



# BENEATH THE TREND

## SOCIAL SELLING

**Skipping traditional retail: Or what it's like when your friend is your rep**

A deep-dive into the world of network marketing purchasers — the pros, the cons, the drivers ... and the potential for awkwardness.



## WHAT WE DID

We set out to learn about why people purchase from social sellers. We kept it close – the first purchase had to be in the past year.



We ended up speaking primarily with females, aged 25-44.

## HOW WE DID IT

We just asked! They told us, in their own words. In a 20-minute qualitative interview with 206 people. And we probed their responses in an AI-delivered conversation.



## WHAT WE ASKED

We talked about why they purchased, how they felt about it, and how it has all worked out since.



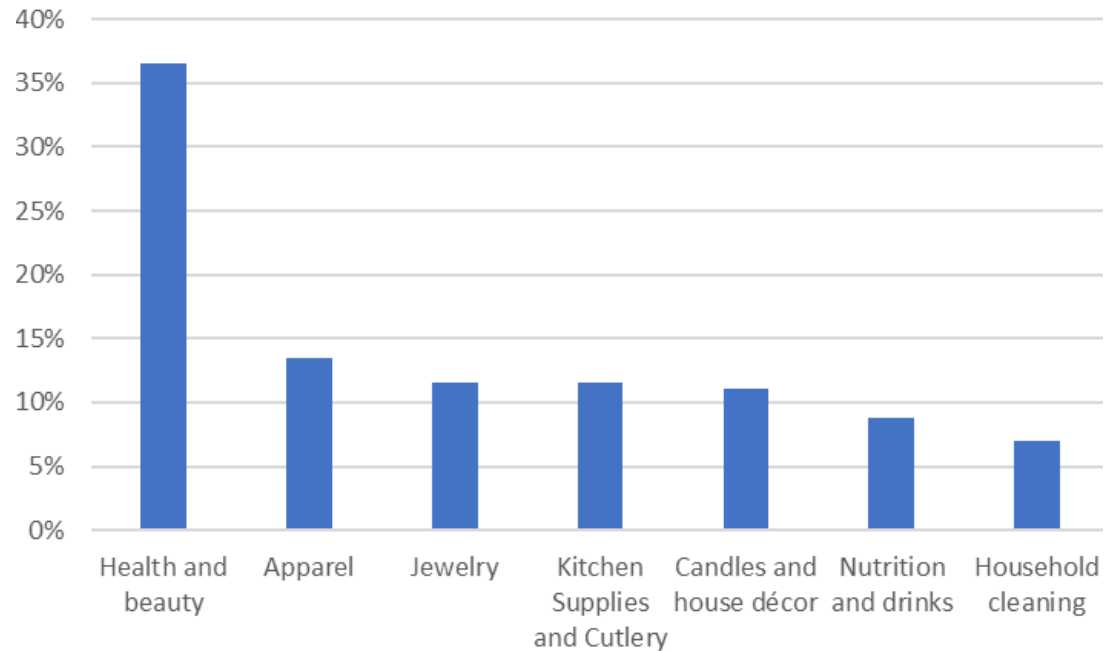
# WHAT WE FOUND ...



# First, let's cover the nuts & bolts ...

## What are they buying?

*They're going big on Health & Beauty – foreshadowing: you'll notice this is a theme later, too ...*



## HOW ARE THEY BUYING?

It's a party! Virtual or live:

**30%**  
Online party through a website

**27%**  
Through social media (party or post)

**23%**  
Party at someone's house

**20%**  
Individual, face-to-face interaction (but not a party)



“

*My relative was selling the product. She also used the products. I liked what I saw on her so I decided to attend one of her parties. At the party we tried on all the products – I liked <them> so I purchased some.*

”

## So why do they buy in the first place?

The hook comes down to one of the 3 Ps:  
PRODUCT, PERSON or PRICE



**47% PRODUCT:** For the most part, they have to want it. They're interested in something new — they're curious because they perceive quality or benefits that they want to explore



**37% PERSON:** The relationship can be the main driver. They want to “support” the person selling or feel obligated; OR the relationship is strong enough that the recommendation is powerful (an important nuance)



**16% PRICE:** Quite simply, they think it's a better deal. They see lower costs through the social sale vs. traditional retail — whether that's lower prices or sales incentives (i.e., I had a party so I could get more stuff)

*Note: Quantified Qualitative: Based on language, percentages are not mutually exclusive*

# We love to get squishy. So how did purchasing make them feel?

More Ps! Mostly it's positivity ... but they do worry about potential issues — and a small number have real problems

50%

## EXCITED

There is a lot of anticipation — they feel good about the purchase and look forward to receiving the product

14%

## WORRIED

There are some with concerns about the order — they don't know what to expect, how it will work, or if it will really fulfill what they are hoping for

