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## How brands are leveraging micro-influencers aka GenZ for deeper engagement : An Analysis

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### ABSTRACT :

This report looks into how micro-influencers are becoming more and more important in marketing strategies aimed at Generation Z. Micro-influencers, on the other hand, usually have between 10,000 and 50,000 followers and are known for their niche expertise and high engagement rates. Gen Z is the first generation to grow up completely in the digital age, so their media habits are very different from those of previous generations. They put a lot of value on content that is real, relatable, and made by the community. The goal of this study is to look at how micro-influencers are changing the buying habits and preferences of Gen Z consumers by using both primary and secondary data sources. We did the research by sending out surveys, watching influencer campaigns, and reading books. According to data from 150 Gen Z respondents, 62% preferred micro-influencers to celebrities or macro-influencers because they trusted them more.

This report looks into how micro-influencers are becoming more and more important in marketing to Generation Z by Brands. Micro-influencers are different from regular celebrities or macro-influencers because they usually only have 10,000 to 100,000 followers. They are known for their niche expertise and high engagement rates. Gen Z is the first generation to grow up entirely in the digital age, so their media consumption habits are very relatable. Instagram and TikTok were named as the best places to find and interact with influencers. There are charts and data visualizations in the report that show how brands are leveraging micro-influencers and how the consumers are reacting over recommendations and content of the micro and macro-influencers, and also how likely they are to convert. The results show that Gen Z shoppers are more likely to buy products that influencers they think are honest and open recommend.

Did a survey in Delhi NCR region among the age group of 15-26 age to get a relevant results and reached out and interviewed some brands to know their point of view and point of action. Brands prefer to work with micro-influencers who share their values, use short-form video content, and keep in touch with their followers. This will not only get people more involved, but it will also make them loyal for a long time.

### Introduction

The world of marketing has changed dramatically in the last decade, moving from a traditional world of ads, billboards and pins to the world!! of:) byte where digital is king!! and social rules. This change has created a new kind of speaker for the brand, “influencers”, who are mainstreamed as instrumental in influencing consumer decisions and designing their preferences. In this group, micro-influencers have specially acquired and developed a place, particularly in connecting Generation Z, the cohort Generation Z born between 1997 to 2012. Many brands have been primarily focusing on reach and visibility Generation Z, mostly being overlooked towards the intrinsic and essential trust-based relationships which obviously micro-influencers cultivate within their communities. Consequently, as a result people from the market might be blindsided on concurrent most valuable opportunities available to engage with these called “crucial” audience segment in meaningful and impactful ways

The study centers research on the bifurcated regions of social media’s marketing strategies involving micro-influencers and their influence on society of Generation Z consumers in urban and suburban geographical regions of India. It focuses on Social communal interaction platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, which are particularly popular among this demographic. The primary data is sourced from the friends and known consumers and brands. As Gen Z steps into the limelight of trending trends spots as a major consumer group, it is becoming essential for the market community to create a gripy grasp of their online habits. This report dives into the blooming trend of micro-influencers, putting insights on the table that can help businesses tweak their digital marketing strategies to align with what Gen Z wants. By exploring the key elements of trust, engagement, and authenticity, this study provides valuable insights into the ever-evolving world of influencer marketing.

### Objective

This research report aims to:

- Analyze how micro-influencers shape Gen Z’s buying behavior.
- Identify the most effective platforms for micro-influencer campaigns.
- How Brands are exploring the trust and authenticity of micro-influencers.
- Offer actionable insights for marketers looking to connect with Gen Z.

