

## FASHION AND BEAUTY INFLUENCERS AND ROMANIAN MILLENNIALS: EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

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**ABSTRACT.** Studies have found that product-related information from social media influencers can shape millennial consumers' purchasing behavior. This research investigates, in a descriptive approach, how Romanian millennials relate to content provided on social media platforms by influencers they prefer and follow. The study also shows factors that influence trust in this dynamic. Using data collected through an online-administered survey in the second half of March 2020, the authors found that Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube were the top preferred platforms providing the much-desired video content by influencers. Romanian millennials use this content frequently to make informed purchasing decisions, and they value honest recommendations and opinions, lending trust to experienced influencers, who seem to have qualified voices. They also show confidence towards the influencer to whom they can relate, and the one who is actively involved with their community. For Romanian millennials, the influencers' notoriety measured by the number of followers is an artefact of their quality content, and their confidence is boosted by influencers who show clear, real, and satisfactory results when using products that they are advertising. Marketers, thus, should be cognizant of the elements of trust that can

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translate online reviews by influencers into purchasing behavior, and can design strategies that rely on actual product benefits demonstrated by influencers.

***Keywords:** social media influencers, Millennials, consumer behavior, fashion and beauty, trust.*

## **Introduction**

Since ancient times, people served as sources of inspiration for other people, from writers, actors, singers to businessmen, politicians etc., but today, given the rise of technology, the means of becoming a source of inspiration for others got the handiest in known history. Celebrity got easier to reach even for those who do not particularly operate in a field that provides such a status. Due to social media, the world is richer because of what we today call *influencers*, who influence many people every day.

Social media refers to activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media. Conversational media are Web-based applications that make it possible to create and easily transmit content in the form of words, pictures, videos, and audios (Safko, 2010). Social media is also the main channel through which people gather their information today, therefore can always stay updated on the latest news around the world. It helps people become more culturally sensitive of the world's matters. Almost all existing companies and name-brands use social media these days to promote themselves, and that can be reflected in consumer behaviors: consumers are better informed regarding a product/ service and after the purchase they are able to evaluate the product and share their opinion about it.

Spironelli (2019) affirms that e-commerce is undoubtedly an important resource for beauty businesses and the beauty industry nowadays; however, the author argues, consumers may be driven to buy products by other factors, such as price and convenience. The beauty industry is highly present on social media platforms these days, and that is happening mainly because of influencer content. Usually, brands are the ones choosing the people to promote them, and studies show that online influencers are a valuable means of promotion, because of the established trust they have among their publics and due to sharing their reviews of certain products with their online communities. Followers will buy the product and, this way, brands and businesses get to attract their customers.

This study looks at the perceived impact of fashion and beauty influencers upon the consumer behavior of Romanian millennials. The dynamics between influencer content and consumer behavior of millennials is an essential topic to explore, as the latter developed along technology, and it best understands and integrates it into their daily lives.

### **Social media influencers (SMIs)**

Social influencers represent a type of third-party endorser who shapes audience attitudes (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2011). They gain popularity through their participation on social networking sites and achieve fame through online media, such as blogs and online videos on sites like YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. Influencers amass followers through the content that they cultivate themselves, allowing audiences to step into their personal narratives. They are often seen as more “organic,” with many of them leading normal lives not as established celebrities or actors, making them more relatable to the everyday consumers watching their content (Forbes, 2016, p. 79).

Influencers are usually the front image for many brands and companies. Due to the fact they are famous on social media, but also closer to their audience because they usually lead normal lives, they have the great potential of attracting big numbers of customers. This happens because people tend to associate the product with the person who promotes it, thus followers of influencer X will desire the product Y promoted by the influencer.

Moreover, the way they promote the product is through content such as videos, tutorials, posts on their blogs etc. This helps the follower/ prospective customer get a better look at that product, its reviews, and make a clearer impression. The role of influencers is to impress, but meanwhile be credible and true to their audience. Being authentic is the greatest quality for an influencer. They need to have the ability to distinguish themselves from the crowd and to offer their audience unique, personalized content. Perceived authenticity, as Pöyry et al. (2019), bears a positive effect on photo attitudes and purchase intentions among followers. Furthermore, being real helps influencers gain the respect of their followers and establish a sense of closeness and intimacy.

