

The role of
Instagram & **Influencers**
in the purchasing journey

SOCIAL SOUP

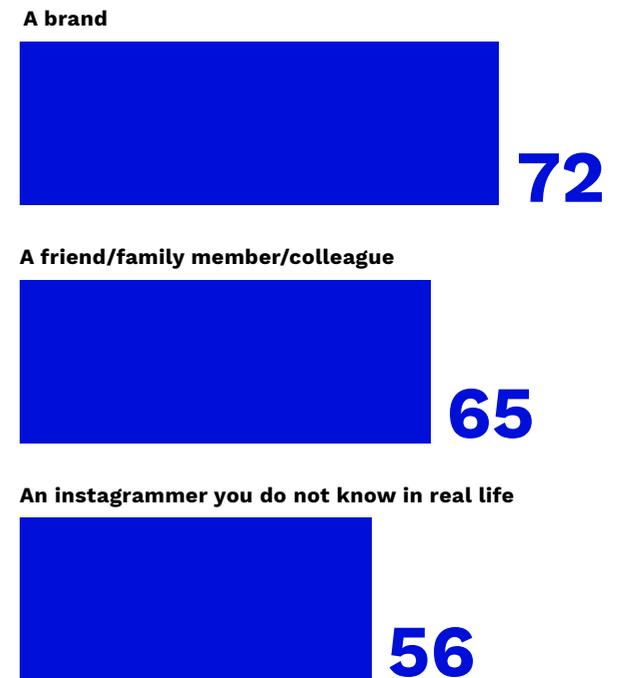
Instagram: an effective marketing platform

There are now **9 million monthly active Instagram users in Australia¹**. Typically, Instagram users access the platform **33 times a week, and spend an average of 13 minutes per usage occasion²**. This equates to a total of over **7 hours a week of dedicated screen time on Instagram.**

However, Instagram is not just for hours of idle browsing; it also provides a powerful platform to drive traffic online as well as in-store, ultimately leading to sales conversion. A Social Soup study of 349 Instagrammers³ found that users act after seeing a post featuring a product they're interested in, with 83% reporting that they had bought products online after seeing it posted on Instagram by either a brand (72%), a known acquaintance (65%), and/or an influencer (56%)⁴.

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1. Social Media Statistics Australia - September 2018
<https://www.socialmedianews.com.au/social-media-statistics-australia-september-2018/>
 2. Yellow Social Media Report 2018.
 3. 349 Instagrammers from the Social Soup community
 4. Social Soup Instagram Research, n=349.

Q: Have you ever purchased or researched products because you saw it posted by one of the following on Instagram? (%)



Source: Social Soup Instagram Research, n=349.

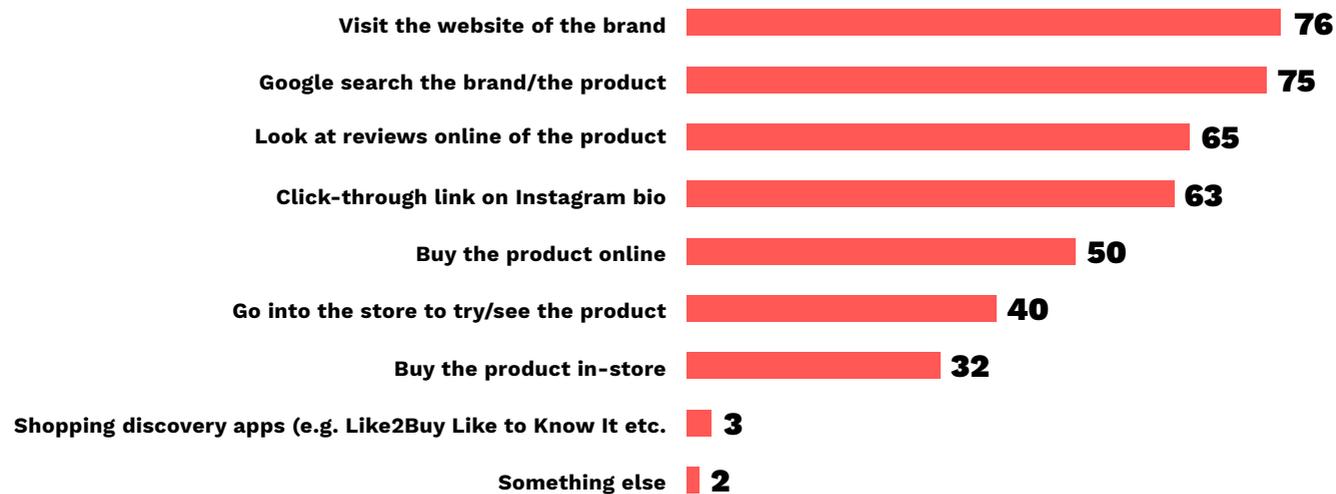
Instagram: how users take action

“If it’s something I like the look of I will go check out their page or store and read reviews then make my selection”