## Literature Review

### Emerging Trends in Influencer Marketing: Leveraging Micro-Influencers for

#### Effective Brand Promotions

ByDr. S. Saravana Kumar

Associate Professor, Department of Management and Commerce, School of Advanced Studies, SVYASA Deemed to be University, Bangalore, India

The study aims to look at different research papers written & published about influential marketing and the emerging trend of Influential Marketing i.e. the role of micro-influencers in brand promotion. The study also aims at the benefits of working with micro-influencers, to speculate on the future of micro-influencer marketing, considering upcoming innovations, technological advancements, and the integration of micro-influencers with other marketing channels. The study is grounded on earlier literature reviews conducted in the field of influence marketing. Conducted a comprehensive review of academic research, industry reports, and relevant publications focusing on influencer marketing, micro-influencers, and brand promotions. The researcher chose 24 of the most pertinent and applicable studies on "micro-influencers," "SMM" "SM influencers," and "Influential marketing for brand promotion" out of the 43 research papers that were accessible with regard to the study's topic. Additionally, these keywords were used to look for relevant publications on Google Scholar, Science Direct, and Web of Sciences. The literary works consulted for this study span the years 2016 through 2021. Based on the results of this research, it is quite evident that using micro-influencers to promote companies is a highly efficient and successful strategy. Micro-influencers have real-world applications for businesses, and further study is needed in this field. For newer brands without much name recognition yet, the word-of-mouth effect that may be built with the help of micro-influencers can be invaluable. Micro-influencers have the potential to grow into a significant and long-lasting channel for introducing consumers to new firms as Social Media platforms add more features and users.

#### Micro Influencers Enhancing Brand Visibility and Audience Engagement on TikTok Digital Platform

Multiple Authors

The goal is to provide a comprehensive understanding of micro-influencers' influence in the TikTok marketing ecosystem, highlighting their increasing importance in the evolving marketing landscape. The study employs online surveys targeting TikTok users to gather their perceptions and engagement levels with micro and macro-influencers. The surveys include questions about user demographics, frequency of TikTok use, age, and their interactions with different types of influencers. This mixed-method approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, providing a robust understanding of the dynamics between micro-influencers and their audiences. The data collected from interviews and surveys are analyzed using thematic analysis for qualitative data and descriptive statistics for quantitative data, ensuring a detailed and nuanced understanding of the research questions. This methodology aims to uncover the underlying factors that contribute to the effectiveness of micro-influencers in TikTok Marketing. Findings were Micro Influencers as a Side Job with Strong Engagement, Economical and Quality Choice for Brands and Theoretical Contribution.

#### Influence of Micro-Influencers on Niche Market Trends Among Gen Z in Sri Lanka

Pathirana, M.T. I Vimukthika, K. T.2

This study explores the influence of micro-influencers on niche market trends and consumer behavior among Generation Z (Gen Z) in Sri Lanka. Utilizing qualitative research methods, the study examines the characteristics of micro-influencers—such as credibility, relatability, and authenticity—that resonate with Gen Z consumers. The research is grounded in Social Influence Theory, Source Credibility Theory, and Diffusion of Innovations Theory, providing a comprehensive understanding of how micro-influencers shape purchasing decisions. Findings indicate that Gen Z consumers place high value on the authenticity and personal engagement of micro-influencers, often trusting them more than traditional celebrities. Micro-influencers are particularly effective in introducing and popularizing niche products, leveraging their close-knit follower relationships to drive consumer interest. However, the study also highlights challenges such as influencer fatigue and skepticism towards heavily sponsored content. The implications suggest that businesses should focus on fostering long-term, authentic collaborations with micro-influencers who align with their brand values to maximize marketing effectiveness. Future research is recommended to further explore the long-term impact of micro-influencer marketing on consumer behavior.

#### The impact of influencers on brand social network growth: Insights from new product launch events on Twitter

Elisabetta Benevento a, Davide Aloini a, Paolo Roma b, Davide Bellino a

In the ever-evolving marketing landscape, influencers play a pivotal role in shaping brand perception and expanding social network followings. This study, grounded in Social Network Theory, examines the impact of influencers on brand social network growth during new product launch events. Leveraging an extensive dataset of over two million tweets from Twitter (now X), we empirically analyse three video game releases to uncover the characteristics and behaviours of influencers within their networks that drive follower migration to the sponsored brand's social network. Our findings highlight the importance of frequent influencer-follower interactions in enhancing brand awareness and directing followers to brand social networks. Furthermore, influencers who occupy central social hub positions and exhibit high popularity are particularly effective in fostering brand growth. This research provides practical guidance within the realm of influencer marketing, offering several valuable insights for both companies and influencers.

