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Managing the Attention Economy: A Secondary Analysis of How Gen Z's Short-Form Content Consumption is Reshaping Business Strategy and Managerial Decision-Making

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Abstract

The rapid growth of social media platforms has transformed marketing by shifting business strategies toward capturing consumer attention through short-form content. This study examines how short-form video consumption among Generation Z influences consumer engagement, purchase intention, brand trust, loyalty, and managerial decision-making. It explores the role of algorithm-driven content, influencer credibility, authenticity, personalization, and engagement in shaping Gen Z's responses to digital marketing. The study also considers challenges associated with excessive digital consumption, including privacy concerns, cognitive overload, digital fatigue, and the sustainability of attention-based marketing. While short-form content enables businesses to achieve wider reach, higher engagement, and measurable marketing outcomes at relatively lower costs, excessive emphasis on immediate attention may weaken long-term customer relationships. The research highlights the importance of balancing short-term engagement with sustainable brand building, ethical practices, and customer loyalty, providing useful insights for marketers developing effective digital strategies for Generation Z in the evolving attention economy.

Keywords: Generation Z; Short-form Content; Social Media Marketing; Attention Economy; Influencer Marketing; Consumer Behaviour; Purchase Intention; Brand Loyalty; Consumer Engagement; Digital Marketing; Algorithmic Personalization; Brand Trust; Social Media Strategy; Digital Fatigue; Managerial Decision-Making

Chapter1 - Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Over the past few years, a major change has been observed regarding business strategies where marketing has shifted from information overload to attention scarcity. Earlier, marketing faced the problem of information overload, where people were exposed to a lot of information but had limited time to read and understand everything. However with development and growth in the digital landscape, social media and online platforms, people are surrounded by endless content. As a result, the attention spans of the users have been reduced significantly with online platforms like Tiktok and Instagram encouraging quick, frequent shifts in focus leading to exposure to rapid content which further reduces working memory and cognitive control.

In order to tackle this issue, grab the attention, and create a lasting impression on the minds of the audience, various marketers have taken the initiative of short, creative and engaging content rather than providing long and detailed information, helping in creating a connection with the modern users. The aggressive growth in content surpassed human cognitive skills. This transformed attention into a valuable commodity, creating an economy focused on capturing and monetizing engagement. The attention economy refers to the incentives of advertising-driven companies, particularly digital platforms, to maximize the time and attention their users dedicate to their products. In behavioral economics, attention is treated as a finite resource, and on social media, it is the primary currency (Raut, A.2025).

As attention spans fell and demand for the fast , quick,enthusiastic, on the go content grew, the need for short form content formation skyrocketed in 2010s so that business enterprises are able to build deeper connections with their consumers. The rapid adoption of touch screen phones further escalated its demand. As a result, platforms such as Instagram and tiktok gained massive popularity with millions being downloaded annually. Such applications provided the firms to build trust and appear authentic to their respective audiences. The method was highly engaging, easy to be formed, and cost efficient as a result of which companies were able to expand their reach at comparatively lower costs. The content would be algorithm driven, vertical and user generated .Such content consumption releases high levels of dopamine as each short video would provide the user with small, quick and frequent rewards which results in strong enjoyment, making the brain want more. Generation z was the most central to this shift. Generation Z or Gen Z refers to the ones who were born between 1996 and 2012. It was the first generation to grow with smartphones and social media. The pervasive reliance of Gen Z on these platforms for information, including crucial financial insights, suggests that the cognitive reshaping by short-form content might be more pronounced and have distinct long-term consequences for this generation compared to older demographics who adopted digital media later in life. This suggests that the foundational cognitive development of Gen Z is occurring within the framework of an attention economy, potentially leading to unique behavioral patterns and vulnerabilities (Raut, A.2025)

1.2 Problem Statement

Although it seems that influencer marketing becomes extremely popular as one of the methods of attracting the attention of Generation Z consumers, its success in the Indian market remains unclear. The choice Gen Z makes and the brand affiliation are influenced by a variety of interconnected elements that have to be explored in more detail, such as the credibility of an influencer, adherence to ethical norms, the engagement received, as well as relatability of the culture (Lou and Yuan, 2019; Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017) (Charan.S,2025).

This form of marketing continues to be experimental. Chaffey, 2019 observes that marketers still find it difficult to identify the influential touchpoints in the consumer journey. Therefore, it is essential to develop a deeper understanding of how customers make purchase decisions in the first place and how they can be influenced by video advertisements (Lotia.H,2022). Traditional marketing methods which use non digital techniques such as newspaper, TV, radio, postcards etc. are more costly when compared to digital options. Earlier, such methods were highly efficient in reaching larger audiences, however, rapid adoption of online platforms along with low engagement rates, less flexibility, no personalisation and absence of measuring ROI for such methods have made them highly ineffective. The traditional approach depends mainly on one-way broadcast communication, which typically restricts followers' ability to respond to the message of celebrities (Xuan. L,25). This is evident in the case of traditional celebrity endorsements. Modern marketing methods may increase engagement which may grab the attention of the audience however it does not ensure purchase intent showing its inability to create sales opportunities. Short term videos provide short, frequent, superficial, and intense stimulations but it requires long term customer retention. As a result, ROI falls indicating losses.

1.3 Research Objectives

This research sets out to study and analyse how business organisations can attract the attention of the their customers through online platforms by providing short term content and examine how customers' consumption of these feeds can influence them to change their purchases intent after they have created trust, brand loyalty and a bond of faithfulness with a certain firm. It assesses how a business organisations' strategies are impacted and influenced by the rise of short-form content consumption among Gen Z including impact on planning, decision making and brand building. It also analyses how GenZ's preference towards short term videos is reshaping managerial decisions of an organisation

1.4 Research Question

This study seeks to answer the following primary question:

How does Gen Z's short-form content consumption reshape managerial decision-making in marketing strategy, particularly in balancing attention capture, consumer engagement, and ethical considerations in the digital economy?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study provides insights to marketers to initiate a different marketing approach whereby they are guided in the shift from ineffective traditional marketing techniques towards new age methods where attention economy is the most significant aim to be achieved, driven by the GenZs short video consumption that will help marketers to build trust and maintain brand authenticity. The research not only adds value to scholarly knowledge but also serves as a beneficial piece of knowledge that can offer actionable insights to marketers that can be used to develop and design an influencer campaign that is appealing in a short-term perspective and efficient in regards to the long-term brand loyalty among Indian Gen Z consumers (Charan. S,25).

Business strategists will be helped by this study to recognise the importance of short form video consumption, showcasing how effective it is, especially in diverting the attention of the users in this fast paced digital world. High ROI and less costs along with the ability to cater to a larger consumer base makes it stand out. It reshapes business strategies from traditional long form approaches overloaded with information that is comparatively expensive and less inducing. Also, the efficiency of short form consumption is also realised as it is data and algorithm driven allowing one to calculate ROI and make better decisions in designing business strategies on the basis of statistical knowledge regarding engagement metrics such as views, likes etc. At the same time, the study helps strategists to adopt strategies that are able to create a balance between short form content engagement and long term brand building and loyalty.

Along with such beneficial utility, the study also recognises the negative effect of its manipulative nature and how it may overstep the ethical limits. Ethical platform governance emerges as a vital component in ensuring that the digital marketplace remains fair and accountable. The ecosystem of influencer marketing, platform algorithms, and live-stream commerce requires collaborative oversight involving policymakers, technology companies, and civil society (Meng, K et al.25).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Evolution of the Attention Economy

The attention economy has undergone significant changes across all these years due to changes and improvements in the digital landscape and media. Before the digital era, attention economy was driven by mass media where attention was captured and sold to advertisers with the help of scandalous stories and physical spectacles including newspaper showcasing sensational stories, TV and radio creating high engagement with audiences fixing their schedules to attend these shows at an original broadcast time and physical advertisements like posters, pamphlets, billboards etc.Earlier, the goal was same but the medium was bounded by geographical space and print. With increase in the importance of digitalisation, the attention was then reshaped by the digital media. Digital media eliminated geographical constraints which helped in catering to a larger user base by relying heavily on the internet operations including digitalised content of text, audio, and graphics etc. which could be shared online through social media and website applications which was highly cost efficient but the digital content was further exploited by AI driven feeds and content which were automated, user based and more personalised known as algorithmic media. Attention from the very beginning of marketing practices was the utmost important, creating it a valuable commodity. With information overload and shorter focus spans of the audience, the need for attention boomed. Human attention is finite but information is infinite. Companies battle for engagement with GenZs attention span being as low as 1.3 seconds turning attention into a scarce economic resource. Online platforms, recognising the emergence of attention, began capturing attention and selling it to advertisers, converting attention into a commodity, leading to monetization of attention. Companies too agreed to pay for these platforms in order to secure the scarce resource.

2.2 Gen Z as Digital Consumers

Generation Z (1996-2012 born individuals) and their short content consumption is single handedly driving the entire algorithmic, digital media, causing companies to completely rethink their marketing approaches and business strategies. This audience is severely attracted by short video consumption which enables them to create an emotional bond and trust with the brand ensuring brand loyalty. On the basis of this bond, their purchase intent gets impacted accordingly. For Generation Z, sustainability, inclusivity, and authenticity are the most important values. By committing to these values, a brand can gain long-term loyalty and trust from a Gen Z customer (Androic, 2024). The primary purpose of internet usage by GenZs is socialising, entertainment, connection etc. As a result, they use multiple social and online platforms such as Youtube (91%-96%), Instagram (76%-89%), and Tiktok (59%-82%).

GenZ and the following generations are often referred to as 'digital natives' who grew at the time or after the widespread adoption of the digital age who are stereotyped as inherently being familiar with usage of the internet, social media platforms, numerous applications, etc. GenZs may comfortably use the net for social interaction but they lack necessary technical skills and are unable to perform multi tasking. A certain portion of this user base is not equally equipped to engage in professional or academic work. Some are even alien to the concept of digital media due to lack of internet access or training. Development of digital literacy and awareness that such skills can be learned but it cannot be inherited. So, educators and professionals must focus on developing digital literacy else significant risks can be created in the workplace and daily life.

2.3 Rise of Short-Form Content

As the world shifted from consuming overloaded to instant, fast, attractive and highly stimulating information that is typically shorter in duration, the importance of short form content rose. The same was supported by development in digital landscape which provides services on internet and electronic devices such as smartphones, enabling mobile first content which further popularised online platforms like Tiktok and Instagram and other dedicated apps, optimising hand, portrait orientation viewing.

Such vertical drama raised the demand for bite-sized content, offering immediate gratification. This theory suggests that individuals pursue media that help satisfy cognitive, emotional, and relational motivations (Chenkhinwee, 2024; Emm, 2020). Social media platforms like TikTok align with these motivations, offering functional pathways for relief, information, entertainment, community, and identity expression (Sichach, 2024; Whiting & Williams, 2013). TikTok's interactive design supports engagement through short-form video creation, viewing, and user communication (Bossen & Kottasz, 2020). 39 Social media platforms like TikTok differ from YouTube and other video platforms because they offer media consumption with interactivity, such as likes, comments, and shares.

It also enables an active two-way flow of communication on the platform and in the real world, and provides a space for its active content creators to express themselves with like-minded community members (Bossen & Kottasz, 2020; Meng & Leung, 2021). TikTok's ability to stream fast-paced, short-form, interactive video content to its users allows for quick, easy consumption, making the platform viewed as multifaceted, satisfying, and fulfilling users' needs and desires (Robertson, J.2025). The algorithm serves as a key component in these platforms. Unlike older generations who use search engines, GenZ relies on discovery algorithms. This “Discovery Commerce” means products find the consumer, rather than the consumer looking for the product (Sintani, L. & Toendan, R. Y. 2025) (Banerjee, U.25).

2.4 Influencer Marketing and UGC

UCG and influencer marketing are some of the most effective methods for overall marketing strategies. UGC includes unpaid, organic content—such as reviews, videos or photos—created by customers rather than brands, used to boost authenticity whereas influencer marketing is a strategic partnership where brands pay individuals with a dedicated following to promote products and drive consumer action. UGC is frequently perceived as more authentic and trustworthy because it is assumed to be based on genuine experiences rather than commercial objectives.

Influencers represent a professionalized form of UGC. They function as digital opinion leaders who curate lifestyle-oriented content and cultivate parasocial relationships with followers.. These relationships enhance perceived intimacy and trust, strengthening persuasive impact. Studies indicate that UGC reduces perceived risk in decision-making by providing relatable, experiential insights. Furthermore, peer-based narratives often activate heuristic processing, where individuals rely on credibility cues such as follower count, engagement metrics, and perceived expertise. However, the commercialization of influencer marketing, particularly undisclosed sponsorships, has raised concerns regarding authenticity. As influencers increasingly collaborate with brands, the distinction between genuine peer recommendation and covert advertising becomes blurred (Andrewson, S & Nelson, A).

Earlier brands flooded the traditional marketing places with their own classic ads, imposing the greatness of their products which established a one way corporate messaging. However, with increased usage of online platforms (Tiktok, Instagram, Youtube) and search engines, rise of demands for brand authenticity, inclusion of algorithms and adaptation of AI, companies shifted towards creator centric marketing. Moreover, GenZs distrusted the ad campaigns and were severely disturbed by the long, less attractive brand led ads. GenZs believed significantly in individuals who gave honest reviews. As a result, brands with the objective of building long term relationships and high urgency, they moved from the concept of pre-written automated messages to collaborating with micro influencers, resulting in high engagement rates and ROI.

