

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Impact of social media influencers among youngsters for health supplements

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ABSTRACT

Background: Social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube have become integral in influencing consumer behavior, particularly among younger demographics. Social media influencers, especially those in the health and wellness niche, play a key role in promoting products like dietary supplements. However, concerns about the authenticity of health claims, potential side effects, and the ethical implications of influencer marketing persist. **Aims and Objectives:** The study aimed to explore the impact of social media influencers on young people's perceptions and purchasing behavior for health supplements. Key objectives included evaluating the reliability of social media as a promotional medium and assessing the authenticity of supplements marketed to youngsters. **Materials and Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted over six months with 200 participants aged 18–40 who regularly consume health supplements. Data was collected through online surveys using Google Forms. Inclusion criteria were individuals who use health supplements and were willing to participate, while non-consumers and unwilling participants were excluded. **Results:** The study revealed that 59.7% of respondents found influencers on Instagram and TikTok to be primary promoters of health supplements. While 41.1% admitted influencers' recommendations influenced their purchases, 56.5% preferred consulting healthcare professionals before buying. Concerns such as misleading claims (49.5%) and supplement safety risks like vitamin overdoses (62.4%) were prevalent. Many favored plant-based supplements (51.3%) and sought third-party certifications (56%) for quality assurance. **Conclusion:** Social media influencers effectively promote health supplements but must prioritize transparency and ethical marketing practices. Young consumers value authenticity, preferring medical guidance and verified product claims. Influencer marketing's success hinges on fostering trust and informed decision-making

Keywords: Authenticity, Consumer Behavior, Health Supplements, Social Media Influencers, Transparency

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INTRODUCTION

Particularly among the younger age, social media has revolutionized how people share information, communicate, and make decisions (1). People can interact with a wide range of content, including information about health and wellbeing, on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok, which have become essential to daily life (2).

These influencers market goods, services, and concepts through their platforms, such as health supplements, which are becoming more and more well-liked by young audiences (3). They are useful tools in contemporary marketing methods because of their accessible content, genuineness, and personal

recommendations, but their influence also presents serious issues.

Vitamins, minerals, herbal items, protein powders, and omega-3 fatty acids are among the health supplements that are promoted as instruments to improve health and wellbeing. These goods frequently meet particular health requirements or close nutritional gaps in a person's diet (4). Although using health supplements can be helpful, there are hazards associated with misuse, unregulated use, and excessive consumption, including negative side effects and long-term health problems. Young people's opinions and purchasing decisions about these products have been greatly influenced by social media influencers (5, 6). Numerous influencers

promote the advantages of health supplements on their platforms, frequently fusing promotional content with personal tales. But the growing dependence on influencers to make health-related decisions has sparked concerns about the veracity of their statements, the security of the goods they recommend, and the morality of influencer marketing (7).

Influencers are frequently seen as trustworthy by young consumers, who value their advice more than conventional forms of advertising. Nonetheless, a sizable portion of the populace still places a high value on seeking medical advice from experts (8). This dichotomy draws attention to a crucial weakness in influencer-driven health supplement promotion: the requirement for openness, empirical support, and moral behavior. Influencers may inadvertently mislead their followers and maybe cause harm if they endorse health supplements without having the necessary information or disclosures. This issue emphasizes how crucial it is to control influencer marketing in the health and wellness sector in order to protect consumers and promote wise choices.

This study looks into how young customers' decisions on health supplements are influenced by social media influencers. It aims to assess how influencers affect opinions, purchase choices, and the degree of trust or skepticism surrounding health-related items (3). Promoting ethical norms in influencer-driven marketing is essential as health awareness rises and consumers depend more on social media for health information, enabling them to make informed and safe health decisions.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To determine if social media can serve as the only trustworthy means of promoting health supplements
- To verify the legitimacy of health supplements marketed to youngsters.