## □ Influencer marketing: When and why gen Z consumers avoid influencers and endorsed brands

**Debasis Pradhan, Abhisek Kuanr, Sampa Anupurba Pahi, Muhammad S. Akram**

Consumer avoidance of brands and influencers is a widespread phenomenon, especially among Generation Z (Gen Z); however, influencer marketing literature lacks clarity about when and why Gen Z engages in such avoidance. Our experimental investigation, across four studies, reveals that Gen Z considers brands' control over influencers to be morally irresponsible and, thus, avoids both. We introduce a novel construct, influencer avoidance, and examine its drivers. Study 1 indicates that perceived brand control engenders avoidance; moderation evidence shows that macro (vs. micro) influencers accentuate (attenuate) the influence of brand control on avoidance. Study 2 shows that Gen Z enjoying a strong versus weak relationship with influencers results in lower (higher) avoidance towards influencers and endorsed brands. Study 3 demonstrates that negative moral emotions mediate the relationship between perceived brand control and avoidance behavior. Study 4 generalizes the findings by analyzing a different influencer and endorsed brand and including a prominent advertisement disclosure. By investigating the drivers and mechanisms of Gen Z's avoidance behavior, our research contributes to research on the theory of moral responsibility, Gen Z's influencer avoidance behavior, and anti-consumption literature. This offers key insights into how to prevent acts of consumer retribution towards influencers and brands.

### 2.8 Gap in Current Research

While multiple studies explore influencer marketing, few examine the **specific psychological and behavioral impacts** of micro-influencers on Gen Z within the Indian context. Most available literature is Western-focused or general in scope. This report aims to bridge that gap by combining primary data with current industry insights to offer a localized, practical view for marketers operating in India

## Research Methodology And Design

### Research Approach

Using a mixed- methods approach, where the combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques are used to explore the shaping of purchasing power of GenZ by micro influencers and how the brands are leveraging the micro influencers over the macro. This combination of mixed-method design was chosen to ensure the deeper understanding of Statistical trends and subjective experiences which is related to influencers marketing.

Where the quantitative data provides the measurable insights of platform usage , engagement levels and frequency of purchase , there the qualitative data shares the nuances of trust, authenticity, and emotional connection.

### Research Design

This research being **descriptive** in nature, it aims to systematically describe the impact of micro-influencers over GenZ and brands leveraging them. This study was conducted in two phases:

#### 1. Phase I – Quantitative Research

In a google form format a structured online survey was administered to gather numerical data on influence of social media, influencers, brands and their marketing strategies and the influence over consumers. With respect to influencers following pattern and engagement frequency .

#### 2. Phase II – Qualitative Research

With the selected Gen Z participants (5 participants) a semi-structured interviews were conducted and micro-influencers (4) to get a understanding of their emotional and psychological factors behind their productivity, engagement strategies and authenticity and the brands (3) for their marketing strategies, choosing of micro-influencers and how and why they are or will prefer micro-influencers over the macro.

### Sampling Technique

Employed a non-probability purposive sampling method was employed. This sample consisted of Gen Z individuals( ages 13-28) few millennials (ages 29-32) from urban and semi-urban regions of India, majorly Delhi-NCR who all with a basis of actively or semi-actively uses social media platforms like Instagram and YouTube .

#### Sample Size:

- Quantitative survey: 50 respondents
- Qualitative interviews: 12 participants (5 Gen Z consumers and 4 micro-influencers and 3 Brands )

#### Inclusion Criteria:

- Individuals born between 1997 and 2012.
- Active users of at least one of the major platforms (Instagram,YouTube etc)
- Have followed at least one micro-influencer (1K–100K followers) for more than six months

### **Data Collection Methods**

#### **a) Primary Data:**

- **Surveys:** Through social media communities, student networks, and influencer follower bases distributed the Google Forms.
- **Interviews:** Via Zoom and google meet conducted virtually open-ended questions designed to brief out the detailed, emotional, and reflective response.

