

**Role of Instagram Influencers in the Promotion of Pakistani Small-Scale Business:
Perceived Influence of Young Females**

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ABSTRACT

In the current era, social media platforms are the most established place for business opportunities. The growth of social media marketing makes Instagram a very famous platform with its short-form video feature, Reels. As a powerful medium, it enhanced brand visibility and engaged audience. The influencers on Insta gram act as intermediaries between businesses and consumers in this regard. They developed story driven content, visually appealing and relatable content that not only influence views but also share the purchasing decisions. This study aims to find the promotion of small-scale business in Pakistan by exploring the role of Instagram influencers and their influence on young females. The current research grounded on cultivation theory that how repeated exposure to these reels cultivates perception and consumer behaviour among young females regarding small scale business. A quantitative approach has been applied by employing survey method to find the impact of Instagram reels on the purchasing intentions of the consumers and how small-scale business flourished by utilizing this forum. The findings show many respondents are actively using Instagram, watching influencers' reels and frequently engage with small scale business promotions. Majority respondents said they came to know about small scale business via it, expressed a greater likelihood of purchasing or recommending products endorsed by trusted influencers. The study concludes that Instagram influencers are promoting small scale business and encourage engagement with it by building trust on them. Instagram via storytelling and appealing reels effectively shaping consumers' perceptions by creating awareness and contribute to the growth of local enterprises.

Keywords: Influencers, Instagram, promotion, reels, small scale business

INTRODUCTION

Social media has completely changed the world of marketing and consumer in recent years. Among many platforms, Instagram stands out as a leading platform specially in the promotion of businesses specially because of its short form video content which are called "Reels". These engaging reels have become a vital medium for influencers to promote the brands and connect with their audience effectively.

Instagram influencer's rise in Pakistan reflects the global trend where influencers are like a bridge between businesses and consumers. By creating content for brands, they help building trust and enables the businesses to compete in digital world. It works for large scale business and also for small-scale business. In Pakistan, traditional marketing in costly for small-scale businesses as compared to digital marketing and that is the reason this strategy of promotion has a profound effect in Pakistan. This research aims to explore that how the role of Instagram reels created by influencers in promoting Pakistani small-scale businesses, influence the young females of Pakistan.

It was observed that adoption of Instagram reels as a promotional tool has been increased in small-scale businesses. Instagram is a vital platform for brand's visibility, its features allows the businesses to create appealing and interactive content. Influencers play a pivotal role in businesses thriving in Pakistan. (Shahzad & Fatima 2023).

Digital influencers have a power to influence the decision making process and young audience these show higher responsiveness to trust influencers promotions rather than traditional one. (Javed et al. 2022).

Generally, woman takes more interest in influencers content as it is usually home based showing their families, kids and homes. They tell stories that attract people specially woman to promote the business. So, female consumers feel more connected and related to other female influencers on Instagram. If we talk about Pakistan, it is seen that female consumers are most responsive to influencer's content on Instagram. Safdar and Mahmood (2020) conducted a study that revealed that young women from Punjab rely on social media for their purchasing decisions that makes Instagram a vital platform for their buying journey.

Young females makes a significant sum of engagement as active users of Instagram in Pakistan. They take more interest in buying a product promoted and recommended by the influencers as they regularly follow them and find more trust-worthy than the content generated by brands. It highlights that the influencers have this ability to bridge the gap between business and buyers (Rashidin et al. 2022).

Small-scale businesses are on hype in Pakistan, seems like people want to support and buy from local businesses specially after the boycott of brands that supports genocide. This is another reason why influencers take more interest in promoting small businesses as it increases their engagement as well. The increasing trend of small-scale business promotions on Instagram is used to enhance selling of locally produced items and handcrafted items to empower local people particularly women in this field. Nourouzi et al. (2023) suggested that such strategies promote and preserve cultural heritage and boosts sales.

The Instagram Reels play a significant role in promoting brand awareness, audience engagement, and business growth for small enterprises in Pakistan (Noor & Zafar, 2024)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Instagram is the best place to market small-scale business. It offers opportunities to excel in the business field. The social media has transformed marketing strategies and platforms like Instagram become the central to digital marketing due to high user engagement and their visual appeal. In this regard, influencers established credibility by creating relatable and authentic content which makes them effective in promoting products and services particularly for small-scale business (Gross & Wangenheim, 2022).

Jain, C et.al (2022) explained that Instagram was launched in 2010 and quickly became a global sensation, from a personal platform to a key tool for brands to create content and engage audiences. Instagram Reels, popular among youth, boost brand visibility, focused on fashion and influencer marketing making up over half of marketer's budgets. Reels enable brands to introduce products quickly and cost-effectively. Major brands like Sephora, Louis Vuitton, Red Bull adapt Reels, while the 'swipe up' feature enhances buying experience. Zafar, H. (2024) said that Facebook and Instagram have become vital for small businesses to showcase content, especially through Reels. Daneshjo, A. (2023) explores the effects of Instagram on young girls, on their daily lives and highlighted the consequences of Instagram usage. Social media has significantly influenced content consumption, particularly among Generation Z, who attract and appreciate interactive digital media engagement due to their high digital literacy (Doloi, G. 2024). Digital technologies have transformed news

consumption and delivery. In the web ecosystem, short videos and reels serve as a new form of news delivery. Farrau, A. and Ezekiel, J. (2024) studied the use of short videos and reels to engage young audiences in the news media. Their concise, visually appealing format aligns with youth preferences, which can lead to revenue growth through new advertising opportunities. Moreover, incorporating these formats presents significant opportunities for audience engagement and revenue generation.

Influencer endorsements are getting popular and perceived more genuine as compared to traditional advertising. Atiq et al. (2022) explained the role of influencers in business promotions on digital platforms and found that their content and storytelling techniques foster emotional connections which increases the audience engagement that ultimately have strong impact on buying behavior. According to Qadeer et al. (2024), audiences are more likely to trust on the recommendations from the Instagram influencers due to relatable content that's why they perceive them as authentic which enhances purchase intentions among consumers. The studies represent that factors such as trustworthiness, expertise, credibility, and attractiveness of influencers significantly effect the consumer buying behavior.

Youth are active users of digital media and are particularly susceptible to influencer marketing. As most of the products displayed on Instagram in Pakistani context is for females so they are directly get information about brands and small-scale business via Instagram platform. Aziz and Mirza (2024) found that young females have trust on influencers based on perceived authenticity and relatability that significantly affects their purchasing decisions. As a result, influencer marketing and Instagram have become the preferred strategies for brands particularly for small-scale business to build long-term relationships with their audiences.

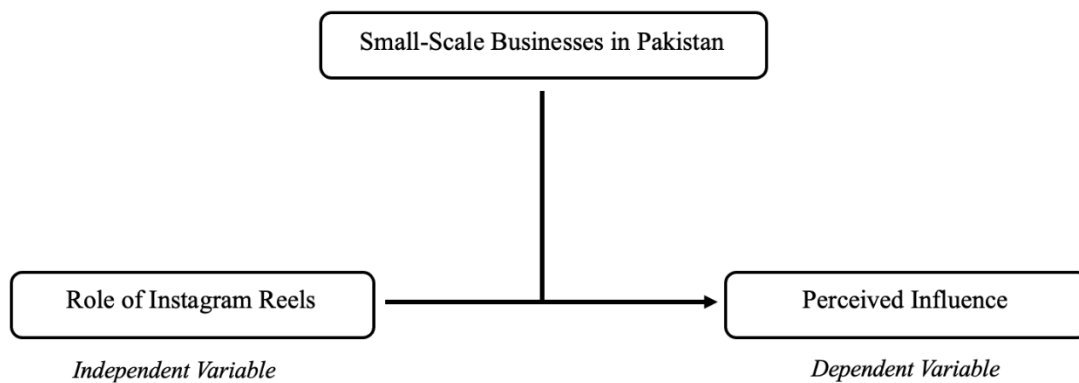
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Cultivation theory highlights the long-term effects of media and its exposure on person's perceptions of reality. It explains that repeated exposure to certain media content shapes viewers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions and that gradually influence their worldview. This theory can be applied in the context of Instagram reels to understand how influencer's reels promote small-scale businesses and how it affects the perceptions and behaviors of young females in Pakistan.

