



## IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR: A CASE STUDY IN DAVAO CITY, PHILIPPINES

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### **Abstract:**

The researcher aims to understand how the public perceives advertisements and the influence of social media influencers on consumer behavior in Davao City, Philippines. By using a quantitative research approach, they conducted a questionnaire survey using a snowball sampling method, involving 156 respondents, mainly cyber-consumers aged 17 and above. The study discovered that online word-of-mouth advertising significantly impacts consumers' decision-making processes, with social media influencers playing an important role in shaping consumers' views on products. This study adds to existing literature by providing notes on the impact of contemporary advertising and validating the effectiveness of social media influencer marketing in influencing consumer behavior.

**Keywords:** social media, marketing, consumer

### **1. Introduction**

In the early definition of advertising, the advertisers primarily aim to sell products rather than directly provide information to consumers. Advertising plays a captivating role in the process of consumption and associated projects (McCracken, 1987). Advertisements are generally perceived as relatively fixed stimuli containing or implying specific information (Mick & Buhl, 1992). Presently, advertising is deeply ingrained in our society and not only significantly contributes to sales stimulation but also goes beyond merely selling products, services, or ideas. It possesses the ability to evoke emotions, initiate discussions, educate, and capture attention through creative means, influencing our society for centuries to come (Kaser, 2012).

The popularity and user base of social networking sites (SNS) like Facebook and Twitter are continually expanding. Acknowledging advertising as an inherent aspect of SNS is crucial for both advertisers and the platforms themselves. Anecdotal evidence suggests that social networking advertising (SNA) can be effective when users accept it,

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but excessive commercialization perception may lead to user abandonment (Taylor *et al.*, 2011).

Advertisers are actively incorporating social media into their marketing strategies to enhance digital engagement. Adidas, a sports brand, recently announced a focus on digital and social media for all its marketing efforts, recognizing the important role of digital engagement (McCarthy, 2017). Businesses, by using advertising as a medium, can interact with customers and keep them informed about their activities. Traditional advertising methods are gradually being replaced by social media. This study concentrates on the "Big Four" social media platforms—Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram. Businesses leveraging these platforms may attract more customers and boost sales due to their large user bases (Nuseir, 2020).

According to Enke & Borchers (2021), social media influencers are individuals with significant relationships and qualities influencing various stakeholders through content creation, distribution, interaction, and personal presence on social media. This claim is further studied by Kumar *et al.* (2023), which states that social media influencers significantly impact consumers' perceived brand value, satisfaction with the brand, and favourability of the brand. A survey of 1013 consumers reveals the impact of social media influencers on consumer engagement.

This study aims to explore the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior in Davao City, Philippines. It is proposed that consumers perceive messages from social media influencers as more credible and persuasive, with 82% of follower polls supporting the idea that people are more inclined to follow the advice of their favorite influencers (Talaverna, 2015). Due to their ability to connect with customers, social media influencers are considered more credible, trustworthy, and knowledgeable compared to celebrity endorsement strategies, particularly when targeting younger generations (Berger & Keller, 2016).

## 2. Research Objective and Hypotheses

This study aims to investigate the impact of media influencers on consumer behavior and puts forth the following hypotheses:

**H1:** There is a positive relationship between media influencers on consumer behavior and awareness

**H2:** There is a positive relationship between media influencers on consumer behavior and roles

**H3:** There is a positive relationship between media influencers on consumer behavior and its effects

**H4:** There is a positive relationship between media influencers on consumer behavior and being influenced.

### 3. Literature Review

This research delves into the influence of social media influencers on consumer behavior, drawing on the following literature to substantiate its claims.

#### 3.1 Digital Marketing as a Promotional Tool

In recent years, the field of digital marketing and marketing innovations has rapidly evolved. Marketers must stay ahead of competitors to ensure online success, staying informed about trends, advertising platforms, and technological advancements. Conducting a comprehensive yearly study is crucial for assessing previous digital marketing trends and planning effective campaigns, including expanding digital presence, enhancing audience engagement, and integrating digital marketing into overall marketing management to stimulate business growth (Kolyandov & Radev, 2021).