### **Influencer marketing and celebrity endorsement**

Influencer marketing refers to marketing where the influencers are the channel through which brands and businesses are delivering their message to the wide-reaching market. This WOM (Word of Mouth) type of marketing proved to be very successful for brands and businesses, showing growth potential and raise of awareness. WOM marketing is when a consumer's interest in a company's product or service is reflected in their daily dialogues. This type of free advertising is basically generated by customer experiences.

The celebrity endorser is defined by McCracken (1989) as any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement.

Throughout their careers, celebrities acquired the status of important individuals, who have a voice and can make themselves heard easily, and that is why regular people see them in a different light, a better light. People admire their looks and personalities, listen to what they have to say, agree on, and share their opinions and, of course, take into consideration their recommendations. Hence, it is not hard to see why celebrity endorsement (implicitly influencer marketing) might be the best marketing strategy yet.

People follow influencers' lives in social media, and through right execution influencer marketing seems like a natural part of their lives rather than advertising, which usually even is. Influencers posting about brands and products on their social media are usually seen as fellow social media users by their followers, thereby the messages of the brands are seen as more credible and trustworthy (Isosuo, 2016).

Although influencers do not appear in TV advertisements or on street banners, when it comes to promoting a product or service for the regular consumer, they have become one of the most trustworthy sources. Compared to celebrities, influencers are more credible to their audience, mostly because they lead normal lives and can relate easier to the customer. The way they present the product ("unboxing" videos, tutorials, video reviews etc.) and the interaction they have with possible customers (often offering answers to frequently asked questions) is of extreme importance. In the eye of the customer this creates a sense of intimacy between the influencer, respectively the brand, and the customer. This is one of the reasons why influencer marketing is very efficient, maybe one of the most efficient forms of marketing that exist.

### **Advertising on social media platforms**

Social media is in a process of evolution and is undergoing continuous alteration, and besides helping people get in touch, it may be a useful tool for many other things. Users can now express their opinions about a product, a brand, or a company, even about a regular

person or a celebrity/ influencer. Nowadays, advertising is present everywhere, on every website and social media platform. Consumers have the chance to interact directly with the brand, offer feedback about a product or a service and more importantly, to share their opinions and reviews with other users.

*Facebook* is the biggest, most popular and used social media platform. It was founded in 2004, and it has an audience of 1.69 billion users worldwide (Statista, 2017). Since its beginnings, for companies and brands this was the perfect place to promote their products and services, given the impressive number of daily users, and the fastest ways in which a message can get delivered. But what kind of publicity one sees on his Facebook account is decided mostly by Facebook.

*Instagram* is one of the most popular social media platforms in the world. It was launched exclusively as a mobile app, first for IOS users in 2010, and later, in 2012 also for Android users. It differentiates itself from Facebook with its more personal style, centered on visual content. It allows users to share their lives through a series of instant photos and videos. As of January 2019, Instagram is the second most used social media platform used by marketers worldwide with 73%, with the first one being Facebook with 94% (Statista, 2021).

Publicity and promotion of brands and companies is visible on social media platforms and happening mostly via endorsement from celebrities and influencers. Facebook and Instagram are the most popular platforms, with Instagram slowly taking the lead in terms of influencer content. Although advertising became possible on Instagram in 2015 (Goel & Ember, 2015, June 2), most brands are promoting themselves through content and influencer marketing, digital influencers being brand ambassadors. Furthermore, influencers and celebrities are mostly present on Instagram because it is new, timelier, which is evolving and improving continuously, offering more and more features to users.

## Millennials

According to Pew Research Center (2015), age cohorts give researchers a tool to analyze changes in views over time; they can provide a way to understand how different formative experiences interact with the life cycle and aging process to shape people's view of the world. An age cohort is made from a group of people born around the same time from a particular population, who share certain events and experiences over their life course, and generations are the conventional way of grouping age cohorts. Each generation has a particular set of traits, attitudes, habits, and concerns.

Generation Y, also known as Millennials, were born between 1980 and 2000, aged between 20 and 40 today. There are, however, various classifications placing generations among various ranges. The term *millennial* appeared and was discussed first in the book *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069* (by Strauss & Howe, published in 1991). In the following years, this generation received more names as: *Generation Y* (introduced by Ad Age), *Net generation* (discussed by Tapscott), *Digital Natives* (coined by Prensky) (Kraljević & Filipović, 2017).