This theory argues that through continuous exposure of media (such as Instagram reels), certain values, norms and perceptions can be cultivated. Influencers frequently promote small-scale business through Instagram reels, which creates a repetitive and consistent image of this business in their young female follower's minds.

As young females watch these reels and influencers featuring and endorsing local and small-scale businesses, they perceive this business are in trend and considered it as an integral part of their lifestyle. Their attitude towards this marketing is being shaped by this repeated exposure which makes them more likely to trust, explore and purchase. Influencers' storytelling and relatable content develop credibility among young viewers that develop their decisions on purchasing local items.

When cultivation theory applies to Instagram Reels and the promotion of small-scale businesses, it highlights how repeated exposure to influencer's content young females' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. Through this continuous media exposure, influencers help cultivates social norms, reinforce aspirational lifestyles, and foster long-term consumer behavior which favors small-scale businesses.



This framework outlines the relationship between roles of Instagram reels and perceived influence of young females in Pakistan with context to Pakistan small-scale business. The study explored how Instagram reels devised the impact on young females in exploring and supporting small-scale business.

Research Objectives

- To explore the impact of Instagram influencers on the awareness of Pakistani small-scale businesses among young females.
- To determine the role of Instagram influencers in the promotion of small-scale businesses
- To examine the Instagram reels factors those, play role in making the purchasing decisions of young females.
- To analyse the effectiveness of different influencer strategies on young females' engagement with small-scale businesses.

Research Questions

- What is the impact of Instagram influencers on the awareness of Pakistani small-scale businesses among young females?
- Do the Instagram influencers play any role in the promotion of small-scale businesses?
- How Instagram Reels influence the purchasing decisions of young females regarding small-scale businesses?
- How influencers' strategies on Instagram are effective on young females' engagement with small-scale business?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The aim of this study is to examine how Instagram reels developed the perceived influence on young females with reference to the promotion of small-scale business in Pakistan. By applying quantitative approach, Survey method is used to explore the impact on young females. Burns and Grove (2003)

explains that survey research is a structured and a systematic method employed to examine and analyze the relationships among variables. Therefore, this method is utilized in the current study.

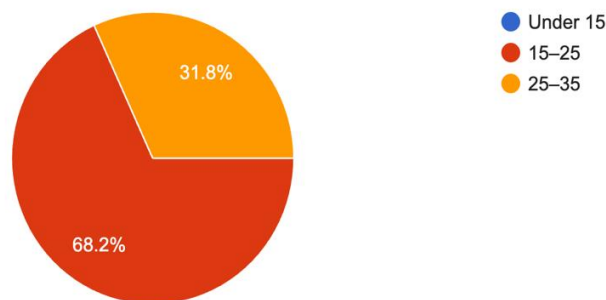
ANALYSIS

Figure 1

Age of the Respondents

What is your age?

110 responses



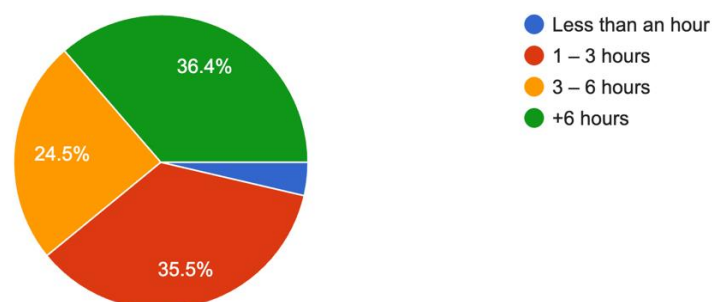
It shows that out of 110 respondents, 68.2% respondents are between the age of 15-25 and 31.8% of respondents are between the age of 25-35. No respondents were under 15, majority are under the age of 15-25.

Figure 2

Usage of Social Media

How much hours do you spend using social media per day?

110 responses



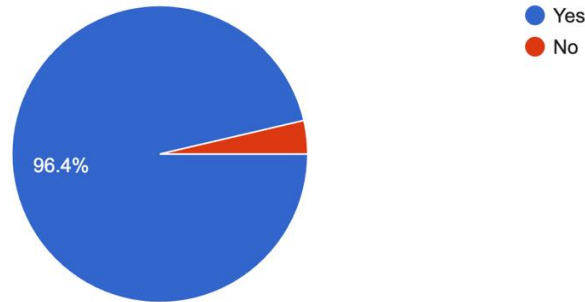
It represents an analysis of 36.4% of people use social media for 6+ hours, 35.5% of people of 1-3 hours and 24.5% for 3-6 hours per day. Majority of the respondents use social media platforms between 1-6 hours a day.

Figure 3

Popularity of Instagram

Do you use Instagram?

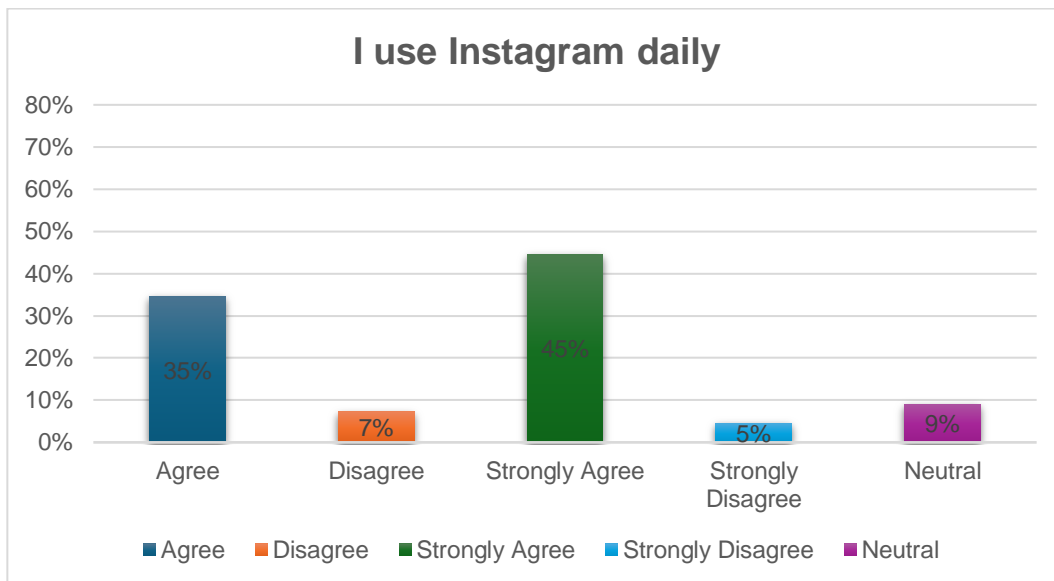
110 responses



It highlights that 96.4% of people uses Instagram that clearly shows its popularity

Figure 4

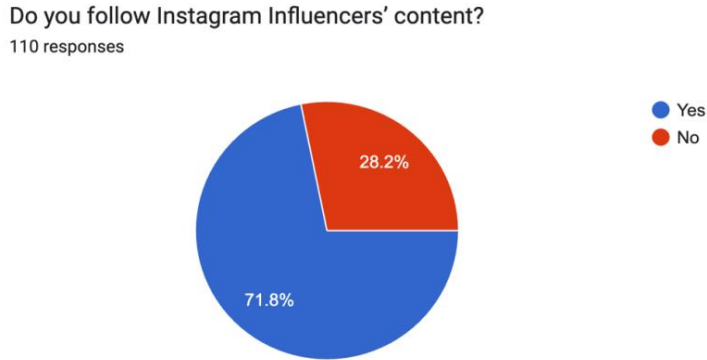
Instagram Usage



Data in this graph indicates that 45% women strongly while 35% agreed that they use instagram, this shows that total 80% of the majority uses Instagram daily. 9% remained neutral and 12% declined that they use instagram daily.