#### 3.2 Consumer Behavior on the Internet

The scientific literature on consumer behavior online underscores that various factors influence individuals seeking products to meet their needs. Online consumer behavior includes activities such as information search, product selection, consumption, satisfaction or dissatisfaction with purchased items, and more (Kavaliauskienė & Margis, 2019). Factors affecting online shoppers' satisfaction, particularly the issue of trust, have been identified as significant barriers (Sumanjeet, 2016). Influencers and bloggers have been shown to positively impact consumer attitudes and purchase intentions (Hsu *et al.*, 2013). Research on online consumer behavior is organized into eight categories, ranging from cognitive issues to consumer internet search (Cummins *et al.*, 2014).

#### 3.3 Influencers as the Marketing Mix

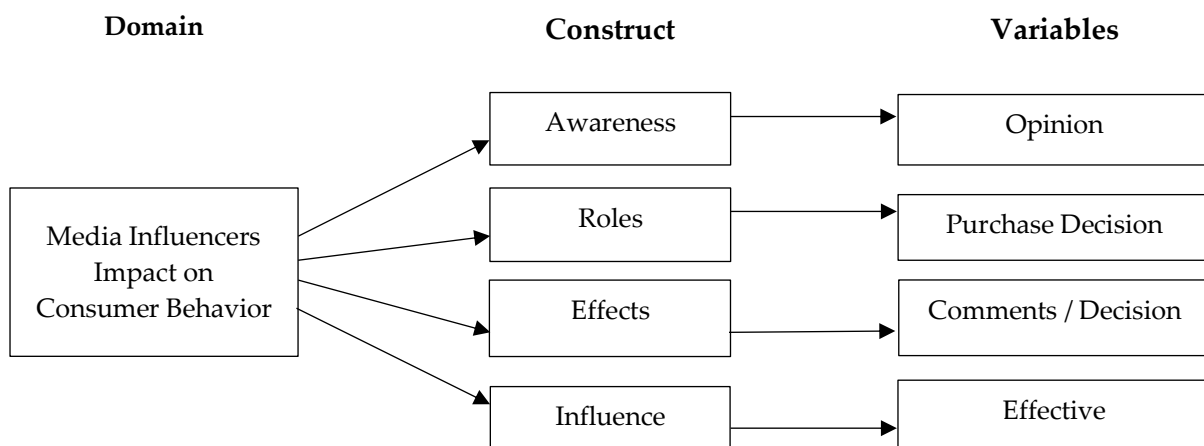
A study by Berger and Keller Fay Group (2016) found that influencers possess greater credibility and knowledge, influencing consumers to follow their recommendations. The increasing popularity of influencer marketing is attributed to factors such as higher return on investment, trustworthy content, enhanced engagement with target audiences, and real-time consumer responses. Successful marketing through digital platforms requires not only online engagement but also modifications to products/services based on consumer opinions. Understanding consumer behavior influenced by influencer marketing is crucial for brands/companies aiming to improve growth and development strategies (Govindan & Alotaibi, 2021).

This study was anchored from the framework conceptualized by Khan *et al.* (2021) from the study, *Social Media Influencers and its Impacts on Consumer Behavior: Malaysia*, which was examined through social learning theory, attribution theory, and the two-step flow of communication. Social learning theory, proposed by Bandura (1971), suggests that individuals acquire new behavior patterns by observing others, a concept applied in influencer marketing where influencers showcase, recommend, or endorse products, leading viewers to adopt similar behaviors (Raju & Phung, 2019).

Attribution theory, as explained by Weiner (2010), states that consumers perceive communicators as more trustworthy when they attribute more information to the communicator's product evaluation. Influencers play a crucial role in shaping consumer opinions about products and services (Weiner, 2010).

The two-step flow of communication model suggests that individuals base their decisions on the influence of opinion leaders, who are, in turn, influenced by mass media. This model contradicts the one-step flow of the magic bullet theory and asserts that ideas circulate first among opinion leaders and then among a larger populace. Facebook serves as the mass media platform, social media influencers as opinion leaders, and consumers as those influenced by them. This model posits that individuals form opinions based on the interpretation and contextualization provided by opinion leaders rather than being directly influenced by mass media (Weimann, 2017).

