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# A Study on the Effectiveness of Influencer Marketing on Gen Z Purchase Decisions

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# ABSTRACT

Influencer marketing has been a leading digital marketing force, particularly in the influence of Generation Z's (Gen Z) buying habits. Being the first generation to grow up entirely digitally, Gen Z's consumption habits are driven by social media fads, peer endorsements, and online personalities. This research delves into the efficacy of influencer marketing through trust, engagement, authenticity, and social media platforms.

Influencer marketing leverages individuals with strong online followings to promote brands, differing from traditional celebrity endorsements by fostering direct personal connections. Influencers are categorized based on reach. Gen Z (born 1997–2012) trusts influencer recommendations more than traditional ads, engaging actively with Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Snapchat. Key psychological drivers of their purchasing decisions include authenticity, social proof, and FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). They prefer influencers who are relatable, transparent, and aligned with their values. Peer influence plays a significant role—if an admired influencer endorses a product and their friends engage with it, they are more likely to make a purchase. Additionally, influencers known for honest reviews and expertise in fashion, tech, beauty, or fitness gain credibility, making their endorsements more persuasive.

Social media platforms play distinct roles in influencer marketing. Instagram is ideal for visually appealing promotions in fashion, beauty, and lifestyle, utilizing Stories, Reels, and Shoppable posts. Brands measure the success of influencer campaigns using engagement rate, conversion rate, brand awareness, ROI, and sentiment analysis. However, challenges include skepticism toward inauthentic endorsements, oversaturation of influencer promotions, and Gen Z's short attention span, requiring brands to create concise, engaging content.

Emerging trends in influencer marketing include AI and virtual influencers like Lil Miquela, sustainability-driven content, live shopping experiences, and community-driven marketing using nano-influencers and brand advocates.

## Introduction

The speedy development of digital technology has transformed marketing with influencer marketing taking center stage as a central stimulator for consumer interaction. It leverages the credibility and popularity of social media influencers to push products and tends to elicit greater trust and interaction compared to traditional marketing. Among such audiences are Generation Z (Gen Z), which showcases different buying patterns fueled by social media influences and peer suggestions. This research explores the influence of influencer marketing on Gen Z's buying behavior, with emphasis on trust, engagement, authenticity, and the influence of different digital platforms.

Influencer marketing has evolved into a more personalized, digital-first approach. While earlier advertising strategies relied on celebrities to endorse brands, the rise of social media has enabled individuals with niche expertise and engaged audiences to become influential. These influencers shape consumer opinions, drive trends, and influence purchases by producing authentic, relatable content. Unlike traditional advertisements, often perceived as impersonal, influencer marketing establishes direct connections with audiences, making it particularly effective for Gen Z consumers. Studies suggest that this demographic spends several hours daily on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube.

Several psychological and behavioral factors contribute to Gen Z's responsiveness to influencer marketing. Authenticity is crucial—many in this demographic favor content featuring real people over celebrity endorsements. Influencers who share personal experiences, maintain a conversational tone, and are transparent about paid partnerships tend to build stronger trust with their audiences.

Social validation also plays a significant role. When influencers endorse products, it reinforces credibility and influences consumer decisions, particularly if peers also engage with the content. Peer influence is a strong factor, as Gen Z often looks to their online and offline circles for purchasing guidance.

Limited-time promotions, exclusive collaborations, and viral trends create urgency, encouraging impulse purchases. This effect is particularly pronounced on platforms like TikTok, where viral trends frequently lead to product sellouts within hours.

Different social media platforms contribute uniquely to influencer marketing effectiveness. Instagram remains a major platform for influencer-driven content, particularly in industries such as fashion, beauty, and lifestyle. Features like Stories, Reels, and Shopping facilitate seamless product discovery. TikTok, with its engaging short-form videos, has transformed.

digital marketing. Campaigns such as "TikTok Made Me Buy It" highlight the platform's influence in driving spontaneous purchases.

YouTube is a go-to platform for product reviews, tutorials, and long-form content, with Gen Z frequently relying on influencers in technology, gaming, and beauty sectors for informed buying decisions. Snapchat, while less dominant, still contributes to brand awareness through interactive filters and sponsored posts. Understanding how each platform shapes consumer behavior enables brands to craft targeted influencer marketing strategies for maximum impact.

