive statistics reveal that participants generally perceive influencers as highly expert (Mean = 4.21, SD = 0.06) and enjoyable (Mean = 4.04, SD = 0.07). The constructs of inspiration (Mean = 4.14, SD = 0.06), authenticity (Mean = 3.94, SD = 0.15), and similarity (Mean = 3.74, SD = 0.06) also received well rounded ratings. These findings suggest that respondents value influencers who exhibit expertise, entertain, inspire, and convey authenticity. Additional analyses on specific content types indicate varying levels of engagement, with entertaining content receiving the highest mean rating (Mean = 4.38, SD = 0.06). Overall, these insights provide a much better understanding of the influencers' impact on Gen Z's perceptions and preferences.

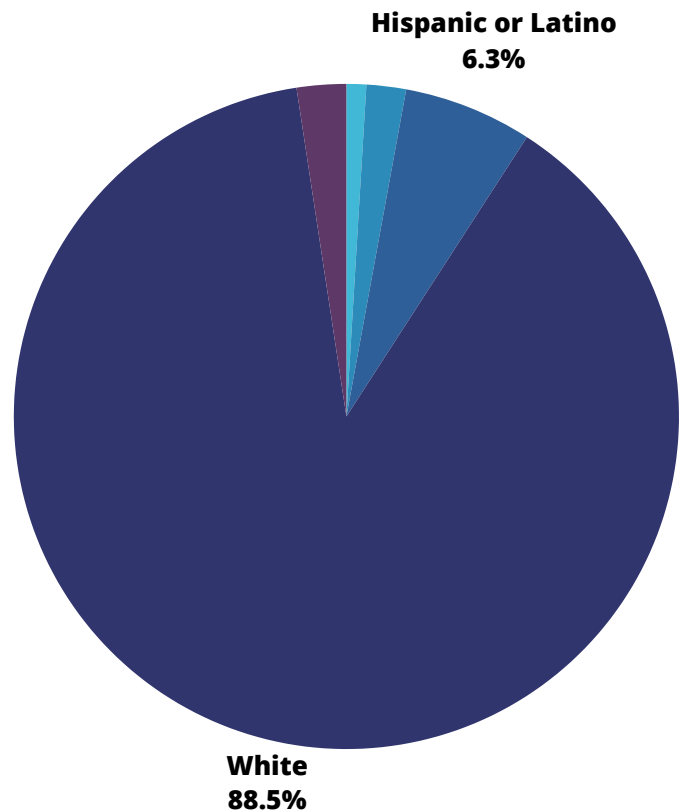