Using a descriptive design, this study aims to identify the relevant variables and develop meaningful hypotheses. The research will track the behavior of individuals within the sample population. For an overview of the research design implemented in this study, please refer to Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Research Framework**

### 3. Material and Methods

#### 3.1 Research design

This research utilized a descriptive research design and aimed to decipher the impact of social media influencers on customer behavior. According to Andrade (2019), descriptive research design is a type of research design that focuses on describing and analyzing the characteristics of a particular phenomenon or population.

#### 3.2 Research Locale

The focus of the study is Davao City, a highly urbanized city and the gateway of Mindanao. Concentrating on a progressive area like Davao City ensures a thorough understanding of social media and market trends.

### 3.3 Research Respondents

The respondents were from Davao City, 156 in total that were primarily young teenagers aged 17 and above, categorized as cyber-consumers, and were surveyed, responding to 20 questions that were thoroughly analyzed.

### 3.4 Sampling Method

Considering the data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (2020), Davao City is the most urbanized in the Davao Region posting a population of 1,776,949. Hence, this study used a non-probability sampling method known as the virtual snowball sampling method which according to Baltar *et al.* (2012), can increase the sample size and its representativeness. The survey was conducted online, targeting respondents within Davao City, Philippines, during the period from May to June 2023. The questionnaire, comprising twenty questions related to social media influencers and consumer buying behavior, was administered through Google Forms. The survey link was disseminated across various social networking platforms, including Facebook Messenger and Viber.

### 3.5 Research Instruments

This research utilized an adapted questionnaire from the study of Khan *et al.* (2021), *Social Media Influencers and its Impacts on Consumer Behavior: Malaysia*, published in a SCOPUS journal. This structured questionnaire was administered, incorporating validated scales to measure the correlation between media influencers on consumer behavior and awareness, between media influencers on consumer behavior and roles, between media influencers on consumer behavior and its effects, and between media influencers on consumer behavior and being influenced.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Awareness Section

Results showed that consumers would follow social media influencers for product opinions and information. Most respondents answered "Moderately likely" with 39.10% which is also the highest percentage. "Very likely" comes second with 23.70%, "Slightly likely" at 18.60%, "Extremely likely" at 10.30%, and "Not at all" at 8.30%.

### H1: Accepted

The study's findings suggest that online word-of-mouth advertising has a significant impact on consumers' decision-making processes before or after purchasing a product. Additionally, online content and social discussions play a crucial role in shaping consumers' perspectives on the products they choose. When asked about their inclination to follow social media influencers and the reasons behind it, 39.10% of the participants stated that they have a moderate likelihood of following influencers to seek their opinions on specific products or services. The second highest response, at 23.70%, indicated a high likelihood of following influencers, while 10.30% expressed an extremely high likelihood.

## 4.2 Roles Section

Results showed that consumers would base their purchasing decisions on the influencer's usage. Most respondents answered "Moderately likely" with 40.40% which is also the highest percentage. "Very likely" comes second with 26.30%, "Slightly likely" at 25.00%, "Not at all" at 5.80%, and "Extremely likely" at 2.60%.

### H2: Accepted

Social media influencers have a significant impact on consumers' purchasing decisions and are considered effective in influencing consumer behavior. The research indicates that consumers will increasingly rely on social media influencers for their future purchases. The survey included a question asking respondents about the role of social media influencers in their purchasing decisions and behavior. 26.30% of the respondents answered that they are highly likely to base their purchasing decisions on an influencer's use of a product. Moreover, when asked about the significance of social media as a tool in their purchasing decisions, 37.80% of the respondents answered that they are very likely to consider social media as an important factor.

## 4.3 Effects Section

The Effects Section showed that the consumers would purchase a product that has a comment or review. The majority of the respondents answered "Extremely likely" with a massive 65.40%. "Very likely" comes second with 21.80%, "Moderately likely" at 10.90%, "Slightly likely" at 1.90%, and none of the respondents answered "Not at all."

### H3: Accepted

The result from the research showed that 65.40% of the respondents are extremely likely to look for comments and reviews of the product on social media before purchasing it. About 28.10% of the respondents are very likely to purchase a product that has a comment or review, which means there is a significant portion of consumers consider social media comments and reviews as an influential factor in their purchasing decisions. This indicates that consumers value the opinions and experiences shared by others on social media when considering a product.

