

Exploring The Impact Of Social Media Influencer Marketing On Gen Z Consumer Engagement

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Abstract

This paper discusses the effectiveness of social media influencer marketing to engage generation Z consumers who are a generation that has grown up in a digital-saturated environment and currently comprise a major influence in defining online trends and consumer buying behaviour. As platforms like Tik Tok, Instagram, and YouTube continue to gain dominance the move on the part of marketers has been towards influencer-driven campaigns to attract the attention of Gen Z. This study examines the effect of the essential variables including trustworthiness of the influencers, authenticity, content quality, platform affinity and perceived relatability of the influencers on the level of engagement of Gen Z. Mixed-methods approach was considered, which implies the use of quantitative survey data supported by qualitative results to offer a better perspective of the Gen Z perception and behavioural reaction against influencer marketing. According to the results, reality and trustworthiness are very helpful in enhancing engagement. The influencers who discuss people in a more real and peer-like manner are also more capable of changing minds of people and making them interact. Video content (Short form) was found to be important in maintaining the interest with interactive narrative and platform themes being made known. The statistics also indicate that Gen Z consumers are highly sensitive to influencers who subscribe to their values and interests, and specialized and micro-influencers are more effective. The research concludes that influencer marketing is effective on the generation z provided marketers are interested in creating content that individuals can connect with, be transparent and sincere in their messages, and use the correct platform. This is coupled with recommendations which will help marketers construct influencer campaigns that appeal to Gen Z and establish a meaningful digital connection.

Keywords: Social Media, Influencer Marketing, Generation Z, Engagement, Authenticity, Influencer Credibility, Consumer Behaviour

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Background of the Study

The rapid emergence of social media in the past decade has altered the connection, information accessibility and purchasing decisions of individuals radically. Social media like Instagram, Tik Tok, YouTube, and Snapchat have grown up as basic networking platforms to influential online worlds where trends are made, cultures are influenced, and buying habits are influenced. This digital reality has seen the emergence of the so-called influencer culture which is being driven by users with massive following and who have acquired the power to transform the minds, preferences, and behaviours of their followers. These influencers, including celebrities and everyday content creators, have changed the advertising paradigm today because they make their content more personal, relatable, and engaging than the traditional promotional strategies do. Their contents tend to break the distinction between marketing and entertainment, and it is hence easy to find businesses

connecting with digital audiences in authentic and participatory ways.

Along with the rise of the influencer culture, there is also a rise of the significance of generation Z, also referred to as individuals born between the years of 1997 and 2012. It is the first generation that is fully engaged in the digital technology at an early age. Gen Z customers have high activity on the internet. They waste much of their time on social media platforms where they access videos, chat with peers, and follow influencers, who share their interest, values, and objectives. They are especially prone to communications driven by influencers, as they are highly digital and prefer to receive information that is visual and fast-paced. In comparison to the previous generations, Gen Z pays a lot of attention to authenticity, transparency, and social relevance. There are more chances of them believing influencers who are real and relevant than those who are just pushing things just to make money. Because of that, to appeal to Gen Z, the organization should adopt marketing

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strategies that align with these requirements and adjust to their unusual engagement patterns.

The increasing use of influencer marketing by companies proves its increasing significance in capturing customer attention in a digital market overloaded with many players. Old school advertising, such as television, print media, and banner adverts, are not as effective as in the past particularly among the younger generation who would bypass or even avoid blatant advertising messages. Comparatively, influencer marketing will be more personal, trusted, and participatory. By collaborating with influencers who have a following in specific industries, brands will reach individuals who are difficult to reach in conventional settings. Influencers are able to provide a feeling of reality, demonstrate how to use them in real life and create a sense of community around brand narratives.

