

Effectiveness of Influencer Marketing Among Generation Z: A Study with Reference to Mysore District

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Abstract

Influencer marketing has emerged as one of the most powerful digital marketing tools for reaching Generation Z, a cohort born between the late 1990s and early 2010s that has grown up immersed in social media. The present study examines the effectiveness of influencer marketing among Generation Z consumers in Mysore district, Karnataka, with specific reference to three dimensions: influencer credibility, influencer expertise, and content quality. Primary data were collected from 165 Generation Z respondents aged 18–28 years using a structured questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale. One-sample t-tests and chi-square goodness-of-fit tests were applied to test the hypotheses. The results reveal that all three dimensions score significantly above the scale midpoint, with content quality recording the highest construct mean (4.03), followed by influencer expertise (3.89) and influencer credibility (3.87), each significant at the 1 per cent level. The chi-square test confirms that platform preference is not uniformly distributed ($\chi^2 = 145.291$, $p < .001$), with Instagram (46.1%) and YouTube (29.1%) dominating usage. The study concludes that influencer marketing is highly effective among Generation Z in Mysore district and suggests that marketers prioritise creative, informative content delivered through credible, category-expert influencers on Instagram and YouTube.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Generation Z, Credibility, Expertise, Content Quality, Mysore District

1. Introduction

The proliferation of social media has fundamentally transformed the way brands communicate with consumers. Traditional advertising, which relied on one-way mass communication, is steadily giving way to influencer marketing — a strategy in which brands collaborate with social media personalities who have built loyal follower communities around specific interests such as fashion, technology, food, fitness and travel. Influencers occupy a unique position between celebrities and peers: they command large audiences yet retain the relatability and perceived authenticity of an ordinary consumer, which makes their recommendations more persuasive than conventional advertisements.

Generation Z, comprising individuals born roughly between 1997 and 2010, constitutes the first truly digital-native generation. Members of this cohort spend a substantial portion of their day on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and Snapchat, discover new products primarily through social feeds, and display marked scepticism toward traditional advertising. For this generation, an influencer's opinion often functions as electronic word-of-mouth, shaping brand awareness, attitude formation and purchase

intention. India, with one of the world's largest Generation Z populations and rapidly expanding smartphone and internet penetration, has witnessed exponential growth in its influencer marketing industry, extending well beyond metropolitan cities into tier-two cities such as Mysuru.

The effectiveness of influencer marketing is generally understood through the source credibility framework (Ohanian, 1990), which holds that the persuasiveness of a message depends on the trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness of its source, complemented in the digital context by the informational and entertainment value of the content itself. Accordingly, the present study investigates three dimensions — influencer credibility, influencer expertise and content quality — to assess how effectively influencer marketing shapes the perceptions of Generation Z consumers in Mysore district. Being a prominent educational and cultural centre of Karnataka with a large student population, Mysore district offers a representative setting to study Generation Z digital behaviour outside metropolitan markets.

2. Review of Literature

Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) explored the credibility of celebrities' and influencers' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase behaviour of young female users through in-depth interviews. The study found that non-traditional celebrities such as bloggers, YouTube personalities and Instafamous profiles were perceived as more credible and more relatable than traditional celebrities, and that perceived similarity with the influencer strengthened trust. The findings established that influencer credibility significantly affects the purchase decisions of young social media users, a relationship the present study examines among Generation Z in Mysore district.

De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders (2017) conducted experimental studies on marketing through Instagram influencers, examining how the number of followers and product divergence affect brand attitude. The study revealed that influencers with high follower counts are perceived as more popular and, through perceived popularity, more likeable; however, a very high number of followees can reduce perceived uniqueness and likeability. The research demonstrated that mere reach does not guarantee effectiveness and that influencer selection must consider audience perceptions — underscoring the importance of the credibility and expertise dimensions employed in the present study.

Lou and Yuan (2019) developed and tested an influencer marketing value model examining how message value and influencer credibility affect consumer trust in branded content on social media. Using survey data analysed through structural equation modelling, the study found that the informative value of influencer-generated content, together with the influencer's trustworthiness, attractiveness and perceived similarity to followers, positively affected followers' trust in branded posts, which in turn influenced brand awareness and purchase intentions. The study confirmed that content quality and source credibility jointly drive influencer marketing effectiveness, providing the direct theoretical basis for the three constructs measured in the present study.

3. Research Gap

Existing studies on influencer marketing effectiveness have largely concentrated on Western markets or on Indian metropolitan cities, with limited empirical attention to Generation Z consumers in tier-two cities. Mysore district, despite its sizeable student and young professional population, remains under-researched in this respect. The present study addresses this gap by empirically assessing the effectiveness of influencer

marketing among Generation Z in Mysore district across the dimensions of credibility, expertise and content quality.

4. Objectives of the Study

1. To study the demographic and social media usage profile of Generation Z consumers in Mysore district.
2. To examine the perception of Generation Z consumers towards influencer credibility, influencer expertise and content quality in influencer marketing.
3. To assess whether influencer marketing is significantly effective among Generation Z consumers in Mysore district.