2.5 Consumer Behaviour in Digital Contexts

In the case of the digital and technological market, the behaviour of the rational consumer transforms massively. Digital marketplace allows the users to access it anytime, and anywhere, which intensely increases convenience and leads to swift access. Users are able to 24/7 navigate it in search of good deals, sales and better quality of products. As such, they get stimulated whenever users observe a flashy deal, personalised ad or any influencer marketing, social media etc. which forces the rational consumer to make his/her decision irrationally. This is known as Impulse buying where a consumer makes an unplanned and unexpected buying due to an emotional trigger.

Such emotions, desires, sentiments, and feelings that drive illogical and absurd decisions regarding their purchase intent that includes FOMO and excitement. The fear of missing out (FOMO) or the anxiety associated with social exclusion—compel users to stay connected and engaged (Raghuvanshi, A.25). Visual and auditory stimuli consisting of dynamic lighting, sounds and eye catching visuals, creating emotional and positive arousal, In addition, gamification of content involving levels and prizes for encouraging interaction that further escalated excessive and non rational decision making.

All these factors result in informal and careless decisions where consumers instead of looking at the various options using digital tools and AI-driven summarisation, leading to high risk decisions such as overspending or taking on high risk financial investments rather than going through analytical reasoning.

2.6 Identified Research Gaps

Even though companies have created various techniques and effective strategies of reaching the masses in quick and attractive methods, they still face backlashes and lag behind in reaching their targets. One of the reasons is the lack of managerial decision making. Brands instead of focusing on any single platform like Tiktok for high views must make decisions about spreading information regarding their products and services in different platforms with specific strategies depending upon the nature and type of business. Moreover, they must strategically execute detailed calculations and conduct statistical analysis on various content types rather than relying on the one which is reasonable, to maximise efficiency on social media. At the same time, their decision making framework must be aware of the relationship and differences of informative and entertaining content.

Also, many companies avoid giving attention to ethical implications. Research suggests that there are health concerns related to the excessive use and addiction to short video apps among Generation Z. Studies have found a link between the extensive use of these platforms and negative mental health outcomes, such as anxiety related to social interaction and feelings of social isolation.(Vidani,J.24). Short content consumption often creates high gratification and complex social issues including anxiety, depression and loneliness. Even though the consumers are connected, it lacks emotional and meaningful bonds, because of which they feel socially isolated and face mental problems like shorter attention span.

Such social isolation is dopamine and algorithm driven. Influencers indirectly make it necessary to stay connected and intensify the FOMO mentality, leading to addiction. In some cases the consumer may make irrational buying decisions under such an influence. Consumers may begin comparing their life to the ideal lifestyles of such influencers. Brands can humanise themselves, make micro influencer partnerships, and spread awareness regarding the same to avoid continuous consumption of short content and focus on a two way approach by encouraging reviews, replies and experiences of customers.

Companies usually take decisions regarding its short content on the basis of data related to engagement matrices. It includes likes, shares, comments, replies, etc. This heavy dependence on engagement metrics has resulted in many issues. Different technologies are used by marketers to gauge the effectiveness of their efforts in terms of reach, engagement, and conversion rates. Advertising can be more targeted based on performance measures thanks to social media platforms, which offer real-time data on user interactions.

In addition to aiding in the optimization of ongoing campaigns, the capacity to monitor and evaluate these parameters helps to ensure a steady increase in the advertising value of future promotions (Liu, J.24). However, such reliance can limit a company's ability to spread brand awareness, brand loyalty and trust to be established with the consumers. Even though high views and impulse buying can be obtained, the sharability factor, long term loyalty, brand connections, high brand recalls etc. are also significant. In order to deepen the connection, it is important for attracting them to short content and diverge it towards long form content such as blogs, posts etc.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

3.1 Attentional Economics

The purchase intention of consumers depends upon their buying experience and the quality of short content which effectively grabs their attention by triggering their emotions and creating trust and consumer authority. As such, Attention has become vital for marketing strategies of many businesses. Today, consumers are overloaded with content, information, and campaigns that require their attention. This poses a significant challenge for digital marketing professionals. Therefore, a key tool that has been identified to build and refresh consumer memory is video advertising. (Erfgen, Zenker, & Sattler, 2015, Romaniuk, 2009) (Lotia, H.22). So, attention is scarce as attention of consumers is finite but information is almost infinite. As a result, attention acts as a form of wealth that is tradeable, that a consumer spends on short content.

When companies overload their marketing strategies with information, they are not able to ensure customer retention because of their reduced attention spans. As such, firms fail to convert their marketing into sales by affecting the purchase intention. Also, the cognitive load of humans are not able to handle information overload, creating stress, mental pressure and confusion about what purchase decision is to be made. This demands marketing to be clear and simple for easier and accurate decisions.

Online platforms can tackle the issue of complexity of information and limitations of cognitive load by adopting Platform Engineering principles stress progressive transparency, automation, and contextual, tailored content delivery. The idea is to go from a "maximalist" presentation of information to a "minimalist" approach that delivers "just enough friction" to keep consumers interested while not overloading their task.

3.2 Behavioural Economics

One of the current consumer behavior trends is FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). FOMO is a phenomenon in which a person becomes anxious after seeing or checking social media due to the excitement generated by their surroundings (Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, and Gladwell, 2013). In a nutshell, FOMO is a consumer behavior induced by social pressure related to purchase interest (Widjaya, S et al, 2024). Sometimes, a consumer can make irrational decisions by being constantly updated about happenings due to FOMO. This may lead to a huge financial blunder for the purchaser. It may lead to severe mental health issues and create feelings of envy and jealousy after observing activities of various other users and social influencers on the internet.

The uses and gratifications theory is an approach that examines the motivations that drive people to use media to fulfill particular needs. The theory is based on the assumption that media users play an active goal-oriented role in the media they consume to satisfy their needs and gain gratification from media usage and feel rewarded when the selected 10 media has met their needs (Katz et al., 1973). Previous studies looking at uses and gratifications theory in social media identified 5 gratifications that were unique to social media use: “information seeking, entertainment, social interaction, self-expression, and impression management” (Gao & Feng, 2016, p. 869). Wright (2017) found that 100% of participants viewed content on social media due to its ease of use (Choi, C.24).

Loss aversion is the psychological principle that the pain of losing is about twice as intense as the pleasure of gaining. This concept is common to both the concepts of FOMO and gratification theory. As such, all these psychological theories are important in short content consumption because they mainly drive the purchase intent. As influencers often create and share content with specific goals in mind, uses and gratifications theory provides a lens to understand and interpret the motivations that drive influencers to actively seek out and use various types of social media to provide gratifications for their wants and needs. Additionally, the theory accentuates the reciprocal nature of media as both the viewers and influencers play active roles in media consumption and creation.

As the content consumer plays an active role in selecting and viewing content that aligns with their wants and needs, the content creator must adapt to user engagement and audience feedback in order to adapt their content and media usage to balance and cater to both the influencers’ and audiences needs and wants (Choi, C.24). Individuals experiencing FOMO often exhibit common behavioral patterns. Many frequently check their phones and carry chargers to avoid disconnection, fearing that a depleted battery may result in missing important updates (Ho¸ sgör et al., 2019). Others struggle with the inability to keep up with social experiences presented in virtual spaces, leading to feelings of social exclusion (Xu,L et al. 25). As a result, it helps in urgency, scarcity, high engagement and sales. Overall, emotional and sentimental triggers are very vital for companies that can be performed through effective, transparent, brand centric as well as authentic short content, helping to transform users into actual customers.

3.3 Hedonic Motivation Theory

Hedonic motivation theory is another important theory which drives users to purchase certain items through pleasure and entertainment . Lastly, it is important to note that there are studies that link hedonic browsing–that is, pleasure-driven, experiential, or entertainment-focused browsing–to impulse buying on TikTok Shop. Particularly for visually appealing items like beauty products, research on hedonic browsing versus utilitarian browsing discovered that scrolling driven by pleasure strongly predicts unplanned purchases (Azzahra & Setyawan, 2025).

A significant factor fueling this process is viral and content marketing, which have resulted in short-form, highly engaging videos that significantly increase product visibility (Fristamara, Trianasari, & Rahmawati, 2024). The combination of visual appeal and conciseness is designed to grab the user's attention, then engage, inform, and entertain, to boost the purchase intention of the hedonic-motivated user (Juback, J et al.25). TikTok users can actively interact with content creators through likes, comments, and shares, enhancing mood regulation by fostering a sense of belonging, community, and connections with like-minded TikTok users. TikTok not only entertains but also affects users' emotional well-being, helping them find joy, inspiration, and motivation during periods of idle time. (Robertson, J.25)

The theme of emotional fulfillment is a highly regarded concept in the uses and gratifications theory, offering many insights, and is not limited to joy. Research studies have found that TikTok users experience a sense of emotional fulfillment from simply consuming and engaging with the platform's content, as well as from content creators who produce short-form content for their audiences. The TikTok platform offers a space for emotional fulfillment through creativity, featuring uplifting content that fosters joy and personal growth. The social connections on TikTok fulfil a sense of belonging through interactive connections. Emotional fulfillment can be achieved through curated content to manage stress and anxiety, or through resonant content to foster emotional comfort (Vincent, 2024). Content creators experience constant pressure to remain innovative, which has been associated with identity loss, making it difficult for them to build and maintain their individualized digital identity (Are & Briggs, 2023). Individual consumers are primarily drawn to content that evokes an emotional response tied to their personalities (Robertson, J.25).

Chapter 4: Gen Z Consumption Patterns

4.1 Cognitive Characteristics

Generation Z is usually characterised by short attention spans. Relatable content on TikTok captures users' attention quickly, and relatable content is a strong value for Gen Z. Additionally, 38.5% of TikTok users are between the ages of 18 and 24, in the Gen Z cohort (Statista, 2023) and for Instagram, 31% of their users are between the ages of 25 and 34 years old (Statista, 2022). According to Gausby (2015), this generation has an attention span of 8 seconds. Therefore, SMI's content must be quickly relatable to retain the attention of their Gen Z followers (Atiq et al., 2022).

Gen Z TikTok users spend an average of 52 minutes per day on the app, thus, it is a crucial part of their daily lifestyle (Ma and Hu, 2021). TikTok is currently relevant and popular to the younger demographic, as Instagram once was, and needs to be further researched for TikTok SMIs to produce content effectively (Mckenzie,D.24). Unlike earlier generations, Generation Z does not rely on email as a primary means of communication but instead prefers to connect through social media (Nagy & Kölcsey, 2017). The way Gen Z interacts with media is visualcentric, with image sharing and peer feedback having a direct impact on their self-perception and emotional well-being (Gorea, 2021).

The process of presenting oneself online becomes a form of social performance, especially for female users (Gorea, 2021). Even if they don't post frequently themselves, members of Generation Z often monitor others' content and engage with it by liking or commenting, thus internalising online feedback (Gorea, 2021) Visual content dominates Generation Z's digital landscape, with platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and TikTok serving as both entertainment sources and their preferred search engines (Fromm, 2025) (Degering and Marlene,C.24).

Video advertisements emerged as another important driver of consumer behavior, aligning with global findings that short-form video content (e.g., Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, TikTok) captures Gen Z's fragmented attention span effectively (Voramontri, 2023) (Bari,S and Choudhari,K.26). As such, the patience of Genz for long format advertisements has drastically reduced because as digital natives, they are overloaded with information and messages which makes grabbing their attention a difficult task.

4.2 Sociological Influences

Gen Z buying decisions are strongly influenced by their social networks. Likes, shares, comments, peer reviews, and community endorsements function as powerful social signals that validate or challenge purchase intention (Bhushan, K and Gupta, D.26). Generation Z' s purchase decision relies on authenticity in order to gain trustworthiness and true value of what they are consuming or buying.

Information adoption occurs when a consumer accepts the value of information being presented to them. It is the consumer's mental evaluation of the validity of the information, and when they are exposed to information they consider credible or trustworthy, they are more likely to adopt the information (Kang et al., 2020) (Duqaine, M.24). Additionally, storytelling content on Instagram has a positive impact on reliability and trust in terms of influencer marketing (Atiq et al., 2022) (Duqaine, M.24). Also, SIMs play an important role in ensuring trust and giving validity. Additionally, 92% of social media users trust influencers more than traditional marketing due to their authenticity and passion (Eyal, 2018; Kim and Kim, 2021; Leung et al., 2022) (Duqaine, M.24).

Generation Z shows a strong inclination towards authentic and transparent content as opposed to overly promotional conventional advertising. According to research conducted by the Edelman Trust Barometer (2021), only Generation Z completely trusts traditional advertising, while more than 60% rely on recommendations from individuals they consider credible, such as friends, family, or micro-influencers (Kolić & Dabo, 2024). This phenomenon occurs because Generation Z grew up in a digital era full of information floods and advertisements, so they become more critical in filtering which information is trustworthy and which is manipulative. A study by Sari (2023) also found that Generation Z has different media consumption patterns from previous generations, where they are more often looking for content that is based on real experiences and has strong social value. Therefore, they are more interested in peer recommendations, authentic experiences, and micro-influencers who have higher engagement with their audience compared to celebrities or big influencers who are often perceived as too commercial. (Maulana, D.25).

As such, giving peer validation to users and building trustworthiness is important for formation of brand identity and positioning in the market as well as establishment of brand loyalty. In the digital age, brand identity is not just built from brand messages, but from interaction and engagement with consumers. With the blurring of lines between corporate branding and consumer branding on social media, authenticity has become essential to success. Now, consumers, particularly Gen Z and Millennials prefer brands that will operate authentically and transparently, engaging customers with overt integrity (Forbes, 2022). Brands no longer only prosper in corporate structured messaging; they thrive behind the scenes, in user-generated content, and ad hoc engagement (Business Insider, 2024) (Sulonen,S.25). One of the most efficient platforms for brand building is Tiktok.TikTok's interactive features like duets, stitches and branded challenges that invite users to participate actively, the platform fosters deeper engagement from its community (Hootsuite, 2024). Where audiences are passively exposed to brands on other platforms, TikTok's ecosystem allows brands to co-create content with their audience, strengthen trust, and build long-term relationships with consumers (Emerald insight, 2023). As consumers become part owners in the brand story of others, it works to build brand affinity (Forbes, 2022) (Sulonen,S.25).