#### **b) Secondary Data:**

To contextualize findings and support the literature review reviewed academic journals, research articles, social media usage reports, Statistical databases, and influencers marketing case studies.

### **Data Analysis Techniques Quantitative Data:**

- **Cross-tabulation** was used to understand variations based on gender, age brackets, and location.
- Graphs and **pie charts** were used to visually represent platform usage, types of purchases influenced, and preferred content formats.

### **Qualitative Data:**

- Thematic analysis was performed by coding interview transcripts to identify recurring themes such as “authenticity,” “reliability,” “peer-like trust,” and “purchase influence.”
- **Manual coding** was used to retain the contextual sensitivity of open-ended responses.

### **Research Instruments**

#### **1. Structured Questionnaire**

- 20 questions (both multiple-choice and Likert scale)
- Focus areas: influencer trustworthiness, content engagement, frequency of purchases, platform preference

#### **2. Interview Guide**

- Open-ended questions aimed at exploring motivations, feelings about influencers, and reasons for trusting specific micro-influencers

### **Ethical Considerations**

#### **This study ensured:**

- Voluntary participation with informed consent
- Anonymity and confidentiality of all respondents
- No collection of sensitive personal data
- Ethical compliance with university guidelines and the Indian research ethics framework

Participants were briefed about the purpose of the research, the use of data, and their right to withdraw at any point without any consequences.

### **3.8 Limitations of the Study**

- **Sample Size Constraints:** Although the aim of this study for border representations, cause of time frame the findings are frame limited to Delhi-NCR region and few samples from different places of India but considering Delhi-NCR major as the samples are major from here.
- **Self-reported Data Bias:** The survey may be manipulated or have inaccuracies in response due to participants' perceptions or social desirability.
- **Platform Limitation:** The focus on Instagram, and YouTube may overlook the influence of other emerging platforms like Snapchat or Pinterest

## **4. Data Analysis**

### **4.1 Definition and Evolution:**

Influencers marketing is a sub part of social media marketing, involving endorsement and product placements from those of individuals who are dedicated social trends follower and are holding expertise within their niche.

In the early 2000s this whole concept was born with celebrity endorsements and blog collaborations, evolving to influencer marketing signifying the rise of social media platforms over the period of time( 2010-2015 and continuing). Cause of their niche audiences, high engagement, and cost-effectiveness in today's time the micro-influencers (10k-100k followers) with the time are becoming a primary asset for brands and for customers .

#### 4.2 Types of Influencers:

Understanding influencer types helps brands tailor their campaigns. Here's how brands classify them:

Types	Followers	Brand Usage
Nano	1k-10k	hyper Local campaigns, community lead content
Micro	10k-100k	Campaign, affiliate marketing, product trails
Macro	100k-1M	Brand launches, major seasonal campaigns
Mega/Celebrity	1M+	High visibility, endorsement, Ambassador roles

**Fig1.1 Types of Influencers**

##### 1. Why Micro-influencers :

- Micro-influencers empathize on building a closer relation with their content consumers and followers by often engaging in direct comments, dms, or stories and lives.
- Making this relationship strong the consumers tend to follow their trends and trust their options more rather than relying over the unreachable and not so connecting celebrities, perceiving them as peers.
- Brands consider them over the macro-influencers and celebrities cause of their authentic storytelling who are capable of driving both awareness and conversion in specific segments and genre .

##### 2. Micro-influencers in Focus:

Micro-influencers typically and also known as content creator over social media, who have typically between 10,000 to 100,000 followers. Beauty , fitness, food, travel or tech are some specific niches within which they specifically operate their creations, typically known for their authentic and consistent engagement with their audiences.

Where celebrity influencers have a broad and diverse reach and engagement from the audiences, micro-influencers have a deeper conversation and relation with the typical and niche consumers having a loyal community. Having engaging followers who often trust the recommendations by their micro-influencers, perceived as credible and sincere.