In addition to the **83%** who have purchased a product after seeing it posted on Instagram, **a further 11%** have researched a product without purchasing, meaning that a total of **94%** of users take some form of action after seeing a product posted on Instagram. Of the

94%, **three in four** users report that they have either visited the website of the brand, or have Google searched the brand / product. A further **one in two** users have reported that they have bought the product online, and **one in three** have bought the product in-store:

Q: How would you typically go about either buying or researching the product after seeing it on Instagram? (%)



Source: Social Soup Instagram Research, n=329.

Recent purchases on Instagram by account type

In the Social Soup Instagram Study, when respondents were asked to recall their most recent purchase inspired by Instagram, **27%** reported that it was inspired by an Instagrammer they did not know in real life, second only to brands followed by the user (**29%**). Just **3%** of purchases from Instagram were inspired by celebrities:

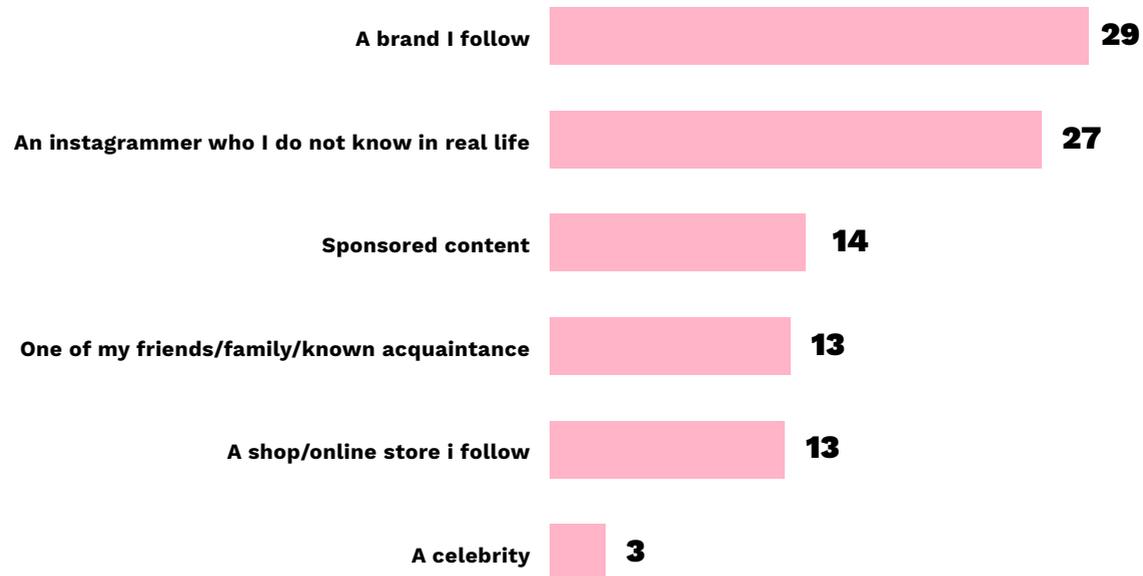
“I generally feel inspired to buy something if I’ve seen it in multiple places - e.g. seen multiple accounts that I follow post about the same product. I would go to their website, assess the price, then I would look for a similar product in other places, then decide whether to purchase”



Most recent Instagram purchase: Type of Instagram account

“Thinking about your most recent purchase inspired via Instagram...

Which of the following best describes the type of account this Instagram post came from?” (%)



Source: Social Soup Instagram Research, n=349.