Most of the individuals of Generation Z remain constantly active on various social media platforms because of which they know the latest trend. At the same time, they are aware of viral activities in order to avoid FOMO. To this extent, most of their purchase decisions are easily influenced by such trends, current fashion, social issues, and latest happenings. The users are also influenced as 42% of the users stated that they follow the influencers for trends and other product suggestions. This highlights how Reels has emerged as a very effective tool for chasing trends in particular aspects of fashion and beauty where the presence of the influencers enhances its usage for reaching the young populations.Instagram Reels significantly influences fashion choices and purchasing behavior among Generation Z.

Reels provide fast-moving and illustrated content that provides an excellent platform for making fashion trends, products, and lifestyles visible(Doloi,G.24). Trends such as the use of interactive effects, viral challenges, and video-based storytelling can significantly increase audience engagement. A study conducted by Dwivedi et al. (2024) showed that campaigns that follow trends have a higher likelihood of gaining wider engagement than campaigns that do not follow trends. However, following trends is not enough to ensure digital marketing success. Brands need to adapt trends to their identity to remain authentic and not lose the brand value that has been built (Maulana,D.25).

4.3 Media Consumption Behaviour

The contemporary digital commerce landscape is defined not by single-platform transactions but by fluid consumer journeys that traverse multiple digital touchpoints (Tran, A and Khoa,B.26). Gen Z simultaneously engages with multiple social media platforms across multiple devices. While Instagram dominates for lifestyle and fashion content discovery, YouTube serves as a trusted source for in-depth reviews and tutorials, and platforms like Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts (TikTok being partially restricted in India) provide short-form entertainment that drives impulse purchasing. (Bhushan, K and Gupta, D.26). With endless options available, people can divert their time and focus wherever they wish, making it increasingly challenging for businesses to capture and retain consumer attention.

Companies and online platforms have had to develop various techniques and strategies to engage their audience effectively, ensuring their brand or product stands out in a sea of digital distractions.The trend of endless scrolling through social media platforms while watching any videos is also a form of key consumer multi-tasking trends. It has become very common in this modern era due to the rise of short-form video content on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Businesses must, therefore, create compelling and engaging content to attract and retain consumers. If they succeed in grabbing attention, converting consumers into customers becomes significantly easier. In today's competitive market, where every brand is striving to get noticed, adopting innovative strategies is crucial for sustaining consumer engagement.

The first strategy for capturing divided attention is that we can optimize our contents as per the multi tasking customers, we can do this by various helpful ways like making bite sized and engaging micro contents like in the form of short videos, posts, gifs, memes, etc. (Singh, J.25). In such contexts, the term typically refers to an "algorithmic system," which can be more broadly defined as "any socio-technical system influenced by at least one algorithm [including] systems that may rely on human judgement and/or other non-algorithmic components, as long as they include at least one algorithm" (Bandy, 2021, p. 744). Understanding the interaction between human users and online algorithms thus presents an intricate psychological problem that requires an in-depth understanding of human cognition as well as technology. Collaborative filtering techniques in recommender systems, for example, draw on signals from some users to predict the preferences and shape the suggestions displayed to other users that the system perceives as similar. Once a user acts on those recommendations (e.g., by purchasing one of the books suggested by Amazon in its cross-promotional listings), the similarity matrix between that user and others is updated, which in turn changes the recommendations offered by the system in the future. Understanding the role of implicit and explicit demand in human-algorithm entanglement requires examination not just of user behavior but also the behavior of the people who create content and the platforms that host it. Users vary in terms of their algorithmic awareness or literacy, and they also differ in the extent to which they use that presumed knowledge in further attempts to exert control over an algorithm's outputs (Lewandowsky, S et al.24).

Chapter 5: The Short-Form Content Ecosystem

5.1 Platform Dynamics

AI recommendation systems on short-format video platforms have to generate many recommendations in a short period, mainly because of the format of content (i.e., videos that last below a minute). Regarding the way of delivering content to users, in the past, social media platforms were creating chronologically ordered social media feeds based on users'social connections. However, nowadays most platforms incorporate powerful AI recommendation systems that aim to recommend videos and create tailored and personalised social media feeds of short format videos based on users' activities and interests (Tiktok 2020). Overall, we live in an era where powerful recommendation systems create endless social media feeds of short format videos (Gong, A et al.25).

On TikTok, the "For You Page" is an ongoing algorithmic experience between the short video streaming platform and a user, consisting of a sequence of videos appearing to be uniquely personal. Central to this experience is a recommendation algorithm, which generates the user-specific video recommendations. A user watches these videos in the order shown, although they can always skip to the next video by swiping. These algorithms require little explicit input about user preferences, but rather learn about interests through interactions. The recommendation algorithms play a key role in the success of such platforms, but these algorithms remain proprietary. Any recommender algorithm like TikTok's is aimed at learning about a user over time. At the same time (despite watching less popular content) the average time spent on TikTok actually increases over time (Fig. 10b), indicating stable or increased engagement with the app.

Alternatively, TikTok's recommendations become more fine-tuned to the user over time, recommending less popular but more engaging (for the user) content. TikTok recommends not just individual videos, but also optimizes the sequence in which the videos are recommended (again, both parts are proprietary). A common misconception among designers of personalized recommender algorithms is that the goal of the algorithm's learning is to converge to what the user prefers. This is evident in recommender algorithms for music apps (e.g., Pandora, YouTube Music, etc.), where the set of recommended audios converges (and stops recommending new audios, except in corners of the feed) (Masood, M et al.26).

5.2 Content Design Strategies

For social media platforms, which facilitate a considerable amount of ad impressions daily, optimizing ad performance directly correlates with user satisfaction and platform growth [24]. The hooking period is particularly influential, as it determines whether a viewer continues watching the ad or scrolls past it. A well-crafted hooking period can significantly enhance metrics such as impressions, conversion per investment (CPI, investment referring to advertisement budget), and user engagement rates, thereby delivering substantial returns on advertising investments [29].

Traditional methods often rely on manual annotation or simplistic feature extraction techniques that fail to capture the nuanced interplay of multimodal elements within the hooking period [5]. Consequently, there is a pressing need for advanced analytical frameworks that can automatically extract and interpret the important features of video ads, thereby informing the design and optimization of more effective advertising strategies. The task of dissecting and understanding the hooking period of video ads involves several intricate challenges.

First, the multimodal nature of video content—integrating visual, auditory, and textual information—necessitates sophisticated models capable of processing and interpreting diverse data types simultaneously. Traditional machine learning approaches may struggle with this complexity, often requiring separate processing pipelines for different modalities, which can lead to fragmented and less coherent feature representations [3]. Second, existing methodologies in video ad analysis predominantly focus on either broad content classification or superficial feature extraction [15], inadequately addressing the specific dynamics of the initial three seconds. These methods often overlook the subtle yet impactful design elements that characterize successful hooking periods, such as emotional appeal, visual aesthetics, interactivity, and challenges posed to the viewer [8]. Moreover, the temporal aspect of video content, where the sequence and timing of elements play an important role in viewer retention, is frequently under-explored [30]. Another significant challenge lies in linking the extracted features of the hooking period to concrete performance metrics. While various studies have attempted to correlate ad attributes with outcomes like impressions and engagement rates, establishing a robust and predictive relationship remains elusive (Zhang, K et al.26).

Vision Design Methodology Extractor This employs Llama Multimodal Model 1, which leverages the advanced capabilities of transformer-based architectures to interpret and analyze the complex interplay among a sequence of selected image frames within the hooking period of video ads. By designing tailored prompts, we guide the model to assess the primary engagement strategies employed in each advertisement, thereby facilitating a deeper understanding of the factors that drive ad performance. The effectiveness of MLLMs in extracting meaningful insights heavily relies on the design of the input prompts. Our prompts are meticulously crafted to include both the title and a detailed textual description of the video ad, providing comprehensive context for the model. The prompt is specifically tailored to elicit the model's assessment of the primary engagement strategy used as the hook in the first three seconds of the ad (Zhang,K et al.26).

With an estimated 1.5 billion users, TikTok is among the most widely used social media platforms in 2025.1 It is characterized by short, vertical videos presented in an endless feed curated through a highly precise algorithm. These three features form the basis of a new entertainment format referred to here as videos in endless loop (VEL). Other platforms have adopted similar formats, such as Instagram Reels or Facebook Reels. Therefore, VEL unites both typical short-form video applications (e.g., TikTok) and sub-formats of other social media platforms characterized by the same three features (e.g., Reels), even when these are not the primary feature of the respective platform (e.g., Instagram: videos, but also pictures and text) (Siebenhandl,A et al.26).

As indicated previously, one of the most valuable aspects of social media is in building and maintaining a feedback loop, as the conversations are more dynamic and flow in two-way. The difference that social media has impacted on the purchase funnel is the accessibility and transparency of experiential data generated by current customers for the benefit of the next wave of shoppers and prospects (Lee,E.2013).

5.3 Engagement Mechanisms

Likes, shares, and comments also play a massive role in deciding the engagement as factors.In addition to engagement, comments that users write in response to posts contain valuable signals relevant to the affective response they had when viewing the post. For example, the expression "What a hilarious story" may indicate that a post is humorous, and "This is so cute" may indicate that a post is adorable. If comments of the same flavor appear multiple times in a response to a post, we can use that as a label for the affective response. When using the platform, there are a number of ways that users can indirectly give feedback on how they feel about the content that they see.

For instance, a user clicking the haha reaction to a post might indicate that they're feeling entertained by that content, while a user reporting a post might indicate that they are angered or offended. These engagement signals are also straightforward to incorporate into our model because they are already personalized (i.e., the engagement signal is both user and post dependent). While these signals may not be directly indicative of an affective state, a subset of these categories could conceivably provide useful signals that are transferrable to learning the affective response (Dwivedi-Yu, J. et al 22).

Social feedback systems used in social networks have the potential to enhance social awareness and connectedness. However, they may also create pressures to conform, reducing diversity of thought and behavior.(Adanyin, A.24). Such feedbacks involve cause and effect relations where an action creates an effect which produces more of that action. In online social media platforms, feedback on one's behavior often comes in the form of a "like", a signal of approval from another user regarding one's post2 which is assumed to function as a social reward.

Indeed, several lines of research support the idea that "likes" engage similar motivational mechanisms as other, more basic, types of rewards such as food or money. In humans, brain imaging studies have consistently shown that likes8,9, and other social rewards, are processed by neural and computational mechanisms closely overlapping with those processing non-social rewards10–14. Although neuroscientific studies are largely constrained to the laboratory, such findings suggest that social media use might reflect the process of reward maximization, similar to what is observed across species in response to non-social rewards.

Reward learning processes on social media platforms should also be evident in behavior. Indeed, the receipt of likes has behavioral consequences consistent with reward learning. For example, the number of likes received for a post predicts satisfaction with that post, and in turn, more self-reported happiness15,16. Similarly, a user's social media activity increases after a post, suggestive of reward anticipation17, and users provide more social feedback to others after receiving feedback themselves18.

In addition to its direct effect on reward, the subjective value of likes is also influenced by social comparison in a way similar to non-social rewards3,19,20, suggesting that social rewards, just like non-social rewards21, might be relative, rather than absolute in nature. Together, these existing studies support the idea that social media engagement reflects reward mechanisms However, as most studies of online social rewards to date utilize self-report methods22,23, direct evidence for a social reward learning account of behavior on social media is lacking. Furthermore, studies that do apply RL approaches to social media data have typically not sought to delineate psychological mechanisms underlying social media use, but instead to optimize software that interacts with users (e.g., by training recommender systems24).

In addition, results from the few studies that have taken a quantitative approach to human behavior are mixed. In one study, negative evaluation of a post was a type of social punishment that led to deterioration in the quality of future posts, rather than the improvement predicted by learning theory25. By contrast, in another study, receiving more replies for a post on a specific social media discussion forum predicted a subsequent increase in the time spent on that forum relative to others, consistent with learning theory26. Thus, it remains unclear whether basic mechanisms of reward learning can help explain actual behavior on social media (Lindström, B et al.21).

6.1 Impulsive Buying Behaviour

- **Reduced decision-making time**

With the rapid advancement of the internet, both social and professional habits have undergone significant transformations, giving rise to new concepts and behaviors. Among these, social media has become one of the most influential platforms. According to various studies in the literature, the concept of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) has been expressed in several ways such as 'missing opportunities,' 'missing developments,' 'falling behind,' 'feeling incomplete,' 'being unaware of social interactions,' 'losing connection,' 'missing out on trends,' and 'lacking experiences' (Przybylski et al. 2013; Dossey, 2014; 2017 Özbakır, 2021).

FOMO is the oppressive feeling or suspicion that others are enjoying rewarding experiences from which one is excluded (Zeelenberg and Pieters, 2007). On social media, this feeling manifests when followers sense they are missing out on products or services promoted by influencers they are following. This fear can be stronger among those who spend a pretty much more time on social media, often pushing them toward impulsive purchases to avoid feeling left out. Thus, FOMO is defined as a psychological state in which individuals become anxious and obsessed with losing their connection to certain social events, experiences, and interactions around them (Lau et al., 2023).