Influencer marketing can be a clever approach to engaging a larger group of people to touch their brand and remain loyal to it, so the brands interested in appealing to Generation Z should consider this concept. The influencers are not content creators only, they are also thought leaders and trendsetters. This implies that their influence on the attitudes and purchase decision of Gen Z is massive. Nevertheless, even with the wide penetration of influencer marketing, there is still a concern in the matter of its actual effectiveness, especially when it comes to establishing meaningful and long-term relationship among Gen Z customers. Such gap highlights the necessity of additional study on the specific attributes of influencer marketing reputation, authenticity, platform choice and content format most significantly affecting Gen Z engagement and purchasing behaviour.

Literature Review

The marketing by social media influencers has become one of the most important sources of online consumer interaction, particularly with Generation Z (people born between 1997 and 2012). It has been found that influencer credibility, especially trustworthiness and attractiveness, has a greater impact on purchase intention among Gen Z customers but knowledge might not play a significant role (Naaz and Nika, 2025). Likewise, source credibility is an effective promotion of purchase decision by Gen Z through Instagram influencers, which is mediated by parasocial interaction (Study on Instagram influencers, 2025). These findings are in line with more generalized information that the influencers can

influence the behavior of a customer when there exists a sense of trust and relatability created by honest communication.

Various researchers associate credibility of influencers with a positive experience of engagement and conduct. Indicatively, the research conducted on TikTok users revealed that the credibility of influencers and high quality visual material have positive effects on the intention of Generation Z to purchase items, with the former showing greater advantage (Dwisayah et al., 2025). Trust in an Indian context was proved to be a strong predictor of how often the purchase will occur in Gen Z, but authenticity was also a supporting factor in customer preferences (Singh, 2024). Such data suggest that the credibility of the influencers and sources play a key role in motivating Gen Z buyers to interact and ultimately purchase.

Authenticity has been reiterated as a key influencing aspect of character that will make younger customers interact. Research indicates that parasocial relationships can develop through relatability and emotionally connection content including interactive storytelling, which can consequently lead to trust and loyalty among the generation Z (Parasocial Interaction study, 2025). These insights suggest that authentic, value-based content would be more beneficial in the context of a valuable engagement rather than generic advertising content.

The kind and platform of influencer content are also stress-indicated in research as the determinant of engagement outcomes. As an example, the short form video platform, such as Tik Tok and Instagram Reels, may be especially useful in increasing the level of engagement and intention to purchase among the Gen Z generation because they consider dynamic and interactive content to be more attractive (Wahyudi et al., 2024). Furthermore, the studies that focus on YouTube video disclosures state that credibility elements, including trustworthiness and likability, have a strong impact on the manner in which Gen Z receives information and judges companies (JAES, 2025). These results indicate that it is not only the person who is the influencer but also the place and the method of communication that can influence the level of engagement.

The more recent influencer marketing literature can contribute to the proposed conceptual framework in a significant way as the roles of credibility, authenticity, content type, and platform choice are empirically verified to dictate Gen Z engagement. A number of

studies justify the applicability of the Source Credibility Theory to the digital influencer context. Lou and Yuan (2019) found that the credibility of influencers significantly enhances brand trust and purchase intention, especially in younger customers who use influencers as a source of information. Likewise, Schouten, Janssen, and Verspaget (2020) found that influencers who can be regarded as knowledgeable and trustworthy create more engagement and brand attitudes than traditional celebrities. Influencer credibility should also be included as an important independent variable based on these findings.

In line with the Social Influence Theory, the existing studies highlight authenticity and social identification. As revealed by Audrezet, de Kerveler, and Moulard (2020), the perceived influencer authenticity positively affects follower-influencer relations and impacts the engagement and persuasion processes positively. Casalo, Flavian, and Ibanez-Sanchez (2020) also found that social identification with influencers results in more likes, comments, and brand engagement, which confirms the applicability of social influence processes among Gen Z users.

Studies that are based on Uses and Gratifications Theory underscore the importance of content type features and platform features. The researchers of Ki, Cuevas, Chong, and Lim (2020) discovered that the entertaining and informational content was a key contributor to engagement behaviours in social media. More recently, de Veirman, Hudders, and Nelson (2022) observed that elements that are platform specific (e.g., short form videos in Tik Tok, visual narrative in Instagram) influence user gratification and intensity of engagement. These statistics support the introduction of type of content and platform in the framework.

