Influencers, consumers and the journey from scrolling to shopping

Revealing consumers' real experiences with influencer marketing

euroconsumers group



Funded by TikTok

Disclaimer

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A recommendation from an influencer may take just a few seconds to watch. The consumer journey around it is more complex: consumers discover content across multiple platforms, they recognise it as advertising or not, they react to posts, investigate products and sometimes they buy.

This report follows those different stages through the experiences reported by consumers aged between 18 and 64 years old, in five European countries. It is the first step towards a broader survey planned for 2027, which has one key objective: **using consumers' first-hand experiences and expectations as the basis for building a sustainable influencer economy which works for consumers and businesses alike.**

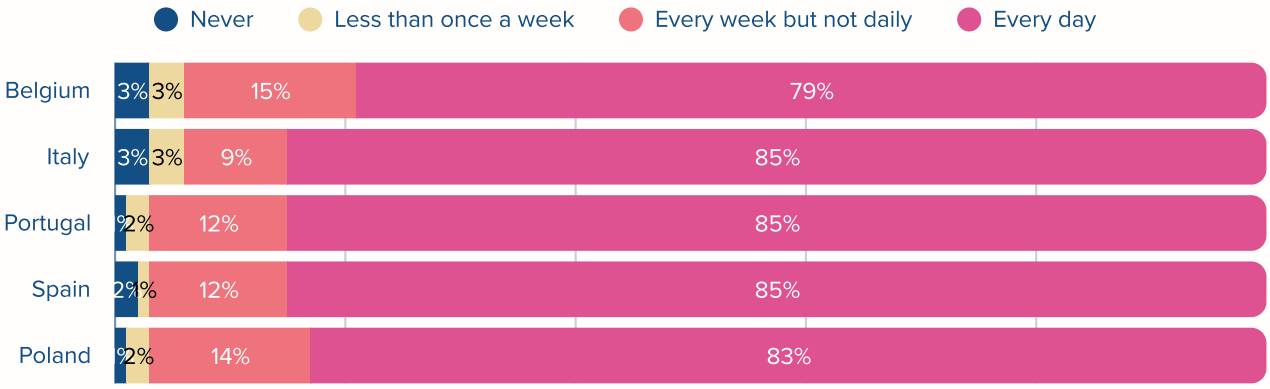


01 Social media is already part of everyday life

Long before an influencer recommends a product, social media is already part of everyday life for most respondents. More than eight in ten use social media daily, and 55% check it several times a day. Just 2% say they never use it. For many consumers, **social media is not an occasional destination: it is a place they return to throughout the day.**

And they rarely stick to a single platform. **Respondents use an average of four platforms**; 41% use five or more. YouTube (84%), Facebook (80%) and Instagram (75%) have the widest reach, followed by TikTok with 57% of social media users. Moving between platforms gives consumers multiple ways to discover content, follow creators and encounter product recommendations.

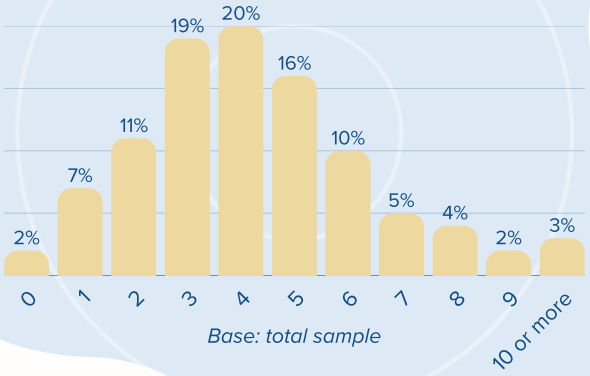
Social media platforms use



Base: total sample

Age also shapes this online experience. Younger respondents tend to use more platforms. Respondents under 29 with a high level of education use around six on average, compared with an average of fewer than three for respondents over 54 years old in a more difficult financial situation. This helps explain why consumers' experience of social media — and later, of influencer promotions — can differ considerably.

Number of social media or online platforms used at least once during the past 3 months



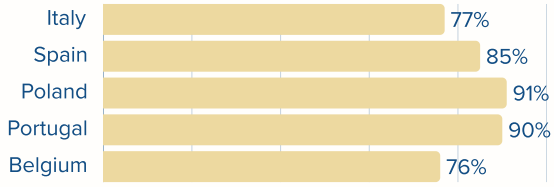
Base: total sample

02 Influencer promotions are a regular feature in consumers' feeds

Influencer promotions have become a familiar part of that social media landscape: 84% of respondents have encountered them. What stands out even more is how frequently people see them. **Among daily social media users, 78% see influencer promotions at least once a week,** including 44% who see them every day. For these consumers, commercial recommendations are a recurring feature of their feeds rather than an occasional interruption.

