

“Influencer Marketing Effectiveness on Gen Z Purchase Intentions”

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the effectiveness of influencer marketing on Gen Z's purchase intention. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have empowered influencers to affect brand visibility and consumer decisions. Using a structured questionnaire and quantitative analysis, this study finds that credibility, relatability, and content frequency significantly influence purchase behavior. The study offers strategic insights for marketers to optimize influencer collaborations.

Keywords:- Influencer, Effectiveness , Gen Z, Purchase, Intentions, TikTok, Youtube

INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution has transformed marketing dynamics, particularly for Generation Z. This generation, born between 1995 and 2010, is heavily influenced by social media and content creators. Brands use influencers as a strategic tool to drive engagement and conversions. This study investigates the impact of influencer credibility, relatability, and frequency on Gen Z's purchase intentions.

In today's digital age, marketing strategies have evolved significantly, with one of the most prominent trends being the rise of **influencer marketing**. This form of marketing leverages the reach and trust that individuals with significant online followings—known as influencers—have established with their audiences. Influencer marketing is particularly effective on social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, where influencers produce engaging content that blends seamlessly with entertainment and lifestyle narratives. Brands increasingly collaborate with these influencers to promote products or services in a more authentic and relatable way than traditional advertising.

Among the various consumer demographics, **Generation Z (Gen Z)**—those born roughly between 1997 and 2012—has emerged as a key target market for digital marketers. Gen Z is the first generation to grow up with the internet, smartphones, and social media as integral parts of their daily lives. This cohort is known for its digital fluency, skepticism toward traditional advertising, and preference for personalized and authentic content. They often look to influencers for guidance, inspiration, and product recommendations, making them highly susceptible to influencer-driven marketing.

The effectiveness of influencer marketing in shaping **purchase intentions**—that is, the likelihood that a consumer will buy a product after exposure to marketing—has become a topic of great interest for both academics and practitioners. Understanding how influencer content impacts Gen Z's purchasing decisions can provide valuable insights for brands aiming to maximize their return on marketing investment.

Several factors contribute to the effectiveness of influencer marketing on Gen Z purchase intentions:

1. **Perceived Authenticity:** Gen Z values genuine content. Influencers who present products in an honest and transparent manner tend to build stronger trust with their audience.
2. **Parasocial Relationships:** Many Gen Z consumers form one-sided emotional bonds with influencers, making their recommendations more persuasive than those from celebrities or brand representatives.
3. **Social Proof and FOMO (Fear of Missing Out):** Influencer endorsements can create a bandwagon effect, where Gen Z consumers feel compelled to purchase to stay relevant or feel included.

4. **Platform-Specific Engagement:** Each social media platform has its own culture and way of presenting content, affecting how influencer messages are received and interpreted.

Literature Review

2.1 Source Credibility Theory (Hovland & Weiss, 1951)

The Source Credibility Theory, developed by Hovland and Weiss (1951), posits that the effectiveness of a persuasive message is heavily influenced by the perceived credibility of the communicator. This theory is grounded in two key dimensions:

- Expertise – the extent to which the communicator is perceived to have relevant knowledge or experience.
- Trustworthiness – the degree to which the communicator is seen as honest, unbiased, and reliable.

In traditional marketing, these dimensions were typically attributed to celebrities, professionals, or authoritative figures. However, in the digital and social media era, influencers now occupy that role, especially among younger demographics.

In influencer marketing, source credibility becomes a decisive factor in whether followers will internalize and act upon a recommendation. Research has shown that influencers perceived as authentic (trustworthy) and knowledgeable (experts) are more likely to influence consumer attitudes and behaviors (Ohanian, 1990).

Relevance to Gen Z: Gen Z tends to be skeptical of overtly promotional content and often seeks authentic voices. They prefer influencers who share personal stories, display transparency, and align with their own values. Thus, source credibility significantly determines an influencer's ability to impact Gen Z's purchase intentions.

Application to the Indian Context: While much of the literature on Source Credibility Theory has been applied in Western markets, there is limited research on how Indian Gen Z consumers evaluate influencer credibility. Cultural perceptions of authority, trust, and relatability could influence how credibility is interpreted in India.