Methodology

This cross-sectional study was conducted over a period of six months, focusing on individuals aged 18 to 40 years who regularly consume health supplements. A total of 200 participants, including both males and females, were included in the study. Data collection was carried out through online surveys using Google Forms, ensuring ease of access and widespread participation. Participants were selected based on specific criteria: individuals who actively consumed health supplements and were willing to participate in the study. Individuals who did not use health supplements or were unwilling to participate were excluded. This methodological approach ensured the inclusion of a representative sample of health supplement users while maintaining ethical standards and participant consent throughout the research process.

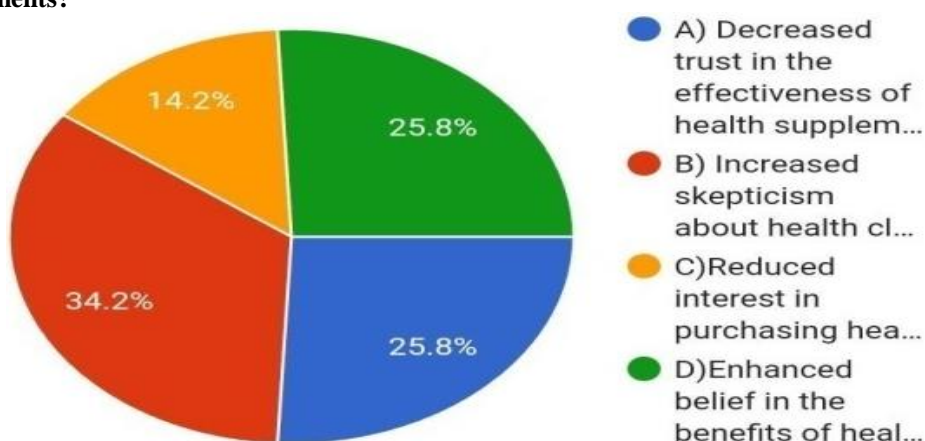
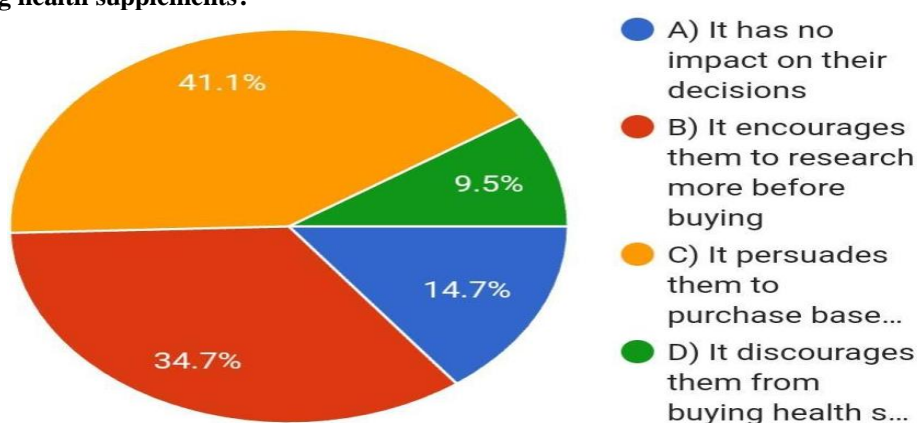
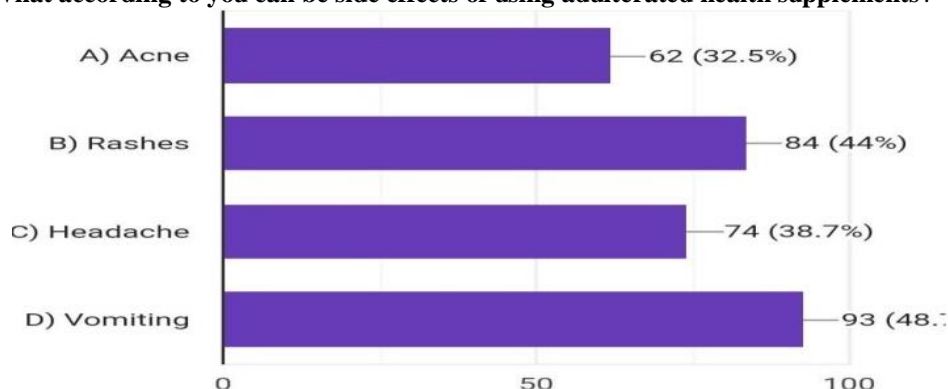
RESULT