# Influencer Survey Descriptive Stats

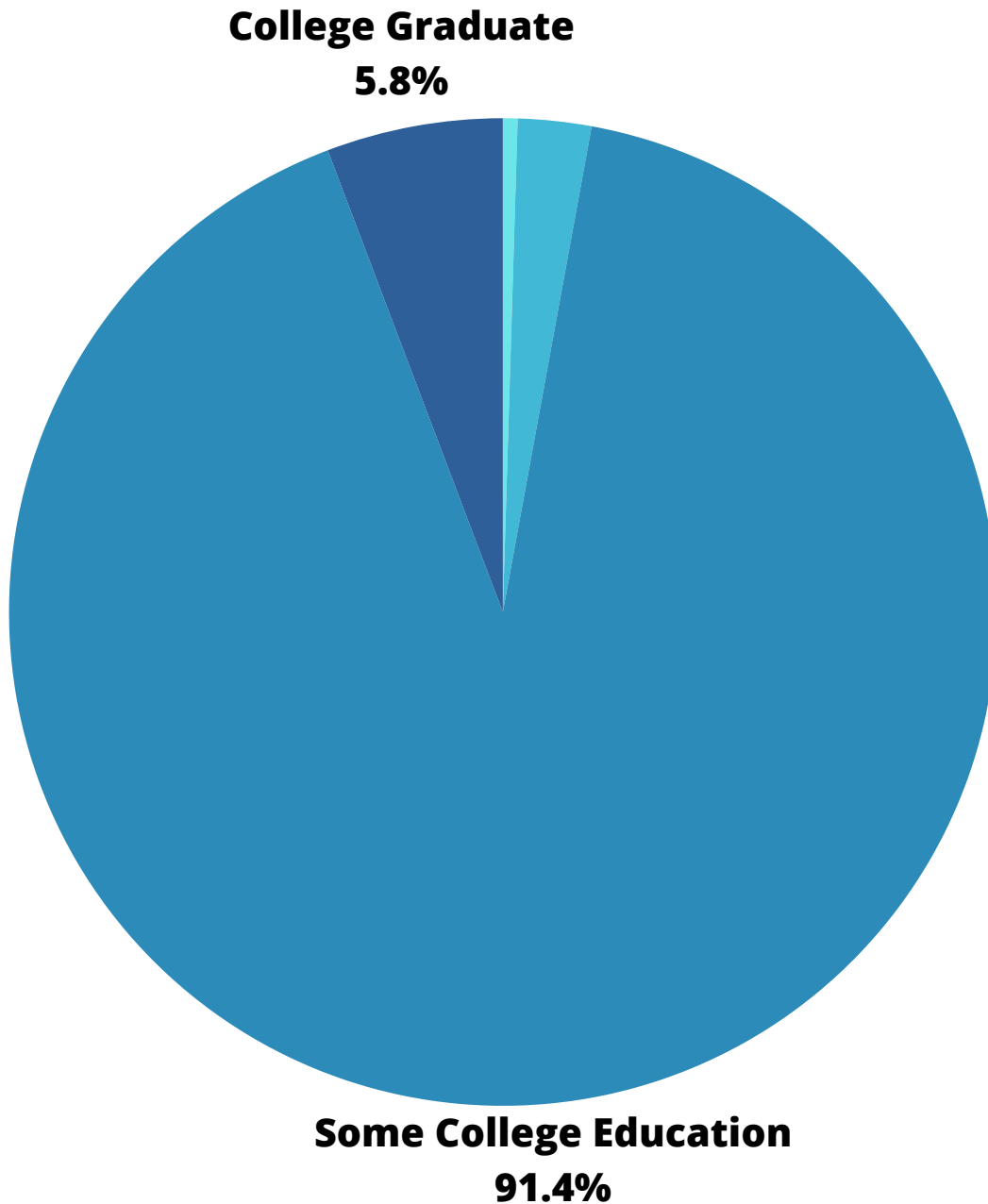
Gender



Ethnicity

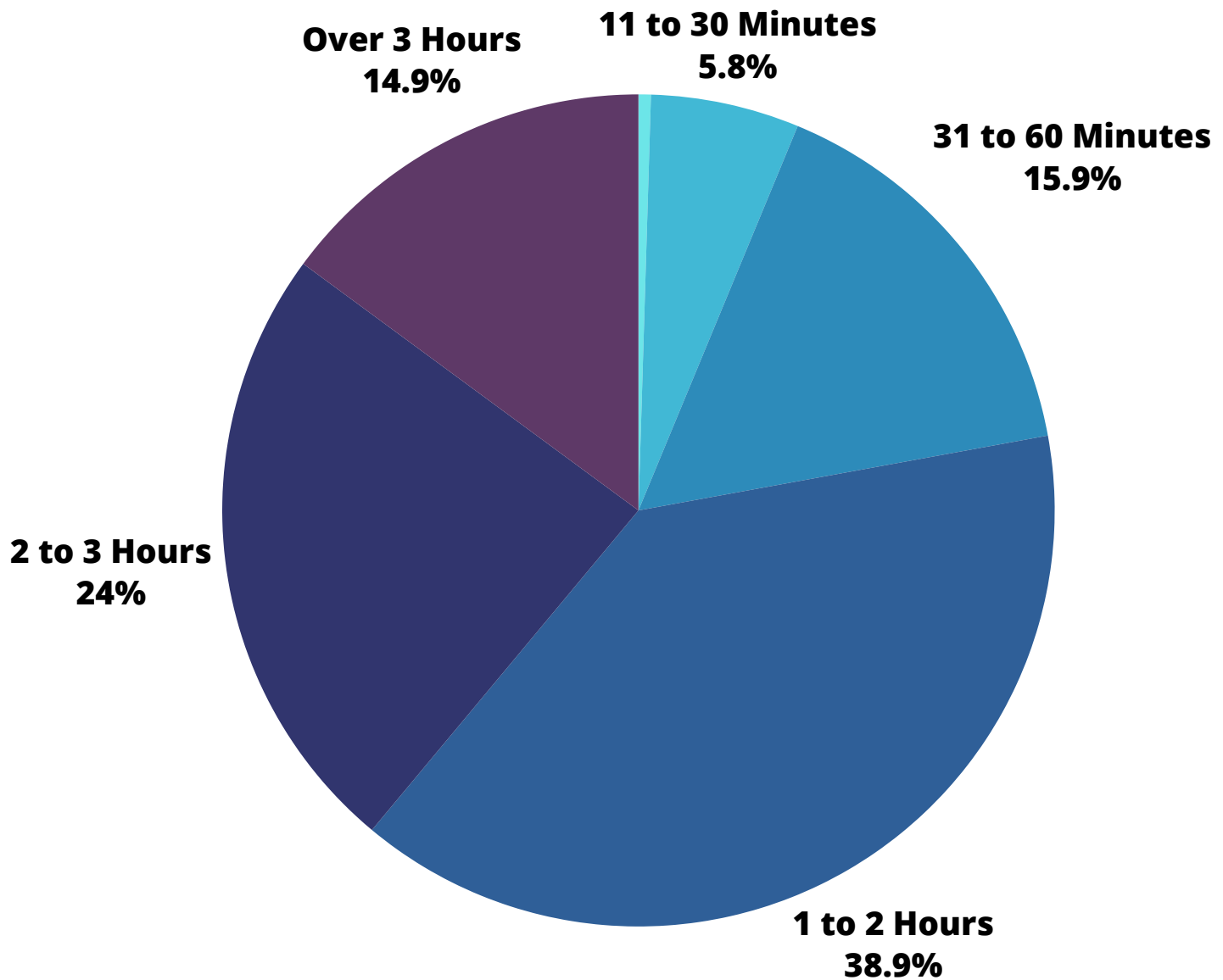


# Influencer Survey Descriptive Stats



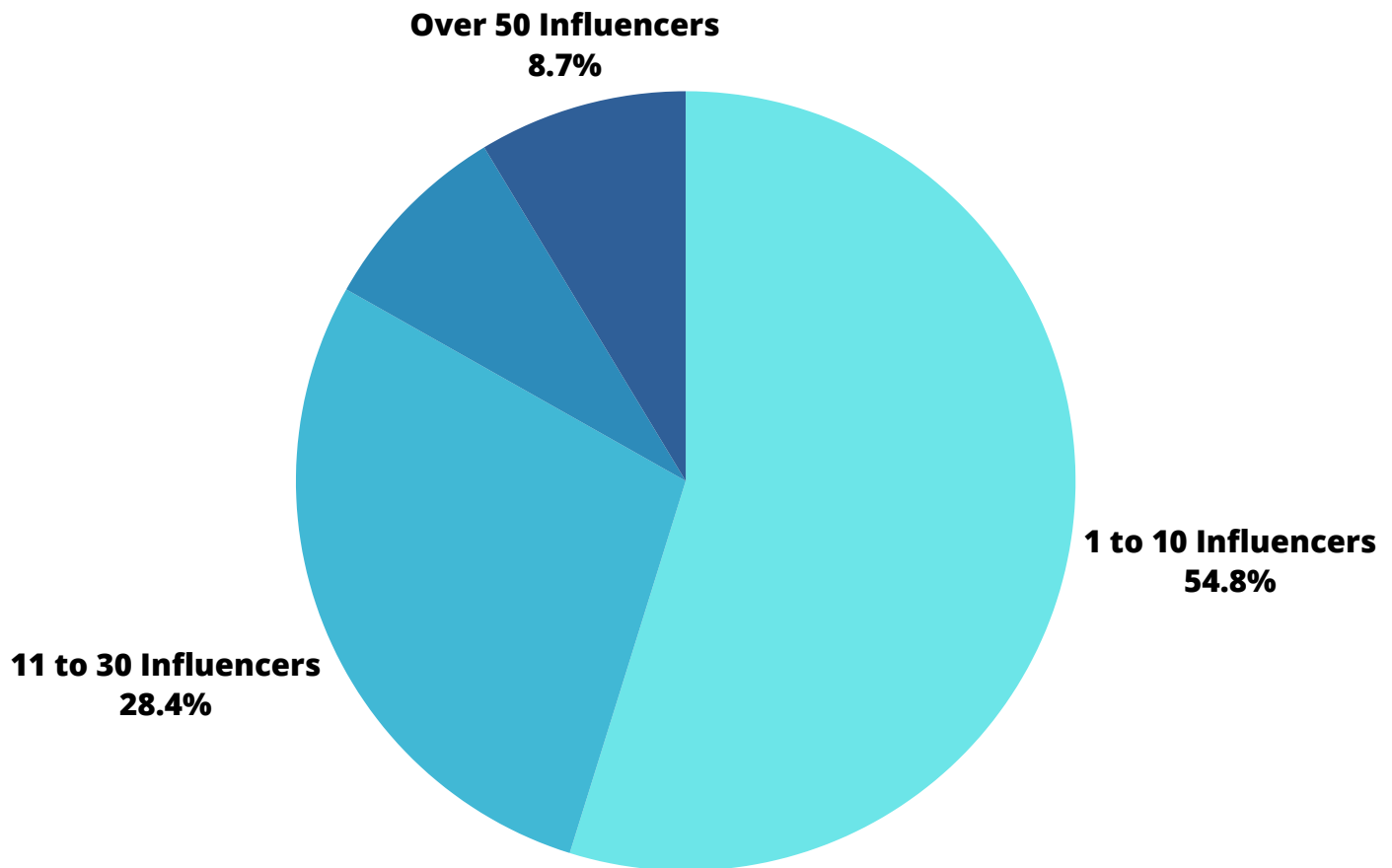
Education

# Influencer Survey Descriptive Stats



Time Spent On  