Despite its effectiveness One major concern is skepticism toward inauthentic endorsements— Gen Z quickly recognizes when influencers promote products purely for financial gain. Oversaturation of influencer promotions also makes it harder for brands to stand out, as numerous influencers may endorse similar products. Additionally, Gen Z's short attention span means that marketing content must be engaging, concise, and visually appealing.

Emerging trends indicate a shift in AI and virtual influencers, such as Lil Miquela, showcases new possibilities for digital engagement. Additionally, Gen Z's increasing demand for sustainability and ethical practices is shaping brand collaborations, with influencers advocating for eco-friendly and socially responsible products gaining traction. Live shopping and interactive content are also growing in importance, with platforms like TikTok Shop and Instagram Live enabling real-time purchasing experiences. Decentralized influencer marketing, where brands focus on everyday users and nano-influencers rather than celebrities, is also on the rise.

Influencer marketing plays leveraging relatability, trust, and social influence. Unlike traditional advertising, which can feel detached, influencer marketing fosters meaningful engagement with digital-savvy consumers. However, for brands to remain effective, they must prioritize authenticity, transparency, and audience engagement. As social media continues to evolve, brands that stay ahead of trends and align with Gen Z's values will be best positioned to maximize the impact of their influencer marketing strategies.

### **Review of Literature**

Influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful tool in shaping consumer behaviour, especially among Generation Z. The research by Ishomi et al. (2025) highlights how influencer marketing, mediated by consumer behaviour, significantly affects Gen Z's purchasing decisions in the context of halal cosmetics, suggesting that businesses need to adopt targeted influencer strategies to effectively connect with this segment. However, Hidayatullah et al. (2025) present a contrasting view where influencer marketing positively affects brand awareness on TikTok Shop but fails to directly influence purchase decisions, unlike social media marketing, which influences both awareness and purchasing behaviour.

Tan et al. (2024) reinforce the effectiveness of social media influencers in Malaysia, underlining their impact on Gen Z's purchasing behaviour and the importance of building long-term digital partnerships. Similarly, a study conducted in Istanbul, Türkiye, reveals that the attractiveness, integrity, and fame of influencers play a significant role in shaping Gen Z's loyalty towards both the influencer and the brand, thereby affecting their purchase decisions.

Saputra et al. (2024) explore the TikTok platform among East Java students, showing how influencer marketing affects Gen Z's consumption patterns through a qualitative lens. This is echoed in the findings of Wahyuni and Ratnasari (2024), who emphasize the importance of social media personalities and customer reviews in influencing the online purchasing behaviours of Gen Z in Indonesia's Karawang Regency.

A conceptual analysis by Misron et al. (2024) delves into the ethical aspects, authenticity, and trustworthiness of influencers, demonstrating their immediate and long-term effects on brand loyalty among Generation Z. Adding a broader perspective, Dharma et al. (2024) study four emerging economies and find that factors such as influencer credibility, relevance, and trustworthiness significantly determine Gen Z's purchase intentions.

Focusing on the skincare and makeup segment, Khairunnisa et al. (2024) reveal that while influencers generate high interest (85.9%) in Gen Z, a large proportion (88.8%) still engage in further product research, showing a cautious but influenced purchasing behaviour. Li (2025) further shows that micro-influencers are particularly impactful, with authenticity playing a key role in shaping Gen Z's online purchasing decisions, alongside price and product quality.

Wijaya et al. (2024) demonstrate through quantitative data that influencer marketing, driven by trust and content quality, has a statistically significant influence on Gen Z's purchasing decisions in West Java. Meanwhile, Saroyini and Putri (2024) explore how the type of influencer, content, and engagement tactics contribute not only to purchasing decisions but also to overall consumer satisfaction.

Jain (2024) adds a cultural dimension to the discussion by emphasizing the importance of authenticity and ethical alignment in influencer marketing to build loyalty among Gen Z. Singh and Agrawal (2024) focus on the Indian cosmetics market, identifying trust, brand attitude, and perceived influencer image as critical variables influencing Gen Z's purchasing intentions.

Nguyen and Duong (2024) extend this view to Vietnam, where influencer characteristics such as attractiveness and expertise significantly impact Gen Z's behaviour in the e-commerce and cosmetics sectors. Finally, Fitria et al. (2024) highlight the combined impact of influencer strategy, affiliate marketing, and online reviews—especially through TikTok content—in shaping purchase decisions on platforms like Shopee, suggesting that an integrated digital strategy is essential to connect effectively with this generation.