But this familiarity is not evenly distributed. **57% of women under 34 see influencer promotions every day, compared with 19% of men over 54.** The contrast shows how the same form of marketing can be part of one consumer's daily routine while remaining much less visible to another.

respondents exposed to influencer promotions



Base: total sample

frequency of seeing influencer promotions



Base: daily social media users





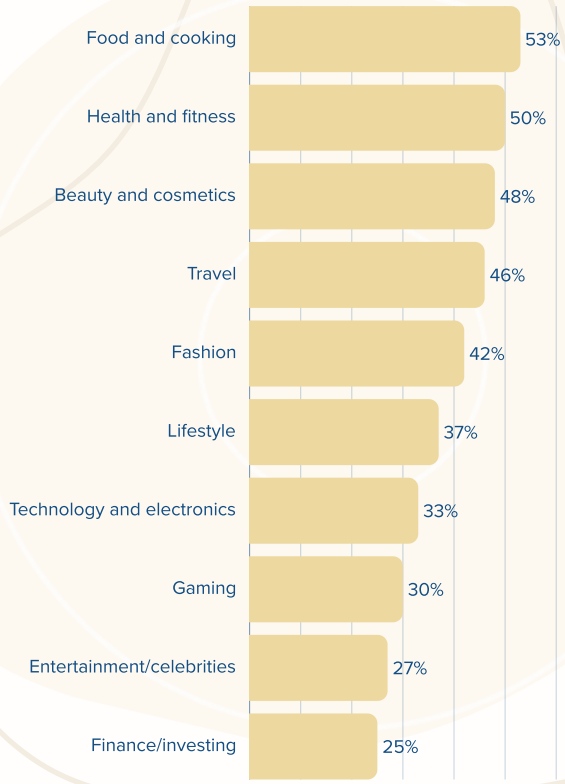
03 What influencers promote goes far beyond one category

What do consumers see influencers promoting? The most frequently encountered categories are food and cooking (53%), health and fitness (50%) and beauty and cosmetics (48%). Travel, fashion and technology also feature prominently. Together, these findings show how **promotions are woven into many everyday interests, from what people eat and how they travel to the products and services they use.**

Some categories carry different kinds of purchasing decisions. 26% of respondents who have encountered influencer promotions have seen content related to finance and investing. Although this audience is smaller than those exposed to promotions for food or beauty, it illustrates how influencer recommendations can **also reach areas involving more consequential financial choices.**

The variety of promoted products matters: **consumers do not experience one uniform influencer market.** They see different subjects, products and creators depending on the content they follow and the platforms they use.

What types of products or services do influencers most often promote in your feed?



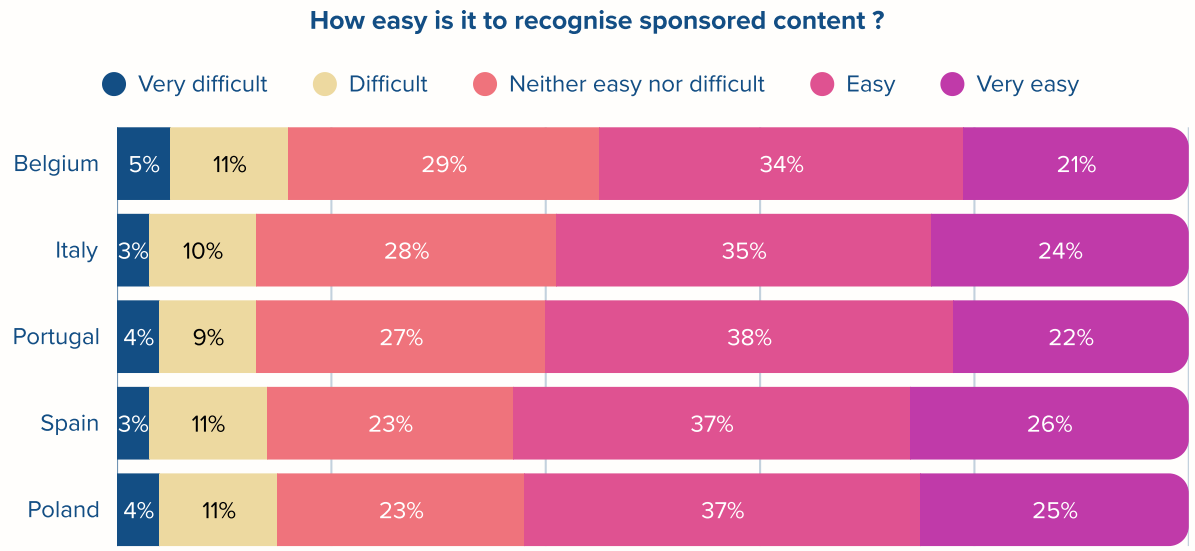
Base: respondents exposed to promotions by influencers