Brands are leveraging and shifting towards the micro-influencers over the period of time due to:

1. Higher engagement rates(average of 3-6% vs. 1-2% celebrities).
2. Collaboration rates are affordable and economy friendly.
3. Talent of creating content which feels personal and less scripted, resonating with Gen Z and millennial consumers.

Example:

**Plum**, a skincare brand, collaborates with 100s of micro-influencers each month who share unfiltered reviews, tips, and reels. These influencers generate mass trust through real use-case scenarios.

##### 1. Brand Relevance:

Brands leverage micro-influencers for:

- **Niche penetration** (e.g., cruelty-free skincare for vegan audiences)
- **Cost-effective influencer marketing** with higher ROI
- **Localized or regional campaigns** (e.g., vernacular language creators for Tier 2 cities)

#### 4.3 Platforms of Influence:

Engagement and audiences' behaviour varies with the social platforms. Choosing the appropriate platforms by brands depends on their campaign goals(awareness, conversions, loyalty).

### 1. **Instagram:**

- Key format post: reels, stories and carousel posts.
- For aesthetic visual storytelling and products demos brands often use Instagram and it's tools.
- Beauty, fashion, wellness and DIY niches are the major specialisation if these micro-influencers.

### • **Why Brands prefer Instagram:**

- Native shopping integration (Instagram Shop)
- High reach for Reels
- Direct link tracking and metrics

### 2. **YouTube:**

- Basically for long form content like tutorials, vlogs , haul etc. Niw they have introduced "shorts" section too same as reels.
- With chances of long term trust building micro-influencers are building deeper credibility here.
- Tech brands, skink care routines, short films, vlogs and etc have great and impact full chances here.

### 3. **Twitter/X, Pinterest, LinkedIn (secondary):**

- **Twitter/X:** For thought leadership and topical marketing (e.g., finance, policy).
- **Pinterest:** Great for product discovery, design, DIY, and decor.
- **LinkedIn:** For B2B influencer marketing in SaaS, EdTech, HR-tech.

Bringing new terms and evolution to the marketing and entertainment field the micro-influencers are redefining the digital influence. Their rise signals a shift in branding from **one-size-fits-all mass marketing** to **precision-led engagement**. Both the platforms Instagram and YouTube try to amplify the reach and engagement with their offering and accessibilities of creator tools, audiences insights, and commerce features making the micro-influencers marketing essential.

#### **4.4 Characteristics and Content Styles:**

Micro influencers have a certain style of creativity and not just the followers who are being supportive but by the content unique style of creation and engagement they stand out for the brands.

### 1. **Key Characteristics:**

- **Authenticity:** With a style of making the content which makes it unfiltered and personal.
- **Specialization:** They are certainly dedicated to focus on 1-2 content domains.
- **Accessibility:** With view of connection and relevance they are more responsive ( comments, dms, followers input).
- **Community-first Mindset:** To be the first preference for consumers they often co-create through polls, Q&A, and crowd-sourced content.

### 2. **Common Content Styles:**

- **Before-and-after posts** (beauty, fitness)
- **Mini-tutorials or how-to reels**
- **Lifestyle integration** (showing product as part of their day)
- **User-generated content challenges**
- **Affiliate discount codes and swipe-up stories**

#### **4.5 Audience Trust and Relatability:**

Micro-influencers come with one of the most and well appreciated valuable assets and that is **Trust**.

By the content they are to make an image in the consumer of "one of us" - not any typical celebrity but a real person with the real opinion wincing feels connected and related.

### 1. **Why they are trusted:**

- Less commercial bias,
- Share personal experiences, and
- The connection is two way.

## 2. Comparing Micro vs. Macro/Celebrity Influencers

Here's a structured comparison to show **why brands are increasingly shifting towards micro-influencers** for specific objectives:

Features	Micro-influencers	Macro/Celebrity Influencers
Followers Range	10k- 100k	100 <sup>3</sup> -1M(macro), 1M+(celebrity)
Engagement Rate	High(5-10%)	Lower(1-3%)
Cost to Brands	Affordable	Expensive
Audience Type	Niche, highly relevant	Broad, mixed audiences
Content Style	Casual authentic	Polished Curated
Brand Perception	Community-based trust	Mass appeal, visibility
Conversion Rate	Higher	Medium-

**Fig 1.2 Comparison of Micro and Macro influencers**

### 4.6 Brands Strategies with Micro-Influencers:

#### 1. Types of Collaboration:

A type of collaboration where the aspect of achieving campaign goals, brands awareness, community engagement, or conversion are achieved by tailoring the strategic partnership with the micro-influencers.