Generation Y comes from an era of economic and technological changes, during the age of Internet and mobile phones and is generally received as *"highly educated and technologically connected compared to prior generations"* (Kraljević & Filipović, 2017, p. 6). Generation Y is considered the first tech-oriented generation, who grew up with technology, and is using it regularly, especially for job-related activities and socializing. Millennials are multitasking professionals and can juggle many responsibilities at once, are motivated and enjoy teamwork; they are also known to be more curious and innovative. Moreover, because they were

*"nurtured and pampered by parents who didn't want to make the mistakes of the previous generation, Millennials are confident, ambitious, and achievement-oriented. They also have high expectations*

*of their employers, tend to seek new challenges at work, and aren't afraid to question authority. Generation Y wants meaningful work and a solid learning curve"*

(Kane, 2019, May 28).

Targeting the right customer is the desired outcome for every brand or business and finding large numbers of potential clients in the same place is indeed the 'Holy Grail' of marketing. Also, as of 2019, most millennials have entered the work force and now represent a significant purchasing power (Kraljević & Filipović, 2017).

### **Millennials' consumer behavior and social media influencers**

Most members of Generation Y have an extensive experience with technology, as they have first used computers as toddlers and then "*embraced the interconnectedness of the Internet, mobile devices, and social media social network sites (SNS) as part of their interactive world*" (Azni et al., 2021, p. 143). Growing up with technology, millennials have become used to depend on their smartphones, computers, messaging, social media, in almost every aspect of their lives.

Digital natives are used to receiving information fast. They like to parallel process and multi-task (Prensky, 2001). Yet, because of that, they can also select relevant from irrelevant information. They are more attentive towards the information and advertising they choose as relevant, aiming for high quality, smart, and meaningful content. Although they love online shopping, they will be very careful and selective with what they buy. Their consumer behavior is different from those of past generations, and to understand this behavior is crucial for brands looking to find new and loyal customers. Therefore, in creating and implementing strategies for marketing it is essential to understand why consumers buy, and what sparks their interest in a certain product or service.

Sweeney (2006) believes that millennials expect a much greater array of product and service selectivity. They have grown up with a huge array of choices and they believe that such abundance is their birthright. Millennials are often regarded a demanding generation that wants the best, none the least when it comes to shopping. They want a multitude of choices combined with high-speed service and are likely to do thorough research online beforehand (Tapscott, 2008). All these affect the way they perceive and evaluate online influencers. Because of the general tendency of the generation to always discuss and review over the products they buy, influencers can have a positive impact.

Influencers seem to be especially important for millennials' purchase intent, in connection to fashion consciousness. In a study exploring how millennials' sustainability values translate into action when acquiring fashion items, Johnstone and Lindh (2022) found that purchase intent among European millennials might be guided by trust in celebrity influencers, rather than the brands' corporate social responsibility approach. Thus, influencers might be an effective strategic option when marketing sustainable fashion items.

In a study of consumers' attitudes and purchase intention related to influencers' content, Lim et al. (2017) found that a positive relationship: when millennials perceive a congruency between social media influencers and the products they endorse, it can favorably impact upon the former's purchase intention. Moreover, millennials were more likely to accept meanings from brands and adopt a favorable attitude translating into purchase when they perceived influencers as attractive or relatable. In a similar approach on millennial university students, Mgiba and Nyamande (2020) found a positive relationship between a persuasive influencer and brands, tightly linked to the intention to purchase from these brands.

Caçada (2019) investigated how millennials, a digital generation of consumers, perceive influencers as endorsers of products. He found influencers to be the best form of endorsement for hedonic products, and that relatability of consumers with influencers positively affects the formers' purchase intentions. The study showed that influencers

can increase purchase intentions when perceived as highly expert and trustworthy. However, Lim et al. (2017) pointed out millennials' lack of trust in influencers' content about a product they endorsed when they deemed the latter ill equipped in expertise or lacking knowledge about the product.

Placing the dynamics between millennials and social media influencers under a gender lens, Gajewski (2019) looked into female millennials' relationship with influencers to map motivations and trust. The study showed that women create para-social relationships with these influencers, and the commercial activities in which the latter engage in social media content do not weigh negatively upon trust. Gajewski (2019) found that female millennials' motivations were gaining information, social comparison, construction of self-image, inspiration and emotional enhancement, and gaining a sense of community and belonging.