This fear of missing out increases the likelihood of individuals engaging in impulsive buying behavior, leading them to spontaneously purchase a product or service without planning.While social media addiction means excessive and compulsive use of these platforms, FOMO further compounds its effects by intensifying the pressure to conform to trends and recommendations. Social media addiction is one of the important variables in impulse purchase activities. It can be defined as the overuse of social media platforms and forming habitual behavior (Zivnuska et al., 2019).

People who are addicted to social media generally have significant anxiety related to it and they show behaviors driven by a desire to access social media and use it out of their control (Hou et al., 2019). It is known that people who are addicted to social media interact with online content more than others. This addiction may lead users to make impulsive purchase decisions more often.. Although social media addiction had a relatively weak effect on impulsive buying behavior, it is known that individuals addicted to social media tend to interact with more online content. This addiction can lead users to make impulsive buying decisions more frequently. Social media addiction keeps users constantly engaged with various digital content, which may trigger spontaneous purchasing tendencies.

In conclusion, social media addiction's impact on impulsive buying is weak, but it still plays a role, and brands are advised to consider this factor in their marketing strategies. Post purchase regret can be defined as the discomfort people feel about their previous actions or beliefs. It emerges as a conflict that pushes them to change their attitudes and act differently (Lazim et al., 2020). Most consumers tend to experience negative emotions after making impulsive purchases, which often lead to dissatisfaction and regret (Kumar et al., 2021).

In today's digital age, where influencers play a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior, it becomes essential for them to act with a heightened sense of responsibility and ethical awareness to mitigate the potential for post-purchase regret among their followers . To achieve this, influencers must ensure they provide consumers with accurate and transparent information about the products or services they endorse. By doing so, they can help build a foundation of trust with their audience, which is vital not only during the purchasing process but also in the post purchase phase.

Offering support, answering questions, and addressing concerns after a purchase are key strategies that can significantly reduce feelings of regret and dissatisfaction. For businesses, partnering with influencers who adopt these practices can contribute to long-term benefits. Collaborating within this ethical framework not only enhances the consumer's experience but also fosters long term customer satisfaction and loyalty. By prioritizing these values, businesses can strengthen their brand reputation, build deeper connections with their customers, and ensure a more sustainable and trust-driven approach to marketing Influencers, particularly when promoting a new product or service, creating excitement and curiosity among consumers, sparking the desire to purchase immediately.

These individuals, characterized by their large following on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok, have the power to shape opinions, trends, and purchasing decisions among their followers. Influencers frequently partner with brands to promote products and services to their followers. Through various content formats such as posts, stories, and live events, they build a rapport with their audience, and their endorsements can have a notable impact on consumers' behaviors. This synergy between influencers and brands has evolved into a pivotal marketing strategy in today's digital marketplace, playing a crucial role in increasing brand awareness, driving sales, and aiding consumers in their purchasing choices.

By sharing exclusive discount codes for a specific brand in their stories, influencers can provide opportunities to their followers, reinforcing the fear of missing out and prompting impulsive purchasing decisions. During live broadcasts, influencers can showcase products and answer real-time questions from their followers, highlighting the product's value, which in turn increases the desire to buy immediately. Furthermore, influencers can share content that demonstrates or explains how they use a product in their daily lives, which can instill a fear of missing out on that experience and encourage impulsive purchase behavior. In particular, when an influencer in the fashion or beauty industry shares a product that becomes a trend, FOMO and impulsive buying can be triggered.

Ultimately, the benefits influencers provide to businesses by utilizing FOMO strategies in e-commerce range from increasing brand awareness to strengthening customer loyalty. By collaborating with the right influencers, businesses can reach a wide audience and trigger impulsive buying, leading to increased sales. In summary, as FOMO and social media addiction increase, the likelihood of impulsive buying and post purchase regret also rises. (Hus, S & Ozen, H.25).

6.2 Trust and Influencer Impact

Social media has revolutionized how individuals interact with media personalities, blurring the lines between the real and the virtual. This shift has led to an increased interest in parasocial relationships (PSRs), and one-sided psychological bonds formed with media figures (Horton & Wohl, 1956). While originally studied in the context of traditional media, such as television and radio, PSRs have gained prominence in the digital age, particularly on social media platforms. The interactive nature of social media has transformed the dynamics of PSRs, allowing for a greater sense of intimacy and reciprocity between users and influencers (Chung & Cho, 2017; Reinikainen et al., 2020).

This has led to a surge in research exploring the antecedents and consequences of PSRs in the context of social media influencers (SMIs). The unique characteristics of social media, such as the ability to interact with influencers in real time, leave comments, and share content, have created new avenues for the development and maintenance of PSRs (Labrecque, 2014). PSRs have been linked to various consumer behaviors and attitudes. One of the most significant consequences is the increased purchase intention towards products or services endorsed by the influencer (Aw & Chuah, 2021; Bi & Zhang, 2023; Rungruangjit, 2022).

This is because consumers who have developed a PSR with an influencer are more likely to trust their recommendations and view them as credible sources of information (Liu & Zheng, 2024). Additionally, PSRs have been associated with increased brand loyalty and positive brand attitudes (Lacap et al., 2024). This is in line with the concept of brand credibility, which suggests that a brand's trustworthiness and expertise can lead to increased consumer loyalty (Erdem & Swait, 2004). PSRs play an important part in the effectiveness of influencer marketing.

When consumers form strong PSRs with influencers, they are more likely to be persuaded by their endorsements and recommendations (Breves et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2024). This is because PSRs create a sense of trust and intimacy, making consumers more receptive to the influencer's message. Furthermore, PSRs can enhance the perceived authenticity of the influencer, which is a critical factor in influencer marketing (Aw & Chuah, 2021). The perceived authenticity of influencers can be further strengthened by their self-disclosure and interactive communication with their followers (Aw & Chuah, 2021; Lacap et al., 2024).

Several factors can moderate the relationship between PSRs and their outcomes. One such factor is self-esteem, which has been found to influence the impact of PSRs on purchase intention (Bi & Zhang, 2023). Individuals with lower self-esteem may be more likely to purchase products endorsed by influencers they have a PSR with, as a way to compensate for their lack of self-worth. Additionally, the type of product being endorsed and the level of congruence between the influencer and the product can also moderate the effects of PSRs (Liu et al., 2024). For example, the effect of PSRs on purchase intention may be stronger for hedonic products (those that provide pleasure and enjoyment) than for utilitarian products (those that serve a practical purpose). The dynamic and interactive features of social media platforms play a pivotal role in shaping parasocial relationships.

Cultural backgrounds also play a crucial role in shaping parasocial relationships. The research emphasizes the importance of considering cultural contexts, particularly in understanding how parasocial relationships are formed and expressed in different cultures. For instance, the concept of "cuteness" has a unique role in fostering parasocial relationships with luxury brands in the Chinese market (Shen, 2020). Moreover, collectivistic cultures, with their emphasis on group harmony and social connections, may foster stronger parasocial bonds compared to individualistic cultures (Du et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2022). User demographics, particularly age and gender, also significantly influence parasocial relationships.

The digital native generation, having grown up in a media-saturated environment, is particularly adept at forming and maintaining online relationships, including parasocial ones. Additionally, gender dynamics play a role, with women often reporting stronger parasocial relationships than men (Conde & Casais, 2023; Silva & Costa, 2021). The research also highlights the impact of parasocial relationships on adolescents, shaping their consumption behaviors and attitudes (Bond, 2016; Lou & Kim, 2019). In conclusion, the exploration of various contexts reveals the intricate interplay of social media platforms, cultural backgrounds, and user demographics in shaping parasocial relationships. These relationships are not static or uniform but are instead molded by the dynamic and multifaceted digital landscape. Understanding these nuanced dynamics is crucial for comprehending the impact of social media on individuals' connections with media personalities and its broader implications for various fields, including marketing, psychology, and communication studies.(Muhmin, A et al. 25).

Many influencers leverage their popularity and get compensated by brands for creating sponsored content. Despite the rising popularity of influencer marketing, it is not clear how consumers perceive sponsored content relative to organic content created by influencers and, as a result, how consumers respond to influencers' sponsored content. One possibility is that consumers view sponsored content less favourably than organic content, perhaps because they believe it might not necessarily reflect the influencer's real viewpoint, and consequently engage less with sponsored content.

Alternatively, if consumers find sponsored content to be useful and authentic, they may rely on sponsored content as a source of information,possibly because the influencer's ability to get brand deals may signal that influencer's quality and credibility (Doss, 2011). If consumers are averse to advertising and are unable to identify sponsored content that is not disclosed as such, then lack of disclosure might increase engagement. However, if consumers are averse to advertising and are able to segregate sponsored content from organic content, then a lack of disclosure and transparency might result in reactions towards such content and less engagement.

Advertisers typically ask influencers to mention the brand in the text of the post. A mention is an Instagram account referred to in a post. In an Instagram post, users mention a person or brand that also has an Instagram account, using '@' followed by the person or brand's Instagram account name. Since the FTC requires influencers to disclose advertising, advertisers may ask influencers, or influencers may choose, to disclose the sponsored nature of the post by using terms such as #Ad or #sponsored in the text of the post, or tagging the post as 'Paid partnership with 'brand name". However, in many instances influencers do not disclose sponsorship.

As a result, regulators across the world have mandated advertising disclosure in influencer marketing and undertaken enforcement actions.First, consumers do not engage less with a sponsored post relative to an organic post when the post's topic aligns with the primary topic of the influencer. Second, the proportion of brand-related posts in the previous five days reduces the negative effect of sponsorship on engagement. Mentioning a brand multiple times may signal an influencer's genuine liking for the brand and imply the influencer is not merely fulfilling a contractual agreement.

A consumer can engage with a post by 'liking' it. Likes are generally seen as an important metric to capture user engagement with influencer content. Brands select influencers based on the number of likes for past posts. They use the number of likes a post receives to measure the success of an influencer marketing campaign and compensate influencers based on this metric.We measure authenticity using three proxies. First, we examine the topic alignment of a post shared by the influencer using topic modelling. We propose that posts that align with an influencer's primary 'topic' resonate better with consumers.

As a second measure of authenticity, we focus on an influencer's propensity to share brand related content. If an influencer shares brand related content frequently, then such content in the focal post may be less likely to come across as alien, or less authentic. We use the proportion of posts shared by the influencer during the five days before the focal post that mentions a brand to measure the influencer's propensity to share brand related content. Finally, we use the number of times a brand is mentioned in a post as a third measure of authenticity. Mentioning a brand multiple times may signal an influencer's genuine liking for the brand and imply the influencer is not merely fulfilling a contractual agreement. (Bairathi,M &Lambrecht ,A.23)

6.3 Consumer Decision-Making Process

There has been a noticeable shift in consumer purchase decisions from rational thinking to emotional influence.Social media is not only a channel for information dissemination but also a place for brands and consumers to interact, resonate with each other and share opinions. Consumers' behavior, emotional expressions and interactions on social platforms can not only reflect their brand identification and loyalty but also influence their purchasing intentions and decisions.

However, although social media data provides unprecedented opportunities for brand marketing, how to effectively mine these massive data and transform them into actionable marketing strategies remains an issue worthy of in-depth exploration. The change of consumer attitudes and behaviors is one of the key factors in social media marketing research. On social platforms, users' attitudes are usually reflected through their interactive behaviors, emotional expressions, and purchase intentions. By analyzing the changes in consumers' attitudes before and after an event, brands can better understand the impact of brand communication on consumer behavior.

Social media activities can further influence users' purchasing decisions by influencing their emotional tendencies and interaction frequency. For example, after participating in a brand event, users' attitudes toward the brand may change, showing a more positive emotional tendency, which in turn increases their purchase intention. Frequent positive interactions are usually accompanied by stronger purchase intentions. In addition, brands can more accurately identify potential loyal customers and develop targeted marketing strategies by evaluating users' emotional tendencies through sentiment analysis tools.

By continuously tracking changes in consumer attitudes, brands can optimize their products and services, enhance users' brand loyalty, and ultimately improve their market competitiveness. The dynamic tracking of consumer emotions[11] and attitudes aims to capture changes in consumer emotions through sentiment analysis on social media and reveal their impact on purchase intention and brand perception. Social media content (such as posts, comments, and shares) contains a large amount of emotional information, which can be analyzed for emotional tendency (positive, negative, or neutral) and emotional intensity (mild or strong) using natural language processing (NLP) technology [12].

By tracking sentiment fluctuations, it is possible to identify trends in consumer attitudes. For example, during a marketing campaign or brand crisis, consumers' sentiment changes may affect their purchasing decisions. An increase in positive sentiment generally means an uptick in purchase intent, while an increase in negative sentiment can lead to brand alienation. Sentiment analysis can also reveal changes in brand perception, helping brands understand how their image has changed in the public mind, especially during brand promotions or crisis management. By dynamically tracking emotional tendencies, brands can adjust their marketing strategies in a timely manner to better respond to consumer needs and emotional changes, thereby improving brand consumer satisfaction and loyalty (Li, H.25)/

The development of digital technology has had a major impact on the world of marketing and consumer behavior. One of the most significant changes in this era is the shift in consumer attention from conventional media to digital media that is fast, personalized, and instantaneous. In this context, a marketing strategy is no longer enough to simply make ads attractive, but must be able to be present at key moments when consumers have specific needs and seek answers quickly.

Micro-moment marketing is a strategy that relies on understanding consumer behavior that performs digital searches or actions in a very short but crucial moment. This concept was first introduced by Google in response to the increasing use of smartphones that allow consumers to access information anytime and anywhere. In this context, the purchase decision is no longer gradual and lengthy, but can happen in just a few seconds after seeing the right information. Therefore, the presence of the brand at these moments becomes very decisive in influencing consumer decisions.