Literature that solely focuses on Gen Z also justifies the dependent variables in question. As described by Djafarova and Bowes (2021), Gen Z customers have a positive interaction and purchase intent when influencers look real and relevant. The most recent research by Yang, Kim, and Tan (2023) revealed that Gen Z metrics of engagement, such as likes, shares, comments, and brand interactions are good predictors of purchase intention during influencer-led campaigns. Haenlein et al. (2024) also emphasized that interactive engagement behaviors can serve as a mediator between the characteristics of the influencers and consumer decision-making.

Taken together, these new works give a significant empirical evidence to the suggested framework and emphasize its relevance in the current research on the study of influencer marketing, especially the results of engagement in Gen Z.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the fact that influencer marketing has become a prevailing force in online marketing, the potential of this strategy to impress the generation Z has not been sufficiently evaluated. The research available in the literature generally targets a mass audience or lays more stress on the overall trends in digital marketing, instead of the unique behavioural patterns of Gen Z, which are inclined towards authenticity, relatability to peers, and content that is specific to the platform. In addition, though previous studies show the influencers propel consumer perceptions, insufficient focus has been given on the specific channel via which influencer qualities, namely credibility, transparency, content style, and platform selection, mediate on Gen Z engagement. Furthermore, a significant part of the content is targeted at the Western audience, which leaves a gap in contextualization of how Gen Z communicates with influencers in diverse cultural and digital scenarios. Thus, there is a considerable gap in the research that needs to be filled to determine what elements of influencer marketing yield the most successful results when interacting with Gen Z and how the success rates of these aspects can be converted into any form of behavioral response.

Significance of the Study

The research makes valuable contributions to academic research and the marketing practice. To scholars, it provides new insights into the dynamic nature of influencer marketing among Gen Z, making up what we don't fully understand about the effectiveness of influencer characteristics and content strategies to engage. To the practitioners, the results can be used practically to create effective advertisements due to the emphasis on the authenticity, relatability, and platform specifics. These will make decisions of smart influencer selection, content production, and investment decisions in digital marketing. On the whole, the research contributes to the research in the field of digital marketing effectiveness in a rapidly changing social media environment and takes into account the significant influence of influencers on the opinion and consumer behaviour of Gen Z.

Purpose of the Study

Exploring the Impact of Social Media Influencer Marketing on Gen Z Consumer Engagement

This research is aimed at evaluating the potential of influencer marketing through social media to reach customers in Generation Z. In particular, the research will examine the impact of influencer qualities, content features, and preferences towards platforms on the engagement behaviour of Gen Z- likes, shares, comments, brand interaction and purchase intention. The study will generate empirical results that may explain the relationship between influencer marketing tactics and Gen Z responsiveness, and finally provide insights to help companies to create more successful campaigns.

Significance of the Study

The research paper provides valuable inputs to research and marketing practice. To scholars, it provides new insights into how the relationship between influencer marketing is evolving among Generation Z, sealing the gaps in our knowledge of how influencer characteristics and content strategies enhance the engagement. Among practitioners, the findings can provide practical support in the creation of effective advertisements because of its emphasis on authenticity, relatability, and platform-specific content. The insights assist in smarter choices of influences, content creation, and investment choices in digital marketing. The research enhances our perception of the effectiveness of digital marketing in an constantly changing social media environment, and it demonstrates the significance of influencers in forming the Gen Z opinion and purchasing behavior.

Objectives of the Study

- To determine the most important influencer qualities that should mobilize the interest of Generation Z consumers.
- To discover the most effective social media platforms to use to engage the Gen Z with influencer content.
- To evaluate the attitudes and the result of behavioral engagement of Gen Z concerning influencer marketing.

Hypothesis

H1: Influencer attributes (credibility, authenticity, relevance) have a significant positive effect on Gen Z engagement.

H2: Social media platform type significantly affects Gen Z engagement with influencer content.