Figure 5

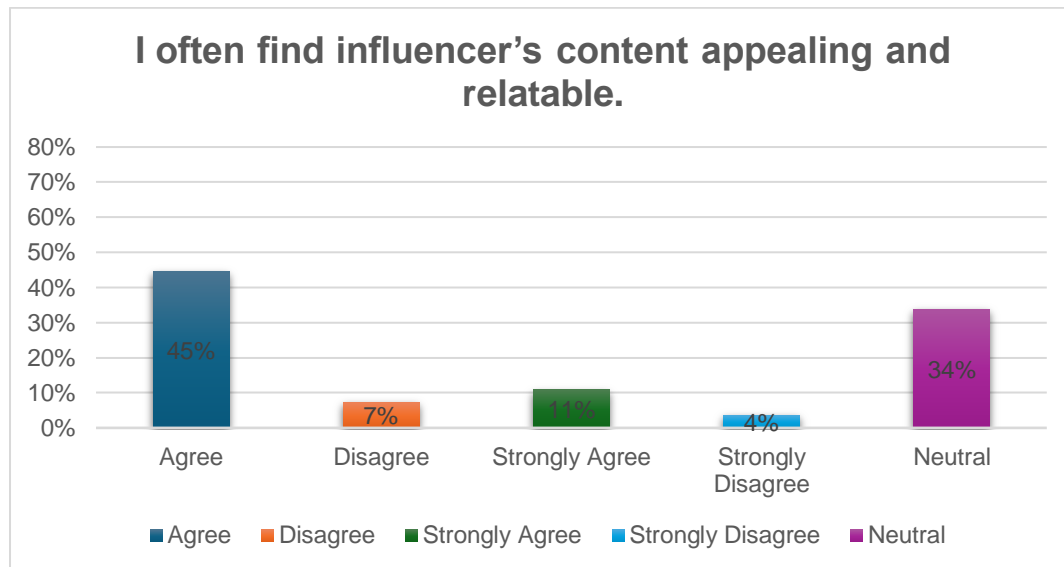
Following of Influencers' Content



It analyzes that 71.8% of people follows Instagram Influencers' content while 28.2% don't get influenced.

Figure 6.

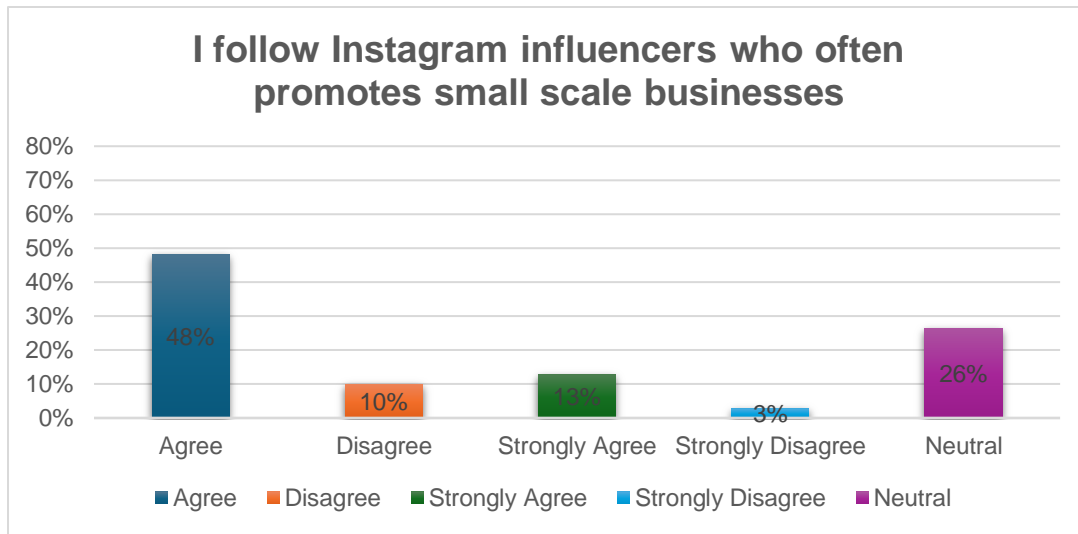
Influencers Content appealing and relatable



The data in this figure indicates, majority (56%) of the respondents find influencers content appealing & relatable, 45% agree and 11% strongly agree with the statement. While a significant portion of 34% remained neutral. A small sum (11%) of women disagreed with the statement.

Figure 7

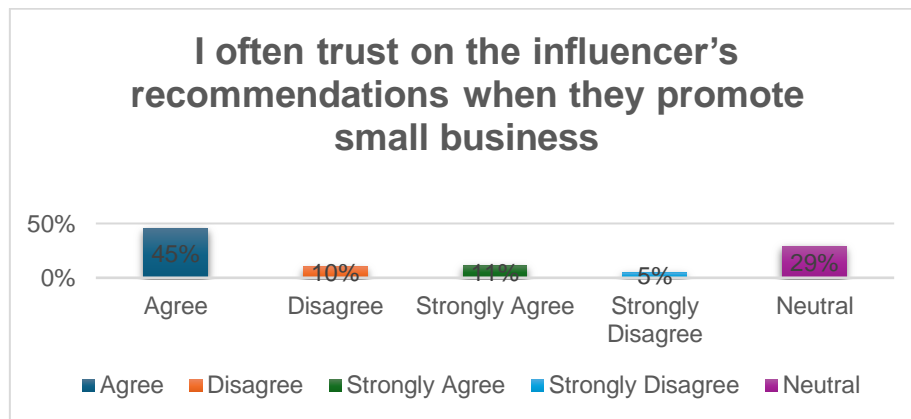
Promotion of small-scale business



The data of this figure specify that 48% of the population agreed and 13% strongly agreed that they follow Instagram influencers who often promoted small scale businesses. 26% women remained neutral and 10% disagreed with the statement which explains that the total of 61% of the population agrees that they follow influencers who promotes small scale businesses.

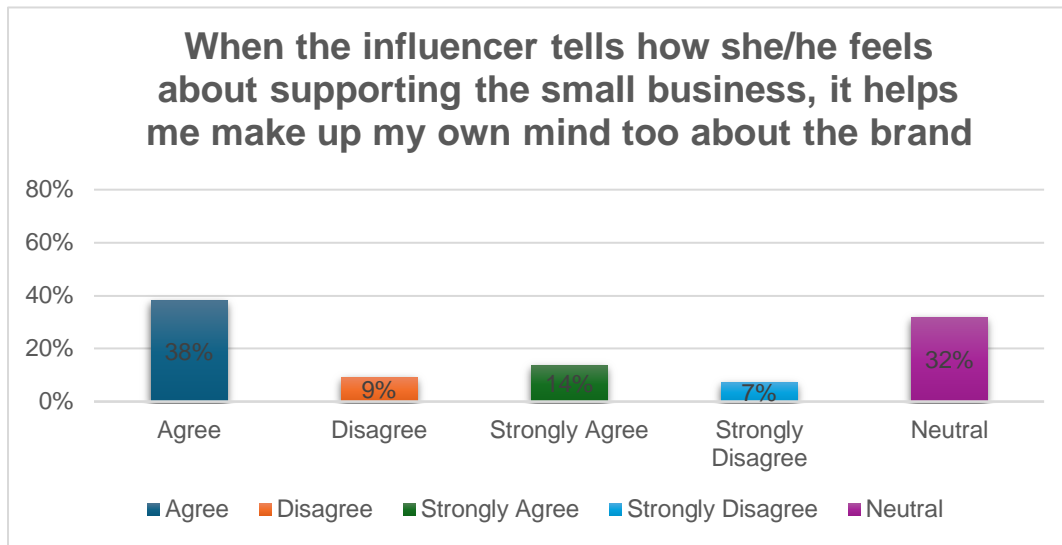
Figure 8

Trust on Influencers' recommendations



The result depicts as 45% agreed and 11% strongly agreed which makes it total 56% of majority having positive opinion for this statement. While 29% remained neutral and very less number of respondents (15%) disagreed and strongly disagreed about having trust on influencers recommendations when they promote small business.

Figure 9

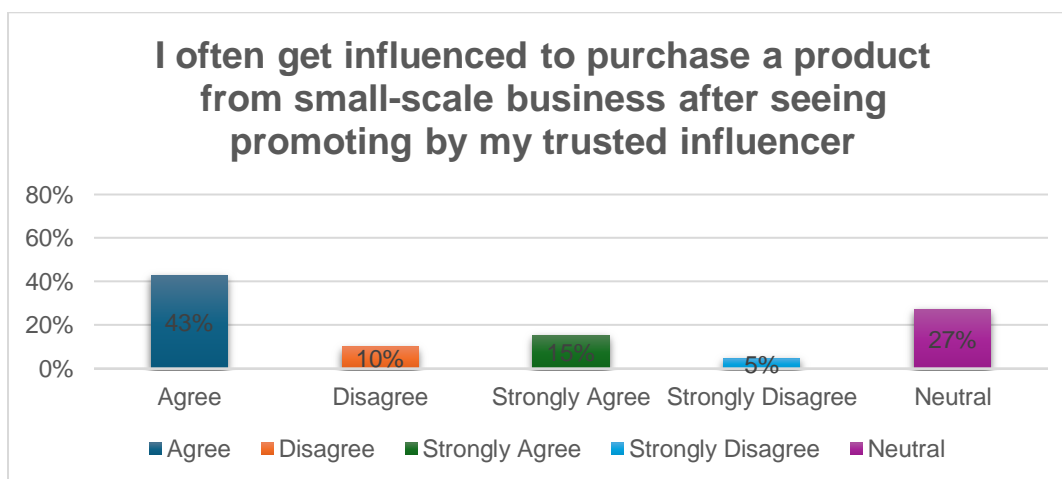


Support of small-scale business

This graph indicates, 38% respondents agreed with the statement and 14% strongly agreed that makes it total 52% majority have positive opinion about the statement. 32% remained neutral and 16% disagreed.