The study was conducted with 200 participants, all of whom responded to the survey. The data collected through Google Forms is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Survey Questionnaire on Health Supplement Marketing through Social Media, Including Participant Response options and Percentages

Questions	Options	Age (%)
Some doctors' use social media as influencers nowadays, do you find them more reliable than other popular influencers?	Yes	33.20%
	No	28.40%
	Both are equally reliable	15.80%
	Depends on content	22.60%
Why do u relate to social media influencers choice	Due to lifestyle	24.70%
	Followers count	18.90%
	Due to content	35.30%
	All of the above	21.10%
How do social influencers primarily promote health supplements to youngsters?	Through television advertisements	24.10%
	Through Instagram and TikTok	59.70%
	Through email newsletters	12.60%
	Through billboard ads	3.60%
Which of the following is a concern associated with social influencer marketing of health supplements?	Misleading health claims	49.50%
	Decreased popularity of social media platforms	17.40%
	Enhanced regulatory oversight	13.20%
	Higher cost of health supplements	20%
What should youngsters consider before purchasing health supplements promoted by social influencers?	The cost of the supplements	10.50%
	The influencer's popularity on social media	24.10%
	Consultation with a healthcare professional	56.50%
	Discount offers available online	8.90%
Did you ever experienced side effects on usage of products	Yes	33%
	No	34%
	Not sure	27.70%

Which social media platform you find most reliable?	Instagram YouTube Twitter Whatsapp	23.70% 48.90% 15.30% 12.10%
Health supplements are Animal and plants based. Which one do u prefer?	Animal Based Plant Based Both	12.20% 51.30% 36.50%
Do you check the content of health supplements while buying from the influencers?	Always Never Sometimes Rare	43.20% 18.90% 29.50% 8.40%
What is the primary reason people take health supplements?	To replace meals To address specific nutrient deficiencies To enhance flavor in foods To avoid exercise	16.20% 62.80% 12% 8.90%
Which certification should you look for to ensure the quality of a supplement?	FDA approval NSF International certification Celebrity endorsement Social media popularity	56% 25.70% 8.90% 9.40%
What is a common source of plant-based omega-3 supplements?	Cod liver oil Flaxseeds Beef liver Egg yolk	29.30% 50.80% 9.40% 10.50%
Which of the following is a primary benefit of taking fish oil supplements?	Improves skin color Enhances memory instantly Supports heart health Increases hair growth overnight	16.80% 20.40% 55% 7.90%
When considering a supplement, which is NOT an important factor?	Your specific health needs The brand's reputation The packaging design Third-party testing	21.50% 17.30% 50.30% 11%
What should you do before starting a new supplement regimen?	Research the supplement's benefits and side effects Check with a healthcare provider Read customer reviews All of the above	15.30% 22.60% 11.60% 50.50%
What is a potential risk of taking supplements without professional guidance?	Enhanced flavor of meals Improved skin tone Overdosing on certain vitamins or minerals Spending less on groceries	16.90% 13.20% 62.40% 7.40%
Which supplement is often used for joint health and is sourced from animal bones or skin?	Vitamin C Collagen Magnesium Iron	26.20% 32.10% 24.10% 17.60%
How can you verify the sustainability and ethical sourcing of a supplement?	Check for third-party certifications Look for eco-friendly packaging Read the brand's mission statement All of the above	20% 15.30% 10.50% 54.20%