##### 1.1 Product Gifting(Barter Collaborations):

- In exchange of reviews and mentions brands sends free products to them.
- Very common in beauty, fashion, and wellness genres.
- Tend to be ideal for new brand launches or budget-conscious campaigns.

##### 1.2 Paid Collaborations:

- Sponsored content posted by the influencers are compensated monetarily by the brands.
- These often include deliverables like Instagram reels, story, static posts, or YouTube mentions.
- Content guidelines, timelines, brand mentions are mandatory.

##### 1.3 Affiliate Marketing:

- A unique discount codes or tracking links are given to influencers.
- Commissions are earned to influencers on every sale through their code.
- Popularity in the fitness, fashion, and personal care industries.

##### 1.4 ContentCo-Creation:

- Influencers and brands work together to co-develop content.
- Creating authentic, creator-owned content, performing better than brand-generated ads.

### 4.7 Content Formats Used:

Engagement and reach are heavily influenced by the choice of content format. With creativity and uniqueness micro-influencers use the platforms with native tools so that they are able to convey the brand story and ideas in a very relatable way.

#### 1. Reels:

- High engagement rate, visibility, and discoverability.
- Ideal solution for demonstrating products, any tutorial or any trend based campaigns.
- Value of back with trending audios or storytelling formats.

#### 2. Reviews and Testimonials:

- YouTube videos (long form) Or Instagram carousels.
- Importance of detail, details, information, and interest building.
- Before and after comparison is often used.

### 3. **Instagram Takeovers:**

- Brand page are often taken over by the influencer for the day or event.
- Branch access are given to new audience
- With particularly around launches or the behind the scene content, a buzz is build.

## 4.8 *Brand Positioning Through Influencers Voice:*

Within faces, choice of personal brand and values, and their authenticity brands align with them and position as they wish to achieve.

### 1. **How it works?**

- Eco-conscious status are very often picked by the sustainable brands.
- Lifestyle, curated influencers are very popular in luxurious levels.
- College students and creators are very often considered by youth brands.

### 2. **Voice Consistency:**

Rather than sticking to the traditional concept of scripted promotions, brands very often, asks the influencers to speak in their natural tone, this also helps brands in:

- Tap into the creator's **storytelling style**
- Build emotional resonance
- Avoid overt advertising fatigue

## 4.9 *Regional and Niche Targeting:*

With the help of micro influencer brands are able to reach specific geographic, communities, or subcultures that somehow may otherwise would have been hard for the brands to access even via mass media or celebrities.

### 1. **Regional Language Influencers:**

- Emphasising in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities.
- Speaks in the regional language made me Hindi, Tamil Marathi, etc.
- With the local consumers, sentiment of emotions and behaviour are build by them.

### 2. **Niche Interest-Based Influencers:**

- Micro influences have a focus on niche interest like fashion book, reviews, vegan cooking, etc.
- Ultra targeted marketing Is emphasised and enabled and a strong product context alignment can be seen.

Strategies of brands with their micro influencers are very increasingly personalised and platform specific. Micro influencers are very specific with there scale and context whether it is collaborations or any high engagement affiliation with the niche bloggers or regional collaborators booming in traditional marketing cannot.

With a mindset of authenticity and engagement, micro influencer work with the brands to position authenticity and helps hyperlocal or Nisha communities to build campaigns that will not only resonate deeply with their audience, but also perform well with the engagement and insights

and the brands (3) for their marketing strategies, choosing of micro-influencers and how and why they are or will prefer micro-influencers over the macro.

