

Impact of Influencer Marketing on Purchase Intent among Gen Z

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary digital environment, social media has transformed marketing communication into a more interactive, peer-driven process. Influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful strategy, particularly among Generation Z (Gen Z), who have grown up in a fully digital ecosystem. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z consumers are more skeptical of traditional advertising and place greater emphasis on authenticity, credibility, and peer recommendations. This study examines the impact of influencer marketing on the purchase intention of Gen Z consumers, focusing on key influencer attributes such as credibility, trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and perceived authenticity. Grounded in Social Influence Theory, the research adopts a descriptive and analytical design. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire from 157 Gen Z respondents (aged 18–25) in and around Siliguri using convenience sampling. Reliability of measurement scales was tested using Cronbach's alpha, and data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression techniques.

The findings indicate that influencer marketing significantly affects Gen Z's purchase intention. Trustworthiness, transparency in sponsored content, and alignment between influencer values and brand identity were found to be strong predictors of purchase intention. Influencer expertise, particularly in product categories such as technology, beauty, fashion, and fitness, positively influenced consumer decisions. While physical attractiveness had some impact, it was less influential compared to trust and expertise. Additionally, parasocial interaction was found to mediate the relationship between influencer marketing and purchase intention, highlighting the importance of emotional connection and long-term engagement. The study underscores the strategic importance of authentic and value-driven influencer marketing for effectively engaging Generation Z consumers.

Keywords: *Influencer Marketing, Generation Z, Purchase Intention, Social Media Marketing, Consumer Behaviour*

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has flipped the way people connect with brands. Marketing communication is no longer one-way or purely promotional; instead, it has evolved into a more interactive and peer-influenced process driven by user-generated and creator-led content (“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi, Romania & Obreja, 2023). In this new world, influencer marketing is not just a buzzword- it matters, a lot. Influencers have built real trust with their followers, so when they talk about, a brand, it just hits differently. Among all the forms of marketing, this form has proven especially effective among younger consumers, who are more closely engaged digitally.

Now, about Gen Z. We’re talking about people born from the mid-1990s up through the early 2010s. They’re the first kids who never knew a world without the internet. So, no surprise, their habits do not look like their parents’. They talk differently, they shop differently, and they make decisions in their own way. Gen Z spends tons of time on Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat—pretty much any social app you can think of. Influencers on these platforms are not just selling stuff, they’re shaping opinions and choices in ways old-school ads just cannot manage (Ninan et al., 2020). Studies keep showing that when influencer content pops up alongside normal posts from friends, it comes across as way more real. Gen Z trusts it.

Here’s the thing—if someone’s thinking about buying something, that intention is a big deal. It is a good sign of whether they’ll actually go through with the purchase. For brands, understanding what gets Gen Z to that point is huge. This generation is not just a big chunk of buyers now; they’re setting the tone for what’s cool and what sells down the road (Sharma et al., n.d.). Unlike earlier generations, Gen Z smells a generic ad from a mile away. They want the real story, and they care what their peers think. That is why influencer marketing works so well for them—it is built on real, experience-based recommendations.

People have studied influencer marketing before, sure, but there is still a lot we do not know. We need more hard data about what specific things—like credibility, trust, expertise, looks, and how “real” an influencer seems—actually push Gen Z to buy. Most research so far just scratches the surface. That is what this article tries to tackle. We’re digging into the nuts and bolts: what influencer qualities

really move the needle for Gen Z, what the research says, and what this all means for marketers (Ahmad & Juhari, 2023).

In the past there has been many researches on influencer marketing but it can said that still there is a clear need for empirical studies that explores how specific influencer attributes such as credibility, trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and perceived authenticity which shape the purchase intentions of Generation Z consumers. Since most of the existing literature remains either conceptual or limited in scope, leaving important questions unanswered, so in this research article a sincere attempt has been made to answer such questions. In response to this gap, the present extended abstract examines the influence of influencer marketing on Gen Z's purchase intent by focusing on key influencer characteristics, relevant theoretical perspectives, and their implications for marketing practice (Ahmad & Juhari, 2023).

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The digital revolution did not just change marketing—it blew it up and started over. Smartphones and fast internet made social media the place where people share, talk, and shop. Apps like Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Facebook are not just for catching up with friends anymore. They're massive marketing engines. People see stuff, get influenced, and make buying decisions right there.