Social Media

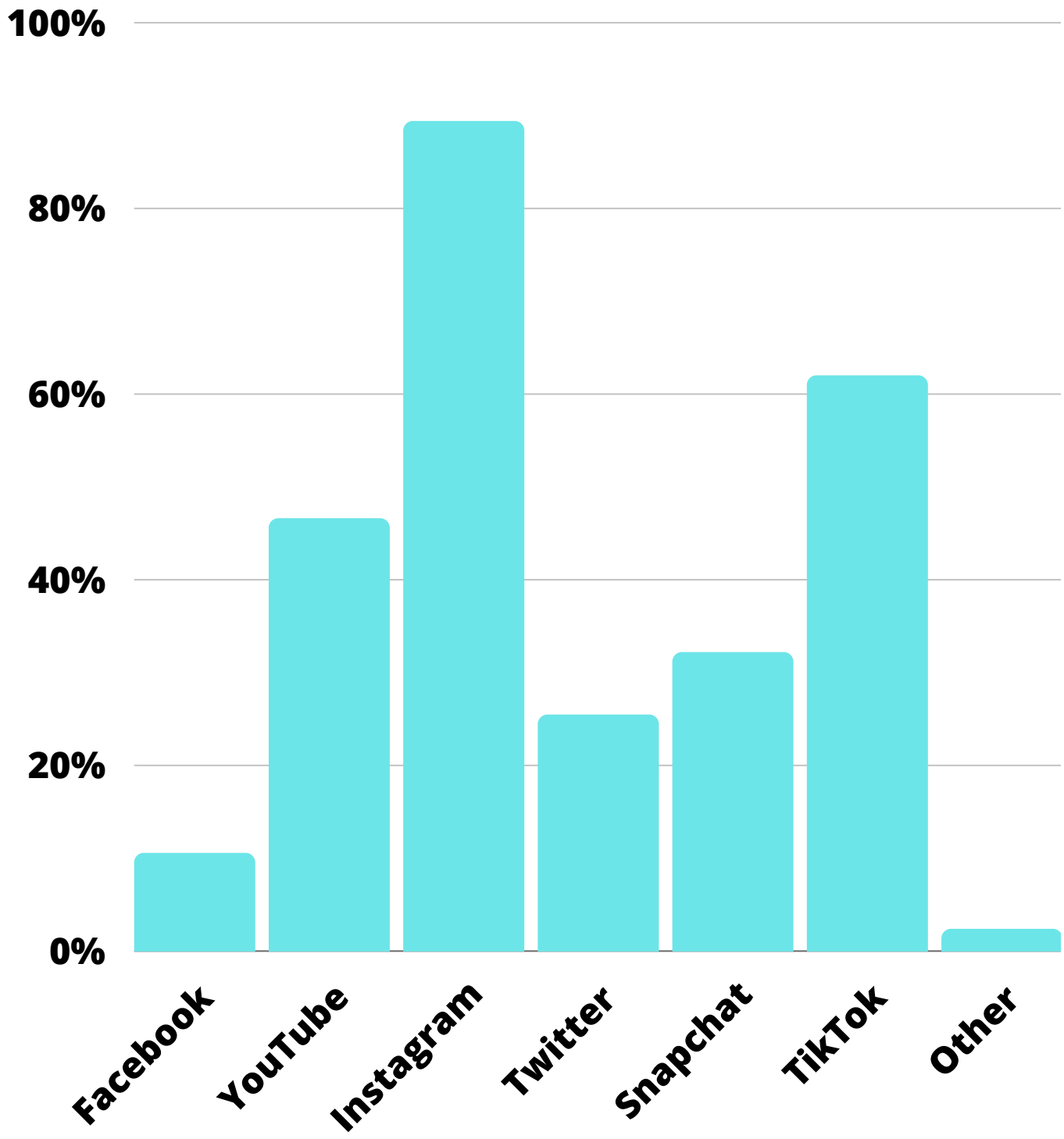
# Influencer Survey Descriptive Stats



Number of  
Influencers Followed

# Influencer Survey Descriptive Stats

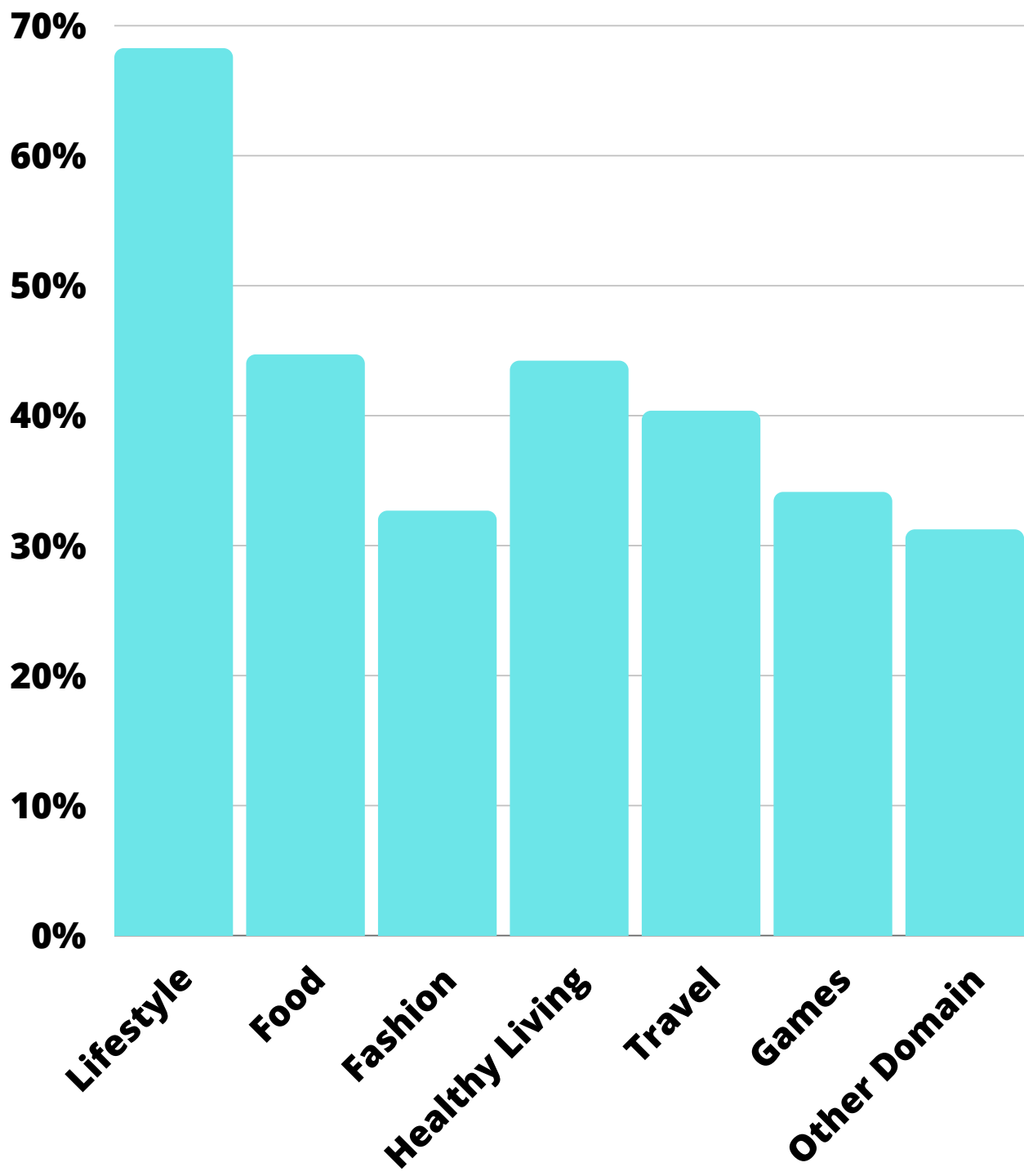
Social Media Platforms  
Used to Follow Influencer