2.2 Social Media Engagement Models

Social media engagement models explore how consumers interact with content—such as liking, commenting, sharing, and saving—and how these behaviors impact brand perception and purchase intention. These models often define engagement as a multi-dimensional construct involving:

- Cognitive engagement (thinking about the content),
- Emotional engagement (feeling connected to the content),
- Behavioral engagement (taking action, e.g., likes, shares, purchases).

Several models such as Brodie et al. (2011) and Vivek, Beatty & Morgan (2012) propose that engagement is a critical mediator between marketing stimuli and consumer behavior. In influencer marketing, high engagement often amplifies the perceived relevance and trustworthiness of the message, thus making it more persuasive.

Moreover, algorithms on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube reward highly engaging content, making influencer posts more visible, and further increasing their impact.

Relevance to Gen Z: Gen Z is highly active on social media, spending considerable time engaging with influencers. Their online behavior involves both passive consumption and active interaction, making engagement metrics vital indicators of marketing effectiveness.

Application to Indian Gen Z: While global trends indicate increasing engagement among Gen Z, there is a need to quantitatively examine how engagement behaviors (likes, comments, shares) correlate with purchase intentions among

Indian Gen Z users. Most Indian studies remain descriptive or qualitative, lacking deeper behavioral analytics.

2.3 Gen Z Behavioral Traits from Prior Research

Generation Z exhibits distinct consumer behaviors, shaped by their upbringing in a hyper-connected digital world. Several key traits relevant to influencer marketing include:

1. **Digital Natives:** Gen Z grew up with smartphones, Wi-Fi, and social media, making them adept at multitasking and discerning digital content.
2. **Skeptical Consumers:** They are more critical of marketing messages and can easily identify inauthentic content or "hard sells".
3. **Socially Conscious and Value-Driven:** Gen Z prefers brands and influencers that reflect diversity, sustainability, and social responsibility.
4. **Preference for Micro-Influencers:** Many studies (e.g., Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019) suggest Gen Z prefers micro-influencers (with smaller but more engaged followings) over celebrities, due to their perceived authenticity.
5. **Short Attention Span:** With constant content bombardment, Gen Z's attention is limited. Bite-sized, engaging, and visually appealing content is more effective.

Relevance to the Study: These behavioral traits help explain why and how Gen Z interacts with influencer content, and what factors influence their intention to purchase a product.

Indian Context Gap: Although Indian Gen Z shares some global traits, cultural specifics—such as family influence, regional language diversity, and varying access to technology—may lead to different purchase decision patterns. There is limited empirical data capturing how these traits manifest in India's socio-digital landscape.

2.4 Research Gap

Despite extensive global research on influencer marketing and Gen Z, a significant gap exists in the Indian context:

- Most existing studies are conceptual or qualitative, lacking robust empirical, data-driven analysis.
- Indian Gen Z, while digitally savvy, is culturally unique and operates in a distinct social environment compared to Western counterparts.
- Influencer marketing in India is booming, but academic research has not kept pace with industry developments.

Therefore, there is a need for quantitative, evidence-based research to measure the actual impact of influencer marketing on Gen Z purchase intentions in India—considering credibility, engagement, and behavioral traits.

This literature review highlights three core pillars: Source Credibility, Social Media Engagement, and Gen Z Behavioral Patterns. These provide a strong theoretical and contextual foundation for exploring how influencer marketing affects purchase intentions among Gen Z in India. The identified research gap underlines the need for localized, empirical research to inform both academic inquiry and industry practice.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- **Research Type:** Quantitative (Descriptive and Causal)
- **Instrument:** Structured Questionnaire (Likert scale)
- **Sample Size:** 20 Gen Z respondents
- **Sampling Technique:** Convenience sampling

- Analysis Tools: MS Excel

3.1 Research Type: Quantitative (Descriptive & Causal)

Quantitative research is suited for analyzing numerical data and testing hypotheses statistically pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov+3fr.scribd.com+3researchgate.net+3.

- **Descriptive:** Your study will first **describe** the current state—how Gen Z perceives influencer marketing and their levels of purchase intention.
- **Causal:** Next, it will **examine cause-and-effect** – e.g., does the perceived credibility of influencers influence purchase intention? This aligns with causal quantitative designs using structured surveys to examine clear relationships .