Influencer marketing is now one of the top strategies in digital marketing. Brands team up with influencers who promote products to their followers. But it is not like the old days of celebrities holding up a soda. Influencers feel close to their audience. They talk directly, their content feels like it is coming from a friend, and that makes people listen (Alnaser et al., 2024). It is that sense of authenticity that gives influencers their edge.

Gen Z, the true digital natives, rely on social media for everything—what to buy, what's trending, and what their friends think. They expect honesty. They want brands to be clear and even a little vulnerable. If there is no genuine connection, they're out (Kothari et al., n.d.). That is why influencer marketing is such a big deal for how Gen Z sees brands and what they decide to buy.

A bunch of factors make influencers effective with this crowd, but not all influencers are created equal. Some have that special something that really gets Gen Z to pay attention—and buy.

Generation Z, often described as digital natives, represents a consumer group that has grown up in a technologically advanced environment. This generation

heavily relies on social media for product information, peer recommendations, and brand discovery. Studies suggest that Gen Z consumers value authenticity, transparency, and emotional connection when interacting with brands (Kothari et al., n.d.). Consequently, influencer marketing plays a critical role in shaping their attitudes and purchase intentions.

Several characteristics of influencers contribute to their effectiveness. These include credibility (perceived expertise and reliability), trustworthiness, attractiveness, and the ability to create parasocial relationships—one-sided emotional bonds where followers feel personally connected to influencers. Additionally, advertising effectiveness and perceived authenticity influence how marketing messages are received and interpreted (Singh & Agrawal, 2024).

Despite the increasing investment by brands in influencer marketing, there remains limited empirical understanding of which specific influencer characteristics most strongly affect Generation Z's purchase intention. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the relative influence of credibility, attractiveness, advertising effectiveness, and parasocial relationships on the purchase intention of Gen Z consumers.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Influencer marketing keeps getting bigger, and brands are pouring serious money into working with social media personalities. But let's be honest—just because a brand teams up with a popular influencer does not mean people will rush out and buy their products. There is still a lot we do not know, especially about what actually pushes Generation Z to make a purchase.

Gen Z spends a ton of time online and sees influencer promos everywhere (Duffett & Mxunyelwa, 2025). Still, it is not as simple as picking the most famous or good-looking influencer and hoping for the best. Things like credibility, trust, authenticity, and whether people feel a real connection to the influencer seem to matter a lot more. If marketers keep guessing and do not dig into what really works, they'll waste money on campaigns that just do not deliver.

That is where this study comes in. The goal is to figure out exactly how different aspects of influencer marketing shape Gen Z's buying decisions—and, even more important, which of those factors matter the most.

Therefore, the problem addressed in this study is: To determine the extent to which influencer marketing factors influence the purchase intention of Generation Z consumers and to identify the most significant predictors among them.

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study matters—not just for academics, but for anyone working in marketing. It digs into influencer marketing and how it shapes what people buy, especially when it comes to Gen Z. These days, digital platforms pretty much run the show in marketing, so figuring out how influencers actually sway purchase decisions is huge.

What sets this research apart is how it pulls from different theories—things like source credibility and parasocial interaction—to see how factors like credibility, attractiveness, ad effectiveness, and emotional connection all play together. By looking at these in one model, the study paints a clearer picture of what really moves people to buy.

Focusing on Gen Z is a big deal, too. This group grew up online, they're glued to social media, and their shopping habits do not look like anyone else's. Since Gen Z is a key, fast-growing market, knowing what makes them tick when it comes to influencers gives marketers and researchers something solid to work with. The study nails down which influencer traits actually drive Gen Z to hit “buy,” so future research and campaigns do not have to guess.

On the practical side, the findings are pretty direct: credibility and real emotional connection matter more than just being attractive or throwing out flashy ads. For brands, that means it is smarter to team up with influencers who feel genuine and trustworthy, not just popular. The study points out what really predicts purchase intent, so marketers can design campaigns that actually work. In the end, it brings theory and real-world practice together, giving everyone better tools to navigate the wild world of social media marketing.

5. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Influencer marketing has rapidly become a central tactic in digital brand communication, leveraging social media personalities to reach and persuade consumers in contexts where traditional advertising frequently fails to engage (Freberg et al.). As social platforms mature, the mechanisms through which influencer content affects consumer attitudes and behavioural intentions have attracted sustained scholarly attention. Two complementary theoretical traditions frame the literature: source credibility theory (which foregrounds expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness) and parasocial interaction theory (which foregrounds perceived interpersonal bonds between followers and influencers). Together they explain why and when influencer endorsements convert exposure into purchase intention.

Source Credibility and Influencer Effectiveness

Source credibility theory establishes that perceived expertise and trustworthiness increase persuasive impact (Ohanian; classic scale: expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness). Empirical work adapting this model to social media finds that credibility dimensions predict advertising trust and purchase intention in online contexts (Ohanian). Applied influencer research demonstrates that message value and perceived credibility amplify branded-content trust and subsequent purchase likelihood, particularly when content is viewed as authentic and informative (Taylor and Francis). De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders' experimental work showed that features associated with influencer credibility and popularity (e.g., follower counts, perceived expertise) shape brand attitudes, though effects vary with product type and perceived fit between influencer and product.

Attractiveness, Attention and Boundary Conditions

Attractiveness—visual appeal, presentation style, and aesthetic production—frequently increases attention to influencer content and can enhance message persuasiveness (Ohanian). However, emerging findings qualify attractiveness's role: while visually appealing influencers often secure engagement, attractiveness alone does not guarantee stronger purchase intentions unless coupled with perceived authenticity or expertise. In other words, attractiveness may operate as a necessary but not sufficient condition, drawing attention that must be converted by credibility cues or substantive information.

Advertising Effectiveness and Message Value

Advertising effectiveness in social media depends on message relevance, informativeness, and perceived value. Lou and Yuan's influential work articulates an "authentic influencer" model in which message value and credibility jointly elevate consumer trust in branded content; informative, transparent messages increase perceived usefulness and thereby purchase intent ("Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi, Romania & Obreja, 2023). Several more recent empirical studies corroborate that message in-formativeness and relevance (rather than mere exposure) drives brand awareness and purchasing behaviours in digital environments.

Parasocial Relationships: The Emotional Pathway

Parasocial relationship theory explains how repeated, personalized communication fosters one-sided social bonds: followers perceive influencers as acquaintances or friends, which increases the influencers' persuasive power (Horton & Wohl)

framework adapted for social media). Recent empirical work finds that parasocial ties are particularly potent in online contexts: stronger parasocial relationships predict higher trust, higher willingness to accept recommendations, and increased purchase intention. For digitally native cohorts such as Generation Z—who regularly consume “daily life” content and expect interactive, authentic narratives—parasocial connection often mediates the effect of influencer content on consumer behaviour.

Generation Z as a Distinct Consumer Segment

Generation Z’s distinctive media habits—high platform fluidity, preference for short-form and authentic content, and emphasis on personal values—make them a high-priority target for influencer campaigns. Studies focusing on Gen Z indicate that this cohort prefers peer-like, authentic messengers and that emotional connection and perceived alignment with values are decisive for purchase decisions. While several papers document these tendencies, there remains heterogeneity across contexts (platform, product category, and cultural market) that limit broad generalizations (see country-specific Gen Z studies and recent cross-national surveys).

Gaps and Opportunities in Existing Research

Despite clear evidence that credibility, message value, and parasocial ties matter, three important gaps remain. First, much of the literature tests predictors in isolation or uses small convenience samples; fewer studies jointly estimate credibility, attractiveness, advertising effectiveness and parasocial relationship in a single multivariate model using adequately powered samples. Second, the relative strength of these predictors among Generation Z — and whether parasocial relationship mediates or moderates credibility’s effects — is underexplored. Third, context sensitivity (platform differences such as TikTok vs Instagram, and product type) is often acknowledged but rarely modelled explicitly in statistical tests. Addressing these gaps requires integrated models (e.g., simultaneous multiple regression or SEM) and larger, stratified samples that allow interaction tests and cross-platform comparisons.

Contribution of the Present Study

The present research addresses these gaps by jointly testing the four predictor constructs (credibility, attractiveness, advertising effectiveness, parasocial relationship) on purchase intention within a Generation Z sample, estimating their relative effects and assessing model fit. By integrating source credibility and

parasocial perspectives within a single analytical framework, the study aims to clarify which influencer characteristics most powerfully predict purchase intention among Gen Z and to provide actionable implications for platform-specific influencer strategies.