# Influencer Survey Descriptive Stats

## Domain of Influencers Followed



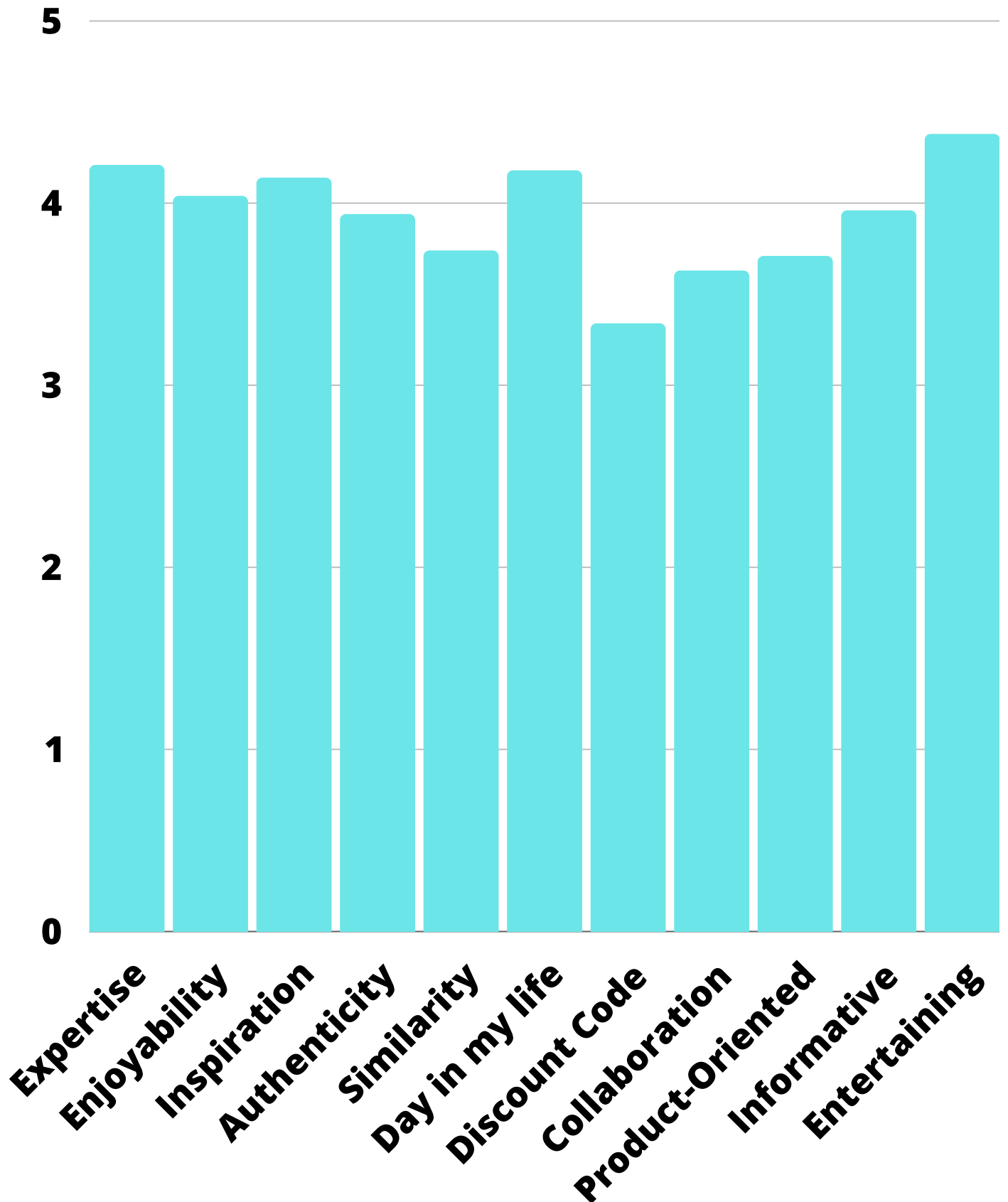
# Scales Reliability for the Influencer Characteristics Constructs