Figure 10

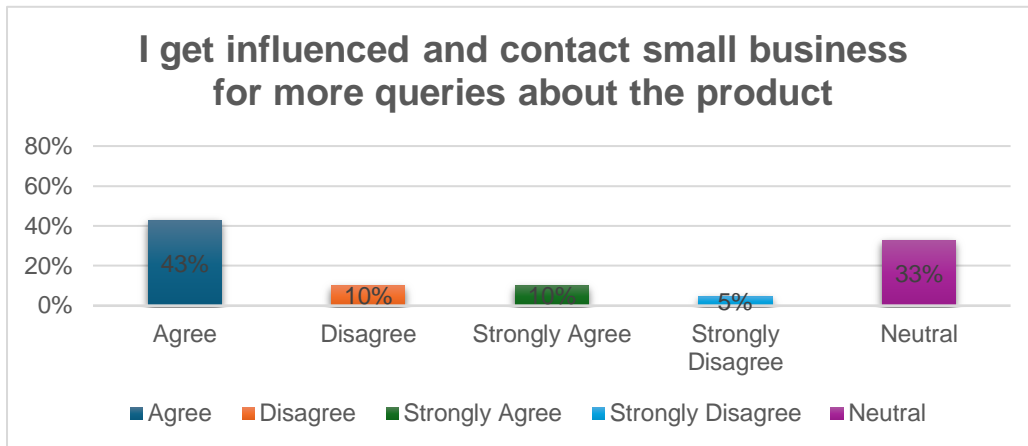
Influence on Purchase decisions



The data shows that 43% agreed and 15% strongly agreed that they get influenced to purchase a product from small scale business after they see it being promoted by the trusted influencer. 27% remained neutral and 15% women disagreed.

Figure 11

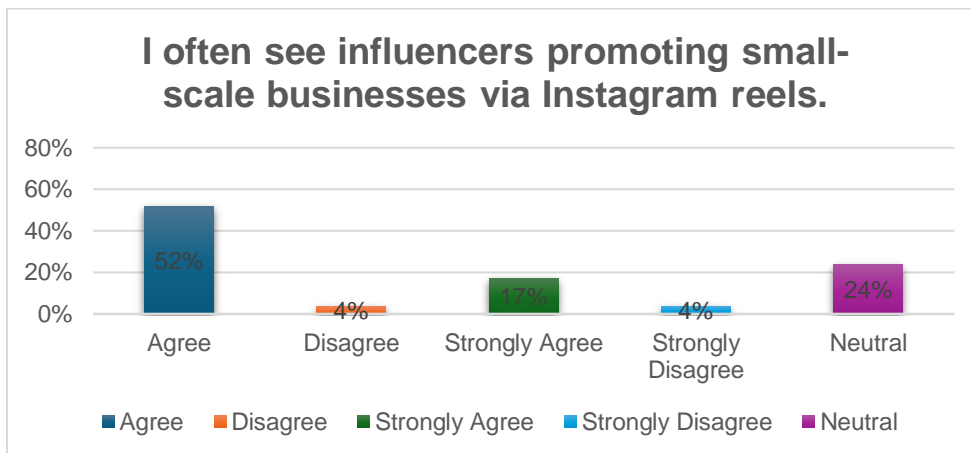
Information and queries regarding small-scale business



According to this graph, 53% agrees that they get influenced and contact small businesses for more queries about the product. On the other hand, 33% remained neutral and 15% disagreed with the statement.

Figure 12

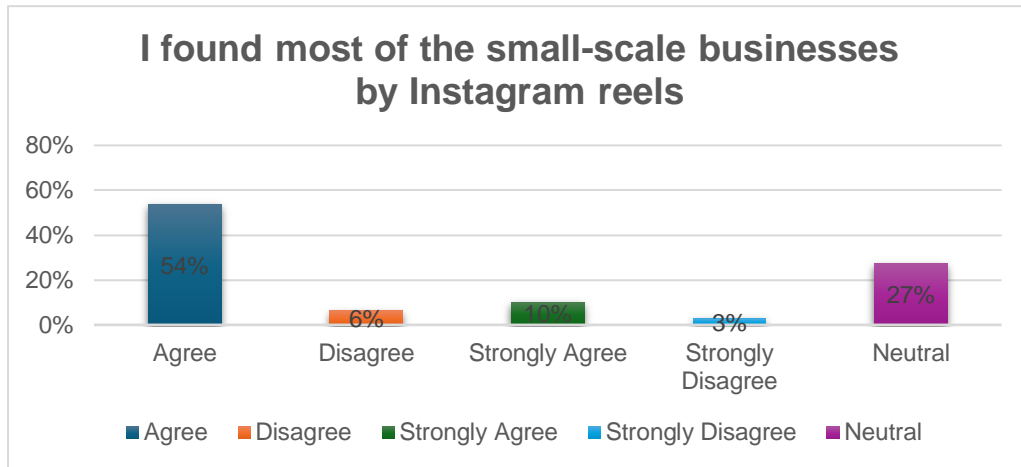
Instagram reels as source of small-scale business promotion



The data in this graph presents that 52% of the respondents agreed and 17% strongly agreed with the statement While 24% of the respondents remained neutral and 8% disagreed. That explains that total 69% of the people often sees Instagram reels of influencers promoting small scale business.

Figure 13

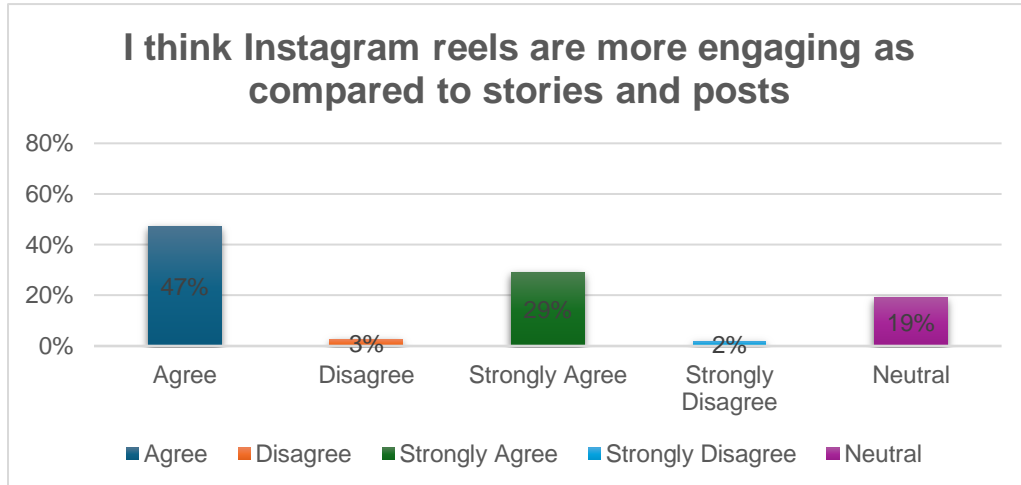
Instagram reels are the most famous platform



Data in this chart clearly shows that 64% of the respondents agreed that they found small scale business through Instagram reels while 9% disagreed and 27% remained neutral.