5. Hypotheses of the Study

H01: Influencer credibility does not significantly influence Generation Z consumers' perception of influencer marketing effectiveness ($\mu = 3$).

H02: Influencer expertise does not significantly influence Generation Z consumers' perception of influencer marketing effectiveness ($\mu = 3$).

H03: Content quality does not significantly influence Generation Z consumers' perception of influencer marketing effectiveness ($\mu = 3$).

H04: There is no significant difference in the preference for social media platforms among Generation Z consumers in Mysore district.

6. Research Methodology

The study is descriptive and analytical in nature, based on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire administered to Generation Z consumers (aged 18–28 years) residing in Mysore district. A sample of 165 respondents was drawn using convenience sampling from colleges, workplaces and public locations across the district. The questionnaire comprised two sections: demographic and social media usage details, and fifteen statements measuring influencer credibility (IC1–IC5), influencer expertise (IE1–IE5) and content quality (CQ1–CQ5) on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Data were analysed using percentage analysis, descriptive statistics, one-sample t-tests (test value = 3, the scale midpoint) and chi-square goodness-of-fit tests at the 5 per cent level of significance. Secondary data were drawn from journals, industry reports and published literature.

7. Data Analysis and Interpretation

7.1 Demographic and Usage Profile

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents (N = 165)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	82	49.7
	Female	80	48.5
	Other	3	1.8
Age (years)	18–20	42	25.5
	21–23	58	35.2
	24–26	44	26.7
	27–28	21	12.7

Education	PUC/Diploma	18	10.9
	Undergraduate	86	52.1
	Postgraduate	52	31.5
	Others	9	5.5
Occupation	Student	92	55.8
	Employed	39	23.6
	Self-employed	16	9.7
	Unemployed	18	10.9
Monthly Income	No income	71	43.0
	Below ₹15,000	33	20.0
	₹15,001–30,000	36	21.8
	₹30,001–50,000	17	10.3
	Above ₹50,000	8	4.9
Most Used Platform	Instagram	76	46.1
	YouTube	48	29.1
	Snapchat	14	8.5
	Facebook	10	6.1
	X (Twitter)	6	3.6
	Others	11	6.6
Daily Usage	Below 1 hour	16	9.7
	1–2 hours	41	24.8
	2–4 hours	68	41.2
	Above 4 hours	40	24.2

Source: Primary data

Interpretation: The sample is nearly gender-balanced (49.7% male, 48.5% female). The largest age group is 21–23 years (35.2%), and a majority are undergraduates (52.1%) and students by occupation (55.8%), which is consistent with the Generation Z profile; accordingly, 43.0% report no independent income. Instagram is the most used platform (46.1%), followed by YouTube (29.1%), and 65.4% of respondents spend more than two hours daily on social media, indicating deep digital immersion and high exposure to influencer content.

7.2 Influencer Credibility

Table 2: Perception towards Influencer Credibility — Descriptive Statistics and One-Sample t-Test (Test Value = 3)

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	S.D.	t-value	% (A+SA)
IC1: Influencers I follow are trustworthy while recommending products	5	10	23	72	55	3.982	0.997	12.652**	77.0
IC2: Influencer recommendations appear honest and unbiased	6	11	28	69	51	3.897	1.034	11.146**	72.7

IC3: I believe influencers use the products they endorse	8	12	29	68	48	3.824	1.082	9.788**	70.3
IC4: Credible influencers positively shape my product perception	7	13	25	70	50	3.867	1.068	10.424**	72.7
IC5: I rely on credible influencers before making purchases	9	14	27	66	49	3.800	1.122	9.160**	69.7

Source: Primary data; ** significant at the 0.01 level ($df = 164$, table value at 5% ≈ 1.975)

Interpretation: All five credibility statements record mean scores between 3.800 and 3.982, well above the scale midpoint of 3, with 69.7% to 77.0% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. The computed t-values (9.160 to 12.652) exceed the critical value at the 1 per cent level with $p < .001$ for every item; hence H_{01} is rejected. Generation Z consumers in Mysore district perceive influencers as trustworthy and credible sources, and this credibility significantly shapes their product perceptions (construct mean = 3.874).

7.3 Influencer Expertise

Table 3: Perception towards Influencer Expertise — Descriptive Statistics and One-Sample t-Test (Test Value = 3)

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	S.D.	t-value	% (A+SA)
IE1: Influencers possess adequate knowledge of the products they promote	5	11	20	74	55	3.988	1.000	12.690**	78.2
IE2: Influencers are skilled in demonstrating product features	6	12	22	71	54	3.939	1.040	11.602**	75.8
IE3: Expert influencers provide useful comparisons and reviews	7	10	24	72	52	3.921	1.042	11.359**	75.2
IE4: Influencer expertise increases my confidence in the brand	8	13	25	69	50	3.848	1.091	9.990**	72.1
IE5: I prefer influencers specialised in a particular product category	9	15	28	66	47	3.770	1.124	8.795**	68.5

Source: Primary data; ** significant at the 0.01 level ($df = 164$)

Interpretation: Mean scores for expertise items range from 3.770 to 3.988, with agreement levels of 68.5% to 78.2%. All t-values (8.795 to 12.690) are significant at the 1 per cent level ($p < .001$); hence H_{02} is rejected. Respondents believe influencers possess adequate product knowledge and demonstration skill, and such expertise significantly enhances their confidence in endorsed brands (construct mean = 3.893).