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ )
<b>Expertise: Influencers who are skillful and knowledgeable in producing high-quality content and communicate well with their followers.</b>	
When looking at [influencer name]'s content, I find he/she is an expert.When looking at [influencer name]'s content, I find he/she is knowledgeable.When looking at [influencer name]'s content, I find he/she is competent.	0.93
<b>Enjoyability: Influencers who are hilarious, funny, enjoyable, or who like to produce entertaining content.</b>	
I find [influencer name] funny.I find [influencer name] hilarious.	-1.12
<b>Inspiration: Influencers whose taste, style, and lifestyle are inspiring, or who are upbeat and like to produce positive, and aspirational content</b>	
[influencer name] intrigues me with new ideas.[influencer name] broadens my horizon.[influencer name] inspires me to discover something new.	0.95
<b>Authenticity: Influencers who are true to oneself or to others, and implies sincerity, genuineness, truthfulness, and originality.</b>	
I find [influencer name] dependable.I find [influencer name] honest.I find [influencer name] reliable.I find [influencer name] sincere.I find [influencer name] trustworthy.	0.97
<b>Similarity: Influencers who have mutual characteristics that people share with them.</b>	
I find [influencer name] to be quite like me.I find [influencer name] to have similar tastes and preferences as me.I find [influencer name] to have a lot in common with me.	0.88

# Descriptive Stats for the Main Constructs

Constructs	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Expertise	4.21	0.06	1	5
Enjoyability	4.04	0.07	1	5
Inspiration	4.14	0.06	1	5
Authenticity	3.94	0.15	1.6	5
Similarity	3.74	0.06	1	5
Day in my life content	4.18	0.08	1	5
Discounted code content	3.34	0.09	1	5
Collaboration content	3.63	0.08	1	5
Product-oriented content	3.71	0.09	1	5
Informative content	3.96	0.09	1	5
Entertaining content	4.38	0.06	1	5

# Content Constructs Mean



# Influencer Survey Hypotheses

## **Null Hypothesis 1:**

**There is no significant difference in the purchase intention of Gen Z individuals based on gender for the product promoted by social media influencers.**

## **Null Hypothesis 2:**

**Light users, regular users and heavy users do not affect consumers purchase intention promoted by a social media influencer.**

## **Null Hypothesis 3:**

**There is no significant relationship between the expertise of a social media influencer and Gen Z consumers' purchase intention.**

## **Null Hypothesis 4:**

**There is no significant relationship between the enjoyability of a social media influencer and Gen Z consumers'**

## **Null Hypothesis 5:**

**There is no significant relationship between the inspiration provided by a social media influencer and Gen Z consumers' purchase intention.**

## **Null Hypothesis 6:**

**There is no significant relationship between the authenticity of a social media influencer and Gen Z consumers' purchase intention.**

## **Null Hypothesis 7:**

**There is no significant relationship between the perceived similarity to a social media influencer and Gen Z consumers' purchase intention.**

## **Null Hypothesis 8:**

***There is no significant relationship between the posting of day in my life content by a social media influencer and Gen Z consumers' purchase intention.***

## **Null Hypothesis 9:**

***There is no significant relationship between the posting of discounted code content by a social media influencer and Gen Z consumers' purchase intention.***

## **Null Hypothesis 10:**

***There is no significant relationship between the posting of collaboration content by a social media influencer and Gen Z consumers' purchase intention.***



