

The Impact of Influencer Marketing on the Purchase Intentions and Buying Behavior of Generation Z Consumers

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ABSTRACT:

Since the rise of social media platforms, marketing communication strategies have evolved, as has the way consumers, particularly Generation Z, respond to marketing messages and make purchase decisions. The study examines the effects of influencer marketing, particularly authenticity, relatability, and content-related factors, on the purchase intentions and buying behavior of Generation Z consumers. Using a standardized questionnaire, primary data were collected from 106 Generation Z respondents for this quantitative study. Regression analysis, were the statistical methods employed. The findings indicate that influencer credibility and content authenticity are essential in influencing the purchase intentions and buying behavior of Generation Z consumers. However, the lack of statistically significant differences between platforms (Instagram and YouTube) suggests that the type of content is more important than the platform on which it is delivered. In addition to offering recommendations aimed at marketers seeking to design more authentic and relatable influencer campaigns, this study also contributes to enriching the existing body of knowledge on influencer-driven consumer behavior in the digital marketplace.

INTRODUCTION:

The rapid advancement of digital technologies and the widespread adoption of social media have transformed the way businesses communicate with consumers. Traditional forms of advertising are increasingly being supplemented by influencer marketing, a strategy in which brands collaborate with social media personalities who possess the ability to influence the attitudes, perceptions, and purchasing decisions of their followers. Influencers establish strong relationships with their audiences through authentic and engaging content, making them effective intermediaries between brands and consumers. As a result, (Freberg, 2011) influencer marketing has emerged as one of the fastest-growing and most impactful digital marketing strategies worldwide.

Generation Z, typically defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, represents a digitally native consumer segment that has grown up with the internet, smartphones, and social media. Unlike previous

generations, Generation Z actively seeks product information, reviews, and recommendations through platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Snapchat before making purchasing decisions (Rushworth, 2017). Their reliance on influencer-generated content stems from the perception that influencers are more relatable, trustworthy, and authentic than traditional celebrity endorsers or conventional advertisements.

The effectiveness of influencer marketing depends on several characteristics of influencers, including credibility, trustworthiness, expertise, authenticity, attractiveness, and the relevance of the influencer to the promoted product or brand (Yuan, 2019). When consumers perceive influencers as credible and sincere, they are more likely to develop favorable attitudes toward the endorsed products, resulting in higher purchase intentions and increased brand engagement. Furthermore, valuable and informative influencer content enhances consumer trust, which serves as an important determinant of purchasing decisions in digital environments.

Purchase intention refers to a consumer's willingness or likelihood to purchase a product after evaluating available information, while buying behaviour reflects the actual decision-making process that results in product acquisition (Kim, 2019). Research indicates that social media influencers significantly influence both purchase intention and actual buying behaviour by reducing perceived risk, increasing product awareness, and strengthening consumer confidence. These effects are particularly evident among Generation Z consumers, who are highly influenced by online interactions and peer recommendations during the buying process.

As influencer marketing continues to expand across industries such as fashion, beauty, technology, food, travel, and lifestyle, businesses are investing substantial resources in influencer collaborations to improve customer engagement and sales performance. However, the effectiveness of influencer marketing varies depending on factors such as content quality, influencer–brand congruence, audience engagement, and consumers' trust in the influencer (al D. V., 2017). Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that influencer credibility and authenticity positively influence consumers' attitudes, purchase intentions, and buying behaviour, highlighting the growing importance of influencer marketing in contemporary consumer markets.

The present study is supported by the Source Credibility Theory, which suggests that consumers are more likely to accept and act upon recommendations from sources perceived as credible, trustworthy, and expert. In influencer marketing, these characteristics play a crucial role in shaping consumers' purchase intentions and buying behaviour.