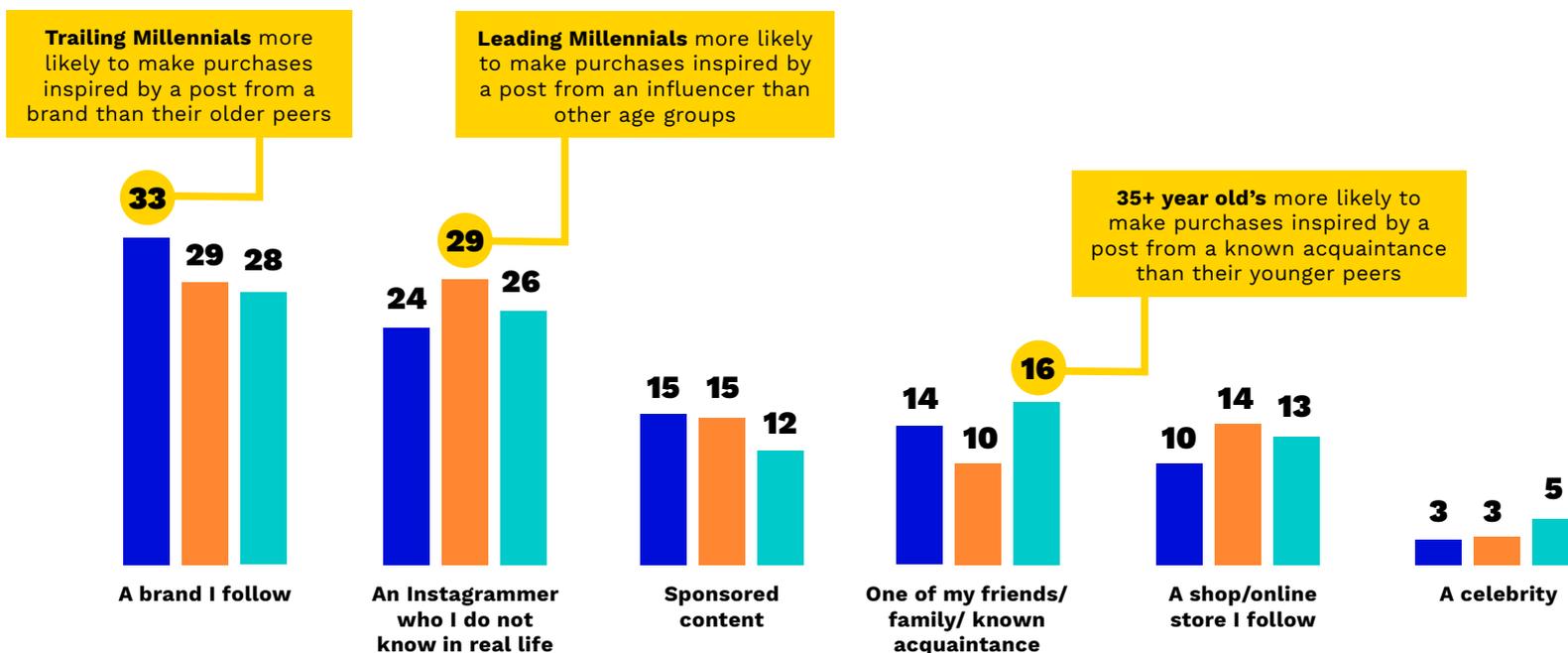
Age sensitivity: Instagram account type

When it comes to the effectiveness influencer marketing, differences in receptiveness arise within the age groups. Trailing millennials (aged 16 – 27) are more likely to make purchases inspired by brands than their older peers, while leading millennials (aged 28-34) are more imported by Influencers than their peers:

“I read reviews. If the reviews seems to be good. Then I’ll go and purchase it”

Q: Most recent Instagram purchase: Type of Instagram account by Age

“Which of the following best describes the type of purchase?” (%)



Source: Social Soup Instagram Research, n=329.

Recent purchases on Instagram by category

In the Social Soup Instagram Study, when asked about their most recent purchases inspired by Instagram, fashion was the most frequently purchased category, representing **26%**, followed by beauty (**25%**), and baby / toddler (**15%**):

“If I see an appealing product on Instagram, I’ll Google it and read a few reviews/ watch product demos and check out the website. If everything is positive and the price is in alignment with my budget then I will definitely consider progressing to purchase.”