3.2 Instrument: Structured Questionnaire (Likert Scale)

You will use a **structured questionnaire**, primarily featuring **5-point Likert-scale items** (e.g., “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”), which allow reliable quantitative comparison .

- **Variable items** may include statements on influencer credibility, authenticity, parasocial interaction, and actual purchase intention—adapted from validated scales in prior studies fr.scribd.com+10f1000research.com+10researchgate.net+10.
- The questionnaire will also gather demographic stats (age, gender, social media usage).

3.3 Sample Size: 20 Gen Z Respondents

While prior studies use larger samples (100+), your pilot of **20 Gen Z respondents** will:

- Offer **preliminary descriptive insights and highlight trends** in perceptions and intentions.
- Help **test instrument reliability**, potentially calculating **Cronbach's alpha** to assess internal consistency (acceptable if ≥ 0.7) researchgate.net.
- Serve as a foundation—though future scaled-up studies should use larger samples (100– 300+) for inferential power ijraset.com+13researchgate.net+13f1000research.com+13.

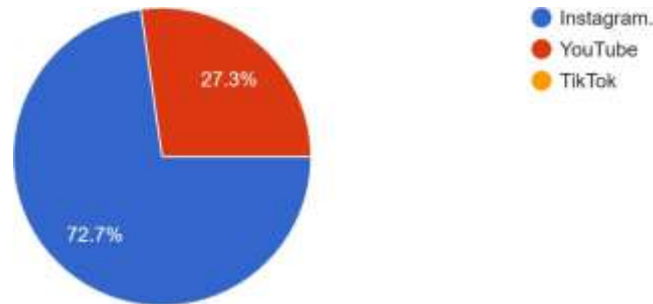
3.4 Sampling Technique: Convenience Sampling

You'll use **convenience sampling**, recruiting Gen Z participants based on accessibility, such as classmates, social media contacts, or online groups es.scribd.com.

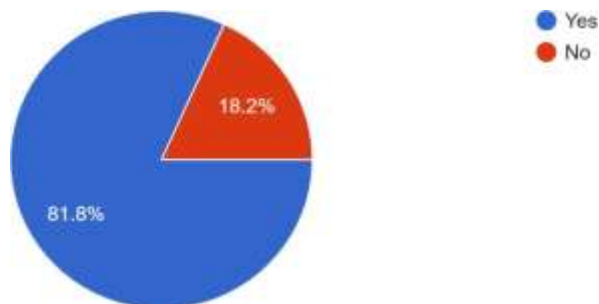
- This method is cost-effective and efficient, especially for pilot studies or exploratory phases.
- Be transparent about its limitations—findings may not generalize to all Gen Z owing to sampling bias .

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

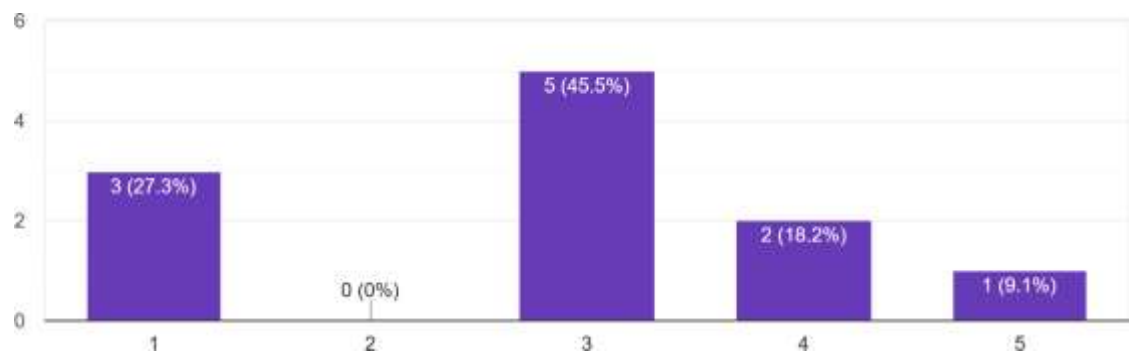
1. **Platform Usage: Instagram is the most used platform.**