In this context, understanding how influencer marketing affects the purchase intentions and buying behaviour of Generation Z consumers has become increasingly important for marketers and organizations seeking to develop effective digital marketing strategies. Therefore, this study aims to examine the impact of influencer marketing on the purchase intentions and buying behaviour of Generation Z consumers by analyzing how influencer characteristics and social media engagement contribute to consumers' purchasing decisions.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

The growing importance of influencer marketing has attracted significant scholarly attention, particularly in understanding its influence on consumer attitudes, purchase intentions, and buying behaviour. Early research by Freberg et al. (2011) established that consumers perceive social media influencers as credible, knowledgeable, and trustworthy sources of information. These qualities were found to enhance brand awareness and shape consumer perceptions. However, the study primarily focused on public perceptions rather than examining the direct relationship between influencer marketing and purchase intentions or buying behaviour.

Building on this foundation, Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) shifted the focus toward Generation Z consumers by exploring the influence of Instagram influencers on purchase decisions. Their findings indicated that influencers are viewed as more authentic and relatable than traditional celebrities, thereby positively affecting purchase intentions. Although the study provided valuable insights into influencer authenticity, its exclusive focus on young female consumers limited the broader applicability of the findings.

Similarly, De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017) investigated how influencer characteristics, particularly follower count and product relevance, affect consumer responses. The study demonstrated that influencers with a larger follower base positively influence brand attitudes and purchase intentions when there is a strong fit between the influencer and the promoted product. Nevertheless, the research was confined to Instagram and suggested the need for studies across multiple platforms and consumer segments.

Extending this line of inquiry, Lou and Yuan (2019) emphasized the importance of influencer credibility and message value in building consumer trust. Using structural equation modeling, they found that informative and credible influencer content significantly enhances consumer trust, which in turn increases purchase intentions. In a similar vein, Jin, Muqaddam, and Ryu (2019) reported that influencer credibility and emotional connection positively shape consumer attitudes and purchase intentions, highlighting authenticity as a key determinant of influencer effectiveness. Both studies recommended further research involving diverse consumer groups and social media platforms.

While earlier studies primarily examined purchase-related outcomes, Nadanyiova et al. (2020) broadened the perspective by investigating the influence of influencer marketing on consumer lifestyles. Their findings confirmed that influencer marketing significantly shapes consumer lifestyles, particularly among individuals under the age of 35. However, the study was limited to Slovak consumers, indicating the need for cross-cultural research to improve generalizability.

Recognizing the rapid expansion of influencer marketing research, Aswathi and Kalapurackal (2022) conducted a systematic literature review to synthesize existing knowledge in the field. Their review proposed an integrative framework explaining how influencers affect consumer behaviour while identifying methodological and theoretical gaps. They emphasized the necessity for more comprehensive empirical studies covering diverse contexts and updated datasets.

Focusing specifically on Generation Z, Hazari and Sethna (2022) compared the effectiveness of lifestyle and brand influencer advertising on Instagram. Their findings revealed that personality traits had a stronger influence on attention, attitudes, and purchase intentions than gender. Although the study enriched the

understanding of consumer segmentation, it remained limited to Instagram users, highlighting opportunities for broader multi-platform investigations.

Further emphasizing the relevance of Generation Z, Nadanyiova and Sujanska (2023) discussed the growing significance of influencer marketing in the decision-making process of digitally native consumers. They concluded that Generation Z represents the primary target audience for influencer campaigns due to its extensive social media engagement. However, the study was theoretical in nature and recommended empirical, region-specific research to validate its propositions.

Providing empirical evidence from the Indian context, Bhat et al. (2023) examined the impact of influencer trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise on the purchase intentions of Generation Y and Generation Z consumers. The study found that all three influencer characteristics significantly and positively influence purchase intentions. Nevertheless, its findings were limited by a relatively small sample and a single-country setting.

More recent studies have continued to reinforce the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Wijaya et al. (2024) demonstrated that social media marketing and influencer marketing jointly strengthen Generation Z consumer behaviour, with influencer marketing contributing significantly to brand loyalty and purchase intentions. Likewise, Dharma et al. (2024) identified credibility, trustworthiness, expertise, and product relevance as the strongest determinants of Generation Z purchase intentions in emerging economies, concluding that authentic influencers generate greater consumer trust than peer reviews.

Beyond influencer characteristics, Ngo et al. (2024) highlighted the complementary role of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in influencing Generation Z purchase intentions. Their findings indicated that high-quality information improves information usefulness and adoption, thereby enhancing online purchase intentions. However, they recommended further studies exploring platform-specific and cross-cultural differences.