## **Sampling Technique**

Employed a non-probability purposive sampling method was employed. This sample consisted of Gen Z individuals( ages 13-28) few millennials (ages 29-32) from urban and semi-urban regions of India, majorly Delhi-NCR who all with a basis of actively or semi-actively uses social media platforms like Instagram and YouTube .

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- **Qualitative interviews:** 12 participants (5 Gen Z consumers and 4 micro-influencers and 3 Brands )

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- Thematic analysis was performed by coding interview transcripts to identify recurring themes such as “authenticity,” “reliability,” “peer-like trust,” and “purchase influence.”
- **Manual coding** was used to retain the contextual sensitivity of open-ended responses.
  - **Research Instruments**
    - **Structured Questionnaire**
      - 20 questions (both multiple-choice and Likert scale)
      - Focus areas: influencer trustworthiness, content engagement, frequency of purchases, platform preference
    - **Interview Guide**
      - Open-ended questions aimed at exploring motivations, feelings about influencers, and reasons for trusting specific micro-influencers

- **Ethical Considerations**

This study ensured:

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- **Platform Limitation:** *The focus on Instagram, and YouTube may overlook the influence of other emerging platforms like Snapchat or Pinterest*

## Data Presentation

At this section there are visual representations of the data collected through surveys and interviews and their interpretation of how Brands are leveraging micro-influencers over macro-influencers. The combination of both the qualitative and quantitative research are presented here to understand the platform strategy, influencer selection criteria, audience engagement, and ROI considerations.

### 5.1 Respondent Demographics

Out of 50 Gen Z respondents:

- **57% were female, 41% male, and 2% non-binary.**
- **62%** were aged 18–22, followed by **38%** aged 22–26, and **10%** 15-18 and 27-31 aged.
- **89%** had followed both micro and macro influencers at some point.

### 5.2 Preference for Micro vs. Macro Influencers

Respondents were asked which type of influencer they were more likely to trust and engage with:

- **Micro-influencers (10K–100K followers): 33%**
- **Macro-influencers (500K+ followers): 33%**
- **Micro influencers bring different impact on the consumers: 34%**

**Interpretation:** The data clearly shows a preference for micro-influencers, supporting the shift brands are making toward niche engagement and personalized messaging rather than broad, celebrity-like endorsements.

### 5.3 Engagement Metrics: Micro vs. Macro

Respondents were asked how often they have preferred the recommendations of macro influencers

- **Micro-influencers:**
  - Liked content: 65% often
  - Saved posts: 48%
  - Commented: 33%
- **Macro-influencers:**
  - Liked content: 47% often
  - Saved posts: 21%
  - Commented: 11%

### Perceived Authenticity and Sponsored Content

Respondents were asked: “When you see a sponsored post, which influencer type feels more authentic?”

- **Micro-influencers: 74%**
- **Macro-influencers: 12%**
- **Depends on the product: 14%**

**Interpretation:** Gen Z associates micro-influencers with honesty and real-life utility, making their recommendations feel more trustworthy, which is a major driver for brands pivoting in this direction.

### 5.5 Brand Strategy Insights from Interviews

Twelve interviews (5 Gen Z consumers, 4 micro influencers and 3 brand managers) revealed deeper strategic insights:

#### a) Gen Z Viewpoint:

“When I see a big influencer promoting five brands a week, I scroll past. But if someone with 20K followers shares their honest opinion, I really pay attention.” – *Male, 20, Hyderabad*

#### b) Brand Perspective:

“Micro-influencers help us break into smaller, loyal communities. For a lifestyle brand, they’re far more cost-effective and give better ROI than mega campaigns.” – *Marketing Head, Glimpse Global*

### 5.6 Budget Allocation and Campaign Format

From secondary data and brand interviews:

- **Average CPM (Cost per Mille) for micro-influencers** is 60–70% lower than for macro-influencers.
- **UGC (User-Generated Content)** campaigns are frequently built with micro-influencers for TikTok and Instagram Reels.
- Brands are forming **longer-term partnerships** with micro-influencers to build loyalty rather than one-off promotions.