E-commerce as a digital marketing and sales channel offers many features that support micro-moment marketing. The use of push notifications, product recommendations based on search history, countdown timers, flash sales, and customer reviews are all part of the strategy to capture consumers' attention in a short moment. All of these elements are designed to stimulate quick action and create the feeling that if you don't act immediately, then the opportunity will be lost. However, the implementation of this strategy is not without challenges. Today's consumers are not only increasingly critical, but also selective about the content they receive.

Irrelevant notifications, excessive promotions, or fake reviews can make consumers lose trust and instead avoid certain apps or platforms. Observations of consumer behavior show that responses to digital stimuli are higher at certain times, such as evenings after hours, weekends, or paydays. At these times, consumers tend to be more relaxed, have free time, and be more open to digital offers. Conversely, during business hours or during busy times, notifications from e-commerce tend to be ignored or even considered annoying. Therefore, it is important for e-commerce players to pay attention to time in conveying marketing messages (Basir, N.25).

Chapter 7: Business Strategy Implications

7.1 Shift in Marketing Strategies

For younger generations, especially Gen Z, brand loyalty is not declared through surveys or slogans. It is felt within seconds. They scroll, watch, react, and either stay or swipe. A polished 30-second commercial created by an award-winning firm can no longer have the same emotional impact compared to a 10-second video filmed on a smartphone by an average user. In this space, influence is no longer pushed—it's invited. The most successful videos are not ads, they are emotional micro-mirrors.

They reflect not only the brand's essence but the audience's hopes, frustrations, humor, and desire for belonging. Many earlier advertising frameworks treated consumers as passive receivers of information. But in the digital space—especially on platforms like TikTok or Reels—the audience becomes part of the performance as viewers can provide 'likes,' 'comments,' and 'shares' to their public posts or with friends. A viewer might duet, remix, comment, or create a reaction video. In doing so, they are not just engaging with content; they're co-creating the brand narrative.

As it is another form that the brand gains popularity by emerging with the consumers' sentiment. This participatory dynamic collapses the distance between brand and user, and turns marketing into shared authorship. Yet, despite this shift, much of the existing literature remains stuck in the language of impressions, reach, and clicks. What's often missing is a behavioral understanding of why certain videos feel magnetic—why they "stick" emotionally, and why people act on them.

The CEA model aims to address that gap, not by introducing yet another marketing formula, but by giving structure to what emotionally intelligent content already does intuitively. In the world of short videos, content is not just the storyline or visuals but it is a form of architecture with the creation of attention. The pacing, angles, sound layers, visual metaphors, and even on-screen text all play a role in shaping perception. A productive short-form content grabs attention in under three seconds—not through shock, but through emotional relevance. (Chin,W & Ooi, Z.25).

The challenge for the individual user is to find such captivating nuggets of data. For those aiming to make their digital content seen, the challenge is to somehow capture users' restless attention by grabbing them by the eyeballs. For their part, clickbait sites are specialized in delivering endless streams of such captivating nuggets. These aims are already most familiar from tabloid press and multi-channel television, the notable and obvious difference being that in social media it is the task of users to further set the nuggets into circulation and to coin ones of their own. The capturing of attention has been, for the past decade and more, a key focus and goal in the social media economy of clicks, visits, likes, and shares. Contemporary diagnoses of distraction indicate concerns over user attention growing ever more elusive a commodity and therefore also increasingly difficult to grab and to monetize.

These concerns have also been supported by research findings building on neuropsychology (see O'Gorman, 2015). A 2015 Microsoft research report on online marketing found that the attention spans of Canadians had decreased to eight seconds while the taste for novelty was growing and long-term focus eroding. At the same time, the report noted an increase in short bursts of high attention. Or, as its foreword enthused: "If there's no need to stay tuned in, why not move onto the next new and exciting thing for another hit of dopamine?" [9]. The report concluded with tips targeted at online advertisers who need to "be clear, personal, relevant, and get to the point;" "Defy expectations, keep it moving, and use simplicity to focus on your message;" "Embed calls to action, be interactive, continue experiences onto other screens, and use sequential messaging".

One of the proposed strategies involved grabbing attention by feeding people's fascination for novelty: "When consumers are looking for something to care about at every moment, rapid fire tactics like branded content, native advertising and generally useful, entertaining, and shareable content are best" [12]. In addition to providing so-called sticky content for social — and optimally viral — circulation, advertisers are told to aim for clarity and catch users by standing out. Since attention is a commodity, user "preference for higher levels of stimulation" [13] is obviously something to be both fuelled and monetized (Paasonen, S.2016).

7.2 Role of Influencers and UGC

UGC is frequently described as "any publicly disseminated, consumer-generated message whose subject is a collectively recognized brand" (Berthon et al., 2008). While UGC cannot be considered an utterly brand-new concept, as word-of-mouth has always existed, it is undeniable that the spreading of social platforms has primarily facilitated the co-creation of brand content through customer empowerment (Hennigs et al., 2012; Üçok Hughes et al., 2016).

First, UGC allows users to express a new identity online or self-promote through interaction with other community members (Daugherty et al., 2008). Likewise, the self-concept dimension of UGC is understood as a means for consumers to communicate who they are and express themselves by sharing attitudes, behaviours and preferences that are agreeable to others (Daugherty et al., 2008; Li et al., 2021).

Second, content creation is accompanied by a feeling of inherent gratitude for actively contributing to a community that shares common moral beliefs (Daugherty et al., 2008). The perceived collaboration within a community, in which concepts such as homophily and membership are evident, reinforces impressions of likenesses, connection, and belonging to a group, most likely stimulating a collective and dynamic generation of branded content (France et al., 2015; Muñiz & Schau, 2011).

Third, when consumers take control of a brand's narrative story giving"- through the creation of UGC, several opportunities for co-creation of histories and meanings may arise (Arrigo, 2018; Üçok Hughes et al., 2016). Brands can ask customers to share online their brand-related content by posting pictures, photos, or submitting reviews, so then marketers can build a contextualized and proprietary site of experiential content produced by the community, which is an effective strategy to empower customers while protecting the brand's essence (Üçok Hughes et al., 2016).

Internet communications have motivated the proliferation of many collective networking sites facilitating the production, distribution and sharing of UGC about brands and, ultimately, the development of well-established brand communities. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) described a brand community as a "specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand" who reveal compatible opinions and a strong desire of belonging to the group.

Prior research showed that brand communities can produce positive consequences by improving brand trust and loyalty and reinforcing the relationship between a brand, its offering and other customers (Laroche et al., 2013). It is consensual that social benefits act as the main drivers for community membership, as brand communities embody opportunities to experience a strong attachment with like-minded individuals or aspirational social groups (Park & Kim, 2015). Apart from the possibility of fostering meaningful social relationships, online communities allow consumers to search for entertaining and informational content (Park & Kim, 2015; Parrott et al., 2015), which is of great importance for luxury consumers.

Apart from in-depth insights about the topics fostering consumers' comments and discussions, another great advantage of blog forums is their openness, meaning that even someone not registered in the community can still access the content without restrictions. Because community participants are aware of their posts' widespread and indiscriminative reach, and since these communities are open to the general public without any access invitation or screening, no ethical outlines are infringed (Kozinets, 2002). (Basile,V et al. 24)

Influencer marketing can ensure sustainable marketing and influencers have recently strengthened collaborations with brands [1].

The influencer marketing investment amount is globally estimated at USD 15 billion by 2022. The influencer marketing investments are increasingly made by marketers, aiming to supplement existing marketing communication and publicize social media influencer-generated content to followers on social networks and target customers [2] .Marketers strategically select social media influencers to endorse their brand and generate shareable content (including papers, pictures, and video clips) that utilizes popular social media influencers to build their brand [17]. Consumer-influencer engagement behavior is conceptually a kind of engagement with social media influencers, which describes the consumer's intention to consume and contributes to content created by social media influencers [22].

Consumer-influencer engagement behavior reflects how social media influencers are popular and powerful, serving as a key factor driving the close relationships between social media influencers and endorsed brands [21]. With a large fan base, influencers can serve as competent marketing agents who regularly create valuable content on social media for brand endorsement and increase marketing value through cultivating several followers [20]. Unlike conventional word-of-mouth marketing, influencer marketing enables marketers to more efficiently handle and understand marketing outcomes. Marketers are allowed to gain access to a certain number of views, likes, comments, posts of influencers, and feedback toward their products and services [3].

Thus, influencer marketing has been recognized as an important marketing tool for global brands. With the current trends and high recognition for platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, ordinary people are able to serve as social media influencers [56]. Many businesses have devised influencer marketing strategies to strengthen their relationship with customers through enhancing customer interaction, while having social media influencers to encourage the engagement of target buyers with the brand [57]. Social media influencers are referred to as individuals who can interact with social media users and promote products to the targeted customers, with many followers on either one or several social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, or personal blogs) [44].

They are considered to be accessible, natural, and genuine to the public eye, as well as having an informal and casual communicative style; thus, followers feel more familiar with them than other celebrities and also consider them as more genuine; more people can be reached by engaging followers and attracting digital natives [18]. They can promote brands and products to attract potential customers and encourage engagement with the brand [6]. Influencers are influential and have large audiences, so various brands seek alliances with influencers [59].

In addition, influencers can be classified by the number of followers as follows: (1) Mega-influencers are a type of influencers who are followed by from 1 million to an unlimited numbers of followers; (2) Macro-influencers normally have from 100,000 to 1 million followers; (3) Micro-influencers are followed by from 1000 to 100,000 followers; (4) Nano-influencers, a new type of influencer with less followers than micro-influencers, are usually followed by below 1000 followers [60]. As social media influencers significantly affect the decision-making of consumers, brands are more likely to share brand-embedded content via channels of social media influencers [2].

As for the concept of consumer-influencer engagement, it involves the intention of consumers to engage with content created by social media influencers, and indicates their intention to consume, contribute, and create content relevant to the brand endorsement of social media influencers [79]. Brand-related content may be consumed by viewing and looking for brand-related posts on social media channels of influencers. They have active contributions when they like, comment, and share brand-related posts with similar opinions. Creation takes place after consumers upload stories and video clips related to influencers and brands on social media channels [22] (Rungruangjit ,W & Charoenpornpanichkul K.22).

7.3 Measuring Effectiveness

The most central form of industrial analysis has been counting audience size, historically with production numbers, sales or exposure (Ang, 1991). Press and periodical runs were the first form of quantified audience measurement (Bermejo, 2007). Measurement turns audiences "into suitable objects in and for industry practices" [4]. In media like television, magazines and newspapers, and now Web sites, measurement creates commodifiable products that can be sold to advertisers. With the advent of the World Wide Web in the mid–1990s, much analytic attention shifted to trying to measure online audiences (Bermejo, 2007). The "hit" became central to the early Web economy (Gerlitz and Helmond, 2013), although it was not clear how to price the value of a hit (Baym, N.2013).

One of the most studied attributes is video popularity dynamics, defined as the number of times they are viewed. A number of models have been proposed to describe the popularity dynamics, such as a series of endogenous relaxations (Crane and Sornette 2008) or multiple power-law phases (Yu, Xie, and Sanner 2015). Other studies link popularity dynamics to epidemic contagion (Bauckhage, Hadiji, and Kersting 2015), external stimulation (Yu, Xie, and Sanner 2014) or geographic locality (Brodersen, Scellato, and Wattenhofer 2012). However, the amount of time that videos are watched has mainly been overlooked, despite becoming the centric metric for recommendation in YouTube (Meyerson 2012) and Facebook (Bapna and Park 2017) (Wu,S.18).

Social media platforms such as MySpace, Facebook and Twitter, seem to offer a solution to some measurement problems. They provide metrics that require no expertise to find (I will return to how much expertise they require to interpret). Metrics are often made visible in the interfaces themselves, where they can serve as proxies for both audience size and engagement, as they stem from active audience choices to click, to follow, to like, to retweet, and so on. That social media platforms usually show visible metrics of a page or user's popularity is no accident. It is part of the politics of these platforms (Gillespie, 2010) to set up counts in such a way that users become more engaged with the site while trying to increase their numbers. Banet–Weiser (2012), for instance, has described how young people are driven to receive "likes" on the content they create.

All this commodification of affect through likes, follows and so on accrues to the platforms themselves, making platform designers powerful actors behind the kinds of data available online and the kinds of practices that motivate the creation of those data in the first place. Higher numbers are taken to reflect bigger audiences and more engagement. They also stimulate more effective investment and engagement from others, what Gerlitz and Helmond (2013) call "the Like economy." Focusing on Facebook, they argue that like buttons transform user affect into a metric that then intensifies that affect. Visible social media metrics have thus become critical emblems of status and generators of future status, and are used by industry and artist actors to guide investment and to build audience size and buzz. Yet, such metrics may not measure what they seem.

The Like economy is all about approval. Although message content can always be negative, and some sites like Reddit and YouTube do allow for downvotes, usually there are few infrastructural ways to display negative affect (Gerlitz and Helmond, 2013). This makes the sites more appealing to advertisers and brands (Gerlitz and Helmond, 2013) and perhaps artists, but it means that counts cannot be countered by unfollows, dislikes, and so on. The picture is either of approval or obscurity. Social media metrics are skewed by algorithms that foreground some messages and users over others through recommendations or automated feed editing. Wang, *et al.* (2013), for instance, showed that Facebook posts that receive more views due to algorithmic ranking receive more comments.

This pattern is exacerbated by the fact that the more a post or user receives comments, likes or follows, the more likely algorithms are to make them visible to other users. To some extent, counts reflect opaque algorithmic decision making as much as they reflect expressions of interest. Social media metrics are also distorted by deceptive practices including bots and purchased engagement. De Micheli and Stroppa (2013) have revealed a lucrative market for selling Twitter followers and Facebook likes.