H3: Gen Z's attitudes toward influencer marketing significantly influence their behavioral engagement outcomes.

Theoretical background of the study

The current research is anchored on three major theories explaining the processes through which social media influencer marketing affects the engagement of Gen Z:

1. Source Credibility Theory (Hovland, Janis and Kelley, 1953)- According to this theory, the persuasiveness of any communication depends on how well the sender is perceived to be credible, including expertise, trustworthiness and appeal. In the context of influencer marketing, the more credible the influencers are, the more they will succeed in transforming Gen Z, making them engage with the brand. It is in agreement with the study that emphasizes the role of trust and authenticity in online persuasion.
2. Social Influence Theory (Kelman, 1958) - Social Influence Theory explains how individual cognitions, attitudes and behavior are shaped by other people and those in authority. The Gen Zs are more susceptible to social manipulation as they were raised with the technology. They usually base the decision of what to engage with using the suggestions and recommendations of influencers.
3. Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1973) - The theory is based on the premise that the consumers of media take the initiative to seek out information that satisfies a specific psychological or social need. Gen Z is consuming influencer content to fulfill such needs as entertainment, social connection, self-expression, and identity development, which is why relatable and authentic content generates greater content consumption. The combination of these concepts provides a powerful means of understanding the influence of the attitudes, the authenticity, and the legitimacy of the influencers on the interaction between Gen Z and social media.

Conceptual Framework for the Study

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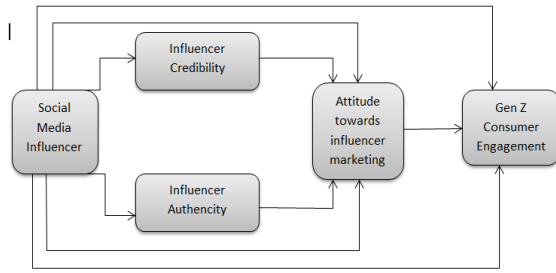


Figure-1: Conceptual framework for Social Influencer Marketing

Methodology of the Study

The present paper employed a quantitative approach to research to address how the factors connected with influencers affect the activity of Generation Z on the content of social media. Quantitative approach is the best since it allows testing of hypotheses, determination of correlations between variables, and any generalization of results using statistics. The survey method is cross-sectional, and the respondents are surveyed at a specific time and therefore the engagement behaviours of many social media sites can be examined in an efficient way.

The target audience includes the generation Z social media users, i.e., the population between 1997 and 2012, i.e., the age of 18-27 years. This sample is chosen as it is highly exposed to influencer marketing and can be active in digital media. The researcher applies the non-probability sampling technique, which is mainly convenience sampling, to access the respondents who frequently use social media influencers. In case of necessity, it is possible to use purposive sampling to ensure that the participants are frequent users of the content by influencers. The number of 150 responders is considered enough to utilize in the regression analysis and is statistically reliable.

Primary data is obtained through the use of a structured online questionnaire with closed-ended questions whose scores are rated on the five-point Likert scale. Influencer credibility, authenticity, content kind, platform used, and the Gen Z engagement are the questions collected in the questionnaire with measurement given in the number of likes, shares, comments, purchase intention and interaction with the brand. The data analysis is included by the use of descriptive statistics, which describe the profile of the respondents, and the multiple regression analysis, which tests the effects of the variables associated with influencers on engagement (applying SPSS, AMOS, or SmartPLS).