11%

## PRESSURED

A few note that they aren't completely comfortable due to a hard time justifying the expense — or, at worst, that they feel forced into purchasing

*Language Nerd Note: We obviously love clever alliteration, but there is actually a lot of emotional nuance here.*



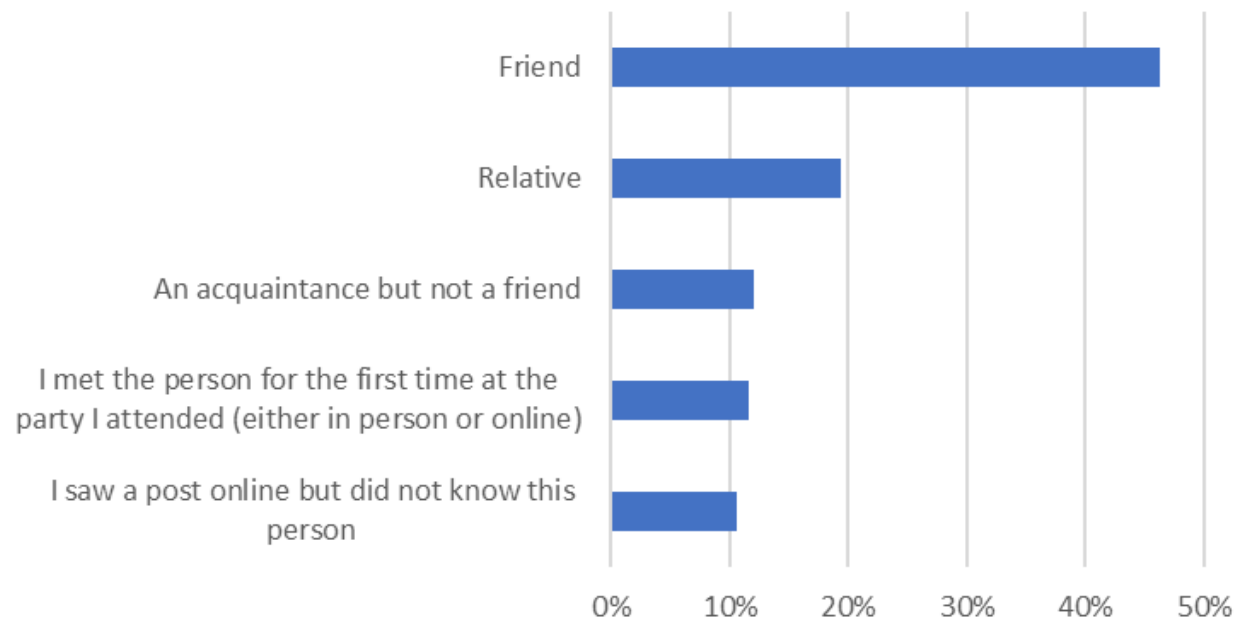
*“Excitement. I was happy to get nice things at a great price. It was unique and expensive looking, but I got a great deal.”*

*Note: Quantified Qualitative: Based on language, percentages are not mutually exclusive*

# What is the rep relationship and interaction like?

## From whom are they buying?

The rep relationship is pretty close in



“  
*Having been friends since elementary school, I live my life with these people interwoven into each and every aspect of my day to day life, so I trust them and what they believe in.*  
”

### Here's why it's different:



You know the person — and feel like they care about you. There's trust.



They seek you out and keep you up to date on deals and things you might like. But it's also super easy to go to them.



They are consulting — and working with you one on one. They know what you like and can make recommendations.



# Role of social media: this is where it gets tricky

They may love their friends.  
They may love the products.  
But they also love their boundaries.



One of our analysis tools identifies the language that comes up with unique frequency in the data set.

**One word that caught our attention, driven by the social media topic:**

**ANNOYING**

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**The bottom line:**

It's fine to share and great to learn about products, but there are limits. Perhaps a weekly post is plenty?

*"I don't mind seeing some posts but most people get crazy and it clogs my feed."*

# So, ultimately, what keeps them coming back to social selling?

This is going to look familiar.  
*It's the unique and personalized execution of the Ps.*



## **PRODUCT:** Quality they can't get elsewhere

Both the perception of quality and the exclusivity of products make it unique. They can also try before they buy, for even greater confidence.



## **PERSON:** The relationship is key

Not only do they trust people they know, they also feel like they are supporting them, so there is a real feel-good component to the purchase. Also – it makes busy lives easier when the products and suggestions come to you.



## **PRICE:** Again – cheaper is simple

*“Traditional stores don't just walk up to you and say, ‘hey, I have a deal going on today.’”*

It's different  
when you are  
seen as a  
person, not just  
a customer

**Language Nerd Note:** Let's boil this into some thematic hypotheses: It's different when you are seen as a person, not just a customer – and you are being communicated to based on your own, special, unique, customized needs, with quality products you can't get anywhere else.