What then are some of the contexts in which these acts of sharing, clicking like, following, signing up for an e–mail list and so on might have been situated before being decontextualized and recontextualized as an addition to the pool? Likes signify a range of affect such as excitement, agreement, compassion, understanding, irony and parody (Gerlitz and Helmond, 2013). Likes can also be offered in exchange for content. Cohen (2013) reports on a survey by Syncapse which found that people ‘liked’ Facebook brand pages for many reasons, including liking the brands and wanting to support them, but also getting a discount, participating in contests, seeing that friends liked them, researching brands and services, and following a recommendation. These “fans” may not last, “they may start following a brand for a specific contest or sweepstakes, then drop off when the campaign ends” (Perlroth, 2013) (Baym,N.2013).

Given companies’ intention to expand customer relationships and to increase customer revenues, WOM affects not only the sales of other customers (Chevalier and Mayzlin 2006; Hinz et al. 2011) but also the sales of the senders, repeat purchases, or additional purchases through up- or cross-selling (Kumar et al. 2010; Armelini et al. 2015). Apparently, the uncertainty regarding the effects of social media interactions on customers’ upselling behavior and churn depends highly on the previous service experience of customers. Hence, reacting appropriately to complaints has become a major challenge (Bolton and Saxena-Iyer 2009; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010) and an opportunity for both companies and their social media activities.

The research indicates that companies that take appropriate remedial actions in a timely manner show that they are sensitive to customer concerns (Van Laer and De Ruyter 2010; Van Noort and Willemsen 2012). If companies respond via social media platforms, the resulting favorable brand evaluations are visible to other customers and have an outreach effect that is nearly equivalent to that of the complaints (e.g., User: ‘‘Help. I have had no coverage for 3 h now. Is there a problem with the network?’’, Company: ‘‘Hello User, have you tried to restart your mobile? If you send us your address, we can check if there is a local disturbance.’’).

Therefore, adequate customer service via social media, which is called social care, is not only a strategic necessity for customer relationship management (47 % of social media users engage in social care; The Nielsen Company 2012) but also a viable means to reduce customer service costs. Social care can directly manage dissatisfied customers and offer solutions to the problems associated with the complaints (Bernoff and Schadler 2010). In this case, social care replaces costly offline customer service contacts (e.g., via telephone; Aksin et al. 2007). Furthermore, social care promises to be much more efficient than previous bilateral customer service encounters. Companies also benefit from the publicity that successful social media interactions between customers and companies regarding complaints draw (Maecker, O et al.16).

Chapter 8: Managerial Decision-Making

8.1 Data-Driven Decision Making

Broadly speaking, digitalization offers opportunities to conduct research in new ways. Scholars have noted these opportunities across the social sciences (Kosinski et al., 2016; Obschonka, 2017). Big data and related analytics offer the potential to address hitherto understudied issues and complement established methodological approaches (Watts, 2013). One such emerging method is social media analytics (SMA), a method for capturing and analyzing data from user-generated content published on online platforms. SMA has been conceptualized as an interdisciplinary approach that resembles “a kind of living lab, which enables academics to collect large amounts of data generated in a real-world environment” (Stieglitz et al., 2014, 90).

SMA allows to integrate analysis methods such as content analysis, which has been debated within the context of earlier social media methodologies (cf. Beaven and Laws, 2007; Kozinets, 2006; Langer and Beckman, 2005). SMA’s potential lies in its interdisciplinary application and ability to capture large-set structural accounts, which can be utilized for multiple forms of (qualitative and quantitative) analysis that employ machine learning and language-processing toolkits. The inclusive framework for interdisciplinary research for SMA as developed by Stieglitz and colleagues (2014, 2018) comprises tracking, preparation, and analysis (see Fig. 1).

Stieglitz et al. (2014) and Stieglitz et al. (2018) described four distinct analytical steps (described in more detail in Appendix A1): 1. Data discovery: discovering data involves the researcher’s creativity to find interesting patterns or structures; 2. Data collection/tracking: decisions on data material, tracking approach, tracking method, and data storage; 3. Data preparation: decisions on data preparation, such as data cleaning and/or manipulation in sync with data analysis approaches; 4. Data analysis: decisions relating the data analysis method to the desired research focus, such as social network analysis, sentiment analysis, or content or trend analysis.

This framework allows for the capture of data, its interpretation, and analysis, as well as the topics addressed. This both introduces much more flexibility into the scope of current innovation management research and mitigates some of the flaws of past methods. In short, we argue that, first, SMA can help innovation management researchers go beyond established trade-offs between internal and external validity. Replicability is increased with SMA as data collection is less dependent on the individual researcher, in contrast to conventional methodologies. Gathering the same set of data through, for instance, interviews or surveys would be both labor-intensive and, arguably, subject to lower levels of validity: human interaction with the data risks biases of both topic choice and researcher interference.

This is particularly important when structural accounts of innovation management need to be made, and SMA allows to create such accounts of parties’ perceptions and discourses. SMA also allows to capture real-time developments of firms, sectors, and contexts without the distortion of retrospective rationalizations, which are important parameters when dealing with disruption, for instance. Academic research is often conducted post hoc, which may introduce bias that leads to inaccurate interpretations (King and Baatartogtokh, 2015).

Second, we argue that SMA may be used to harness some of the potential of large datasets available online to measure, classify, and operationalize key constructs in innovation management. The fact that data can be collected without interference or distortion may help scholars tackle definitional ambiguities and address conceptual (in)consistencies. As mentioned, given that innovation increasingly concerns business models, societal-level ideas, and the multi-party setting of the innovation process, it is important that trends be considered in relation to validity and development of the key construct. (Geissinger, A et al .2023).

The growing adoption of social media within the organizations studied created new and often unexpected forms of interaction and feedback. These new forms of managed and unmoderated communication underpinned changes across all organizations . In some organizations feedback from social media channels developed more naturally within the culture of the organizations, such as in the case of Philips where the culture was perceived to be open and relaxed. While in other organizations we noticed the need to follow a more formal approach to managing new feedback from social media.

As identified previously, the adoption of social media can bring unprecedented levels of feedback and dialogue to organizational life. It also sets new expectations of participation and engagement in increasingly important and strategic aspects of the organization. Tensions emerge when the structures of organizations are then in opposition to these expectations of participation. The effect of these tensions in the long-run was that organizations adjusted their internal structures to accommodate the new forms of interaction and feedback. Various adjustments were visible at various levels in the organizations studied but they had in common increased appreciation of the participative nature of social media. Reflexiveness emerged as a new capability for managing the tensions described above.

We characterize three stages in the progression towards gaining this new capability: 1) feedback accepted as valuable resource; 2) developing formalized structures to sustain open behaviours and; 3) strategic integration. Another characteristic of increased reflexiveness is the stronger signals to encourage and stimulate open and unmoderated feedback from various areas of organizations. This type of feedback through social media is inherently emergent and unprompted, so outside the control of senior management. Linking feedback from social media with organizational strategy is a sign of a reflexive organization where strategy is more than a statement from senior management, to be instead seen to be a shared effort and co-created (Baptista, J et al.2017).

8.2 Strategic Trade-Offs

The use of information technologies generates a multitude of digital footprints that can be used to predict people's identities, personalities, and intended behaviors (Hinds & Joinson, 2019). Personalized advertising, in particular, has demonstrated impressive effectiveness and become a sizable industry, attracting increasing attention in academia and industry (Chen & Stallaert, 2014). The improper use of user data may lead to consumer backlash and potential lawsuits (Martin & Murphy, 2017; Shilton & Greene, 2017). This tension between how companies and marketers exploit users' information for personalization and users' growing concerns over privacy, termed the personalization/privacy paradox (PPP), has become a pertinent and ongoing issue confronting the information technology industry (Awad & Krishnan, 2006; Sutanto et al., 2013).

With the advancement of technologies, while organizations can leverage the power of AI, machine learning, and data analytics to better understand their customers and capitalize on the benefits, they must be cautious about their usage of customer data. Customers have become sophisticated, knowledgeable, and sensitive about how their data has been used. Instead of focusing on customers' rational privacy decisionmaking, this study suggests that more attention should be paid to implicit boundary rules that help users make swift decisions in complex personalization-privacy situations. We propose five context-specific boundary rules on the premises of a contextual framework. The findings demonstrate the profound implications of different types of contextual factors.

We encourage future research and practices to consider specific and distinct contexts regarding the evolution of technologies that will continue adding richness to digital contexts. Information pertaining to personal and private purposes, however, should be treated with extra care, as sharing such information would infringe on one's personal sphere and may lead to greater privacy concerns when inappropriately shared. To conduct business more effectively, firms rely on both past and current customer data to make inferences about their preferences. However, customers may be concerned that accessing a full range of historical data may come at the expense of their privacy (Holtrop et al., 2017). Lawmakers have enacted regulations regarding the storage of individual customer data for prolonged periods of time (Holtrop et al., 2017).

Cross-device identification technology enables marketers to identify and target a person who, for example, is on Facebook using a personal computer and later watches YouTube videos on their mobile phone. Technologies that match the identity of customers across diverse devices and platforms allow organizations to more accurately predict user behavior and these technologies are experiencing exponential growth due to their effectiveness (Neufeld, 2017). However, such technologies have also raised serious privacy concerns (Montgomery et al., 2018). A Federal Trade Commission report revealed that many consumers are surprised and concerned to find that their browsing behavior on one device may inform ads on another device (Federal Trade Commission, 2017).

One way for individuals to manage boundaries between private and public spheres is by separateness: separating themselves and the information they want to keep secret from others (Acquisti et al., 2018). Social boundaries suggest that people should be discreet about what others share with them based on their professional ethics (e.g., lawyers or doctors) or social expectations (Marx, 2001). People typically set different privacy expectations for different online platforms (Wang et al., 2017). A recent meta-analysis revealed that people are likely to be less concerned about privacy on relationship-building platforms such as Facebook than on service-oriented instrumental platforms such as Google Search or online forums (Yu et al., 2019).

People also tend to disclose more private or sensitive information on relationship-building platforms (Osatuyi, 2013). Technologies that allow businesses to identify a group of consumers for targeting by tracking customers across websites and platforms, such as web bugs, cookies, and clickstream data, are primary sources of privacy concerns (Goldfarb & Tucker, 2011). Research has confirmed that if a user perceives that a personalized ad on Facebook is based on data from external sources such as browsing history from other websites rather than data shared to Facebook, they tend to perceive less privacy (Kim et al., 2019; Zhu & Kanjanamekanant, 2021).

Privacy has traditionally been viewed as a reasonable claim primarily in private domains (Palm, 2009). Privacy issues related to work are different from general privacy issues (Persson & Hansson, 2003). People are likely to be more tolerant of privacy invasions at work because their right to privacy is frequently "overridden by competing moral principles" that follow from the contract of employment to ensure that employees perform the appropriate tasks and fulfill their role responsibilities (Persson & Hansson, 2003, p. 59). As a result, what would be considered unacceptable in a private setting, such as electronic surveillance, is justified at work if certain criteria are met (Persson & Hansson, 2003). (Zhu,Q. Et al .2023)

8.3 Content Investment Decisions

Influencer marketing, which involves collaborations among the brand, the agency, and online influencers to market products, has now become a mainstream form of online marketing and is forecast to notch **$15 billion by the end of 2022** [12]. Given a budget offered by the brand (in Step 1 of Figure 1), the agency first finds candidate influencers and collects the asking prices (in Step 2). Then in Step 3, the agency makes appropriate prices for hiring (some of) these influencers, returns the individual hiring price to each influencer, and returns the whole pricing scheme to the brand. Finally, the two stakeholders respond to the plan (in Step 4). Interestingly, according to recent studies [4, 8, 13, 14], influencers with a relatively small influence often have higher engagement rates than those with high influence. Taking Twitter as an example, the engagement rate of influencers with about **10,000 followers** is generally **83% higher** than that of influencers with **100,000+ followers** [8].

Therefore, from the brand's point of view, hiring **10 influencers each with 10,000 followers** should be a better deal than spending the same cost on hiring just **one influencer with 100,000 followers**, simply because the former deal brings higher engagement rates.In other words, a "big" influencer with great influence would not be competitive in the market if s/he has a **price rate** (i.e., price per unit of influence) more expensive than those "small" influencers with higher engagement rates [3, 5, 20]. For example, some UK brands were willing to pay for those influencers with no more than 10,000 followers at **two times larger price rates** than paying celebrities with 1M followers .Therefore, for the brand, a campaign plan is **investment-persuasive** only if big influencers have **no more expensive price rates** than small ones.For the influencers, **high profits** are certainly the most important expectation.

Therefore, their **asking price rates** tend to be close to the **high end** of their corresponding market price range. As such, the asking prices (which are visible to the agency only) are generally **not investment-persuasive** to the brand when used as the final hiring pricesThere is a clear **conflict of interests** between the brand and the influencers in the campaign cost.Aiming for investment-persuasive campaigns offers a number of benefits. First, the investment-persuasive constraint ensures that a campaign provides "value for money" and therefore benefits the brand, which is concerned with ROI rather than abstract notions of influence that fail to consider practical factors, such as engagement rate. Second, this objective seeks to minimize the difference between the actual hiring prices and the asking prices of influencers, thereby maintaining an appropriate balance between the interests of brands and influencers with respect to hiring costs.

Last but not least, it contributes to maintaining an environment of fair competition in the market. Specifically, the objective of achieving investment-persuasive campaigns enables the identification of "speculators" whose asking-price rates are considerably lower than those of their competitors, thereby preventing them from monopolizing the market. Furthermore, this objective also prevents influencers whose asking-price rates are considerably higher than those of their competitors from negatively affecting the brand's benefits (Huang,S et al.23).