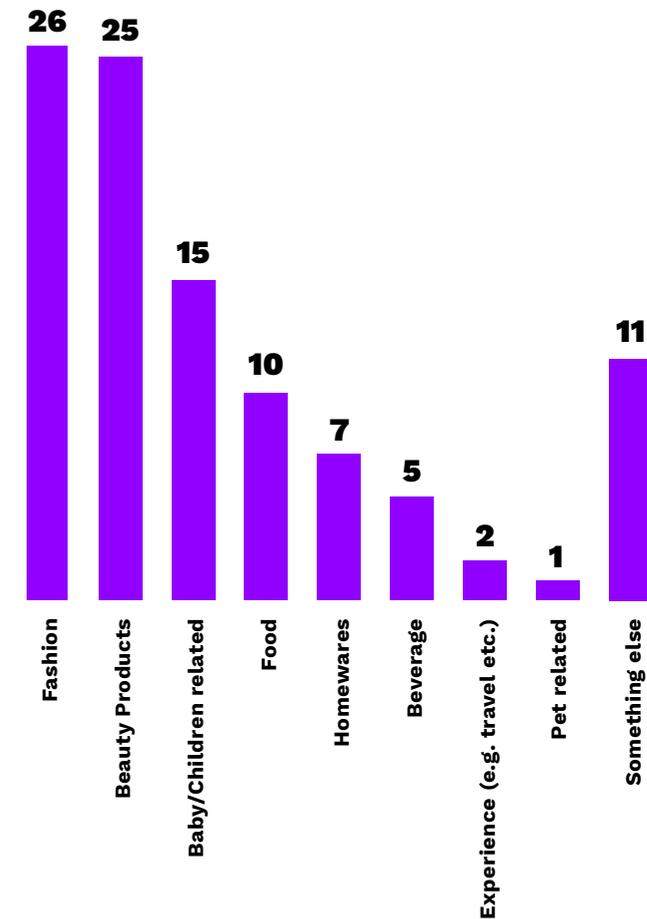
These results speak to the power of Influencer marketing, indicating that Instagram users are not only following Influencers and researching the products they promote, but these interactions between the Influencer and their followers are helping drive purchases.

Source: Social Soup Instagram Research, n=349.

Q:

Most recent Instagram purchase by category

“Which of the following best describes the type of purchase?” (%)



What drives purchases on Instagram?

To understand what drives people to purchase on Instagram, users were asked to think about the last purchase they made that was inspired by Instagram, and why they made the purchase. Their responses to this question uncovered some common themes around what drives purchases:

The Journey to Purchase on Instagram



It created an **emotional connection**



It offered **value** and/or a **point of difference**



It provided the ability to **validate** the purchase



It was an **easy purchase journey**

Emotional Connection

Instagram users want to be inspired by the products and experiences they see on Instagram. The more emotional connection that is built between the brand and the user, the more likely the brand will succeed in purchase conversion. Users find themselves asking questions including: “will this product fit into my lifestyle?”, “will this look good on me?”, “how will this product make me feel?”. Instagram is the perfect platform to provide the answers in real-time.

Emotional connection drivers:

- Inspirational
- Lifestyle fit
- Aspirational
- Authenticity
- Look & feel
- Suitability
- Aesthetically pleasing
- Beautiful photography
- Relatability

Influencers are known for creating Instagram accounts focused on specific niches and passion points, and accordingly have an audience of followers who are also interested in that niche or passion point. As such, Influencers are particularly effective at spreading a brands message and building an emotional connection between the brands they post about and their followers.



When it comes to being inspired to buy a product after seeing it on Instagram, what is it that drives you to purchase it and how would you go about making that purchase?

“Seeing beautiful photos of the item that enables me to easily imagine myself buying and using that product and how that would make me feel.”

“The way it has been photographed is what drives me to like it and research it. I will either click through on Instagram to purchase or visit the website or go in store to buy.”

“If I feel it relates to me and would be good for my life then I tend to buy it online.”

The Offer

There is no doubt that people are drawn in by an offer, and that a good offer will help drive conversion. Offers tend to sit in two main categories: either there is a point of difference (i.e. it's unique, innovative etc), or provides significant value (it's on discount, offers free returns etc).

Examples of value driven offers:

- Discounts
- Deals
- Value offer
- Free postage
- Free returns
- Promotions
- Referral code

Point of difference driven offers:

- Organic
- Sustainable / Environmentally friendly / Cruelty free
- New on the market
- Innovative
- Unique
- Superior design

Influencers act as an ideal medium to deliver specific brand messages, and are able to offer unique offers and promotions to their followers. Since their followers are already engaged with the Influencer, they are likely to take more notice of an offer than through traditional marketing mediums.



When it comes to being inspired to buy a product after seeing it on Instagram, what is it that drives you to purchase it and how would you go about making that purchase?

“Usually it is something different that I haven't seen in a physical store and I really like it.”