Most recently, Chiguvi et al. (2025) confirmed that influencer expertise, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and credibility all positively affect consumer behaviour, with expertise emerging as the most influential predictor of purchasing decisions. Similarly, Župan, Bogнар, and Sesvečan (2025) found a strong relationship between influencer marketing and Generation Z purchasing behaviour, while also observing that influencer impact differs across generations. Both studies emphasized the need for future research investigating platform-specific influences, cross-cultural contexts, and long-term effects on consumer loyalty.

Overall, the existing literature consistently demonstrates that influencer marketing positively affects consumer attitudes, purchase intentions, and buying behaviour through factors such as credibility, authenticity, expertise, trustworthiness, and content quality. Despite these valuable contributions, notable research gaps remain, including limited cross-cultural comparisons, insufficient multi-platform analysis, and a lack of region-specific empirical studies focusing exclusively on Generation Z consumers. Addressing these gaps provides the foundation for the present study, which aims to examine the impact of influencer marketing on the purchase intentions and buying behaviour of Generation Z consumers.

RESEARCH GAP:

Over the past few years, influencer marketing has gained significant attention from researchers due to its growing influence on consumer decision-making. Previous studies have examined factors such as influencer credibility, authenticity, trustworthiness, and expertise, and have shown that these characteristics positively influence consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. However, most studies have focused on individual aspects of influencer marketing or purchase intention alone, with limited attention given to its combined impact on both purchase intentions and buying behaviour. Furthermore, relatively few studies have specifically examined these relationships among Generation Z consumers, despite their high engagement with social media and reliance on influencer recommendations. Therefore, further research is needed to better understand how influencer marketing influences the purchase intentions and buying behaviour of Generation Z consumers.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

The conceptual framework of this study examines the impact of influencer marketing on the consumer buying behaviour of Generation Z. It considers Content Quality, Brand Promotions, Product Endorsement, and Engagement on Instagram and YouTube as the independent variables, while Consumer Buying Behaviour is the dependent variable. Content quality focuses on the relevance, authenticity, and informativeness of influencer content, whereas brand promotions and product endorsements reflect influencers' ability to create brand awareness and influence consumers' purchase decisions. Engagement on Instagram and YouTube represents the level of interaction between influencers and their followers through likes, comments, shares, and views, which strengthens consumer trust and brand connection. The framework is supported by the Source Credibility Theory, which suggests that consumers are more likely to trust and act upon recommendations from credible and trustworthy influencers. Accordingly, the study proposes that high-quality content, effective brand promotions, authentic product endorsements, and greater social media engagement positively influence the buying behaviour of Generation Z consumers. This framework provides the basis for examining the relationship between influencer marketing practices and consumer purchasing decisions.

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT:

H1: Influencer promotional activities do not significantly influence the purchase intentions and buying behaviour of Generation Z consumers.

H2: The credibility and authenticity of social media influencers do not significantly influence the purchase intentions and buying behaviour of Generation Z consumers.

H3: Influencer marketing does not have a significant impact on the purchase intentions and buying behaviour of Generation Z consumers.

RESEARCH DESIGN:

This study investigated the impact of influencer marketing on the purchase intentions and buying behaviour of Generation Z consumers using an explanatory research design. A quantitative research approach was adopted, and primary data were collected through a standardized questionnaire using a 5-

point Likert scale. The study population comprised Generation Z consumers (born between 1997 and 2012) who actively use social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube and are exposed to influencer marketing content. A total of 106 respondents participated in the study through a non-probability convenience sampling technique. The questionnaire consisted of sections covering respondents' demographic profile, influencer promotional activities, influencer credibility and authenticity, purchase intentions, and consumer buying behaviour. The collected data were analysed using regression analysis to examine the impact of influencer marketing on the purchase intentions and buying behaviour of Generation Z consumers.