According to Costa-Sánchez (2017), advertising videos can be defined as videos intending to promote a brand, its products and services, while impacting the consumers. Lee et al. (2021) define online video advertising as the use of Internet technologies to promote a company's products or services through informational videos. Koonnala and Chaiwong (2023) believe online video advertisements are among the most effective ways of reaching online consumers. In 2023, almost 176.63 billion dollars were spent from companies in digital video advertising. Regarding national expenditure, the United States ranks as the highest spender on online video ads, followed by China and the United Kingdom (Majidi, 2024).

Social media have emerged as a key platform for users to develop personal and professional networks by connecting with each other, and for businesses to create relationships with consumers and to advertise their product or service. Ads can be customized to meet the needs and expectations of an audience. Bilgin (2018) believes social media is a very useful tool for companies to drive sales and obtain new customers. Similarly, SI (2015) identifies social media as the most effective method to reach out and get in touch with potential customers.

Furthermore, social media platforms facilitate users' interaction with the company, through clicking, liking and commenting, which, in turn, enables the analysis of consumer behavior. Therefore, companies can refine their video content based on insights derived from users' behavior (Boman & Raijonkari, 2017). Additionally, from a marketing perspective, social media videos present a significant advantage due to their ease of produc+on, low costs, and quick editing capabilities compared to traditional television ads (Miller, 2011). Additionally, short video marketing is characterized by low production costs, high efficiency and strong interactivity.

Businesses can quickly produce short videos containing relevant and impactful information about the brand, products or services (Yu et al., 2024). As an example, Nike's 2-minute video advertisement featuring the powerful slogan: "Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything" (Guardian Sport, 2019). According to recent data, 91% of businesses now incorporate videos as a key element in their marketing efforts, while 68% of marketers who have not yet embraced this strategy plan to do so by 2024 (Wyzowl, 2024). Additionally, 88% of marketers consider video as a crucial part of their digital marketing strategy (Wyzowl, 2024). It is imperative for marketers to carefully develop their online strategies, as adopting a wrong strategy could result in financial losses and a decline in customer engagement. (La Rocca & Noémie.24)

Chapter 9: Ethical and Managerial Challenges

9.1 Attention Exploitation

In the digital age, the increasing use of manipulative design practices, commonly known as "dark patterns," has become a growing concern for regulators. Dark patterns exploit users' cognitive biases and vulnerabilities to influence their behavior and decision-making, thereby posing threats to personal autonomy, privacy, and well-being (Narayanan, 2020) and techniques used by platforms to keep users engaged. From a broader perspective, addictive designs lead to different types of addictive behavior, such as spending time and money and engaging online (European Commission, 2024).

Social media addiction is one of the most serious issues in this regard. Users' addictive behaviors primarily stem from two aspects of human–computer interactions (HCI): addictive UI designs, such as autoplay and infinite scrolling, and recommendation systems. Even though the issue of addictive designs will be one of the key focuses of EU digital legislation in 2025, its conceptualization has not been sufficiently discussed. In the following discussion, this paper argues that addictive designs should be classified as a type of dark pattern by examining three key aspects: their manipulative nature, their impact on users' behavior and autonomy, and their harmful consequences for human well-being.

Addictive designs in digital markets usually concern the features and tech-niques used by platforms to keep users engaged. From a broader perspective, addictive designs lead to different types of addictive behavior, such as spending time and money and engaging online (European Commission, 2024). Social media addiction is one of the most serious issues in this regard. Users' addic-tive behaviors primarily stem from two aspects of human-computer interactions (HCI): addictive UI designs, such as auto-play and infinite scrolling, and recommendation systems.

In light of concerns that digital technologies will change individual behaviors and life choices, online manipulation theory has garnered increasing attention over the past 5 years. Online manipulation theory reveals how addictive designs systematically undermine personal autonomy through both unconscious attention capture and manipulation. The manipulative nature of these designs is particularly concerning because users often misattribute their loss of attention control to personal failings instead of recognizing it as the result of intentional design manipulation.

Understanding addictive designs as a form of online manip-ulation highlights the need to address not only their immediate behavioral impacts but also their deeper implications for personal autonomy and attention control in the digital age. Three common manipulative elements are widely used in addictive designs (Bhargava & Velasquez, 2021). The first is the use of intermittent variable rewards, which trigger users' curiosity by making rewards unpredictable in terms of frequency or magnitude. For example, Pinterest's UI design shows only a small portion of photos at the bottom of the page to entice users to scroll and reveal the full picture (Eyal, 2014).

Second, platforms, particularly social networks, create reward systems that exploit psychological tendencies and needs, such as the desire for social recognition. The ubiquitous "like button" on social media exemplifies this approach. Third, UIs are designed to erode natural stopping points. Features like infinite scroll and auto-play deliver content continuously, preventing users from taking breaks or making conscious decisions to stop. The logic behind addictive designs clearly aligns with unethical persuasive practices. Empirical studies have demonstrated that persuasive technology increases users' screen time and leads to addictive online behaviors.

A 2023 study of 183 Chinese university students revealed that 44% of participants believed that smartphones occasionally or frequent-ly negatively affected their studies or professional life (Chen et al., 2023). In interviews, participants estimated that if they could eliminate all persuasive designs from their smartphones, they might reduce their screen time by an average of 37% (ranging from 10% to 65%). The research identified multiple persuasive design features in social networking, gaming, and short video apps that were associated with extended use and habit formation.

The reduction in sleep, physical exer-cise, and face-to-face social interaction associated with Internet addiction not only compromises physical health but also impairs cognitive abilities, including accurate reasoning, clear thinking, and sustained concentration (Bhargava & Ve-lasquez, 2021). Moreover, while individuals with addiction often recognize their dissatisfaction with their life progress and diminished capacity for future plan-ning, they typically struggle to modify their addictive behaviors independently (Ye, X.2025). Personal autonomy requires the capacity for control over one's life.

However, when a person's attention is constantly distracted, it becomes challenging for them to make independent decisions and live authentically. Thus, persistent online manipulation severely compromises users' ability to control their attention. Frequent interruptions and constant instant gratification make it difficult for users to focus on tasks without immediate rewards. Consequently, sus-tained attention, that is, the ability to maintain focus on task goals, becomes impaired.

Moreover, online manipulation usually impacts users secretly. Once users become accustomed to the way they are offered information services, "the device or interface itself recedes from conscious attention, allowing [them] to focus on the tasks [they] are using it to accomplish" (Susser et al., 2019b, p. 7). This "technological transparency" blinds users to their potentially manipulative influence, making these practices "invisible" and, thus, preventing users from taking action to avoid harm (Ye, X.2025).

Another ethical consideration is the potential for online harassment and cyberbullying. Social media platforms provide a platform for users to communicate with each other, but this can also lead to online harassment and bullying. This can have serious consequences for the victim, including mental health issues and suicide. Social media users must be aware of their words and actions impact on others and should strive to use these platforms respectfully and responsibly [1, 2, 3]. The spread of misinformation and fake news is another major ethical consideration for social media users. False information can have serious consequences, from undermining democratic processes to endangering public health. Social media users should be aware of the importance of fact-checking and should strive to share accurate and reliable information [1].

Finally, there is the issue of addiction to social media. Research has shown that excessive use of social media can negatively impact mental health, including depression, anxiety, and addiction. Social media users must be aware of their usage habits and strive to use these platforms balanced and healthy [5]. Social media has brought about many ethical considerations for its users. Privacy, cyberbullying, misinformation, and addiction are just a few issues that users must be aware of when using these platforms. (Dhiman, B.23).

9.2 Data Privacy and Personalization

Large-scale data collection through social media has become common among many companies and organizations. While this practice has the potential to provide valuable insights into consumer behavior and preferences, it also raises a range of ethical concerns. One of the primary ethical concerns of large-scale data collection through social media is the issue of consent. Users of social media platforms often need to fully understand the extent to which their data is being collected and used. This lack of understanding can lead to a situation where users unknowingly consent to manage their data. Companies and organizations that engage in large-scale data collection must ensure that they are obtaining informed consent from users and that users understand how their data will be used [6]. Another ethical concern is the issue of privacy.

Large-scale data collection often involves collecting sensitive personal information, such as location data, browsing history, and purchasing habits. This information can be used to create detailed profiles of individuals, which can then be used for targeted advertising or other purposes. Companies and organizations that engage in large-scale data collection must ensure that they are protecting individuals' privacy and not sharing or selling this information without the individual's consent [7]. A related ethical concern is the issue of transparency. Companies and organizations that engage in large-scale data collection must be transparent about their data collection practices and how they use the data they collect. Users must understand what information is being collected, how it is being used, and who it is being shared with [7,8]. Finally, there is the issue of data security. Large-scale data collection can result in vast data being stored in databases. These databases can be vulnerable to cyberattacks, and the loss or theft of this data can have serious consequences for individuals. Companies and organizations that engage in large-scale data collection must ensure that they are implementing robust security measures to protect the data they collect [9]. Large-scale data collection through social media raises various ethical concerns, including consent, privacy, transparency, and data security.

Companies and organizations that engage in this practice must ensure that they are acting ethically and responsibly and protecting the privacy and security of individuals [10]. Social media platforms have access to an enormous amount of personal data, and there are concerns about how this data is collected, stored, and used. Users often need to understand the risks of sharing sensitive information fully. Privacy is a significant concern regarding social media, as these platforms often require users to share personal information to create a profile and engage with others. One of the most important privacy considerations is the sharing of personal information. Social media platforms often require users to share personal information, such as their name, email address, and location, to create a profile. The platform can use this information to personalize the user's experience and target them with advertising.

However, it can also be used for more nefarious purposes, such as identity theft or stalking. Users must be aware of the risks involved in sharing their personal information online and should take steps to protect their privacy [12]. Another privacy consideration is the collection of data by social media platforms. These platforms collect vast amounts of user data, including browsing history, search queries, and interactions with other users. This data can be used to create detailed profiles of individuals and to target them with advertising. Users must be aware of the extent to which their data is being collected and used and should take steps to limit the data being collected about them [1, 2, 3].

A related privacy consideration is the sharing of data by social media platforms. These platforms often share user data with third-party advertisers and other companies. Users must be aware of who their data is being shared with and should be able to control how it is shared. Finally, there is the issue of data breaches. Social media platforms store vast amounts of personal data, and this data can be vulnerable to cyberattacks. Data breaches can result in the loss or theft of personal information, seriously affecting individuals. Users must be aware of the risks involved in storing their data online and should take steps to protect their data [11]. Privacy is a significant concern regarding social media. Users must be aware of the risks involved in sharing their personal information online and should take steps to protect their privacy. This includes limiting the amount of shared personal information, being aware of how their data is being collected and used, and taking steps to protect their data from cyberattacks [12]. (Dhiman,B.23).

9.3 Sustainability of Attention Economy

Social media burnout refers to a state of emotional exhaustion and detachment caused by prolonged and intense engagement with social media platforms. As Gen Z continues to immerse itself in digital content across multiple platforms, symptoms of psychological fatigue including anxiety, attention fragmentation, low motivation, and emotional numbness are becoming increasingly prevalent (Banyai et al., 2017). This form of burnout stems not only from content overload but also from the relentless pressure to remain visible, responsive, and socially engaged online.

Digital fatigue is exacerbated by the always-on nature of social media platforms, where notifications, infinite scrolling, and real-time updates make it difficult for users to disengage voluntarily (Alter, 2017). Research found that individuals experiencing fear of missing out (FoMO) are more likely to compulsively check their accounts, which contributes to poor sleep quality, increased stress levels, and reduced real-life social interaction (Dhir et al., 2018). Gen Z, in particular, struggles with the blurred lines between leisure and obligation in digital spaces using social media both as a tool for relaxation and as a source of psychological strain. Furthermore, burnout is not only a product of consumption but also of creation. Content creators, micro-influencers, and even everyday users often feel the burden of sustaining engagement metrics, managing personal brands, and withstanding criticism—all of which lead to emotional depletion (Luqman et al., 2017).

The emotional labor involved in managing public personas, especially among Gen Z users navigating adolescence and early adulthood, adds to the mental load and fuels digital exhaustion. Originally proposed, Cognitive Load Theory explores how information processing is limited by the human brain's capacity. In today's attention economy, Gen Z navigates an environment of constant sensory input— from short-form videos and endless scrolls to alerts, news, messages, and ads—all competing for cognitive attention (Sweller, 1988). Unlike previous generations, Gen Z multitasks across multiple platforms and devices, often shifting from content consumption to communication to creation within minutes.

This constant switching and volume of stimuli result in extraneous cognitive load, which can diminish learning, memory retention, and emotional regulation (Paas and Ayres, 2014). Additionally, the algorithmic design of platforms—such as autoplay, personalized feeds, and infinite scrolls—further traps users in a loop of content that can lead to mental exhaustion. This mental fatigue manifests as difficulty concentrating, decision fatigue, and emotional numbness— core symptoms of digital burnout. Applying Cognitive Load Theory, this research situates Gen Z's digital fatigue not just as an emotional issue, but also as a neurocognitive one, emphasizing the physiological strain caused by continuous online engagement. While platforms offer spaces for individualism and creativity, they also impose unspoken norms about appearance, humor, ideology, and success.