## 4.4 Influence Section

Influence Section indicated that social media is an effective way to shape consumers when it comes to making a purchase decision. Most respondents answered "Very likely" with 37.80% which is also the highest percentage. "Moderately likely" comes second with 28.20%, "Extremely likely" at 26.30%, "Slightly Likely" at 5.10%, and "Not at all" at 2.60%.

### H4: Accepted

The result of the research showed that social media Influencers have an effective influence over consumers. After reading a review of a product or brand on social media, consumers are more inclined to tell their friends and relatives about it. Again, 37.80% of

the respondents also believe that social media is an effective way to shape them as consumers when it comes to making a purchase decision, and 65.40% of the respondents are extremely likely to look for comments and reviews of the product on social media before purchasing it, and 39.10% of the participants stated that they have a moderate likelihood of following influencers to seek their opinions on specific products or services.

## **5. Recommendations**

Future researchers might consider increasing the number of respondents to improve the significance of the results and findings statistically. While 156 respondents provide valuable insights, a larger sample size could enhance the reliability and representativeness of the results, especially considering the diverse population of Davao City. While the virtual snowball sampling method utilized in this study can be effective in reaching a wide audience, especially online, future researchers could consider incorporating other sampling methods to have a more balanced representation of the population. This could help mitigate potential biases associated with online surveys and enhance the validity of the findings.

## **6. Conclusion**

In conclusion, as we progress in the digital era, social media has become an important part of our daily lives. With much information online, consumers are more cautious when making purchases, especially online. Social media influencers have risen to prominence as influential figures in shaping consumer behavior. Consumers increasingly rely on them for guidance, seeking out those they see as trustworthy and genuine.

The study found that online word-of-mouth advertising significantly influences consumers' decision-making processes. Many consumers rely on social media content and discussions to shape their perspectives on products. Also, consumers base their purchasing decisions on how influencers use products. This indicates that influencers play a crucial role in influencing consumer behavior. Many consumers are highly likely to purchase products that have positive comments or reviews on social media. Social media comments and reviews significantly influence their purchasing decisions. Social media is an effective tool for shaping consumer behavior. Influencers have a considerable influence on consumers, and their opinions on social media impact others' purchasing decisions. Finally, the study suggests that consumers often turn to social media influencers for product opinions and information. Most respondents in the study were moderately likely to follow influencers for this purpose.

Influencers create personal connections with their audience by sharing their experiences and opinions about products and services. This connection builds trust and familiarity, making consumers more receptive to their recommendations. The interactive nature of social media allows for direct engagement between influencers and consumers, further enhancing trust and credibility. To improve future research, increasing the

number of respondents would provide more accurate insights. Additionally, conducting comparative studies across different cultures could offer a deeper understanding of how influencers affect consumer behavior. By considering cultural factors, researchers can tailor marketing strategies to better resonate with diverse audiences.

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### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

### **About the Author(s)**

Nickler John Soria is a Licensed Mechanical Engineer and is studying Master's in Business Administration at the University of Southeastern Philippines, Davao City. He is an entrepreneur and a business owner which gained him valuable knowledge in business administration. He also has an interest in digital marketing, social media management, and affiliate marketing.