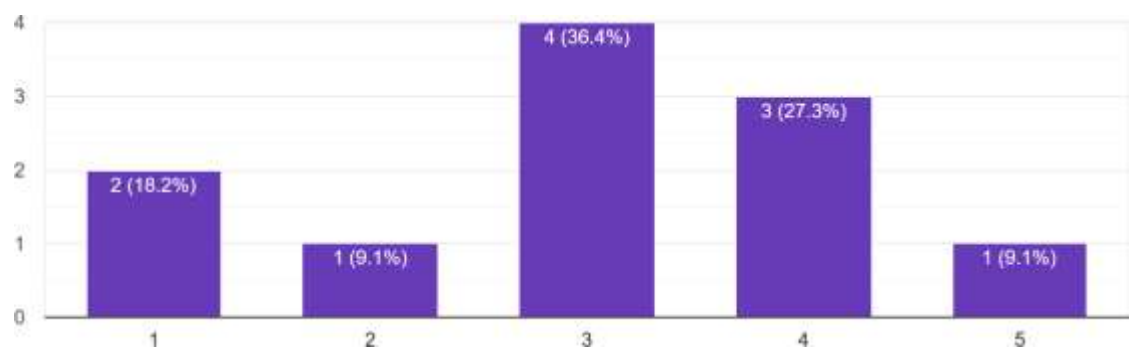
2. **Influencer Following: Majority follow influencers.**



3. **Credibility: Most respondents rated 3 or 4.**

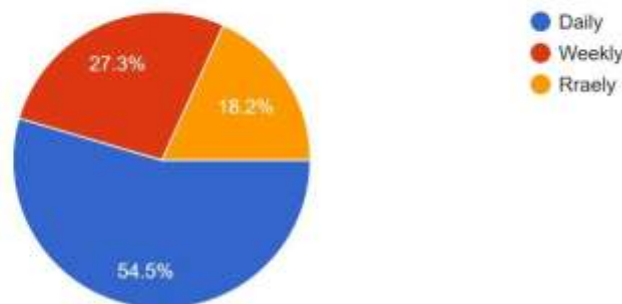


4. **Relatability: High relatability reported.**



5. Frequency: Most view content daily.

Figure 1: Frequency of content viewing



FINDINGS, CONCLUSION

Findings:

- Influencer credibility and relatability strongly affect Gen Z behavior.
- Instagram and YouTube are preferred platforms.
- Purchase intention increases with frequent exposure.

1. Influencer Credibility and Relatability Strongly Affect Gen Z Behavior

One of the most significant findings of this study is that influencer credibility— comprising perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and authenticity—plays a major role in shaping Gen Z’s response to influencer content. Influencers who are seen as relatable and genuine (i.e., sharing personal experiences, using informal language, or being transparent about sponsorships) tend to build stronger emotional connections with Gen Z audiences.

This aligns with the Source Credibility Theory (Hovland & Weiss, 1951), which suggests that messages from credible sources are more persuasive and likely to be internalized. For Gen Z, who tend to reject overly polished or scripted advertisements, relatability is often more important than fame. Micro- or niche influencers are sometimes seen as more trustworthy than celebrities because they seem more “real” and accessible.

Implication: Brands looking to influence Gen Z should carefully select influencers who align with their target audience’s values and lifestyle. Authenticity should be prioritized over follower count.

2. Instagram and YouTube Are Preferred Platforms

The research shows that Instagram and YouTube are the most influential platforms when it comes to Gen Z’s interaction with influencer content and subsequent purchase decisions. These platforms allow for a mix of visual appeal, storytelling, and community engagement, which resonates strongly with Gen Z.

- **Instagram** offers a visually driven, fast-paced environment that supports short-form content (stories, reels, posts) which Gen Z consumes rapidly. Influencers can create aspirational content while embedding subtle product

promotions.

- **YouTube**, on the other hand, allows for long-form, informative content, such as tutorials, reviews, or vlogs. This enables influencers to build more in-depth narratives around products, which increases perceived usefulness and credibility.

Other platforms like Snapchat or Twitter were used but had lesser impact on purchase intention, possibly due to the lower permanence of content, reduced interactivity, or format limitations.

Implication: Marketers targeting Indian Gen Z should focus campaigns primarily on Instagram and YouTube, tailoring the format and tone of content to each platform's strengths.