“If someone is advertising something and it's not at a discounted price I will generally think about it or research it a little but hold off on buying. If it's advertised with a promo I generally jump straight on it.”

“If it's something I would ordinarily buy but maybe a different brand then I might be persuaded to try a new brand. If it fits within allergies I have then I'm more likely to try something new. Especially if it's organic, sustainable, eco friendly etc.”

Validation

Instagrammers want to validate the product before purchase - they will look at the comments to see if there is a positive conversation around the product, and search online for reviews by people who have used the product. If the potential buyer can validate their decision, the more likely it is to lead to conversion.

Validation methods include:

- Trustworthy recommendations
- Online ratings and reviews
- Blogger / Vlogger reviews
- Instagram comments
- Product research
- Viewing at related hashtags
- Tagged photos of the product
- Real testimonials

Influencers tend to be trusted by their followers, with their opinions and recommendations held in high esteem. As such, a post by an Influencer can act as a first point of validation on the purchase journey. The post also offers a second and third point of validation where their follower can validate through viewing Instagram comments, as well as clicking through the related hashtags or seeing tagged photos of the product.



When it comes to being inspired to buy a product after seeing it on Instagram, what is it that drives you to purchase it and how would you go about making that purchase?

“Always check reviews to see legitimacy or feedback and then I would visit the brand’s website and check the product. Then I would buy it wherever it is cheapest or advertised.”

“If it was someone I highly respected I would definitely Google it. I would read reviews and then decide if I would purchase it.”

“If it was highly recommended by someone, I liked the look of it and maybe was in need of something like that thing, I would look into it and make a purchase.”

Easy to buy

The optimisation of customer experience is fundamental in the journey to purchase. If the transaction is easy for the user to make, they are more likely to follow through with the purchase.

This includes the following:

- Easily accessible website
- Product easy to find
- Optimised UX
- Option to use PayPal and other payment platforms
- Ease of ordering / payment
- In app / browser buying

Influencers can provide an easy path to purchase, linking their followers directly to the preferred website, using links in their bios and the swipe up functionality in their Instagram Stories.



When it comes to being inspired to buy a product after seeing it on Instagram, what is it that drives you to purchase it and how would you go about making that purchase?

“Firstly, if I see something that I love on Instagram I’ll do a pretty quick research and search related hashtags to see other customers use of it. From there, I’m looking for ease of purchase so I’m keen to buy through the link in Instagram or through a first time referral code that is often an intro screen when you visit their website thru bio link. I prefer to buy direct from that company or a little local store if they also stock the item”

“Usually I buy if I can immediately click through or find the website easily. If I have to go in store, I tend to forget to do it!”

“If the feedback is good and I like the product I will visit the website and purchase if they accept PayPal”

Instagram & Influencers:

A powerful duo to help brands drive purchases.

As smart phone penetration in Australia tips 89%¹ and social media usage continues to grow, the way people purchase products has changed forever. People are not only buying online more than ever before, but are also using their phones and social media platforms as part of the validation process.

Both Instagram and influencers play an integral part of the purchasing journey for brands. As found in the Social Soup Instagram Study, Instagram is being used as a platform to research and purchase products, and Influencers are inspiring almost **1 in 3** of those purchases.

Instagram provides a highly visual and convenient platform that facilitates the discovery of new products. It showcases how products are being used by others through fresh content that is constantly evolving. It can help people uncover trends in categories they are interested in, and once they find a product that sparks an emotional response in them, they are able to search through relevant comments and hashtags to help validate a potential purchase. In addition, with shoppable Instagram posts on the rise, the platform provides a centralized hub where the customer stays within the platform right through to purchase, helping to optimize the customer experience.



¹ Deloitte Mobile Survey 2018 – The Australian Cut

Instagram & Influencers:

A powerful duo to help brands drive purchases.

Influencers are known for their authenticity and ability to connect with their niche audiences, and therefore can provide a trusted voice direct to the customer. Instagram users are looking to Influencers they follow to provide them with recommendations and help them in the discovery process. Influencers are able to showcase products on behalf of brands, and can craft messages that are relatable and relevant to their audience, ultimately helping drive conversion.

Brands will benefit from aligning themselves with Influencers who match their values, fit their brand, and who are able to produce content that is relevant to their desired target audience. Together, the Instagram platform and Influencers can help brands to build emotional connections with their audience, offer value through well crafted messages, enable the validation process and optimize the customer journey.