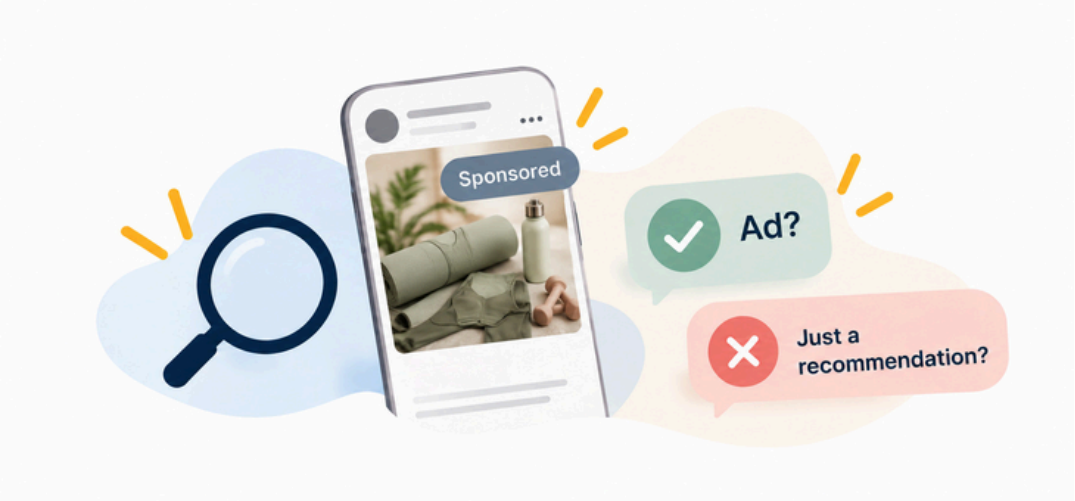
04 Is it commercial? No tags or hashtags, please.

An influencer may be familiar and persuasive, but that does not necessarily mean consumers can easily identify the commercial nature of a post. **33% of respondents estimate influencers disclose sponsored content only sometimes and 20% say (almost) never, while by contrast just 18% believe they (almost) always do so.**

Yet, recognising paid promotions is not necessarily difficult for everyone. Among respondents who gave a definite answer, 60% believe it is easy or very easy to recognise sponsored content, while only 14% find it difficult or very difficult. Age appears to be a defining factor: people younger than 23 years tend to find sponsorship easier to recognise, those over 48 years old find it more difficult.



Respondents also express preferences about how incentives are made clear. The most popular option, selected by 34%, is for influencers to state at the beginning that the content or video is commercial. Others prefer visible written disclosure from influencers at the start (21%) or throughout the content (17%).