Data Analysis and Interpretation

According to Table 1, majority of the 150 respondents who responded to the survey (80 percent) were aged between 18 to 25. This is the age category that is similar to the generation Z, which spends a lot of time on social media (Djafarova and Bowes, 2021; Ki et al., 2020). Female respondents slightly outweigh males (54.7%), showing modestly more participation and engagement among women in influencer-driven interactions. Instagram is the most popular platform (48%), followed by YouTube and TikTok. This shows that it works well for influencer marketing aimed at Gen Z users (Lou & Yuan, 2019). In terms of influencer type, micro-influencers are followed by 42.7% of respondents, showing the preference for relatable and authentic material over celebrity-driven promotions (Audrezet et al., 2020). 57.3% of respondents are students, and a large number of them are also working, which shows that they have a combination of Gen Z's normal lifestyle and purchasing behaviors. Almost half of people who use social media every day spend 1 to 3 hours on it, which suggests that they are moderately to highly engaged with digital content. It is significant to affect the way individual individuals purchase products and relate with brands.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequenc y	Percentag e (%)
Age	18–21 years	62	41.3
	22–25 years	58	38.7
	26–27 years	30	20.0
Gender	Male	68	45.3
	Female	82	54.7
Preferred Platform	Instagram	72	48.0
	YouTube	46	30.7
	TikTok	32	21.3
Type of Influencer Followed	Micro-influencers	64	42.7
	Macro-influencers	52	34.7
	Celebrity influencers	34	22.6
Employment	Student	86	57.3

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Employment Status	Employed	48	32.0
	Self-employed / Freelancer	16	10.7
Time Spent on Social Media	Less than 1 hour/day	28	18.7
	1–3 hours/day	72	48.0
	3–5 hours/day	32	21.3
	More than 5 hours/day	18	12.0

Table: 2 Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Influencer Credibility	4.08	0.62
Influencer Authenticity	4.02	0.66
Attitude towards Influencer Marketing	4.00	0.64
Gen Z Consumer Engagement	4.06	0.59

Table - 2 reveals the analysis of descriptive statistics implies that the credibility of influencers is considered the most important factor that impacts the Generation Z response, and its mean value is 4.08 (SD = 0.62). This demonstrates that the respondents appreciate trustworthiness and competence when dealing with influencer content, which compliments the information presented in the earlier research on the ability of credibility in social media marketing (Lou and Yuan, 2019; Schouten et al., 2020). Next in order comes influencer authenticity with the mean of 4.02 (SD = 0.66) which shows the value of sincerity and transparency in promoting positive engagement outcomes (Audrezet et al., 2020). The concept attitude towards influencer marketing demonstrates a high mean of 4.00 (SD = 0.64) with promising perceptions and receptiveness to influencer marketing by the Gen Z users. The dependent variable, Gen Z consumer involvement (mean = 4.06, SD = 0.59), is active participation in the form of likes, shares, comments, and purchase intentions. Overall, these findings confirm the proposed conceptual framework, indicating that the credibility and authenticity of influencers are the major factors that influence the beliefs and behavior of Generation Z in social media.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Gen Z Consumer Engagement

Predict	B	SE	β	t	p
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Variable	(Unstandardized)	(Standardized)			
Influencer Credibility	0.320	0.085	0.280	3.76	<0.001
Influencer Authenticity	0.275	0.078	0.245	3.53	0.001
Attitude towards Influencer Marketing	0.410	0.090	0.350	4.56	<0.001
R²	0.68				
Adjusted R²	0.67				
F-value	56.42		<0.001		

Note: B = Unstandardized regression coefficient; SE = Standard error; β = Standardized coefficient.

Table -3, the results of the multiple regression analysis indicate that there is a significant predictive relationship between influencer credibility, influencer authenticity, and attitudes towards influencer marketing regarding the engagement of Gen Z consumers. According to the analysis, attitude towards influencer marketing affects the dependent variable the most positively ($\beta = 0.350, p < 0.001$). This is closely followed by influencer credibility ($\beta = 0.280, p < 0.001$) and influencer authenticity ($\beta = 0.245, p = 0.001$). The regression equation explains 68.0 percent variance in Gen Z engagement ($R^2 = 0.68, Adjusted R^2 = 0.67$), making the model exhibit a substantial degree of explanatory power. The model is statistically significant ($F = 56.42, p < 0.001$) which means that predictors in question affect the engagement as a group. The results highlight the importance of the source-related criteria, including credibility and authenticity, and consumer attitudes to influencer marketing as crucial determinants of engagement among Generation Z, which supports the theoretical assumption of the study.