### 5.7 Brands over the influencers:

Three brands' insights were taken to acknowledge their perspective when they hire any influencer and what aspect they see before starting a search for an influencer for their brands.

As two brand names are not revealed (they asked it to be like this), the 3rd brand taken into consideration is Glimpse Global.

- **Micro-influencers**

With more than 10k followers they are approachable but the content and public page they have should align with the brands. They have more understanding and connection with the niche audience and also an energy to put out more for better engagement.

- **Macro-influencers**

Who have followers more than 50k over the social media platforms are more into their content rather than being flexible. They are rigid in nature, thinking of their niche content over the brands asking.

They are more demanding and too much to handle in comparison to micro. With less of a connection with the current behaviour of the trends and consumers.

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## Conclusion & Recommendations

### 6.1 Conclusion

This report is set out to examine and explore the impact created by the influence of micro-influencers on Gen Z's marketing behaviors, while it tries to build a commitment of focusing on trust, engagement, and purchasing decisions and how the brands of current trend and basics are leveraging the micro-influencers over macro-influencers for better engagement and marketing.

Through survey data, interviews, and existing literature, structure substantial evidence which clearly shows that micro-influencers are not just a passing trend with a temporary impact but a powerful tool for marketing to Gen Z.

Unlike the macro-influencers or celebrities, micro-influencers can construct a personal and much deeper connection with their audiences. They provide content which usually is perceived as authentic, more transparent, and relatable to the audience which makes key traits that resonate strongly around Gen Z consumers. The findings show that 52% of Gen Z prefer micro-influencers, and 78% have made a purchase based on their recommendation. Additionally, social media platforms for example, Instagram and Youtube offer a fertile ground for the micro-influencers to develop the relationship with the audience and thrive on it, thanks to their algorithm-driven discoverability and community-based features.

Micro-influencers are now accepted less as advertisers and projected more as community voices or relatable peers offering real-world advice. Especially in India and other emerging countries, for brands aimed at targeting Gen Z segments, the focus should be related to relevance, and micro-influencers provide just that.

### 6.2 Recommendations for Marketers

#### 1. Partner with Micro-Influencers Who Align With Brand Values

Don't focus only on follower count. Instead, assess alignment with your brand's ethos and tone. Gen Z values consistency and purpose, and any disconnect can lead to backlash or distrust.

#### 2. Encourage Creator Freedom

Allow influencers to speak in their own voice. Overly-scripted messages reduce authenticity. Trusting the creator's understanding of their audience will lead to better engagement and conversions.

#### 3. Utilize Short-Form and Interactive Content

Reels, Stories and youtube outperform static posts among Gen Z. Encourage influencers to use storytelling, behind-the-scenes clips, product challenges, and Q&A formats to boost relatability.

#### 4. Track Performance Beyond Likes

Measure ROI based on **engagement rates, click-throughs, saves, and conversion actions**—not just reach. Tools like affiliate codes or link tracking can help you tie influencer activity directly to sales.

### 5. Build Long-Term Relationships

One-off promotions feel transactional. Consider developing **ambassador programs** where influencers grow with the brand, deepening loyalty and consumer trust.

### 6. Be Transparent About Sponsorship

Gen Z is highly aware of online marketing. Always ensure partnerships are clearly labeled as sponsored. Lack of disclosure can lead to trust erosion and even regulatory issues.

### 6.3 Recommendations for Future Research

- Expand this study across **tier 2 and tier 3 cities** in India to understand rural and semi-urban Gen Z trends.
- Investigate how **AI-generated influencers** are being received by younger audiences.
- Examine how **influencer burnout** or over-commercialization impacts long-term effectiveness.
- Compare **B2B micro-influencers** versus B2C for professional services or educational platforms.

### 6.4 Final Words

In a fast-evolving digital landscape, Gen Z's rejection of traditional advertising opens up exciting possibilities for brands that are willing to listen, adapt, and co-create with micro-influencers. The era of glossy, unattainable perfection is being replaced by honest, human-driven storytelling—and those who embrace this shift stand to win the loyalty of one of the most powerful consumer generations in history.

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