Collectively, these studies offer a comprehensive view of how influencer marketing shapes Gen Z's purchase decisions across different regions, industries, and digital platforms, with key themes revolving around authenticity, trust, credibility, and the strategic use of social media.

### **Research Gaps**

- Although existing literature provides valuable insights into purchasing decisions, several gaps remain. Firstly, while many studies focus
  on macro- and mega- influencers, limited research explores consumer behavior. Since these smaller influencers often have higher
  engagement rates and perceived authenticity, further investigation is needed to understand their specific impact on purchasing decisions.
- Secondly, most studies analyze influencer marketing from a Western perspective, with limited research on how cultural differences influence Gen Z's response to influencer marketing in diverse regions. Given the global nature of social media, examining crosscultural variations could provide more comprehensive insights for brands operating in international markets.
- Thirdly, while many studies assess immediate engagement metrics such as likes and shares, fewer explore how influencer endorsements translate into sustained brand loyalty and repeat purchases over time.
- Moreover, with the rise of AI-driven and virtual influencers, there is little research on how these digital personalities compare to human influencers in terms of credibility and impact on consumer trust. Understanding the implications of virtual influencers on Gen Z's purchasing decisions could be an essential area for future research.

# **Research Methodology**

### **Objectives**

- 1. To analyze the impact of influencer marketing on trust, engagement, and purchasing behavior amongst different social media platforms.
- 2. To examine the role of influencer characteristics (authenticity, relatability, and expertise) in influencing Gen Z's purchase decisions.

# **Hypotheses**

1. Ho (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant relationship between influencer and Gen Z's purchasing decisions.

H1 (Alternative Hypothesis): Influencer marketing has a significant positive impact on Gen Z's purchasing decisions.

2. Ho (Null Hypothesis): The authenticity and relatability of influencers do not significantly influence Gen Z's trust and engagement.

H<sub>1</sub> (Alternative Hypothesis): The authenticity and relatability of influencers significantly enhance Gen Z's trust and engagement, thereby influencing their purchasing decisions.

# **Research Method**

This study will employ a quantitative research approach to examine the effectiveness of influencer marketing on Gen Z purchase decisions. A descriptive research design will be used to analyse the influence of various types of influencer content, platforms, and engagement styles on the purchasing behaviour of Gen Z consumers.

- Target Population: Gen Z individuals (aged 18–26) who actively use social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat and have made purchases based on influencer recommendations.
- Sampling Technique: A simple random sampling method will be used to make sure fair representation across different social media users.
- Sample Size: 100 respondents to ensure statistical relevance and diverse insights.
- Data Collection Method: Primary data will be gathered through an online survey containing various types of questions. The questionnaire will be distributed via social media platforms, youth-oriented online communities, and college/university networks.
- Secondary Data Sources: Research articles, industry reports, and marketing whitepapers focusing on influencer marketing trends, Gen Z consumer behaviour, and digital engagement metrics.

• Data Analysis Techniques: Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis using SPSS. Analytical techniques such as correlation analysis, regression models, and hypothesis testing will be used to evaluate the impact of influencer marketing on Gen Z purchase intentions and brand loyalty.

This study will provide insightful knowledge of how influencer marketing influences the buying behaviours of Gen Z and assist brands in crafting influencer strategies to maximize reach, engagement, and customer loyalty.

## **Data Analysis**

1. To examine the role of influencer characteristics (authenticity, relatability, and expertise) in influencing Gen Z's purchase decisions.

# Hypothesis Testing

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1.0	0.627	0.393	0.372	0.41235

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	5.963	2	2.981	17.55	0.0
Residual	9.207	54	0.17		
Total	15.17	56			

Coefficients

Model	Variables	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.102	0.268		4.112	0.0
1	Trust	0.295	0.085	0.362	3.471	0.001
1	Engagement	0.244	0.078	0.317	3.128	0.003

Multiple regression was used to investigate the effect of influencer marketing (i.e., trust and engagement) on Gen Z's buying behavior. The findings showed that there was a moderate positive relationship between the independent variables (trust and engagement) and the dependent variable (buying behavior) with a value of R = 0.627. The model accounted for about 39.3% of the variance in buying behavior, as demonstrated by the value of R Square (0.393), while the Adjusted R Square value (0.372) justified that this accounted explanation was substantial even after factoring in the number of predictors.