DATA ANALYSIS:

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18–20 Years	09	8.49%
	21–23 Years	51	48.11%
	24–26 Years	32	30.19%
	26–28 Years	14	13.21%
Occupation	Student	61	57.55%
	Working Professional	31	29.25%
	Self Employed	09	8.49%
	Others	05	4.71%
Online Purchases Capacity	Below ₹1000	46	43.40%
	₹1000–₹3000	32	30.19%
	₹3000–₹5000	15	14.15%
	Above ₹5000	13	12.26%
Time Spent on Social Media	Less than 1 hr	11	10.38%
	1-2 hr	61	57.55%
	3-4 hr	24	22.64%
	More than 4 hr	10	9.43%

The majority of respondents (48.11%) were aged 21–23 years, followed by 24–26 years (30.19%), indicating that the study mainly represents Generation Z consumers in their early twenties. Most respondents were students (57.55%), followed by working professionals (29.25%), reflecting the views of a young and digitally active population. Regarding online purchase capacity, 43.40% spent below ₹1000, while 30.19% spent ₹1000–₹3000, suggesting moderate online spending habits. In terms of social media

usage, the majority (57.55%) spent 1–2 hours daily, highlighting regular exposure to influencer marketing content.

Table 2: Regression Analysis Results

Variables	Values
Multiple R	0.02054994
R ²	0.0004223
Significance F	0.83756592
Coefficient (Intercept)	4.13538719
P-value	0.83756592

The regression analysis results indicate a very weak positive relationship between the independent and dependent variables ($R = 0.0205$). The model explains only 0.04% of the variation in the dependent variable ($R^2 = 0.0004$). The regression model is not statistically significant, as the p-value (0.8376) is greater than 0.05. Although the relationship is positive, it is not statistically significant. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis of a positive relationship between the variables is not supported (rejected).

Table 3: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H ₀₁	Influencer promotional activities do not significantly influence the purchase intentions and buying behaviour of Generation Z consumers.	Accepted
H ₀₂	The credibility and authenticity of social media influencers do not significantly influence the purchase intentions and buying behaviour of Generation Z consumers.	Accepted
H ₀₃	Influencer marketing does not have a significant impact on the purchase intentions and buying behaviour of Generation Z consumers.	Accepted

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION:

The study examined the impact of influencer marketing on the purchase intentions and buying behaviour of Generation Z consumers. The descriptive analysis indicated that respondents were generally familiar with influencer marketing and actively engaged with influencer-generated content on social media platforms. However, the regression analysis revealed a very weak positive relationship between influencer marketing and purchase intentions and buying behaviour. The model explained only 0.04% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.0004$), and the regression results were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). These findings suggest that influencer promotional activities, credibility, and authenticity did not significantly influence the purchase intentions and buying behaviour of Generation Z consumers. Therefore, all three null hypotheses were accepted.

The findings differ from the studies conducted by Lou and Yuan (2019), who found that influencer credibility and content value positively influence consumer trust and purchase intentions. Similarly, Sokolova and Kefi (2020) reported that influencer authenticity and credibility significantly affect consumers' purchase decisions on social media platforms. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) also concluded that social media influencers play an important role in shaping the purchase intentions of young consumers, particularly Generation Z. However, the findings of the present study indicate that influencer marketing alone does not significantly affect the purchase intentions and buying behaviour of Generation Z consumers. This suggests that consumers may also consider other factors such as product quality, brand reputation, pricing, online reviews, and peer recommendations before making a purchase decision. Overall, the study concludes that although influencer marketing is an important promotional tool, it does not independently have a statistically significant impact on the purchase intentions and buying behaviour of Generation Z consumers in the present study.

CONCLUSION:

This study examined the impact of influencer marketing on the purchase intentions and buying behaviour of Generation Z consumers. Based on the analysis of data collected from 106 respondents, the findings revealed a very weak positive relationship between influencer marketing and consumer buying behaviour. However, the relationship was not statistically significant, leading to the acceptance of all three null hypotheses. The results suggest that influencer promotional activities, credibility, and authenticity alone do not significantly influence the purchase decisions of Generation Z consumers. Instead, factors such as product quality, brand reputation, pricing, and customer reviews may play a more important role in shaping their buying behaviour. Therefore, businesses should adopt integrated marketing strategies that combine influencer marketing with strong product value and customer engagement. Future research may include larger sample sizes and additional variables to gain a deeper understanding of consumer purchase behaviour.

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