Existing research has tried to examine the development of influencer marketing and its growing importance within digital marketing environments (Ahmad & Juhari, 2023). Influencers are more closely viewed as opinion leaders who are able to shape the thinking pattern and behaviours of their followers through shared information, personal recommendations, and brand endorsements.

Factual studies show that influencer marketing can help in creating brand awareness, improve brand attitudes, and create strong purchase intention, particularly when influencers are regarded as reliable and dependable by their audiences. These findings highlight the importance of trust and perceived authenticity in determining how effective influencers on promotional strategies are.

For understanding influencer marketing a very important theory is social influence theory, which explains how individuals' perceptions and behaviours are moulded through interactions with others. Generation Z consumers, in particular, are more exposed to both conventional and informational social influences because of their significant association with social networking sites. The influencers have become a trustworthy medium of reference related to any matter of knowledge which the Gen Z consumers are looking for and shape their mind-set towards the intent to purchase the product.

6. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study is to examine the impact of influencer marketing on the purchase intent of Generation Z consumers. The specific objectives include:

- To study Generation Z's interaction with and exposure to influencer marketing on social media platforms.
- To examine the influence of influencer credibility, trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness on purchase intention.
- To assess the role of perceived authenticity and transparency in influencer endorsements.
- To evaluate the overall effectiveness of influencer marketing as a promotional strategy for influencing Gen Z purchase decisions.

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design. It is descriptive and explanatory in nature, as it seeks to measure relationships and determine the impact of influencer marketing dimensions on purchase intention among Generation Z.

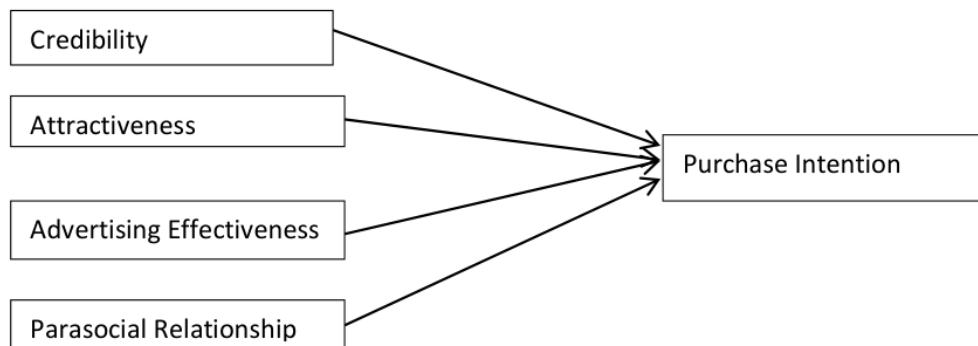
Population and Sampling

The target population comprised Generation Z individuals actively using social media platforms. A total of 157 valid responses were collected using convenience sampling. This sampling method was appropriate due to accessibility and the digital nature of the target group.

Instrument Development

The questionnaire consisted of multiple constructs measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The constructs included Credibility, Attractiveness, Advertising Effectiveness, Parasocial Relationship, and Purchase Intention.

FIGURE 1: Conceptual Framework



The conceptual framework purposes that influencer marketing dimensions (Credibility, Attractiveness, Advertising Effectiveness and Parasocial Relationship) directly influence Purchase Intention.

Hypotheses

H1: Credibility significantly influences purchase intention.

This idea comes from Source Credibility Theory, which says we trust messages more when we think the person delivering them knows what they're talking about and is honest. If an influencer seems smart, genuine, and dependable, people tend to believe their recommendations. When we trust someone, buying from them feels less risky, and we feel better about the product itself. So, when Gen Z sees an influencer as credible, they're more likely to want whatever that influencer is promoting.

H2: Attractiveness significantly influences purchase intention.

Attractiveness is not just about looks — it is also about how influencers present themselves and the vibe they give off. Source credibility theory backs this up, saying attractive people naturally pull us in and can be more persuasive. On social media, if someone looks great or has a cool style, their posts get more attention, and people show more interest in the things they talk about. This is why the idea here is that attractive influencers drive Gen Z to buy.

H3: Advertising effectiveness significantly influences purchase intention.

On social media, advertising works best when influencer posts are clear, relevant, and actually useful. If a post gives good info and matches what people care about, it helps build awareness and makes the brand look better. When influencers explain things well, they cut down on confusion and give people the info they need — which nudges them closer to buying. So, when Gen Z thinks influencer ads are effective, their desire to buy goes up.