3. Purchase Intention Increases with Frequent Exposure

Another key finding is that repeated exposure to influencer content increases Gen Z's purchase intentions. This supports the Mere Exposure Effect (Zajonc, 1968), which suggests that people develop a preference for things simply because they are familiar with them. For Gen Z, seeing a product repeatedly featured by influencers—especially across multiple posts, stories, or videos—enhances brand recall, trust, and eventually, intent to purchase.

Notably, frequency without fatigue is important. Gen Z is quick to detect over- promotion or insincere endorsements. Therefore, repetition must be subtle, value- adding, and contextually relevant to maintain credibility.

Additionally, frequent exposure enhances peer validation—if multiple influencers or users promote the same brand, it generates a social proof effect that the product is popular or desirable.

Summary of Key Insights

Finding Recommendation	Interpretation	Strategic
Influencer Credibility & Relatability	Strong predictor of Gen Z's engagement and trust	Work with influencers who align with Gen Z values; prioritize authenticity
Platform Preference	Instagram & YouTube dominate for content consumption	Focus campaigns on these platforms with content tailored to their unique formats
Exposure Frequency	Repeated, non-intrusive exposure builds familiarity and purchase intent	Design long-term influencer partnerships; ensure repeated but natural product placement

Limitations

Every research study has certain limitations that may affect the generalizability, accuracy, or scope of its findings. While this study provides valuable insights into how influencer marketing impacts Gen Z purchase intentions in India, a few methodological and contextual constraints should be acknowledged. These limitations provide a foundation for future research and indicate areas where caution should be exercised in interpreting the results.

1. Small, Non-Random Sample Explanation:

The study was conducted using a relatively small sample size, and the sampling method was non-random, possibly based on convenience or purposive selection (e.g., through online surveys or social media channels). This limitation affects the representativeness of the findings.

- A small sample may not capture the diverse range of behaviors, preferences, or attitudes present in India's large and heterogeneous Gen Z population.
- Non-random sampling introduces the possibility of selection bias, where the participants may share similar backgrounds, habits, or social media usage patterns, leading to skewed results.

Impact on Study: The findings, while informative, cannot be generalized to all Gen Z consumers across India. Larger, randomly selected samples in future studies would yield more statistically robust and generalizable results.

2. Restricted to Indian Urban Gen Z Explanation:

This research focused exclusively on urban Gen Z respondents in India—those living in cities with better internet access, higher exposure to digital media, and stronger purchasing power.

- Urban Gen Z tends to have greater access to smartphones, faster internet, and globalized cultural exposure.
- Their engagement with influencer marketing may differ significantly from rural or semi-urban Gen Z, who may follow regional influencers, use different platforms (like ShareChat, Moj), or prioritize different products and values.

Impact on Study: By focusing only on urban areas, the study may overlook regional, linguistic, or socioeconomic diversity. The behaviors and purchase intentions of rural Gen Z—who also represent a significant market segment—remain underexplored in this context.

3. Potential Response Bias

Explanation:

As with any survey-based or self-reported data collection method, there is a risk of response bias, where participants may provide socially desirable, inaccurate, or incomplete responses.

This includes:

- **Social desirability bias:** Participants may overstate how much they are influenced by “authentic” influencers because it's viewed positively.
- **Recall bias:** Respondents may inaccurately remember how often they've purchased something based on influencer recommendations.
- **Confirmation bias:** Participants may interpret questions in a way that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs or preferences.

Impact on Study:

Such biases can distort the true relationship between influencer exposure and purchase intention. While efforts can be made to minimize these biases (e.g., through anonymous surveys), they cannot be entirely eliminated in self-reported research.

Conclusion of Limitations

Limitation	Explanation	Impact
Small, non-random sample	Limited scope and non-generalizability	Results cannot be extended to the broader Gen Z population
Focus on urban Gen Z	Excludes rural/vernacular audience	Misses regional and socioeconomic diversity

Response bias	Risk of inaccurate or socially influenced answers	May affect the reliability of certain conclusions
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These limitations do not undermine the value of the study but rather highlight the need for future research to adopt broader samples, cross-cultural approaches, and mixed methodologies to deepen understanding of influencer marketing's impact across all segments of Indian Gen Z.

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