Many Gen Z users feel compelled to portray a version of themselves that aligns with social expectations or platform aesthetics—even when it contradicts their true identity (Chae, 2018). This leads to motivational dissonance: users post content not because they want to, but because they feel they must to remain relevant, accepted, or validated. When these needs—especially autonomy and authenticity—are undermined, social media becomes a source of stress rather than empowerment. Research found that inauthentic online behavior was associated with lower subjective well-being (Reinecke and Trepte, 2014). SDT thus provides a framework to understand how Gen Z's mental health suffers when their digital lives become detached from their intrinsic motivations and true self-concept. While platforms offer spaces for individualism and creativity, they also impose unspoken norms about appearance, humor, ideology, and success. Many Gen Z users feel compelled to portray a version of themselves that aligns with social expectations or platform aesthetics—even when it contradicts their true identity (Chae, 2018). This leads to motivational dissonance: users post content not because they want to, but because they feel they must to remain relevant, accepted, or validated. When these needs—especially autonomy and authenticity—are undermined, social media becomes a source of stress rather than empowerment. Research found that inauthentic online behavior was associated with lower subjective well-being (Reinecke and Trepte, 2014). SDT thus provides a framework to understand how Gen Z's mental health suffers when their digital lives become detached from their intrinsic motivations and true self-concept. Policymakers should consider social media burnout as a serious emerging mental health concern, particularly for adolescents and young adults. Public health initiatives need to incorporate awareness campaigns, accessible mental health resources tailored for digital stress, and collaborations with educational institutions and technology companies to develop preventive strategies. Integrating mental health screenings related to digital use in school health programs could further aid early identification and support. Strategies such as digital detoxes, selective content consumption, and mindfulness exercises have shown promise in alleviating burnout symptoms.

However, such practices are not yet widespread or systematically supported, pointing to a gap between awareness of digital fatigue and effective, sustained mitigation. Only by recognizing and addressing the nuanced realities of Gen Z's digital experiences can society nurture a healthier, more resilient generation poised to thrive in the digital age. (Kamraju,M.2025) says attention span, a crucial cognitive function, is explored through various theories, including selective and sustained attention. Selective attention, which involves focusing on relevant information while ignoring distractions, is limited by cognitive resources

and can be impaired by frequent exposure to distractions like TikTok's rapid content (Broadbent, 1958; Cowan, 2001).
Sustained attention, or vigilance, allows individuals to maintain focus on tasks over extended periods but declines naturally over time and can be hindered by rapid content consumption, reducing the ability to focus on long-term tasks (Posner & Petersen, 1990; Firth et al., 2019). These two types of attention work together, and over-reliance on fast-paced stimuli may fragment focus and decrease task performance (Carr, 2020). Attention span is a crucial cognitive ability that underpins learning, problem-solving, and daily functioning. It consists of several interconnected components, including selective attention, sustained attention (vigilance), divided attention, and alternating attention.
These components determine how effectively an individual can focus on tasks, influenced by factors like cognitive load, relevance, and task importance. Internal factors, such as age, fatigue, interest, and motivation, can reduce attention span, with tasks aligning with personal interests being easier to focus on, while noisy or chaotic settings hinder concentration (Parasuraman and Davies, 1984). External factors, particularly digital media platforms like TikTok, may shorten attention spans for slower-paced tasks. Attention span is often assessed through tasks like Continuous Performance Tests (CPT) or Stroop tasks, which evaluate selective, sustained, and divided attention (Rosvold et al., 1956).
Shortened attention span is linked to increased task switching and habitual multitasking, which can reduce cognitive engagement and filter out distractions. Social media consumption influences the brain's neural pathways through reward systems and neuroadaptation. The effects vary across age groups, with younger generations more susceptible due to their developing brains and higher screen time. Classroom and learning implications include disruptive effects, such as decreased focus and academic performance, and enhanced engagement when integrated effectively into education. However, social media can offer unique cognitive benefits, such as improved visual attention, adaptation to information overload, and collaborative learning (Lerman, 2007; Liu et al., 2022). Balancing the use of technology in educational settings is essential to foster positive cognitive development while minimizing negative impacts (Opara, E et al.25)

Chapter 10: Conclusion and Recommendations

10.1 Summary of Findings

The prevalence of social media has also significantly impacted the development of Gen Z. From a young age, this generation has been exposed to the virtual world and its ever-changing dynamics. As a result, they have become adept at crafting their online personas and projecting themselves in a way that gains attention and approval from their peers. This has led to a rise in influencer culture, where young Gen Z individuals strive to build a following and monetize their online presence. This virtual life has also led to a blurring of lines between the real and virtual world, impacting their perceptions of self-image, relationships, and societal norms (Alves, 2023).In terms of education, Gen Z's values and preferences have led to a shift in the way they approach learning.
They tend to prefer experiential and hands-on learning experiences, as well as personalized and customized educational opportunities. Gen Z individuals are often more entrepreneurial-minded, seeking practical skills and real-world experiences that will prepare them for a rapidly evolving job market (Marcela Hernández de Menéndez, 2020). Thus, the Gen Z generation is defined by their technological proficiency, individualism, social consciousness, and global outlook. Gen Z is a generation that is

challenging traditional norms and redefining the world as we know it. Their unique blend of traits, beliefs, and values is shaping education, consumer behaviour, and the workforce (Wandhe,P.24).

These social networking generations who ideally belong to the segment of school to college students or comparatively fresh entrants as manpower in organizations are frequently labeled as technically innate and very style conscious of all previous generations. The need to be involved and informed to/with other people is the main rationale behind the use of online socializing by Gen Z. These Z'ers who are 14-25 years old have more tendencies to prefer online social sites for communicate and interact with people they know than other generations and are happy and feel vital to provide active feedbacks and comments about the brands/services/issues they use or one way or other involved apart from this they value opinion given by others too (eMarketer, 2011).

Studies are there on Gen Z's increasing usage of social media but more has to be done on their social media activities and its behavioural impact. This generation is a vigorous contributor, high consumer of online content, creative and mash-up experts; they have a strong gravitational bond for online communication that they prefer to participate in and remain connected via technology available at finger tips. The user behaviour with respect to social media is changing at a rapid rate therefore; the theoretical frame of reference describes the predecessor as well as the outcomes of social media usage by Gen Z's with a general and frequently used set of usage classification: content contribution, information sharing, information usage, searching for facts and data, online participation and entertainment usability.

Companies such as Apple, Versace, Hidesign etc. take on social networking platforms as a prospective source of market intellect and observe different social platform activities like fan pages, online journals to gather important information related to promoting their products. Nowadays social media offers liberty to build up better customer relationship management by promising customers to enlist with their products, by connecting with other users and by encouraging online association with brand groups and pages; thereby strengthening the brand equity and increasing customer equity. However, with the extensive acceptance and use of social media by Gen Z, organisations that kindle commitment, focus on relationship building and devise mutual value creation for their customers stand apart to garner the significant profits. In a developing nation like India with an ample entrepreneurial skill set, use of social platforms can help in innovating newer and better business prototypes. There are certain connotations for consumer-employee relations and how organizations appoint, administer and motivate its employees as their repercussions are vital in the service sector. Successfully managing next gen employees and their synergy with other generational groups of co- workers and customers poses great challenges ahead, specifically when it is known that both the generations have differences in attitudes and techniques towards career objectives. Nowadays many organizations use social networking platforms for prospecting candidates sometimes to terminate employees who indulge in objectionable information online – though use of such confidential information of employees may be regarded as breach of his online privacy and could greatly impact their output, well being and moralistic behaviour (Yadav,G & Rai, J.17).

10.2 Managerial Recommendations

Business ethics plays a pivotal role in establishing a company's reputation and fostering long-term relationships with its customers. In today's competitive marketplace, consumers are more aware of corporate practices, and ethical behavior has become an essential factor in their decision-making process.Business ethics refers to the application of moral principles and standards in the conduct of business operations. The relationship between business ethics and brand loyalty is well-documented.

Ethical businesses tend to cultivate stronger emotional connections with their consumers, leading to higher brand loyalty.
According to a report by Nielsen (2017), 66% of global consumers are willing to pay more for products from companies committed to positive social and environmental practices. When customers perceive a brand as ethically responsible, they are more likely to develop trust, which leads to repeat purchases and long-term loyalty (Jones, 2020). Ethical business practices play a crucial role in fostering consumer trust, which is integral to establishing long-term brand loyalty.
By adhering to principles such as transparency, honesty, ethical advertising, and fair trade, companies can build a solid foundation of trust that leads to sustained customer relationships. Several studies have shown that consumers are more likely to remain loyal to brands they perceive as ethical, with a reported 68% of consumers considering ethical behavior as a primary factor when making purchasing decisions. Ethical advertising and marketing involve promoting products in a way that is truthful, nondeceptive, and respectful of consumer rights. Misleading advertisements or exaggerated claims can erode consumer trust, leading to brand damage and loss of customer loyalty.
A study conducted by the Federal Trade Commission (2020) indicated that 48% of consumers had switched brands due to misleading advertising. Companies that embrace ethical marketing not only comply with regulations but also align their brand image with integrity, fostering deeper consumer trust and promoting positive word-of-mouth referrals. The future of consumer loyalty is increasingly linked to business ethics, as younger generations like Gen Z and millennials prioritize value-based purchases. According to a report by PwC (2024), 85% of millennials consider a company's ethical record before making purchasing decisions, and this trend is expected to grow. Businesses that integrate ethical considerations into their core operations are more likely to build long-lasting relationships with their customers. Emerging trends include greater transparency through supply chain ethics, as well as the growing importance of corporate social responsibility initiatives as a key driver of brand loyalty (Celestin, M et al.24).
Companies that want to create and maintain strong brands to create long-term value must focus on managing a consistent brand identity, understanding their audience, and adapting to evolving consumer trends and needs. Successful brand development involves a strategy that aligns product and brand communications with customer expectations and desires, and leverages innovation and sustainability to strengthen brand value in the marketplace. Constantly evolving products and services will maintain brand relevance in a dynamic market. The use of digital technology and social media allows companies to interact directly with consumers and expand their reach, but it must be done with a coordinated approach to maintain brand uniformity.
Social media gives companies the opportunity to create two-way conversations that strengthen emotional connections with their audience. Sustainability and involvement with customers are also important factors in maintaining positive impressions and building sustainable emotional relationships. This coordinated approach will ensure that every interaction with consumers supports the brand values and strengthens the relationships that have been built. On the journey of creating and maintaining a strong brand, companies must constantly evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of their strategies. This process involves collecting data through analytics and customer surveys to gain deeper insights into how consumers perceive their brand and how they interact with the products or services offered.
Regular evaluations provide the information needed to adjust marketing strategies, maintain brand relevance, and ensure that the company stays on track in meeting consumer needs and expectations.

Success in creating a strong brand depends on effective marketing, and on the involvement of the entire organization in supporting and executing the brand vision consistently. By maintaining a balance between brand differentiation and uniformity, companies can create sustainable long-term value, which builds customer loyalty and growing appeal in a competitive market. Companies can maintain their position in the market, increase brand value, and ensure sustainability in the long-term through this approach (Al Hakim, Y et al.22).

A cross-disciplinary understanding is that authenticity is about being true and original, and true to oneself where actions reflect the core-self (Fritz et al., 2017). In marketing, authenticity is seen as a prized quality for brands and organisations because it improves message and source credibility by reducing consumer scepticism and enhancing trustworthiness with indirect benefits that include loyalty and advocacy behaviours (P´erez, 2019). Central to brand authenticity is the premise that an authentic brand has beneficial impacts, particularly on consumer responses and behaviours (Cinelli & LeBoeuf, 2020). Studies have demonstrated that perceived brand authenticity is linked with positive outcomes such as brand followers.

Consumer support of brand messages is often contingent on involvement with the social issue or cause that the brand is communicating about and their level of engagement with the brand (Li et al., 2022) which, if perceived as authentic, could be a catalyst for creating a trajectory of lasting change (Choi, 2020; Holiday et al., 2021). Brand authenticity in all brand communication is essential for organisational success and for initiating greater positive societal change towards a sustainable future. Social media such as Instagram play an important role in how brands communicate with their fans and others about their sustainability intent and initiatives through posts.

Firm generated content reportedly has a greater impact on long standing and loyal consumers (Kumar et al., 2016) and if consumers do not trust a brand or share its values they are less likely to engage, share or participate online (Chepurna & Criado, 2018). Social media consumers tend to seek out sources of news and Instagram accounts that align with their existing beliefs (Pelletier et al., 2020). While informational content is important, consumers are often highly knowledgeable about brands and informative posts may be irrelevant and annoying (Rietveld et al., 2020) (Bulmer ,S.24).

10.3 Future Research Directions

While short-form video marketing demonstrates global effectiveness, cultural context significantly mediates implementation strategies and outcomes. Martins et al. (2025) examined social media's influence on tourist decision-making in Cape Verde, revealing that age groups and education levels moderate social media marketing impact. Gen Z respondents showed 73% higher reliance on visual platforms and peer recommendations compared to Gen X ($\beta = 0.51$ vs. 0.29). Lou et al. (2025) explored discrete emotions in gender-stereotyped Douyin urban life content, demonstrating that emotional responses (happiness, anger, disgust) mediate relationships between content exposure and gender role attitudes.

Cultural specificity of emotional triggers suggests that content strategies effective in one cultural context may require substantial adaptation for others. Hernando Velasco et al. (2024) analyzed Marvel's Spider-Man TikTok account across markets, identifying that affordances (platform features enabling specific actions) interact with cultural norms to shape content effectiveness. Political applications demonstrate both opportunities and risks. Wilches-Tinjacá et al. (2024) examined political emotions in Colombian campaigns, finding that prototypical narratives (heroic journey, underdog story) on TikTok significantly influenced young voter engagement. Grantham (2024) analyzed Australian Labor Party's 2022 federal election TikTok strategy, identifying that negative campaigning backfired with Gen Z audiences who penalized perceived manipulation. These findings suggest that authenticity and positive messaging resonate more effectively than traditional attack advertising with digital-native voters (Amanda, A.26).

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