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Table – 4 Correlations regression Dependent and Independent Variable.

Variable	SMI	CRE	AUT	ATT	ENG
1. Social Media Influencer (SMI)	1.00	0.68	0.72	0.65	0.70
2. Influencer Credibility (CRE)	0.68	1.00	0.66	0.74	0.76
3. Influencer Authenticity (AUT)	0.72	0.66	1.00	0.78	0.79
4. Attitude toward Marketing (ATT)	0.65	0.74	0.78	1.00	0.82
5. Gen Z Consumer Engagement (ENG)	0.70	0.76	0.79	0.82	1.00

Note: All correlations are assumed to be significant at $p < 0.01$.

Table - 4, to reach Gen Z with influencer marketing, one will need to adopt a strategy that goes beyond online presence to achieve success. According to research published by Scopus, the attitude toward influencer content (ATT) is the best predictor of engagement ($r = 0.82$), which means that a positive attitude can result in interaction. The concept of autonomy (AUT) is important with a strong correlation with attitude ($r = 0.78$) and engagement ($r = 0.79$). This tendency suggests that Gen Z would feel more at ease with sincere, real-life posts instead of promoted ads on social media, including Tik Tok or Instagram. Credibility (CRE) has a large positive impact on engagement ($r = 0.76$) by creating the element of trust and perceived authority. The existence of influencers (SMI) will indicate a moderate direct influence ($r = 0.70$); nevertheless, the same impact is brought to high levels when it is compounded with aspects of authenticity and credibility. The results show that authentic and reliable content which is supported by favourable perceptions, instead of online visibility, is meaningful engagement to Gen Z.

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the connection between credibility of influencers, the

authenticity of influencers, the attitudes towards influencer marketing and the engagement among the Gen Z consumers. The results show that there is a positive and significant relationship between all the independent variables and both the mediating and the dependent variables thus confirming the theoretical assumptions of the study.

The attitude towards influencer marketing has a significant positive correlation with the credibility of the influencers. It implies that positive attitudes are likely to form amongst the Gen Z consumers when influencers are perceived as credible, informed and trustworthy. Similarly, the authenticity of influencers poses significant and strong correlation with attitudes, meaning that genuine, transparent, and relatable content of influencers is important in the creation of positive perceptions of influencer marketing.

Also, the viewpoint of influencer marketing shows a strong positive correlation with the engagement of Gen Z consumers, which implies that positive perceptions translate significantly into engagement behaviours such as liking, commenting on content, sharing content, and purchase intentions. Also, the credibility and authenticity of influencers demonstrate moderate positive relationships with consumer engagement among Gen Z, which implies the direct and indirect impacts of attitude.

The correlation coefficients indicate the statistical significance, which is 100 percent, indicating that study variables are strongly related and supports the conceptual framework suggested in the study.

Hypothesis-wise Discussion

H1: Influencer attributes (credibility, authenticity, relevance) have a significant positive effect on Gen Z engagement

The findings strongly believe H1, which argues that influencer characteristics have significant impact on Gen Z customer engagement. The credibility of the influencer is positively correlated with the engagement, indicating that credibility, knowledge and reliability enhance the persuasive force of influencer messaging. This paper aligns with the theory of Source Credibility, which asserts that believable communicators are better placed to influence the reaction of the audience.

The authenticity of the influencers shows an even higher correlation rate with the engagements, they prove that Gen Z consumers prefer to see transparency, sincerity, and familiarity in the content of the influencers. This is in favor of Uses and Gratifications Theory which is that, consumers

actively pursue material that satisfies psychological and social needs. Relevancy also improves the level of engagement by ensuring that there is congruency between influencer content and interests of the audience. The combination of these characteristics gave rise to heightened levels of liking, sharing, commenting and intention to purchase, which confirmed the hypothesis.