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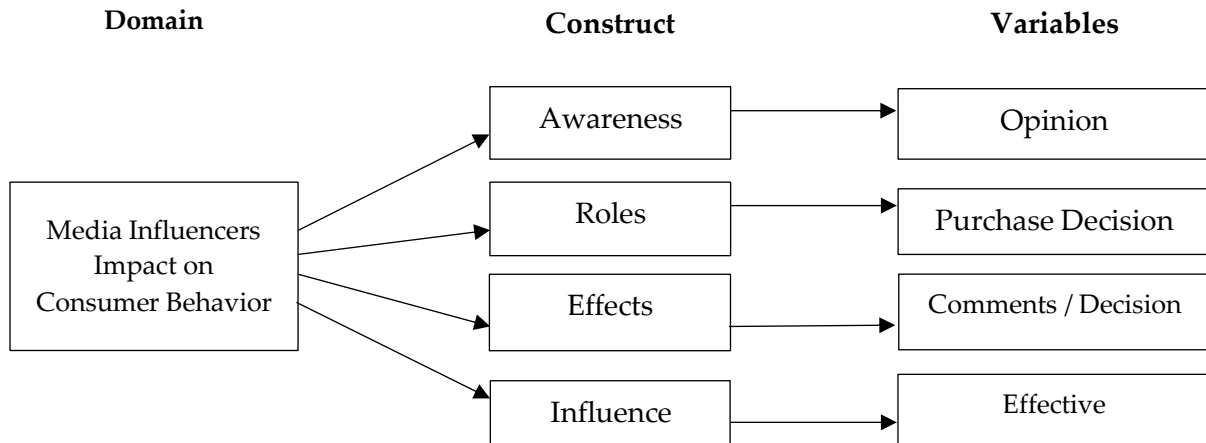
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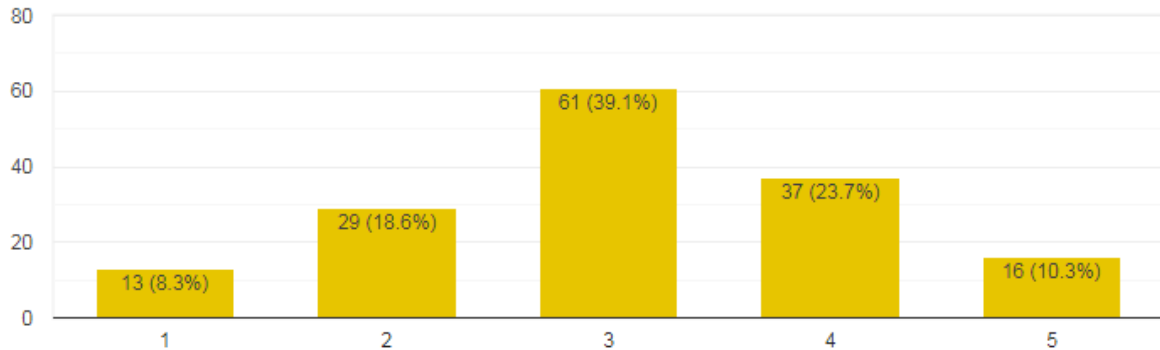
## Appendix



**Figure 1: Research Framework**

This figure the theoretical framework of the study, anchored from the framework conceptualized by Khan *et al.* (2021) from the study, Social Media Influencers and its Impacts on consumer behavior: Malaysia, which was examined through social learning theory, attribution theory, and the two-step flow of communication.

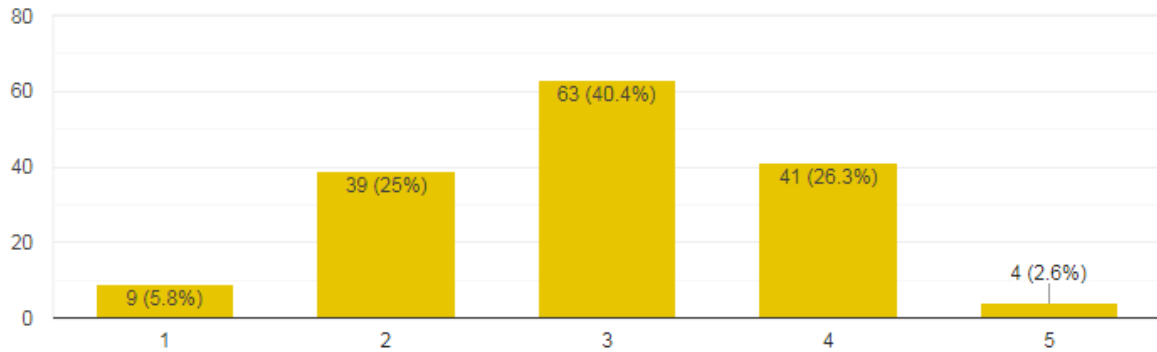
156 responses



**Figure 2: Follow with social media influencers to gather opinions and information about products**

Results showed that most consumers would follow social media influencers for product opinions and information. Most respondents answered “Moderately likely” with 39.10% which is also the highest percentage. “Very likely” comes second with 23.70%, “Slightly likely” at 18.60%, “Extremely likely” at 10.30%, and “Not at all” at 8.30%.