## **Methodology**

This study aims to highlight the perceived impact of fashion and beauty influencers upon consumer behavior among Romanian millennials. Based on previous studies, the research questions are the following:

*RQ1: How do fashion and beauty influencers affect consumer behavior of Romanian millennials?*

*RQ2: Which social media platforms and what types of content used by fashion and beauty influencers impact consumer behavior among Romanian millennials?*

*RQ3: To what extent does the notoriety of the online influencer impact consumer behavior among the population studied?*

To gather data on the variables tackled in the research questions, an online survey was designed. The survey was conducted via social media in the second half of March 2020 and targeted members of the same generation; the sample (N=112) was self-selected on a voluntary basis.

### **Survey results: Romanian millennials' views of influencers**

All survey subjects belong to Generation Y, 34.8% are aged between 20-24 years old, 29.5% aged 25 to 29 years old, 23.2% 30 to 35 years old, and 12.5% within the range of 36-40 years old. Youngest millennials are, as shown, overrepresented in the sample. The gender distribution of the participants shows 67% females and 33% males.

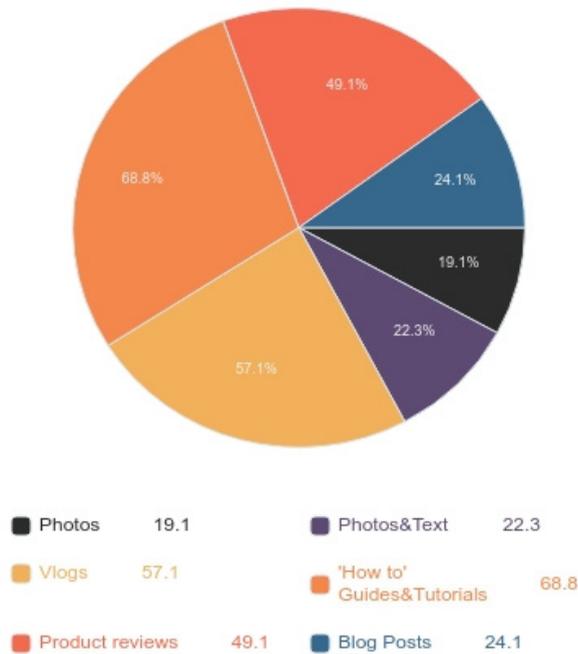
In terms of online platforms used by the participants, Facebook is overwhelmingly present among the answers (98.2%), followed by Instagram (88.4%). YouTube is used by 64.3% of the participants, followed by Pinterest (39.3%), Twitter (27.7%), and Snapchat (25.9%). Given that influencers are mostly active on Instagram due to the special features of InstaStory and IGTV, it makes sense that followers are present there to a high degree. Other platforms selected by the respondents were TikTok, Tumblr, Reddit and Weheartit.

When accessing these social media platforms, participants reported mainly using smartphones (74.1%), and to a lesser extent, laptops (12.5%), personal computers (7.14%), or tablets (6.25%). Regarding their experience with social media platforms, 48.2% of participants have been using them for over 4 years, and 43.75% between 2 and 4 years. Only 1.8% reported having used social media for less than a year.

Asked to name fashion and beauty influencers followed by the research subjects, most top choices reflect *national* influencers, such as Alina Ceușan (70.5%), Ana Morodan (61.6%), Carmen Grebenișan (54.5%), and Ioana Grama (50.9%). Other preferred Romania influencers were

Sânziana Negru (24.1%), Sânziana Iacob (20.5%), Andrei Grigorie (19.6%), Mădălina Merca (12.5%), Dana Rogoz (11.6%), and Andreea Balaban (10.7%). *International* influencers emerged less among participants' preferences, the most popular being Mariano di Vaio (25%), Chiara Ferragni (10.7%), and Johannes Huebl (7.14%).

The influencer content most preferred by Romanian millennials appears to be “How-to” guides and tutorials (68.8%), vlogs (57.1%), and product reviews (49.1%). Blog posts are preferred by 24.1% of participants, photos accompanied by text by 22.3%, and nearly 1 in 5 expressed their preference for photo content (see *Figure 1*).