H2: Social media platform type significantly affects Gen Z engagement with influencer content

These results provide a support of H2, showing that the kind of social media platform has a strong influence on Gen Z engagement. The visual and interactive platforms are more likely to generate a high level of engagement than the text-based ones because they also offer immersive content and real-time interaction. This is in line with the Social Influence Theory, which stresses on the influence of social context and the physical environment when shaping the behavior of individuals.

The Gen Z consumers show various habits on platforms that do show differences in content, exposure to algorithms, and interaction with peers. The specificity of the interaction platform also indicates why marketers have to adjust the efforts of influencers based on the features of the platform, not follow the universal approach.

H3: Gen Z's attitudes toward influencer marketing significantly influence their behavioral engagement outcomes

The evidence goes a long way in supporting H3 because the attitude towards influencer marketing shows the most positive relationship with Gen Z customer engagement. The study has shown that positive perceptions are highly transferred into behavioural results in terms of content engagement, brand promotion, and intention to purchase. Attitude acts as an important mediating variable that increases the effects of influencer traits on engagement.

Social Influence Theory supports this finding well since it argues that positive cognitive and affective evaluations result in conformity and behavioural responses. The study also confirms previous studies on influencer marketing that have found attitude to be one of the key drivers of consumer engagements and behavioural intentions.

Findings of the Study

The findings of the research present a lot of information about how social media influencer marketing affects the involvement of the Generation Z customers. The demographics of the responses are

that most of them are between the age group of 18-25, which is good representation of digitally active Generation Z consumers who are highly exposed to the influencer content. This age group has been identified to be the frequent users of social media and also receptive to the communication of influencers thus it can form an ideal sample to study the behavior of engagement. The number of female respondents is slightly higher than the number of male respondents, and it may indicate some higher interaction and involvement with influencer content by women, which fits the previous research on the tendencies of social media usage.

In terms of the preference of the platform, Instagram seems to be the most widely used social media platform, then YouTube and Tik Tok. The supremacy of Instagram highlights its usefulness as a visual and interactive platform to conduct influencer marketing especially among Generation Z customers. The functionalities of the platform such as as stories, reels, and interactivity postings seem to allow greater levels of engagement than the other platforms do. This conclusion makes us aware of the importance of platform choice when developing influencer marketing strategies.

The information also concludes that a significant percentage of respondents subscribe to micro-influencers, in comparison with macro and celebrity influencers. This specific trend indicates the tendency of Generation Z to turn to the role models as relatable, real, and approachable. Micro-influencers are often viewed as more credible due to the proximity with people, which increases the level of engagement. The decreasing preference of well-known people reveals that popularity can be not enough to create a significant bond between Gen Z consumers.

Regarding employment, most of the respondents are students, and the next are those who are employed and self-employed. This arrangement depicts the life stage of the transition of Generation Z, characterized by academic activity and job formation in the early age. Although the work status varies, it is clear that the respondents are always exposed to the content of influencers, which means that influencer marketing is highly relevant to the various lifestyle categories among Generation Z.

The statistical analysis of the variables of the study demonstrated that the mean scores of the variables within all domains of the influencers were high, which presupposes the positive perception of the respondents. The highest mean score is involved in

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the influencer credibility because it demonstrates trustworthiness, knowledge, and reliability as the most influential features that predetermine engagement. This study explains the importance of credible influencers in shaping the reactions of the Gen Z toward marketing messages. The mean value of influencer authenticity is also large, a fact that supports the importance of sincerity, transparency, and honest communication in the creation of engagement. All these facts indicate that Generation Z values close and genuine interactions between influencers and followers rather than direct promotional strategies.

Construct attitude of influencer marketing shows that the mean score is high meaning that respondents tend to have positive attitudes towards influencer-led marketing communication. Such an optimistic attitude indicates that the customers of Generation Z are willing to be recommended by influencers and find them helpful and interesting, as opposed to annoying. Positive disposition about influencer marketing has a great role to play in transforming the influencer characteristics into practicable engaged behaviour.