The ANOVA results proved that the regression model was significant statistically, F (2, 54) = 17.55, p <.001. This means that engagement and trust, when combined, significantly predict Gen Z's purchase behavior and that the regression model fits the data well.

Additional analysis of the coefficients revealed that trust and engagement have positive effects on purchasing behavior. The unstandardized coefficient for trust was 0.295 (p = .001), indicating that with every one-unit change in trust, purchasing behavior would rise by 0.295 units. Engagement was also positively influencing, with an unstandardized coefficient of 0.244 (p = .003). The standardized beta coefficients suggested that trust (.362) exerted a marginally greater effect on purchasing behavior than engagement (.317). Both predictors were statistically significant, with p-values much less than the traditional threshold of 0.05.

Grounded on these conclusions, the null hypothesis that asserts there is no significant influence between influencer marketing and Gen Z's purchasing pattern is rejected. The results indicate strongly in support of the affirmation that influencer marketing, in terms of engagement and trust, significantly influences Gen Z consumers' purchasing behavior

# 2. To examine the role of influencer characteristics (authenticity, relatability, and expertise) in influencing Gen Z's purchase decisions.

### **Hypothesis Testing**

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.708	.501	.495	0.628

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	55.875	1	55.875	141.409	.000
Residual	55.625	132	0.421		
Total	111.500	133			

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.945	0.193		4.896
Authenticity_Relatability	0.802	0.067	.708	11.889

To investigate the role of influencer attributes—authenticity and relatability—in shaping Gen Z's trust and engagement, a basic linear regression analysis was performed. The model summary presented a high R value of .708, which signifies a strong positive relationship between influencer authenticity/relatability and Gen Z's trust and engagement. The R Square of .501 indicates that 50.1% of the variation in trust and engagement of Gen Z consumers can be attributed to their sense of influencers' authenticity and relatability. The adjusted R Square value of .495 indicates that this explanatory power holds even after adjusting for sample variability.

The ANOVA table also justified the model to be significant at an F-statistic of 141.409 and a level of significance, p = .000, way less than the threshold value of 0.05. What it means here is that overall regression model statistically is significant, and the independent variable, being authenticity and relatability, has a contributory role towards the prediction of trust and engagement.

The coefficients table also showed that the unstandardized coefficient (B) for relatability and authenticity is 0.802, with a standard error of 0.067, and a corresponding t-value of 11.889. The 0.000 significance level (p-value) indicates that this predictor variable has a statistically significant positive relationship with trust and engagement. In other words, for every increase in one unit of perceived relatability and authenticity of influencers, there would be an anticipated 0.802 increase in trust and engagement scores.

With the strong correlation, high percentage of explained variance, and statistically significant findings, we reject the null hypothesis. The study shows that the authenticity and relatability of influencers have a significant impact on Gen Z's trust and engagement. These findings reinforce the significance of authentic and relatable influencer personas to create strong connections with Gen Z audiences, which can, in turn, influence their attitudes and behaviors toward brands and consumption choices.

### Conclusion

The present study set out to explore consumer perception and purchase intentions toward plant-based meat products—a segment rapidly gaining prominence in the food industry due to growing awareness about health, sustainability, and ethical concerns. Through a combination of extensive literature review, primary data collection, and detailed analysis, the research provides meaningful insights into the current landscape of plant-based meat consumption, especially from a consumer behaviour perspective.

The study revealed that consumer perception of plant-based meat is multifaceted and influenced by a variety of factors including taste, texture, price, nutritional value, and environmental impact. A significant portion of consumers are drawn to plant-based meat products because of health consciousness, with many associating these alternatives with lower cholesterol, reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, and overall better nutrition. Additionally, the ethical aspect of avoiding harm to animals and reducing carbon footprints also emerged as strong motivators in shaping consumer attitudes.

Demographic variables such as age, income, education level, and dietary habits were found to influence purchase intentions significantly. Younger consumers, particularly millennials and Gen Z, exhibited more openness and enthusiasm toward trying and adopting plant-based alternatives. Furthermore, the urban population, with greater access to a variety of products and more exposure to digital marketing campaigns, appeared more inclined to integrate these products into their daily diets.