Figure 14

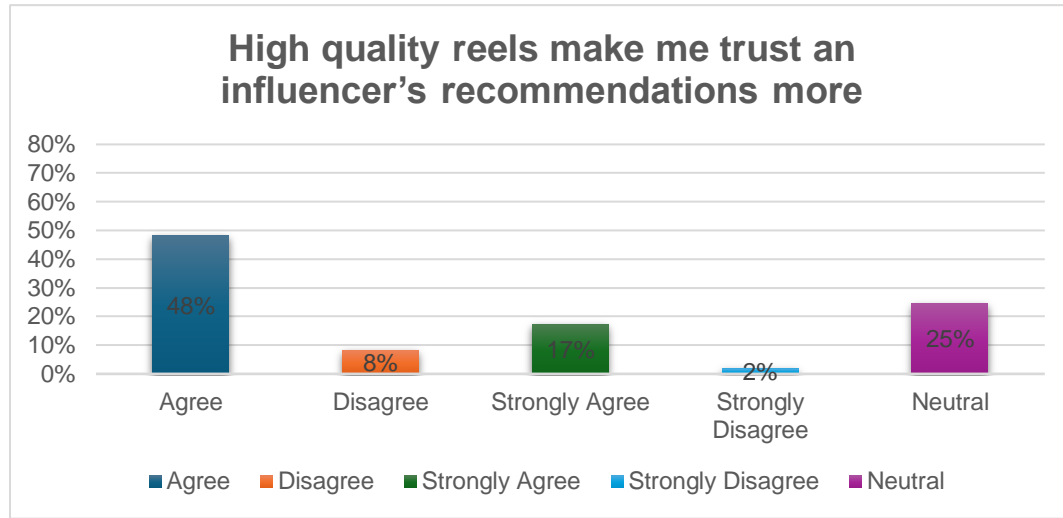
Instagram reels engaged young females



Data in this graph shows that 47% of the respondents agreed and 29% strongly agreed that the Instagram reels are more engaging than the stories or posts while a small sum (5%) disagreed with the statement. 19% of the respondents remained neutral.

Figure 15

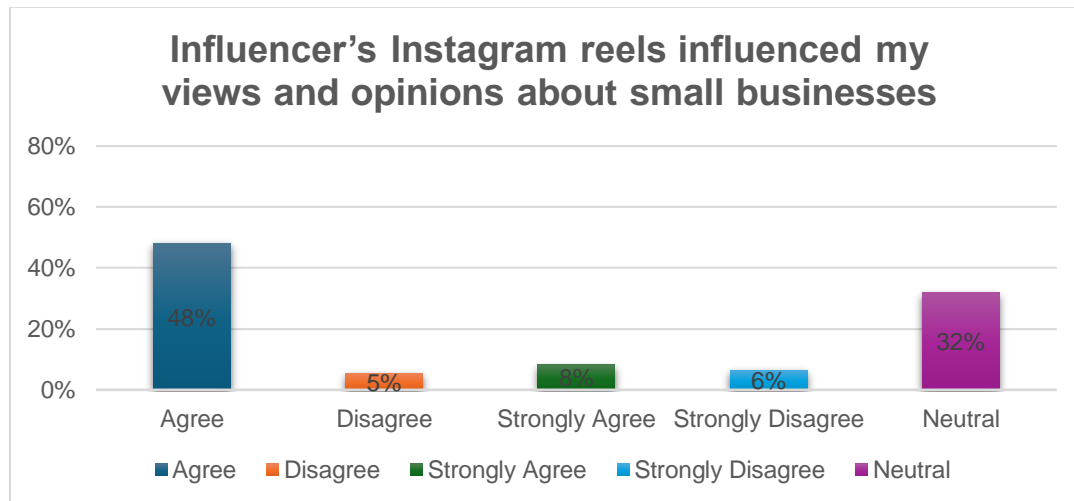
Instagram reels are of high quality with reference to the content



This graph depicts 65% of respondents agreed that high quality reels play a vital role in trusting an influencer's recommendation, while 10% disagreed with the statement and 25% remain neutral. It shows that high quality reels play vital role in gaining the trust for businesses.

Figure 16

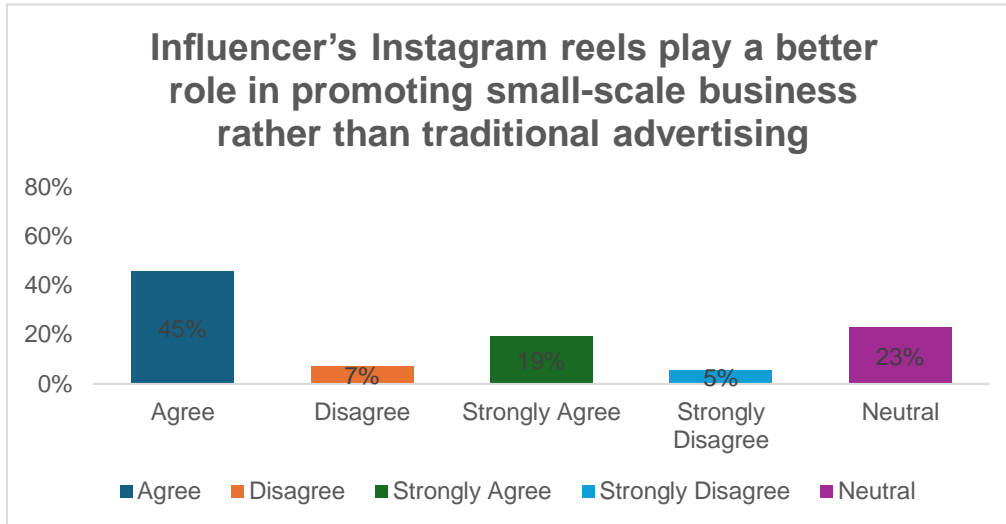
Influencers impact on viewers' opinion



The results show that 56% of the respondents agreed that the Instagram reels are crucial in shaping views and opinions about small businesses at the same time 32% remained neutral with 11% of the population disagree with the statement.

Figure 17

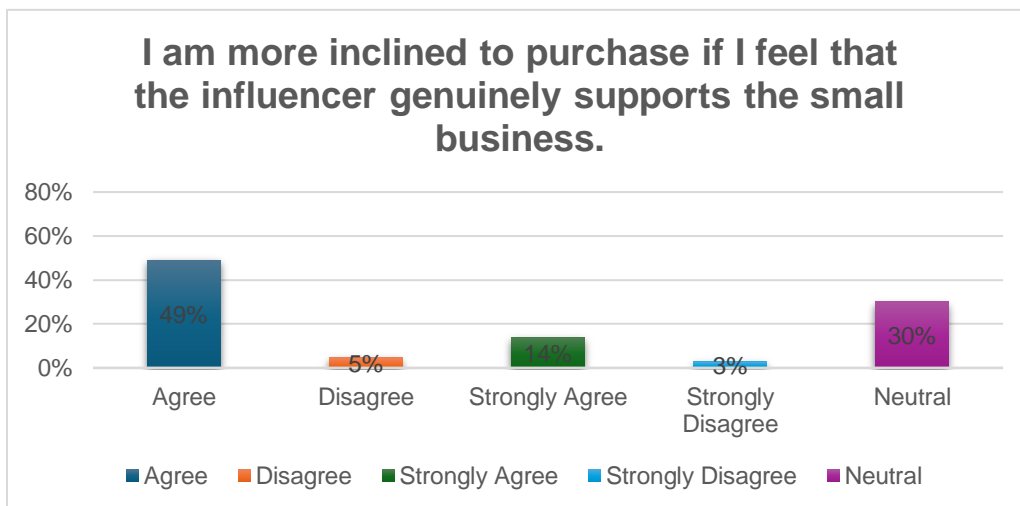
Instagram reels are better than traditional advertising



The result indicates that 45% of the respondents agreed with the statement, 19% strongly agreed and the 23% of the population remained neutral while 12% of respondents disagreed with the statement that Instagram reels play a significant role in promoting small scale businesses rather than traditional media.