The dependent variable, Generation Z consumer engagement also has a high mean score, with active engagement with influencer content. The behaviours that can be engaged are likes, shares, comments, brand interaction, and purchase intention. It means that influencer marketing does not only attract attention, but also triggers participative and behavioural desires in Gen Z customers. The level of high engagement demonstrates that influencer marketing is a potent method of creating brand awareness, developing interaction, and impacting purchase-related choices.

On the whole, the summed up data can be used to substantiate the proposed conceptual framework, according to which the credibility and authenticity of influencers have a positive impact on perceptions of influencer marketing, which in turn facilitates the engagement of Generation Z consumers. The findings confirm the theoretical premises of the Source Credibility Theory, Social Influence Theory, and the Uses and Gratifications Theory in the sphere of the social media influencer marketing. According to the study, reliable and authentic influencers are important in developing the desire attitude and facilitating engagement behaviour among Gen Z customers in the world of digital.

Managerial Implications for Brands and Influencers

The conclusions of the study offer quite several insights that could be helpful to influencers, companies, and marketers who want to effectively engage customers of the Generation Z. To begin with, marketers must focus more on partnership with authentic and actual influencers and not just on those that have massive number of followers. The choice of influencers who can demonstrate competence, honesty, and active involvement may increase the level of customer trust and communication significantly.

Second, the high affinity of micro-influencers demonstrates that marketers can achieve more interaction and higher payback working with influencers having close and relevant relationships with their audience. Gen Z consumers respond well to micro-influencers specifically because they are capable of having a meaningful conversation and make a purchase decision about which products to buy.

Third, marketers ought to develop content plans carefully to align with Gen Z tastes and preferences and give more priority to entertaining, educative, and narrative content rather than blatant promotional messages. The contents that seem authentic and value-oriented will be more favourable and encouraging to influence favourable attitudes and sustained engagement.

Fourth, influencer marketing heavily depends on the choices of the platform. Instagram and Tik Tok should be the main brands need to concentrate on, as they have visual and dynamic elements that are favourable to the high level of engagement. Influencers, in their turn, are to use the platform-specific characteristics such as as reels, short films, and interactive polls to encourage the audience to interact.

Lastly, the influencers must make efforts to be authentic by sharing brand collaborations and ensuring that the endorsements align to their personal values. These strategies do not just enhance credibility but also guarantee the sustainability of trust and interest of the audience in the long term, which provides influencer marketing with a perspective of success in business.

Future Research Directions of the study

In the study, its cross-sectional design and use of self-reported data can be a limitation because this may cause bias in the responses as well as limit causal interpretation. Generalizability is also restricted by the non-probability sampling method, as well as the use

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of a moderate size sample. The proposed future research must be receptive to longitudinal designs, bigger and more varied samples, and greater analysis methods like SEM. Adding analysis (platform-based) and objective social media analytics would significantly enhance future research.

Conclusion

The current paper discussed how social media influencer marketing affects Generation Z consumer behavior and focused particularly on influencer reputation, authenticity, type of content and platform of influencer marketing. The results indicate clearly that influencer-related characteristics are crucial in influencing the attitudes and engagement patterns of the Gen Z on the social media. The most critical independent variables were influencer credibility and authenticity. This demonstrates that credibility, knowledge, and authenticity are relevant in establishing good connections between influencers and young customers.

The research also revealed that Generation Z is an active follower of the content posted by the influencers by liking, sharing, commenting, engaging with the brand and having a purchase intention, especially on a visually oriented platform like Instagram. The fact that most respondents praised influencer marketing is another positive factor that contributes to the fact that Gen Z is open to influencer-based brand communication when in line with their beliefs and expectations.

Combining the Source Credibility Theory, the Social Influence Theory, and Uses and Gratifications Theory, the research manages to confirm the hypothesized conceptual framework and broaden the existing body of literature on influencer marketing in the context of Gen Z. On the whole, the results provide valuable theoretical information and practical implications on how brands and influencers can develop efficient, authentic, and engagement-based marketing techniques. The paper explains the significance of credibility-based influencer recognition and content genuineness in achieving long-term customer involvement among Generation Z.

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