

58pc of consumers follow at least one virtual influencer: report

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Brands like DFS Group and Porsche have tapped virtual influencers in their campaigns. Image courtesy of DFS Group

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Virtual influencers digital computer-generated characters created using graphic software are gaining traction, giving brands more options for partnership opportunities.

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As virtual influencers grow in popularity, brands are increasingly working with them for marketing campaigns and ambassadorships, giving the entity an important role in the advertising world. According to a new [study](#) from The Influencer Marketing Factory, 58 percent of consumers follow at least one virtual influencer.

The Influencer Marketing Factory ran an exclusive online survey in March 2022, collecting data from more than 1,044 U.S. consumers ages 18 years or older.

With human likeness

Virtual influencers are more than just digital characters. The character, created using computer graphics, is designed to emulate human qualities and to possess its own personality. Virtual influencers are fictional digital persons who resemble real life people who are able to influence consumers' decision-making.

Twenty-seven percent of respondents follow virtual influencers for their content, while 19 percent follow them for their storytelling and 15 percent do so because this kind of influencer inspires them.



Chinese virtual influencer Ayayi with a Porsche Taycan. Image credit: iMaker/Porsche

People between the ages of 35 and 44 are the most trusting of virtual influencers, and find them relatable, compared to other age groups.

On a scale from 1 to 10, people between the ages of 35 and 44 elected 6.5 in likeliness to trust a product advertised by a virtual influencer, where the average among all age groups was 5.6.

Regarding where they follow virtual influencers, 28.7 percent said YouTube, 28.4 percent said Instagram, 20.5 percent said TikTok and 14.6 percent said Facebook.

Ostensibly, virtual influencers are just getting started and have a way to go in terms of getting their fictional faces out there.



Miquela at the Prada fall/winter 2021 show. Image credit: @LilMiquela

About a quarter of consumers not following virtual influencers did not know that they existed, while only 35 percent said that they ever bought a product or service promoted by a virtual influencer.

When asked why they do not follow virtual influencers, 51.4 percent of consumers said they were not interested, 24.5 percent said they prefer real human influencers and 24.1 percent said they did not know they existed.

Who is next?

While virtual influencers steadily grow in popularity and there are still many consumers to reach and educate on the concept, luxury brands are tapping in.

In February, German automaker Porsche announced it was expanding its digital expertise, joining fashion labels and retailers in leveraging virtual influencers to engage tech-savvy consumers.

In late 2021, Porsche Ventures made a strategic investment in Chinese technology startup iMaker, which specializes in virtual influencers and digital ecosystems. The partnership allows Porsche to accelerate its work with virtual influencers, which especially resonate with Asian consumers ([see story](#)).

Earlier this year, luxury travel retailer DFS Group put a virtual twist on its Lunar New Year campaign.

The LVMH-owned retailer has tapped two hyper-realistic virtual influencers, Reddi and Vila, for a new consumer experience in the metaverse. The two virtual influencers starred in a digital film, dressed in stylish Qipao dresses and enjoyed a glamorous Lunar New Year dinner ([see story](#)).

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