Figure 18

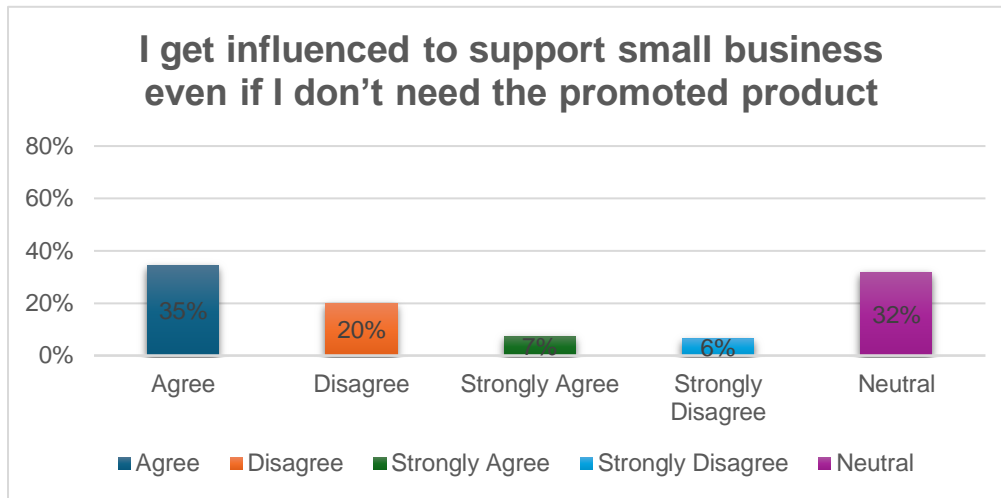
Impact on purchase intentions



According to the analysis of this graph 63% agreed that they are more likely to buy the products from the small businesses if they watch that influencers are genuinely supporting them. On the other hand, 30% remained neutral and only 8% young females disagreed with the statement.

Figure 19

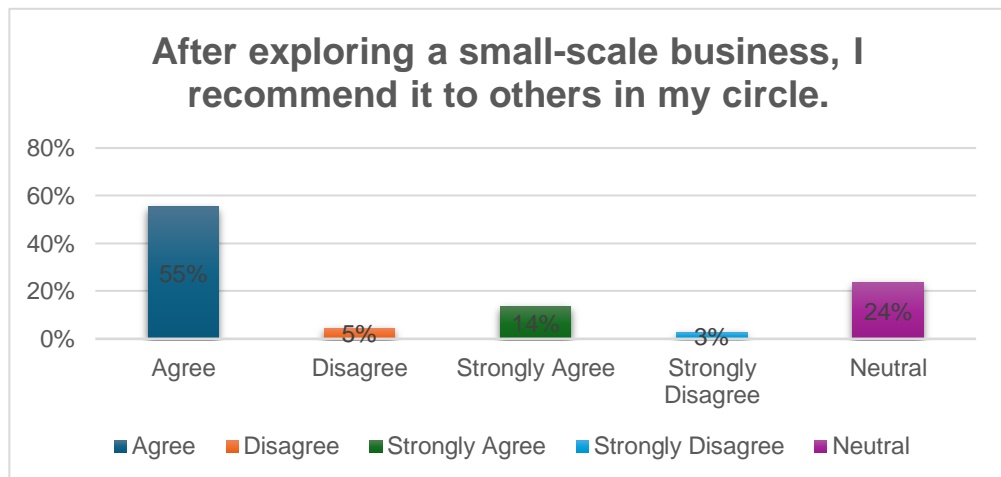
Support to small-scale business



The results indicate that 42% of the respondents agreed that they get influenced to buy the products from small businesses even if they don't need it while total of 26% of the respondents disagreed and 32% remained neutral.

Figure 20

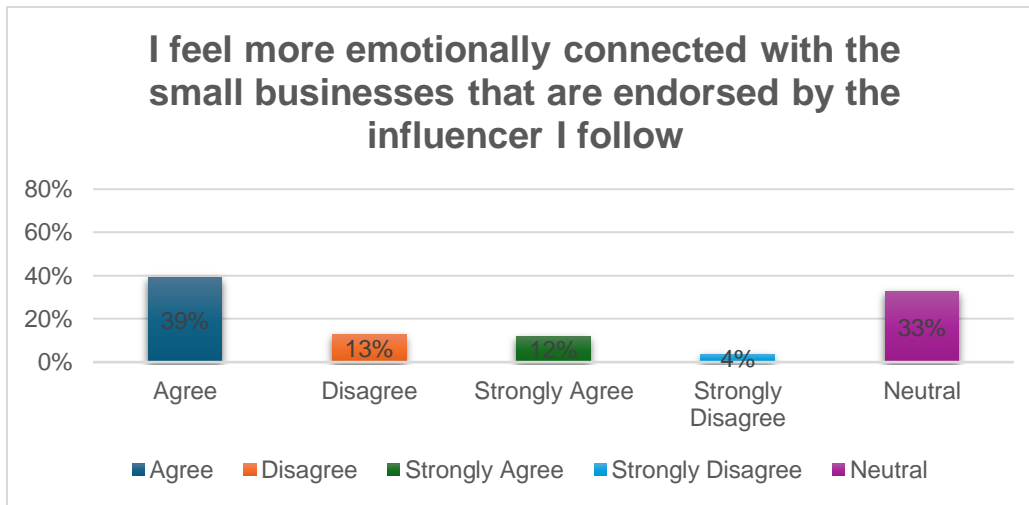
Recommendations to the small-scale business



This figure indicates that 55% of the population agreed, 14% strongly agreed with the statement about recommending the small-scale business in their circle. 24% remained neutral while 8% didn't agree. It shows that majority recommends the small-scale business after exploring it.

Figure 21

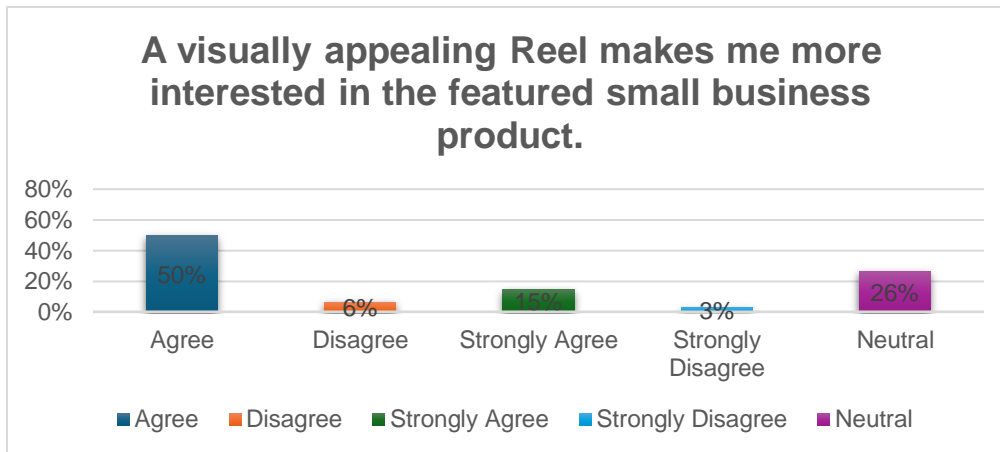
Emotional connection with small-scale business products



This graph shows that 51% respondents agreed that they feel more connected with the small businesses that are recommended by the trusted influencer. While 33% respondents remained neutral and 17% disagreed with the statement.

Figure 22

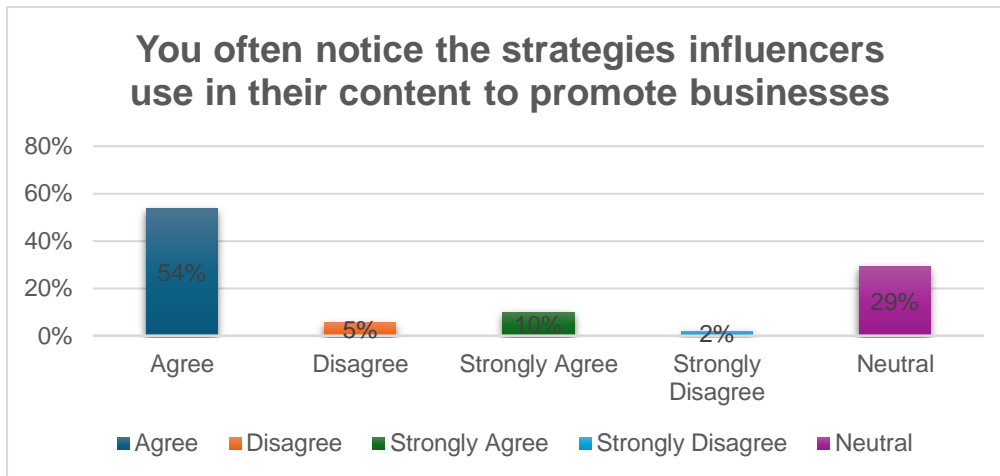
Impact of visually appealing reels



The data shows that the majority (65%) are agreed that visually appealing reels makes them more invested in the featured small-scale business while 26% respondents remained neutral and 9% disagreed with the statement.