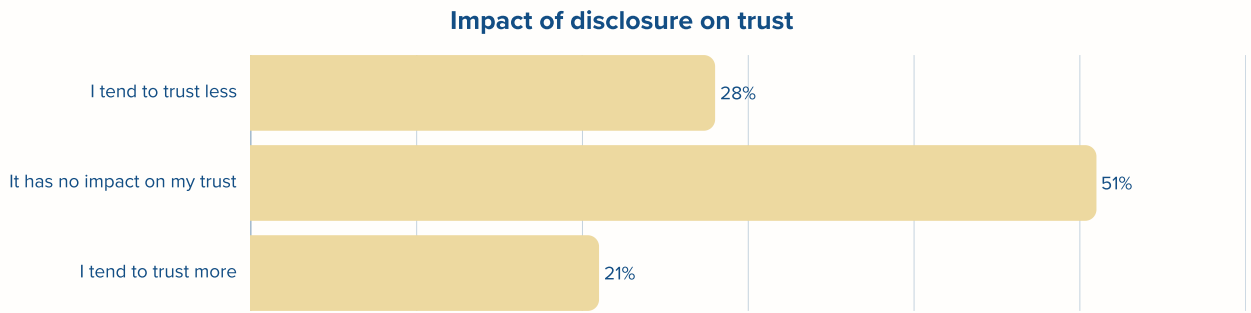


Respondents are more outspoken about what they do not want. **Hashtags in captions and tags** identifying the company or shop paying for the promotion **are among the least popular approaches, with only 5% favouring each option.** The message is clear: consumers want to understand the commercial relationship while they are watching the content, not have to search for clues.

Preferred disclosure method	Total
The influencer should clearly say it at the beginning of the video or content	34%
A text saying “SPONSORED” or similar should appear well visible in the content or at the start of the video (e.g. during the first 10 seconds)	21%
A text saying “SPONSORED” or similar should be well visible through the full video.	17%
A clear label indicating sponsored or paid content should appear well visible in the content or at the start of the video	8%
A clear label indicating sponsored or paid content should be well visible through the full video	8%
A hashtag (e.g. #ad or #sponsored) in the content description.	5%
The influencer should tag the company/shop paying for the content	5%
Don't know	2%

Base: respondents exposed to promotions by influencers

Recognising sponsorship and trusting the promoted product appear to be two different things. **For half of respondents, knowing that content is sponsored makes no difference to their trust in the promoted product;** 28% say it even makes them trust the product less, while 21% go the opposite direction and tend to trust it more.



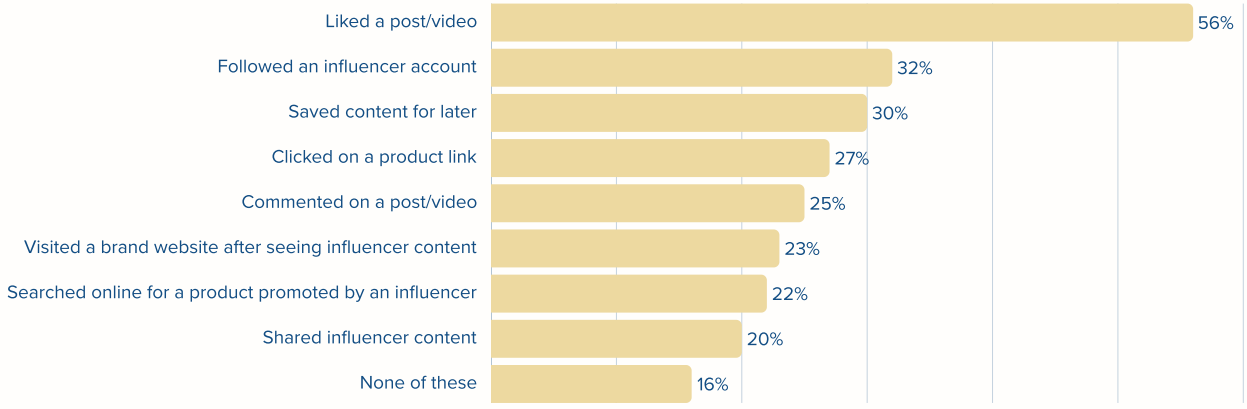
Base: respondents exposed to promotions by influencers

05 From a like to a purchase: the value of sponsored content

Not every encounter with promoted or paid influencer content leads to a purchase. **Often, the first response is simply to engage with a post.** In the past year, 56% of respondents exposed to influencer promotions have liked a post or video. Others have followed an influencer (32%) or saved content for later (30%). These actions show how promotions can attract attention or become part of an ongoing relationship between consumers and creators without immediately leading to a commercial transaction.

Other forms of engagement suggest a more active interest in the product being promoted. 27% have clicked on a product link, 23% visited a brand's website and 22% searched online for a promoted product. Only 16% report none of the actions listed in the survey. This range — from a quick like to further product research — is one of the clearest ways to see how **people respond differently to influencer promotions.**

How people interact with influencer content



Base: respondents exposed to influencer promotionss



However, engagement is not the same as buying. **A majority (60%) say influencer recommendations have no impact on their purchasing decisions**. While **one in five (21%) indicate they are more likely to buy** a product or brand when it is promoted, it has the opposite effect on an equally big group: **19% say they are less likely to buy it** when a product is recommended by influencers.