**Figure 1.** Most preferred types of influencer content

Almost half of the participants (48.2%) resort to Facebook when searching reviews and information regarding a product or service to be purchased. YouTube is a close choice, consulted by 45.5%, and Instagram accounts for 41.1% of searching preferences. Millennials thus

appear to prefer and trust the platforms on which the influencers made their debut, platforms that offer the most diverse type of content, which makes information processing much easier. As to how often participants use these platforms for the named purpose, 39.3% use them once or twice per week, and 19.6% once or twice per month. 2 in 10 respondents use it once a day, and 1 in 10 respondents use it more than once a day for the same purpose. Only about 1 in 10 respondents use it to find recommendations a few times per year or never. However, it is important to emphasize that a wide majority of millennials consulted (94.6%) do turn to social media when they need opinions or recommendations about a product or service, thus influencers and their communities might be perceived as a trustworthy source.

Survey results show that, for millennials, to know the influencers they follow means to trust them. Half of the participants agreed and another third completely agreed to having confidence in the influencer they follow and their community, as they share the same interests. Under 10% of respondents did not care about the question or disagreed. An overwhelming majority (85.71%) of respondents displayed trust for influencers who engage in conversations initiated by followers, which can mean that users expect to be understood, noticed, and considered, as this might give them a sense of connection. What is more, 89.28% of Romanian millennials consulted, declared valuing and trusting the influencer with whom they share a connection.

Most participants (94.6%) agreed to preferring an influencer who focuses on expressing sincere, honest opinions about a product or service, suggesting that their consumer behavior is influenced by their perception of the followed influencers' truthfulness and morality. In matters of experience, 81.2% declared trusting and relying on an influencer who is experienced and has a qualified voice. Thus, overall, when purchasing a product, Romanian millennials tend to express confidence towards an influencer they know and to whom they are accustomed, towards their experience, and the environment that lends them a sense of belonging.

In determining where millennials search for information when they intend to purchase a product or service, about 60% agreed that influencers who post information about products they purchase and/or promote constitute an information source, whereas 33% disagreed. Most participants opted for searching on specialized websites, so very few go beyond online sources when looking for reviews. Buying products based on family and friends' recommendations is preferred by nearly half of respondents (46.5%), whereas the others do not resort to these sources. Spontaneous purchases are made by 33% of respondents, who declared not necessarily looking for information and buying whatever they like, whereas the vast majority denied engaging in such a behavior.

According to the data collected, Romanian millennials tend to stay informed when it comes to the buying process. Since technology developed as they grew, information technology is the handiest way to obtain information needed to make such decisions. Most participants (82.2%) turn to specialized websites, but there was also a significant number of individuals surveyed (60.7%) who sought the advice of fashion and beauty influencers. Millennials are used to fast information, and they are observant towards the information they choose, targeting meaningful and quality content.

Asked about their trust in influencers' opinions as consumers, 65.2% confirmed, while 26.8% denied having trust. Some participants declaring trust, justified their answers by deeming influencers "very experienced in the sector they activate" and "represent[ing] qualified, trusting sources." Also, "they are dedicated in offering the best for their community, and for this reason their judgements are trustworthy" and "usually the products they are promoting seem good, of high quality." Some participants claimed they connect with the influencer who is facing similar issues regarding skin, hair, nails etc., using and promoting products that are visibly good and lend results. Seeing real satisfactory results of a product for an influencer earns the confidence of followers and influences them to buy. Many respondents declared appreciating the most the engagement and the loyalty influencers show towards

their community and towards the field they operate, therefore they trust their opinions and are influenced to buy the products/services these are promoting. The respondents who answered negatively believe that most of the influencers never even tried or used most of the products they are promoting, they are just doing their job and being paid for it. For this reason, most of them do not trust the opinion of influencers, because “as long as [they] are being paid, they will promote anything.” Others declared they see these influencers as superficial, shallow, and not inspiring confidence.