Plus, you feel like a good, supportive person. What's not to like?

Other than, you know, the aforementioned aggressive social media tactics.



# What happens after that first purchase?

49%

Have since made another purchase from their rep

... and, of those, 63% bought a different product

## Guess the category!

The category they're most likely to say they've purchased only once:

*Jewelry*

The categories most often noted as repeat-purchased – but only intermittently & still mixed with in-store:

*Apparel and Kitchen Supplies/Cutlery*

### REMEMBER THE FORESHADOWING?

The categories they consistently purchase through social selling:

*Health & Beauty and Nutrition/Drinks*

The categories where they are most open to future social selling:

*Health & Beauty, Apparel, Candles/Home Decor*

# As Always — Keep in Mind

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This is just the beginning — these are condensed results meant to highlight an overview of key topics



There is an incredible amount of additional language, detail and nuance — this 20-minute interview yielded over 35,000 words for analysis



Comparative cuts (i.e., kids/no kids) are typically incorporated



This interview was intended for fun — interviews targeted for specific objectives yield specific results — and detailed, tailored recommendations



# Verbatim Outtakes

Because sometimes it's fun.



## The power of drinks + karma

*"I was not going to purchase anything but you know how it is when you get a bunch of friends together and have afternoon drinks and a showing, you get caught up in the hype and excitement. And I really believe a person will buy 2-3 x more when at a rep party vs. just looking at a catalog. Plus, you always want to help your friends out and hope by doing a bit extra that when the time comes for me to sell people will be as generous."*

## Pure, bitter honesty

*"My sister-in-law makes her own candles so my sister hooked me into buying some. But all it does is support the broad's gelato habit."*

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## And really. Let's keep some perspective on shakes, people

*"Just the mentality of some of the people. Example, I have a friend that sells some kind of shake. It's all she posts about. ALL. She's constantly FB messaging and making comments about people eating fad items that are unhealthy like the unicorn Frappuccino. 'You could be buying from me and getting a healthy drink instead of buying that unhealthy crap'. Trying a Frappuccino for \$6 vs. buying a freaking shake mix that costs \$150 bucks?"*





## WHO WE TALKED TO

- Past-year, first-time purchasers from a social seller in: health and beauty, nutrition, apparel, candles/décor, cleaning, jewelry or kitchen supplies
- Rep click sample



**206** Online interviews with AI moderator



## TECHNIQUES APPLIED

- ✓ Customized probing
- ✓ In-depth language review
- ✓ Quantified qualitative
- ✓ Language analysis

# In the Weeds – Conversation & Detail

**1**

To begin, I would like you to focus on the first purchase you made from a social selling distributor/representative. You mentioned this was a [insert] product(s). Help me understand what led you to consider, and ultimately purchase this product(s) from a social selling distributor/representative.

**2**

What feelings did you have when you were placing the order? Help me understand what the experience was like from an emotional perspective.

**3**

Now let's focus on the product(s) you indicated you purchased. I want to understand how you ultimately used the product(s). Some people have told me the products replaced something they were using. Others have indicated the products were an addition to their usual routine, etc. Some never used the product(s)! Help me understand what you did with the products and how they fit into your routine.

**4\***

### Quant Battery

- Just to make sure I understand correctly ... Which of the following best represents where this purchase took place?
- Have you made any additional purchases from this person?
- Was this purchase for the same product you originally purchased or new products?
- Earlier you mentioned purchasing from multiple categories. How consistently do you purchase each of the following categories from a social selling company?

**5**

Let's turn our attention to the other products that you have bought from a rep/distributor. Was it an easy decision to purchase these products? Did you have any reservations? Help me understand what led you to purchase from additional categories, and the role your purchases from [insert] played in this decision.

**6**

Now, I want to get your thoughts on the social selling relationship. I want to understand what drives your decision to purchase products outside of the traditional store arrangement in general ... talk to me about all the factors that lead you to purchase from a social selling distributor/representative.

**7**

Thinking more about your relationship with the social selling distributor/representative, help me understand the value, if any, they provide. How do you interact with them ... do you seek them out ... for what? What do they do for you?

**8**

How about social media? Often times social selling distributors/representatives post on social media regarding their products. Talk about your thoughts on this, and what it is like to see these posts within your social media feed.



If you're like us, you're obsessively curious about interesting trends. That's why we joined forces with SoapBoxSample to launch ***Beneath the Trend***. Each month we will leverage our unique methodology to deep dive into a trend, and provide you the insights at no cost.

***Beneath the Trend*** reports demonstrate the depth of information that can be gleaned from QuickQUESTs — Quester's abbreviated, customized solution that delivers rich, qualitative insights on tight deadlines.

For more information, please contact:

**TIM HOSKINS**

President

[Tim.Hoskins@Quester.com](mailto:Tim.Hoskins@Quester.com)

515.509.1975