Even so, although most consumers report that influencers do not affect their purchasing decisions, nearly **one in three exposed consumers purchased an influencer-promoted product in the past year.** Influencer content may not change everyone's purchasing decisions, but it clearly plays a role in the consumer journey for some.



21%
is more likely to buy

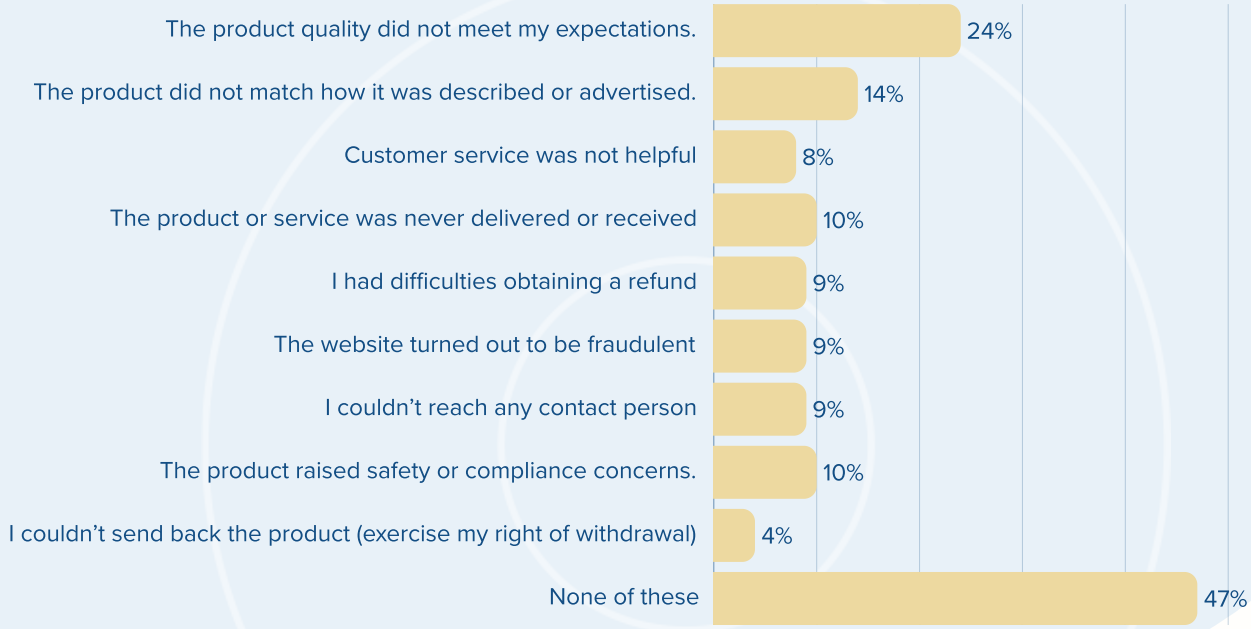


19%
is less likely to buy

06 The highs and lows of buying influencer recommended products and services

The consumer experience does not end at checkout. Among respondents who purchased a promoted product or service, **54% report at least one negative experience,** while 46% report none. The most common problem is quality falling short of expectations, reported by one in four in the last 12 months. A further 14% say the product differed from its description. Respondents who reported problems also highlight issues with delivery, customer service, returns and refunds.

Experienced situations after purchasing a product promoted by an influencer in the last 12 months



Base: respondents who have bought a product or service following influencer recommendations



At the same time, purchasers also appreciate the benefits that come with influencer marketing. **83% of those who bought a product or service say influencer content helped them make more informed decisions.** The most frequently mentioned benefit is seeing a product demonstrated in real life, how it looks, and how it works (38%). Around one in four purchasers of influencer promoted products or services also value practical advice on how to use a product (26%), discovering smaller or independent businesses (27%), or getting help in finding better deals (24%).

These findings are not contradictory. Influencer content can provide useful information and help consumers make informed choices, while the products or services they ultimately buy may still disappoint. The survey captures both sides of that experience.