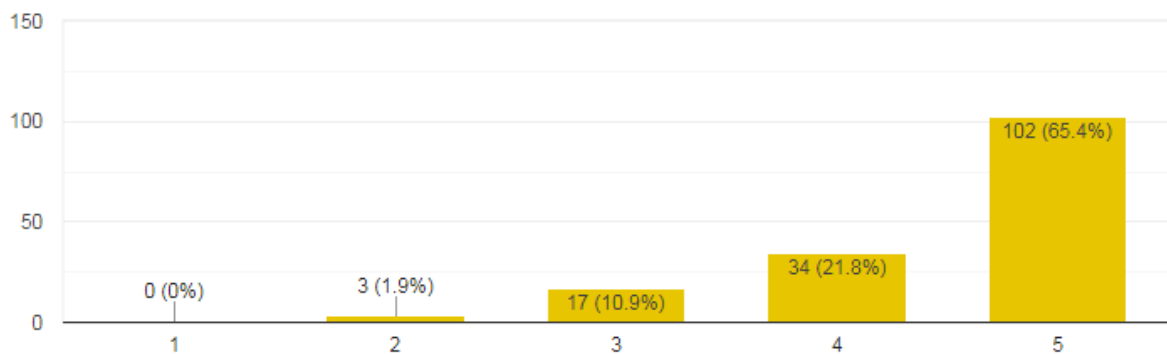
156 responses



**Figure 3:** Consumers base purchasing decisions on the influencer's usage

Results showed that consumers would base their purchasing decisions on the influencer's usage. Most respondents answered "Moderately likely" with 40.40% which is also the highest percentage. "Very likely" comes second with 26.30%, "Slightly likely" at 25.00%, "Not at all" at 5.80%, and "Extremely likely" at 2.60%.

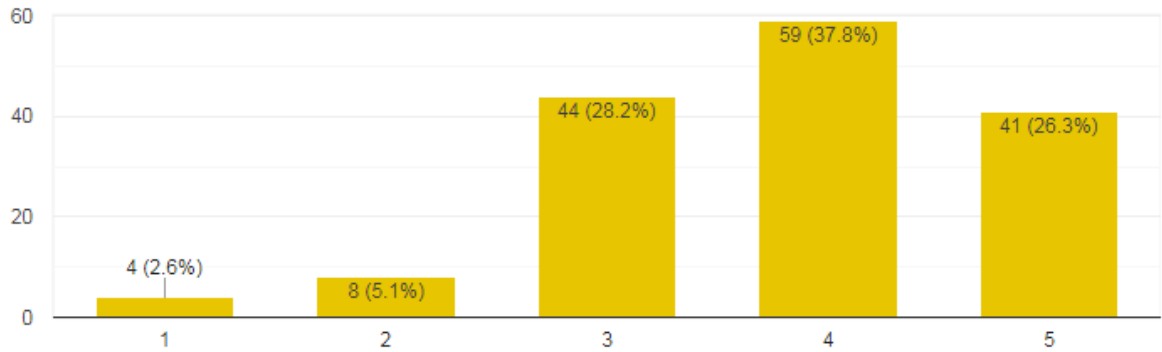
156 responses



**Figure 4:** Purchase a product that has a comment or review

The Effects Section showed that the consumers would purchase a product that has a comment or review. The majority of the respondents answered "Extremely likely" with a massive 65.40%. "Very likely" comes second with 21.80%, "Moderately likely" at 10.90%, "Slightly likely" at 1.90%, and none of the respondents answered "Not at all."

156 responses



**Figure 5:** Social media is an effective way to shape consumers when it comes to making a purchase decision

Influence Section indicated that social media is an effective way to shape consumers when it comes to making a purchase decision. Most respondents answered “Very likely” with 37.80% which is also the highest percentage. “Moderately likely” comes second with 28.20%, “Extremely likely” at 26.30%, “Slightly Likely” at 5.10%, and “Not at all” at 2.60%.

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