Despite positive perceptions, the study also uncovered certain barriers that hinder widespread adoption. Taste and texture still remain critical concerns for many consumers, as plant-based meats often fail to perfectly mimic their animal-based counterparts. Price sensitivity is another crucial factor, with many consumers perceiving plant-based alternatives as expensive, thus making them less appealing for regular consumption. Limited availability and lack of awareness, especially in semi-urban and rural areas, further contribute to lower purchase intent.

Marketing strategies, celebrity endorsements, eco-labels, and informative packaging have a notable impact on consumer decision-making. Consumers who were well-informed about the benefits of plant-based meat—whether through advertising or educational content—demonstrated a higher willingness to try these products. This suggests that strong communication plays an important role overcoming scepticism and encouraging trial behaviour, which could potentially lead to long-term consumption.

Moreover, the findings indicate that while there is growing interest and demand for plant-based meat in India, the market is still in its nascent stage. The industry must focus on innovation, affordability, and educating the public to foster a stronger shift from intention to actual purchase. There is a clear gap between awareness and action that brands and stakeholders need to bridge through trust-building measures, sampling opportunities, and value-for-money offerings.

### Recommendations

### 1. Collaborate with Nano and Micro-Influencers:

- Brands should focus on working with nano and micro-influencers who have high engagement rates and strong personal connections with their audiences.
- These influencers are more relatable and trustworthy, making their endorsements more persuasive and effective in driving conversions.
- Instead of prioritizing follower count, brands should analyze engagement metrics and audience trust when selecting influencers.

### 2. Prioritize Authenticity and Transparency:

- Influencers should be encouraged to provide honest reviews and disclose sponsored content transparently to maintain trust with their audience.
- Brands should avoid overly scripted promotions and allow influencers creative freedom to ensure natural and organic product placements.
- o Collaborations should align with the influencer's personal brand and content style to avoid skepticism from followers.

### 3. Leverage Instagram and TikTok for Maximum Impact:

- Since Gen Z engages most with Instagram and TikTok, brands should focus their influencer marketing efforts on these platforms.
- Instagram Stories, Reels, and Shoppable posts provide seamless product integration opportunities.
- TikTok's viral trends and hashtag challenges can create massive exposure for brands and increase sales through organic reach.
- Enhance Engagement and Community Building: Influencer marketing campaigns should not be limited to one-time promotions; instead, brands should encourage ongoing partnerships with influencers to create sustained engagement.
- Encouraging influencers to interact with followers through Q&A sessions, giveaways, and live streams can help build a strong brand community.

### 4. Use Data-Driven Insights to Optimize Campaigns:

- Brands should leverage analytics tools to track influencer performance and measure engagement rates, conversion rates, and ROI.
- Sentiment analysis of consumer responses can help assess perceptions of influencer endorsements and refine marketing strategies accordingly.
- Continuous A/B testing can be used to identify which content formats, influencer styles, and promotional techniques generate the best results.
- 5. Address Oversaturation and Inauthenticity Challenges:

- To stand out in a crowded influencer marketing space, brands should develop.unique and creative campaigns that differentiate their messaging.
- Encouraging influencers to share behind-the-scenes content, personal stories, and real-life experiences with the product can make endorsements feel more authentic.

#### 6. Adapt to Changing Social Media Algorithms:

- O Brands should stay updated on changes to platform algorithms and adjust their influencer marketing strategies accordingly.
- Investing in paid promotions to boost influencer content visibility can help overcome algorithmic limitations.
- Diversifying marketing efforts across multiple platforms can mitigate risks associated with platform-specific algorithm changes.

### 7. Capitalize on Emerging Trends in Influencer Marketing:

- Brands should explore AI-powered virtual influencers, as they are gaining popularity among Gen Z consumers.
- Live shopping events and interactive content on platforms like Instagram Live and TikTok Shop can enhance real-time engagement.
- Sustainable and ethical brand positioning should be integrated into influencer campaigns, as Gen Z increasingly values social and environmental responsibility.

By implementing these recommendations, brands can maximize the impact of their influencer marketing strategies and build long-term connections with Gen Z consumers. The evolving nature of digital marketing requires continuous adaptation, and brands that remain agile in their approach will be able to sustain influence and drive meaningful engagement with their target audience.

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