The relatively lower mean for IE5 suggests that while category specialisation is valued, it is somewhat less decisive than general product knowledge.

7.4 Content Quality

Table 4: Perception towards Content Quality — Descriptive Statistics and One-Sample t-Test (Test Value = 3)

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	S.D.	t-value	% (A+SA)
CQ1: Influencer content is creative and visually appealing	4	8	18	77	58	4.073	0.934	14.750**	81.8
CQ2: Influencer content is informative and useful for decisions	5	9	17	75	59	4.055	0.977	13.866**	81.2
CQ3: Influencer content is relevant to my needs and interests	6	10	22	72	55	3.970	1.021	12.204**	77.0
CQ4: High-quality content increases my engagement with the brand	5	11	20	73	56	3.994	1.003	12.729**	78.2
CQ5: Well-presented content motivates me to try the product	4	9	21	74	57	4.036	0.956	13.930**	79.4

Source: Primary data; ** significant at the 0.01 level ($df = 164$)

Interpretation: Content quality records the strongest perceptions of the three dimensions, with item means between 3.970 and 4.073 and agreement levels of 77.0% to 81.8%. The t-values (12.204 to 14.750) are the highest in the study and significant at the 1 per cent level ($p < .001$); hence H03 is rejected. Creative, informative and relevant content is the most powerful driver of influencer marketing effectiveness among Generation Z in Mysore district (construct mean = 4.025).

7.5 Platform Preference

Table 5: Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit Test for Social Media Platform Preference

Platform	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	χ^2 value	df	p-value
Instagram	76	27.5	145.291**	5	< .001
YouTube	48	27.5			
Snapchat	14	27.5			
Facebook	10	27.5			
X (Twitter)	6	27.5			
Others	11	27.5			

Source: Primary data; ** significant at the 0.01 level (table value of χ^2 at 5%, $df = 5$ is 11.070)

Interpretation: The calculated chi-square value of 145.291 far exceeds the table value of 11.070 ($df = 5$, $p < .001$); hence H04 is rejected. Platform preference among Generation Z in Mysore district is significantly skewed, with Instagram and YouTube together accounting for 75.2% of usage. A

supplementary goodness-of-fit test on daily usage ($\chi^2 = 32.842$, $df = 3$, $p < .001$) further confirms that heavy usage of 2–4 hours per day (41.2%) is significantly the dominant pattern.

8. Findings of the Study

1. The Generation Z sample is dominated by students (55.8%) and undergraduates (52.1%), with Instagram (46.1%) and YouTube (29.1%) as the leading platforms and 65.4% spending over two hours daily on social media.
2. All fifteen statements across the three dimensions record means significantly above the scale midpoint at the 1 per cent level, confirming that influencer marketing is perceived as effective; H01, H02 and H03 are rejected.
3. Content quality is the strongest dimension (construct mean 4.025; CQ1 highest at 4.073), followed by influencer expertise (3.893) and influencer credibility (3.874), indicating that what an influencer presents matters even more than who presents it.
4. Between 68.5% and 81.8% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the effectiveness statements, with creative and visually appealing content (81.8%) and informative content (81.2%) drawing the highest endorsement.
5. The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 145.291$, $p < .001$) establishes that platform preference is significantly concentrated in Instagram and YouTube, rejecting H04.

9. Suggestions

Marketers targeting Generation Z in Mysore district should concentrate influencer campaigns on Instagram and YouTube, prioritising short-form, creative and information-rich content over follower count alone. Brands should collaborate with influencers who demonstrate genuine product usage and category expertise, since credibility and expertise significantly shape perception; disclosure of sponsored partnerships should be transparent to preserve trust. Micro and regional influencers who create relatable Kannada–English content can be leveraged to deepen local resonance. Influencers, in turn, should invest in content planning, honest reviews and product demonstrations, as content quality emerged as the most decisive dimension of effectiveness.

10. Conclusion

The study set out to assess the effectiveness of influencer marketing among Generation Z consumers in Mysore district across three dimensions — influencer credibility, influencer expertise and content quality. The results are unequivocal: all three dimensions score significantly above the neutral point, with content quality leading, and platform usage is heavily concentrated in Instagram and YouTube. Influencer marketing therefore constitutes a highly effective communication strategy for reaching Generation Z in tier-two markets such as Mysuru. The findings echo Lou and Yuan (2019) in demonstrating that message value and source credibility jointly drive effectiveness, and extend the evidence of Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) and De Veirman et al. (2017) to a non-metropolitan Indian context. Future research may expand the geographic scope, employ probability sampling, and model the causal pathways from these dimensions to purchase intention using structural equation modelling.

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