Graph 1: What is a potential effect of social influencer marketing on youngsters' perceptions of health supplements?**Graph 2: How does social influencer marketing influence the purchasing decisions of youngsters regarding health supplements?****Graph 3: What according to you can be side effects of using adulterated health supplements?**

DISCUSSION

According to the survey, young consumers' opinions and buying habits about health supplements are greatly influenced by social media influencers. Influencers in the healthcare industry were seen as more trustworthy than other influencers, and reliability was mostly influenced by the quality of the content. The most effective venues for promoting health supplements were found to be Instagram and TikTok. Concerns regarding false health claims were voiced by the participants, who also underlined the

significance of certifications, openness, and expert advice prior to buying health supplements.

The results support the original theory that, while social media influencers can effectively promote health supplements, they are not a completely trustworthy source. The research goal of assessing the dependability of influencer marketing was supported by the participants' choice for confirming product authenticity and speaking with medical experts. The findings supported the hypothesis that authenticity and content relevancy are more important than influencer popularity.

The findings are in line with research by Vrontis et al [9], which emphasized the value of third-party certifications and openness in fostering customer trust. This study supports the idea that authenticity is what drives customer engagement by highlighting the importance of content relevance, which is consistent with findings by Argyris et al [10]. The findings of this study are corroborated by De Veirman et al [11], who also pointed out that influencer follower levels are not as important as content quality. However, this study found an increasing dependence on healthcare professionals for health-related decisions, reflecting increased consumer prudence, in contrast to Nathan et al [12], who stated younger consumers might rely too much on social media. Furthermore, Zamil et al [13] echoed his study's findings of skepticism over the efficacy and safety of supplements advertised on social media sites like Instagram. The way that consumer awareness is changing in the digital age is highlighted by this contrast. The safety and legitimacy of health-related items pushed by influencers, as well as the dangers of skin, hair, and nail supplements promoted on Instagram, are major issues despite the advantages of influencer marketing. They warn customers about the possibility of deceptive advertising and stress how crucial it is to carefully consider a product's effectiveness before making a purchase. Similarly, Catalani et al [14]. Describe the perceived dangers and adverse effects of sports supplements sold online using a netnographic analysis. Their research highlights the safety issues with influencer-driven marketing, especially when it comes to performance-enhancing and dietary supplements.

The results imply that although social media influencers have a significant impact on increasing awareness and influencing consumer behavior, the audience's need for reliable and open information limits their impact. The preference for medical professionals as influencers emphasizes how crucial knowledge is when making decisions pertaining to one's health.

The study emphasizes how important authenticity, trust, and ethical marketing are when it comes to promoting health supplements. The study offers useful information for marketers and brands by highlighting the significance of third-party certifications and healthcare specialists. In order to guarantee customer safety, it emphasizes the necessity of regulatory supervision and ethical influencer practices. This study provides a paradigm for more ethical and successful influencer marketing tactics and advances our understanding of the relationship between digital marketing and health-related decision-making.

For a more thorough understanding of social media's effects, future studies should examine how it affects other populations, such as older adults or members of varied ethnic groups. It would also be beneficial to look into how influencer marketing affects customer trust and health outcomes over the long run. Studies

could also concentrate on how regulatory frameworks help to improve the transparency of influencer endorsements and reduce the hazards associated with unsubstantiated health claims. Including qualitative research techniques could broaden the focus and provide more in-depth understanding of the attitudes and motives of consumers.

CONCLUSION

According to our research, young people still value authenticity and confidence in the information they receive, particularly from influencers with a medical expertise, even though social media may be a very effective vehicle for promoting health supplements. Many people would rather speak with medical experts before making a purchase, demonstrating a desire for reliable advice in addition to internet information. In the end, social media's function in supplement marketing is most effective when influencers place a high value on honesty, openness, and scientific support, assisting customers in making wise decisions.

Conflict of interest

No Conflict of interest

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