Did you find influencer content helpful?	Total
Yes, by showing how a product works or looks in real life before I bought it.	38%
Yes, by helping me discover unique products from small, independent, or local businesses.	27%
Yes, by providing practical tips, tutorials, or educational information about how to use a product.	26%
Yes, by helping me find a better deal, discount code, or budget-friendly alternative.	24%
No, they haven't helped me	17%
Yes, by helping me decide not to buy a product that wasn't right for me (e.g., honest reviews or "de-influencing").	11%

Base: respondents who have bought a product or service following influencer recommendations

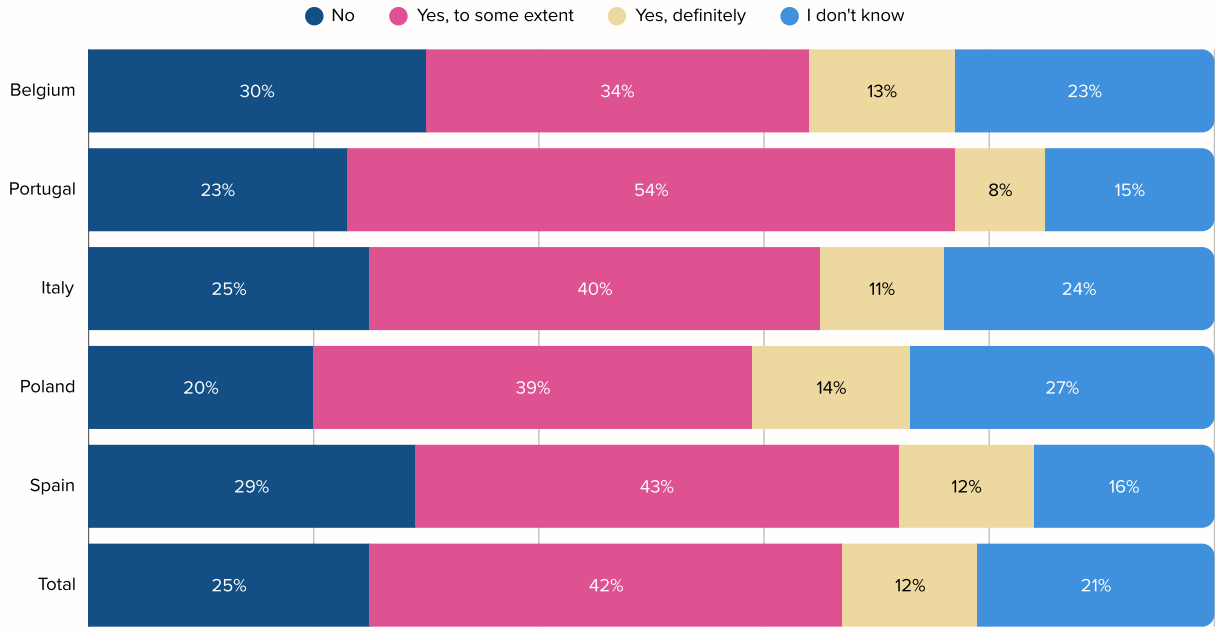


07 Do consumers feel safe and protected?

How confident are consumers about the protection they have when buying influencer promoted products or services? The findings suggest that **consumers perceive a certain level of protection, but relatively few believe existing rules are fully sufficient.** Around 42% think current EU rules provide some degree of protection, while 25% consider the protection insufficient. Just 12% say unequivocally “yes, it is enough”, and around 21% say they do not know.

The differences between respondents are also revealing. **Views vary according to social media use and exposure to influencer content, suggesting that consumers approach this question from different levels of familiarity.** Among respondents with low social media use, 46% believe that what Europe has in place is not enough. The same view is held by 39% of those that do not encounter influencer content weekly. However, when social media use and exposure to influencers go up, so does respondents’ appreciation for EU protection rules.

Do you think current EU rules on influencer marketing protect consumers enough?



Base: total sample



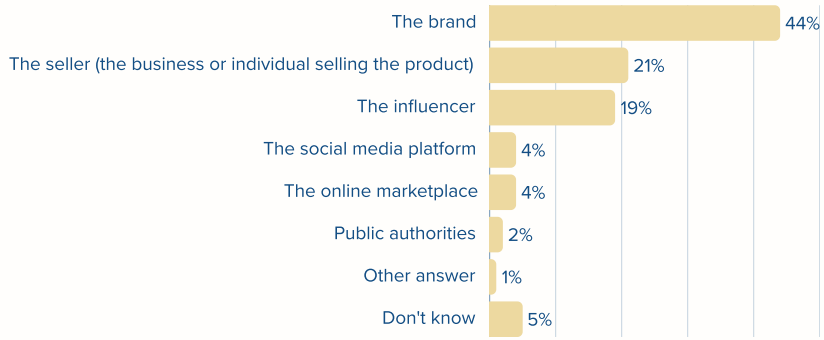
08 When a purchase goes wrong, who do consumers turn to?