Figure 23

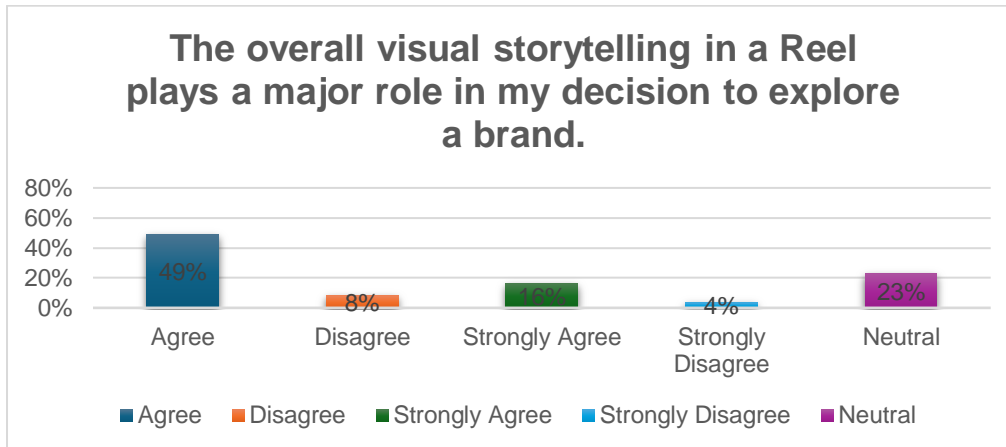
Effective strategies to promote business



The results indicate that 54% of the respondents agreed and 10% strongly agreed with the statement that they notice the strategies used by the influencers in their content to promote businesses. 29% remained neutral while 7% women respondents disagreed. It proves that strategies used by influencers often not go unnoticed by the audience.

Figure 24

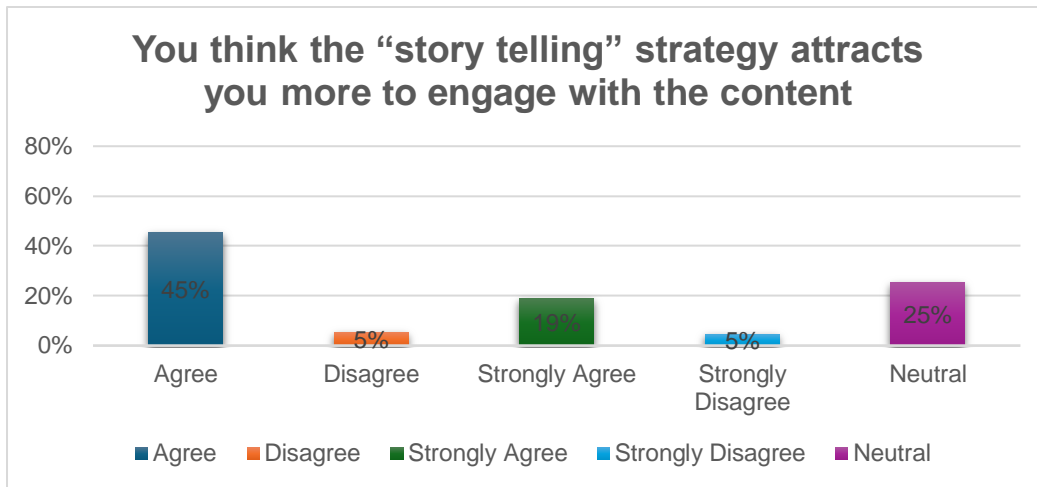
Effect of visual storytelling in Reels



The data indicates that 65% agreed that storytelling strategy plays a major role in forming the decision to explore a brand. 23% women remained neutral while 12% respondents totally disagreed with the statement.

Figure 25

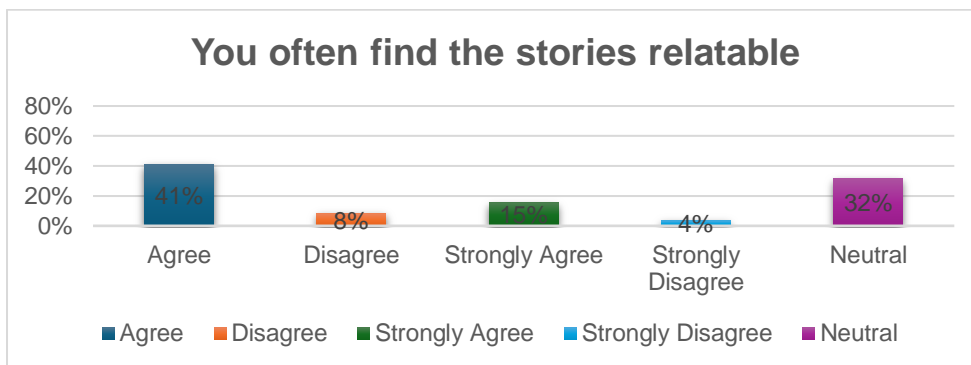
Storytelling strategy in reels engage audience more



The results depict 45% agreed, 19% strongly agreed that makes total of 64% that the story telling strategy attracts people to engage with the content while 25% remained neutral and 10% respondents disagreed with the statement.

Figure 26.

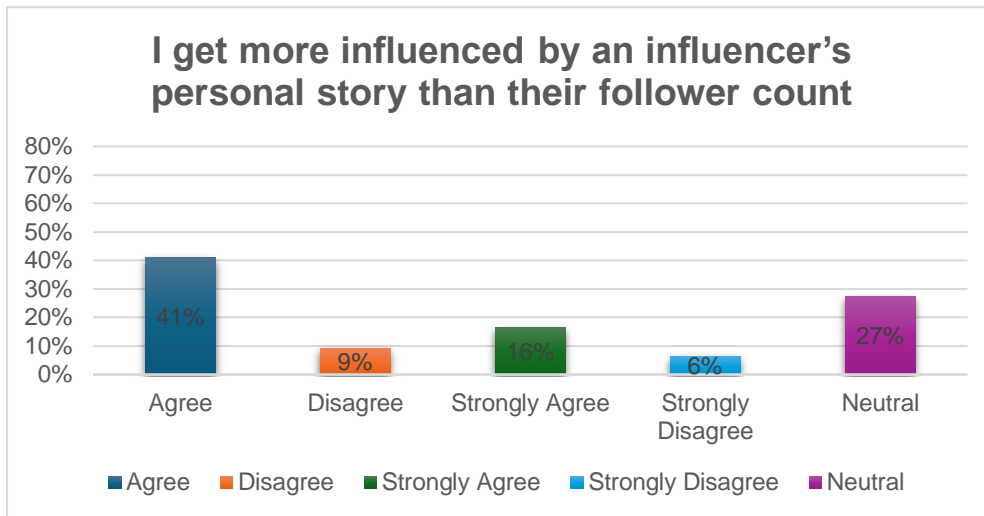
Stories are relatable in reels



The data shows that 56% out of 110 respondents often find the stories used by influencers in Instagram reels relatable, 32% remained neutral while the 12% clearly disagreed with the statement.

Figure 27.

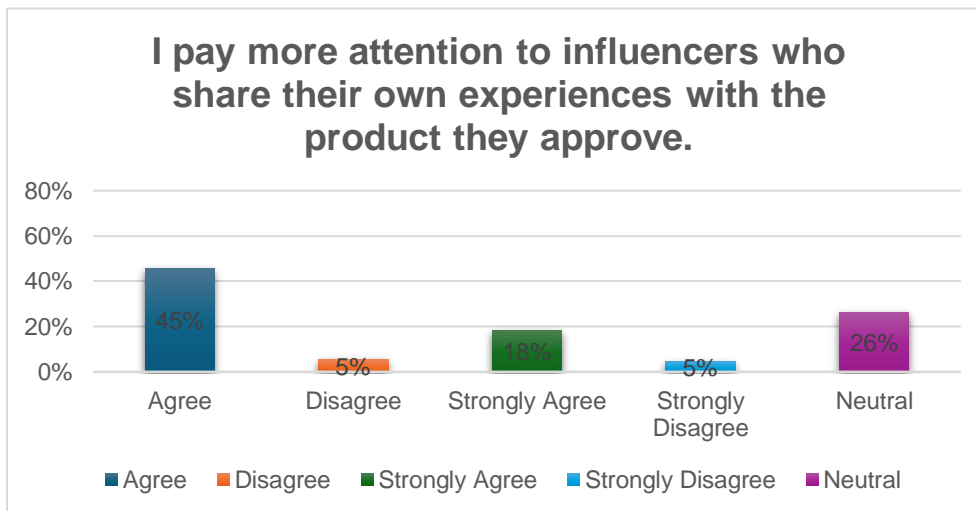
Impact of personal stories in Reels



The figure indicates that 41% agreed, 16% strongly agreed that they get more influenced if the influencers shares their personal experiences with the business rather than their follower counts. 27% of the respondents remained neutral while 15% showed disagreement regarding the statement.