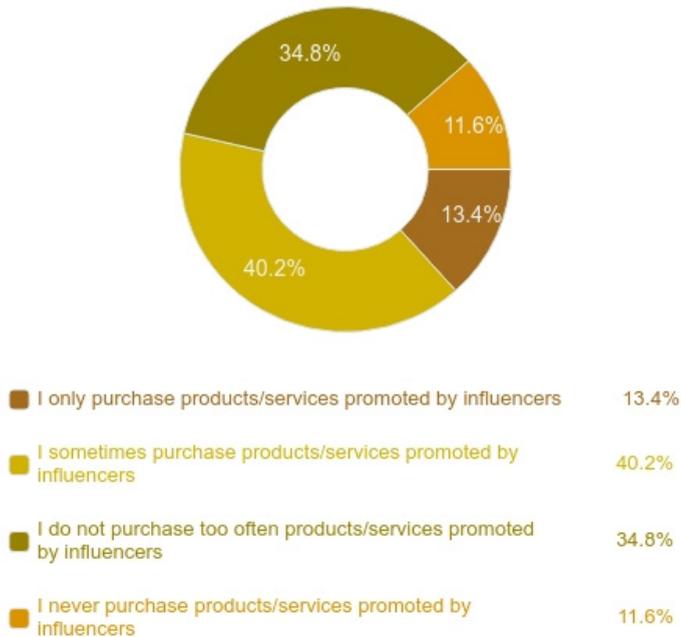
Most millennials surveyed trust the opinions of influencers they follow, if they feel a connection with them, if they feel like they hold a common vision. They appreciate authentic and relevant content. Furthermore, what characterizes millennials is that they express complete trust towards influencers who show clear results of the products promoted.

Another variable in this study represents the perceived importance of the number of followers an influencer has upon the purchase intention of a product promoted by the influencer, to which most participants (50.9%) declared offering much importance, 30.4% considerable importance, whereas 14.3% only offer a moderate amount of importance. Nearly 1 in 10 respondents stated lending little or no importance to this aspect, thus notoriety measured by number of followers can be deemed important, as it creates a sense of confidence: if a large amount of people is watching and appreciating a certain type of content, it must be good and trustworthy. Some, on the other hand, focus on other influencer qualities, disregarding popularity.

The next measurement of trust referred to the perception of the influencer being loyal to more than one brand belonging to the same product category, 68.75% declaring confidence in that influencer who does not display loyalty for one specific brand, the rest of the respondents wishing otherwise. Moreover, supporting an influencer is about joining a community and purchasing products promoted by this former, which can be possible if the information provided indicates benefits and qualities of the product reviewed without

questioning reliability, due to loyalty to a specific brand. However, this can also result in the opposing outcome when brand loyalty appears to be important to followers.

Participants also report different behaviors in terms of acquiring products or services promoted by influencers (see *Figure 2*): 13.4% stated only purchasing products promoted by influencers, and 40.2% admitted to sometimes purchasing such products; 34.8% affirmed not often engaging in such a behavior, whereas 11.6% declared never purchasing products promoted by influencers. On the one hand, millennials do engage in online shopping and usually turn to social media when looking for product information; on the other hand, influencers are perceived as credible sources to whom they can relate and who share the consumers' needs and expectations, so it is quite natural for some millennials to purchase products based on influencers' content.



**Figure 2.** The frequency of purchasing products promoted by influencers

Presented with a scenario in which an influencer they follow give negative feedback on a product the subject intended to purchase, nearly 1 in 4 respondents stated they would still buy the product. Another 1 in 4 denied answering, and over half of the participants stated they would not buy the product anymore. Thus, Romanian millennials value the opinions and recommendations of influencers they follow.

In terms of what matter the most when contemplating upon purchasing a product or service, 17% of respondents picked the price as the main incentive, while 23.2% opted for quality; 22.3% selected influencers' recommendations, and 20.5% named peer recommendations. Moreover, 7.14% of the respondents prefer doctors' or pharmacists' views. These results show that most millennials surveyed value recommendations given by people who are close to them in real life or in their digital ones, but they do rely on opinions from sources they trust and tend to also appreciate the quality of a product; the price appears to be a bit less important.

## **Discussion**

The results presented above help elucidate the relationship between members of Generation Y and the fashion and beauty influencers they follow. Millennials are nowadays the main force on the labor market, individuals who are creating friendships, finding jobs, maintaining relationships, and searching for sources of entertainment and information via the Internet, mainly through social media platforms. Romanian Millennials surveyed own, on average, at least 2 social media accounts, Facebook being the number 1 choice, followed by Instagram and YouTube, which are also the preferred channels for getting information about products before purchasing. Most millennials use these channels for this specific reason beyond 1-2 times a week, and many of them use it daily for this same purpose.