When a product promoted by an influencer turns out to be defective, unsafe or fraudulent, who do consumers consider responsible? **The brand is mentioned most frequently (80%), followed by the seller (68%) and then the influencer (63%).** Online marketplaces rank fourth with one in three respondents (31%) believing they should bear responsibility.

When respondents are asked to identify just one actor as primarily responsible, the same three come out on top: the brand (44%), the seller (21%), and the influencer (19%). But in this scenario only 4% identify the online marketplace or social media platform as primarily responsible. These findings suggest that consumers see responsibility as extending beyond the person who made the recommendation.

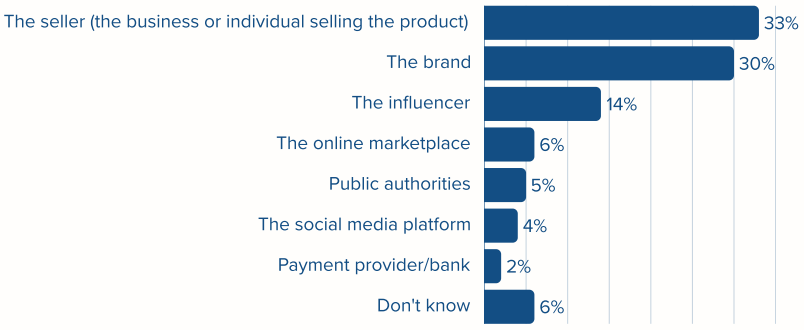
However, the actor considered responsible is not necessarily the first point of contact when something goes wrong. **33% would contact the seller first, while 30% would turn to the brand.** This is a useful distinction: although an influencer may introduce a product, consumers often look first at the businesses involved in the transaction to resolve the problem.

Who is perceived as main responsible for influencer promoted products?



Base: total sample

Who would consumers contact first?



Base: total sample



What consumers tell us

Influencer marketing is no longer a niche phenomenon. **84% of consumers have encountered influencer promotions,** making them a familiar part of everyday online life. From food and beauty to travel, technology and even financial products, influencers reshape how consumers discover products and services, connect with brands and explore new purchasing opportunities. The influencer economy is here to stay, and consumers are very much part of it.

And consumers are not just watching. They engage with content, explore, compare and buy. **One in three consumers exposed to influencer promotions bought a promoted product or service** in the past year. More importantly, among those who purchased, **83% say influencer content helped them make more informed decisions.** Real-life product demonstrations, practical advice and the discovery of smaller businesses show how influencer marketing can go beyond advertising to deliver genuine value to consumers.

But making this market work for consumers also means addressing what they find less convincing. Transparency remains a challenge: many respondents say influencers do not always disclose when content is sponsored. **Consumers' expectations are straightforward: they want to know from influencers, clearly and from the outset, when a recommendation is paid for,** rather than having to decipher hashtags or look for subtle clues. Consumers are not necessarily rejecting commercial recommendations; they want to understand them.

Nor does the consumer experience stop with the click to buy. While influencer recommendations can help people make better-informed choices, **54% of purchasers report at least one negative experience,** from disappointing product quality and misleading descriptions to delivery or customer service problems. When things go wrong, **consumers look primarily at brands and sellers, but to some extent also influencers, for accountability.** The findings remind us that behind every influencer recommendation stands a wider commercial relationship.

Overall, the findings reveal **a market full of opportunity, but with challenges that cannot be overlooked.** Influencer marketing is a dynamic, creative and increasingly influential market that consumers actively embrace and often benefit from. At the same time, their experiences point to clear expectations around transparency, product quality and accountability. By looking beyond the sponsored post and following the entire journey - from inspiration and discovery to purchase and after-sales experience - this survey puts consumers' experiences at the centre of the conversation about how influencer marketing can work better for everyone.

Methodology

This online survey was conducted between 13–18th August 2026 in Belgium, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Spain. A total of 5,088 valid responses from adults aged 18–64 was collected. National samples were weighted for age, gender, education and region, then normalised so each country contributed equally to the five-country results (weighted n=5,000). Percentages in the publication narrative are rounded to whole numbers. Multi-response questions may total more than 100%.

Authors

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