Figure 28

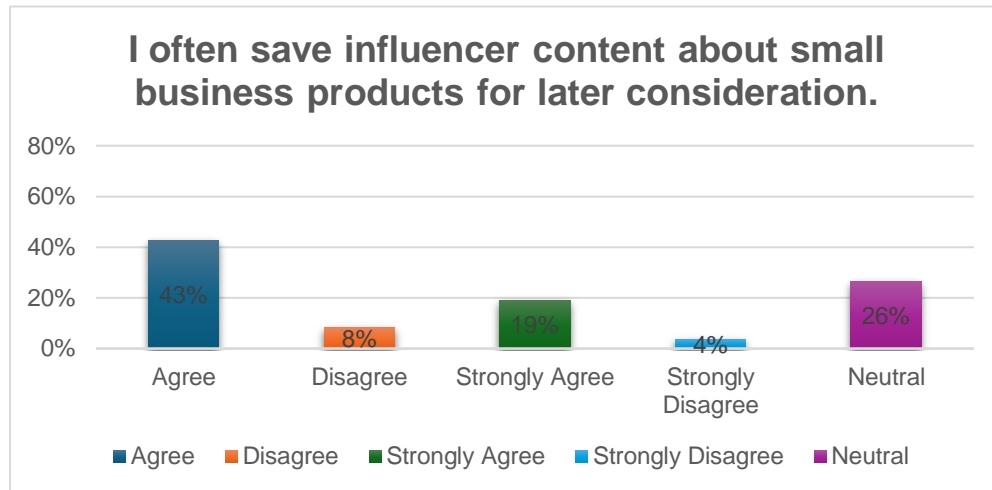
Sharing experiences in Reels



The data presents that majority of 63% respondents agreed that they pay more attention to influencers who share their own experiences about the products they have approved. 26% respondents remained neutral while 10% totally disagreed with the statement.

Figure 29

Save option availing for reels



The data depicts that 62% of the population agreed that they save the influencer’s content about the products from small business for later consideration, while the 26% respondents remained neutral and 12% disagreed with the following statement.

DISCUSSION

The current study focuses on the emerging trends in the digital media marketing. It is the most famous platform for business. This research examined the role Instagram influencers in the promotion of small -scale business to explore the perceived effects on awareness, purchasing intensions and engagement among young females. It was grounded on cultivation theory and analyzed how repeated exposure to the Reels shape perceptions and purchasing behavior toward small-scale enterprises.

The findings depict that Instagram influencers promote small-scale business effectively. Majority of the respondents are following influencers who are endorsing business and sharing their content among circles. They also agreed that Instagram reels are better in in promoting small-scale businesses than traditional advertising. Zafar (2024), found that Instagram Reels are not only increased brand visibility but also enhanced the audience engagement with reference to small enterprises. The analysis revealed that most of the respondents are willing to support small-scale business and continuous doing it on the recommendations of the influencers.

It shows the persuasive ability of influencers that they develop trust of audience. The trust on influencers was determined as the main factor that initiate awareness and purchasing behavior as it is associate with emotional connection (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Further, the results indicated that the content appear in the Instagram reels is appealing and relatable. These are effective so best way for the audience to know about small-scale business. The influencers shared their personal experiences of the products and suggest their authenticity which plays a significant role in influencing audience perceptions. De Veirman et.al, (2017) found that credibility and relatability are the most effective ways to increase influencers effectiveness

In addressing the impact of Instagram Reels on purchasing decisions, the analysis shows that storytelling technique and visually appealing content significantly influence the consumer behavior towards local items. The respondents said that personal narrative and quality visual presentation are effective strategies in making buying decisions. The short videos are usually catchy in the form of

reels as these are less time consuming and young generation enjoys to watch it. The format is also a strong proposal for the success of business. Farrau and Ezekiel (2024) explored that shorter videos are driving engagement for audience as these are very operative in capturing attention of audience.

It is also found that Influencers Instagram reels increased audience engagement with small -scale business by applying approaches like storytelling, personal experiences and high-quality content. The small-scale industries are getting popular and provide place in the society to excel in the field of business. The young generation preferred to buy online and try to experiences new products in the market. Doloji (2024) noted that Generation Z prefer short-form content that is visually engaging. So these reels and short videos not only helps in brand recall but also build a connection of audience with brand.

Overall the data shows positive perceptions of Instagram Influencers reels towards the promotion of small-scale business with 61% respondents are strongly agreed and agreed for their effective roles. While 12% are disagreed and 27% remained neutral and it depicts the limited exposure towards reels rather than opposition. This analysis represents the view that Instagram Influencers are giving awareness and making the consumers specifically among young females. It suggests that such reels encourage engagement of viewers on Instagram which develops follower growth, increased visibility and sales for small-scale businesses.

The findings are consistent with existing literature and support it by indicated the same pattern that social media influencers have now own place in digital marketing and their importance cannot be ignored. The small-scale business lacks traditional marketing resources in most cases so Influencers are key intermediaries to play their roles and bridge the gap between brands and consumers.

Hence, the study confirms that small -scale business is getting popular among audience through social media platforms and Influencers. These marketing policies influenced buying decisions of consumers through visually appealing reels that actually contributes in the growth of local enterprises.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the Instagram influencers' roles in small-scale business promotions and explored the perceived influence on young females regarding awareness, purchasing intentions and buying behavior. It is based on cultivation theory and analysis found that repeated exposure to Instagram reels and influencers' generated content shape the consumers' perceptions and their buying behavior

The findings show that Instagram is effectively contributing awareness of small-scale business. Instagram influencers present content that is the source to discover new brands by the respondents. The digital marketing found new horizons via influencers and Instagram. The content supports the small business enterprises that actually provides major contributions towards local industry. Local industries get established through social media platforms. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) found that young females rely on Instagram influencers in making opinion about brands and products selection.

The influencers' generated content is effective than traditional advertising. Influencers are credible sources who bridging the gap between business and consumers. This trend was noted by Ki et al., (2020), that influencers' credibility increases the audience trust and engagement on social media platforms with business which move towards decision making of consumers. Furthermore, this study highlighted that due to visually engaging and concise format qualities of Instagram reels truly encouraged the consumers purchasing decisions. Respondents said storytelling technique, aesthetic appeal and personal experience motivate them to make buying decisions towards products. Sokolova and Kefi (2020) explained that influencer-generated content which is entertaining and informative are more positively affects the audience in making purchase intentions.

The findings reveals that emotional and visual appeals, personal narratives, interactive content significantly enhance engagement with small-scale business. The study was conducted on young females and it highlights that they have strong positive perceptions for Instagram influencers by confirming their part in shaping awareness, engagement and purchasing decisions. This is aligned with the study of Evans et.al. (2017) who found that modern digital marketing strategies are successfully employed by the social media influencers' which create meaningful connections with audience.

In sum up, Instagram influencers play a significant role in the growth of small-scale business and it is the best platform to display the business. The audience also discover new business and opportunities for them. The authentic communication, strategic storytelling and visually appealing content impact on audience to make purchase decisions. As a result, small businesses through social media marketing emerges and achieve sustainable growth in the digital marketplace.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are proposed for influencers, small-scale businesses, and future researchers based on the findings of the study:

- Small-scale businesses should invest in high-quality visual content and storytelling techniques on Instagram which make promotional content more engaging and effective and reach targeted audiences effectively.
- As Instagram influencers achieved authenticity and they are influencing audience to make purchase decisions so they should focus on ethical promotional practices to maintain long-term credibility. And
- Further research can be conducted to increase the sample size with diverse demographics to get generalizability and qualitative approaches should apply which provide deeper insights into consumer perceptions and motivations.

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