# Influencer Survey Hypotheses

**Null Hypothesis 11:**

**There is no significant relationship between the posting of product-oriented content by a social media influencer and Gen Z consumers' purchase intention.**

**Null Hypothesis 12:**

***There is no significant relationship between the posting of informative content by a social media influencer and Gen Z consumers' purchase intention.***

**Null Hypothesis 13:**

***There is no significant relationship between the posting of entertaining content by a social media influencer and Gen Z consumers' purchase intention.***

# Hypothesis Testing - T-Test Results

	Male	Female
<b>Mean</b>	<b>2.887</b>	<b>3.226</b>
<b>Variance</b>	<b>1.277</b>	<b>1.394</b>
<b>Observations</b>	<b>115.000</b>	<b>93.000</b>
<b>Hypothesized Mean Difference</b>	<b>0.000</b>	
<b>df</b>	<b>193.000</b>	
<b>P(T&lt;=t) one-tail</b>	<b>0.019</b>	
<b>t Critical one-tail</b>	<b>1.653</b>	
<b>P(T&lt;=t) two-tail</b>	<b>0.037</b>	
<b>t Critical two-tail</b>	<b>1.972</b>	

# Hypothesis Testing - ANOVA Results

<b>Anova Single Factor</b>				
<b>Summary</b>				
	<b>GroupsC ount</b>	<b>Sum</b>	<b>Averag e</b>	<b>Variance</b>
<b>Light users</b>	<b>13.000</b>	<b>40.000</b>	<b>3.077</b>	<b>1.577</b>
<b>Regular users</b>	<b>114.000</b>	<b>347.00 0</b>	<b>3.044</b>	<b>1.370</b>
<b>Heavy users</b>	<b>81.000</b>	<b>245.00 0</b>	<b>3.025</b>	<b>1.324</b>

Source of Variation	SS	dF	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between groups	0.038	2.000	0.019	0.014	0.986	3.040
Within Groups	279.654	205.000	1.364			

# Hypothesis Testing - Regression

## Results (Outcome: Purchase Intention)

<b>Regression Statistics</b>								
<b>Multiple R</b>	<b>0.547</b>							
<b>R Square</b>	<b>0.299</b>							
<b>Adjusted R Square</b>	<b>0.250</b>							
<b>Standard Error</b>	<b>1.011</b>							
<b>Observations</b>	<b>167.000</b>							
<b>ANOVA</b>								
	<b>df</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Significance F</b>			
<b>Regression</b>	<b>11.000</b>	<b>67.620</b>	<b>6.147</b>	<b>6.020</b>	<b>0.000</b>			
<b>Residual</b>	<b>155.000</b>	<b>158.285</b>	<b>1.021</b>					
<b>Total</b>	<b>166.000</b>	<b>225.904</b>						

# Hypothesis Testing - Results

The t-test was implemented to check whether there is a notable difference in the purchase intent of Gen Z individuals based on their gender pertaining to the product marketed by social media influencers. The findings present a t-statistic of -2.098 coupled with a p-value of 0.037 (two-tailed). Upon comparing the p-value with the designated significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ), it becomes obvious that the p-value is less than  $\alpha$ . Therefore, we deny the null hypothesis. This signifies a marked distinction in purchase intention between males and females for the merchandise endorsed through social media influencers.

The ANOVA was conducted to determine whether light users, regular users, and heavy users of social media affect Gen Z consumers' purchase intention on the product promoted by a social media influencer. The results show an F-statistic of 0.014 with a p-value of 0.986. Since the p-value is much greater than  $\alpha$ , we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This implies that there is no significant difference in purchase intention among light users, regular users, and heavy users concerning the product promoted by social media influencers.

The regression analysis aimed to explore relationships between various factors related to social media influencers and content characteristics and Gen Z consumers' purchase intention. The overall regression model is statistically significant (F-statistic = 6.147, p-value = 0.000), indicating that at least one of the independent variables is related to the dependent variable. Looking at individual coefficients, the variables "discounted code content" (p-value = 0.004), "informative content" (p-value = 0.031), and "entertaining content" (p-value = 0.017) are statistically significant. This suggests that these content characteristics significantly influence Gen Z consumers' purchase intention.