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# **The Impact of Influencer Marketing on Brand Perception and Purchase Behaviour Among Gen Z Consumers within the Indian E-Commerce Market**

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## **ABSTRACT :**

This study investigates the impact of influencer marketing on brand perception and purchase behaviour among Generation Z (Gen Z) consumers in India's e-commerce sector. Employing a mixed-methods approach—qualitative interviews and focus groups alongside a quantitative survey (n=100)—the research identifies authenticity, relatability, and platform preference as critical factors influencing consumer trust and buying decisions. Instagram and YouTube emerged as the most influential platforms, while micro and regional influencers demonstrated higher engagement and conversion rates. Furthermore, transparent disclosure of sponsorships enhanced trustworthiness. These findings offer actionable insights for digital marketers targeting Gen Z in the Indian online retail landscape.

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## **1. Introduction**

Influencer marketing has become a pivotal strategy for engaging digital-native consumers, particularly Gen Z, whose preferences are shaped by mobile-first experiences and social media ecosystems. In India's rapidly growing e-commerce environment, brands increasingly rely on influencers to present products in authentic and relatable ways. This study explores how various influencer attributes—credibility, relatability, and transparency—affect brand perception and purchasing decisions among Gen Z consumers.

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## **2. Literature Review**

Prior studies have underscored the relevance of authenticity and credibility in influencer marketing. De Veirman et al. (2017) and Djafarova & Rushworth (2017) assert that influencer trustworthiness significantly impacts consumer attitudes. Theoretical underpinnings such as the Source Credibility Model (Ohanian, 1990) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) inform this study's framework. Additionally, Gen Z's preference for social responsibility, honesty, and peer relatability is widely reported (Smith, 2020; Audrezet et al., 2020), further validating the emphasis on ethical influencer practices.

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## **3. Research Objectives and Hypotheses**

### **Objectives:**

- To assess the impact of influencer marketing on brand perception among Gen Z consumers.
- To evaluate the role of credibility, relatability, and authenticity in purchase decisions.
- To examine the influence of different types of influencers (celebrity, micro, regional).

### **Key Hypotheses:**

- H1: Influencer marketing positively impacts brand perception.
- H3: Authentic content significantly enhances trust and purchase likelihood.
- H7: Transparency moderates the relationship between influencer content and consumer trust/purchase behaviour.

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## **4. Methodology**

### **A mixed-method research design was employed:**

- Qualitative Phase: Conducted 10 in-depth interviews and 2 focus groups with Gen Z participants aged 18–25.
- Quantitative Phase: A structured online survey (n=100), stratified by gender and age group.

Tools such as Google Forms (for data collection) and Microsoft Excel (for data analysis) were utilized. Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic content analysis, while quantitative findings were evaluated using regression analysis.

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## 5. Key Findings

- Authenticity was the strongest predictor of purchase behaviour ( $\beta = 0.47, p < 0.01$ ).
- 62.8% of respondents reported changed perceptions of previously disliked brands after influencer engagement.
- 79.1% consumed influencer content mainly on Instagram.
- 50% identified honesty as the most valued influencer trait.
- 37.2% expressed distrust toward influencers who failed to disclose sponsorships.
- 62.8% of respondents in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities preferred regional influencers.

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## 6. Discussion

Findings affirm the pivotal role of credibility and transparency in building trust among Gen Z consumers. Compared to celebrities, micro and regional influencers are perceived as more relatable and trustworthy. Influencers now serve as digital word-of-mouth agents, influencing both the emotional and rational dimensions of consumer decision-making. Trust, therefore, becomes both a strategic asset and a competitive differentiator in influencer campaigns.

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## 7. Conclusion and Implications

This research highlights the imperative for brands to:

- Collaborate with authentic, relatable influencers who resonate with Gen Z values.
- Customize content based on platform-specific formats (e.g., reels on Instagram, vlogs on YouTube).
- Maintain transparency, especially in sponsored partnerships, to reinforce trust.

For marketers, aligning influencer campaigns with Gen Z's emphasis on ethics and social consciousness can enhance both conversion rates and long-term brand loyalty.

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## 8. Limitations and Future Research

The study's limited sample size and urban-centric focus may restrict generalizability. Future research should:

- Expand to regional and rural populations.
- Investigate the longitudinal impact of influencer marketing.
- Explore the role of vernacular language influencers in Tier 2/3 markets.

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