As social media platforms are associated with certain habits, such as communicating, getting entertained, acquiring information, or simply making memories, there are various content types preferred, video formats ranking first among the surveyed millennials' preferences. For this generation, it is important to get to know the influencers they follow. They value honest recommendations and opinions, and trust the experienced influencer, with a qualified voice. They also show confidence towards the influencer with whom they feel they share the same interests, and the proper grounds for a relationship based on trust entail a connection between millennials and the influencer and the emergence of a sense of belonging to a community. Consolidating this relationship requires the active involvement of the influencer in discussions with their own community. More than half of the participants stated resorting to influencers' content when wanting to buy a product and trust their opinions when they feel a connection. The quality and relevance of content and the influencers' authenticity are important for followers, and their confidence builds towards influencers who show clear, real, and satisfactory results of products they are promoting.

This research shows that millennials care about the number of followers of an influencer, and tend to express more confidence towards popular influencers, as they believe their popularity reflects the quality of the content. Moreover, some participants confess placing importance on influencers' content when making purchasing decisions, while others engage in such behaviors to a lesser extent.

### **Conclusions, limitations, and perspectives**

Originating from a world of instant access, millennials have become much more selective towards the things to which they pay attention. Therefore, the desire to search for information, the way they want to, and when they want to, is more than a natural reaction.

This study examined the dynamics between millennials and the new means of getting informed about products, the influencer. The latter emerged and evolved due to consumers belonging to Generation Y. Aiming to find as credible sources of information as possible, millennials are turning to real-life “strangers,” digitally known people who can supposedly offer an honest review. The fashion and beauty industries are of high interest for a significant number of people nowadays, which is why influencers tackling these topics and their relationship with millennials represents a relevant research avenue.

*RQ1: How do fashion and beauty influencers affect consumer behavior of Romanian millennials?* Survey subjects declared owning at least one account on social media platforms, the deployment environment for influencers. This assertion is also supported by the fact that all participants follow at least one fashion and beauty influencer, more from inside the country and less from abroad. Nowadays, the posts on digital platforms are taking care of all needs. Influencers manage to always offer new information, can post educational content, but can also be seen as means of entertaining. Millennials can be charmed by the physical traits of the products, a declared incentive when it comes to purchasing intent, but their interest is oriented towards good content and authenticity. Furthermore, millennials’ choices are shaped by influencers who show clear, real, and satisfactory results of the products they are promoting. Offering good, reliable, and original content is the safest way for any fashion and beauty influencer to attract followers, and implicitly more potential customers, as Romanian millennials declared.

*RQ2: Which social media platforms and what types of content used by fashion and beauty influencers impact consumer behavior among Romanian millennials?* According to survey data, the most used platforms for searching reviews, recommendations about a product or a service are Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. The content with the most significant reported impact on consumer behavior of Romanian millennials is packaged under video format. According to survey participants, most respondents prefer “How-to” guides and tutorials, followed by vlogs and product reviews.

RQ3: *To what extent does the notoriety of the online influencer impact consumer behavior among the population studied?* A vast majority claimed they find the number of followers an important artefact of the influencer's content quality. Most respondents follow influencers that are quite popular: Alina Ceușan, followed by Ana Morodan, Ioana Grama, Carmen Grebenișan. However, millennials are not inclined towards superficiality, and they only see the notoriety of the influencer as a "translation" of valuable content. Moreover, the power of the influencer lays in the hands of the members of Generation Y. They prefer the influencer with whom they share the same interests and the ones that get involved in their online communities, who interact with followers. Millennials appreciate sincere opinions and advice, and they show confidence towards the capable, experienced influencer, who have an expert voice.

These findings build on previous literature tackling the dynamics between millennials' consumer behavior and social media influencers, establishing when and how the former trust the latter on purchasing choices. The present research did not include a representative population sample, but a convenient one, so results cannot be generalized for the entire population of Romanian millennials. This descriptive and rather exploratory attempt is merely a start for further investigating, on a wider, more representative sample, and using complementary methods, the complex dynamics of building trust among SMIs and millennials, which could generate further valuable results to inform the fashion and beauty industry and the brands' advertising strategies.

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