H4: Parasocial relationship significantly influences purchase intention.

Parasocial relationship theory is all about those one-sided bonds we form with people we follow online. On social media, a follower might feel like they really know an influencer — almost like they're friends. That emotional connection builds trust and makes any product recommendation feel personal and sincere. Gen Z, who basically lives online, is especially good at forming these bonds. That is why the stronger the parasocial relationship, the more likely Gen Z is to buy what the influencer suggests.

Statistical Tools

In this study a descriptive and analytical research design is used to understand the influence of influencer marketing on the purchase intentions of Generation Z consumers. Primary data was collected by using a structured questionnaire which was given to Gen Z individuals who actively use social media platforms and follow

one or more influencers. A convenience sampling approach was used wherein both undergraduate and postgraduate students within the Gen Z age group of 18-25 residing in and around Siliguri were selected respondents due to their high level of engagement with digital media. Secondary data also have been employed in the form of research articles, books and various websites which form the base for any scholarly article.

The questionnaire was divided into several sections such as demographic characteristics, influencer credibility, content quality, social media marketing, parasocial interaction and purchase intent. Purchase intention was assessed using Likert-scale items that reflected respondents' likelihood of purchasing products endorsed by influencers. To ensure the consistency of the measurement scales, reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha. The data was collected from 157 respondents for analysis through appropriate statistical techniques, including descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple linear regression analysis.

8. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

TABLE 1: Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

Construct	Cronbach's α
Credibility	0.799
Attractiveness	0.752
Advertising Effectiveness	0.808
Parasocial Relationship	0.710
Purchase Intention	0.858

Since all the alpha values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

TABLE 2: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD
Credibility	2.99	0.85
Attractiveness	3.63	0.77
Advertising	3.46	0.79
Parasocial	3.10	0.77
Purchase Intention	3.06	0.92

From the table it can be noted that attractiveness recorded the highest mean score, indicating favourable perception among respondents.

TABLE 3: Correlation Analysis

Predictor	Correlation with Purchase Intention
Credibility	0.63
Attractiveness	0.66
Advertising Effectiveness	0.68
Parasocial Relationship	0.74

All the independent variables demonstrated strong positive correlations with purchase intention. Parasocial relationship exhibited the strongest association suggesting that emotional connection plays a major role in influencing purchase decisions.

TABLE 4: Multiple Regression Results Predicting Purchase Intention

Predictor	Beta (B)	p-value	Result
Credibility	0.304	0.007	Significant
Attractiveness	0.212	0.133	Not Significant
Advertising	0.187	0.205	Not Significant
Parasocial	0.483	0.0001	Significant

TABLE 5: Model Summary

R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	p
0.699	0.672	26.08	<.001

TABLE 6: Summary of Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta (B)	p-value	Decision
H1	Credibility on Purchase Intention	0.304	0.007	Accepted
H2	Attractiveness on Purchase Intention	0.212	0.133	Rejected
H3	Advertising Effectiveness on Purchase Intention	0.167	0.205	Rejected
H4	Parasocial Relationship on Purchase Intention	0.483	0.001	Accepted

Interpretation of Each Hypothesis

H1: Credibility significantly influences purchase intention.

The regression results show that credibility has a positive and statistically significant effect on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.304$, $p = 0.007$). Since $p < 0.05$, H1 is accepted. This indicates that higher perceived influencer credibility increases Gen Z consumers' purchase intention.

H2: Attractiveness significantly influences purchase intention.

Although attractiveness has a positive beta value ($\beta = 0.212$), the relationship is not statistically significant ($p = 0.133$). Since $p > 0.05$, H2 is rejected. This suggests that attractiveness alone does not significantly influence purchase intention when other variables are included in the model.

H3: Advertising effectiveness significantly influences purchase intention.

Advertising effectiveness shows a positive but statistically insignificant effect ($\beta = 0.187$, $p = 0.205$). Since $p > 0.05$, H3 is rejected. This indicates that advertising effectiveness does not independently predict purchase intention in the presence of other influencer factors.

H4: Parasocial relationship significantly influences purchase intention.

Parasocial relationship has the strongest and statistically significant effect ($\beta = 0.483$, $p = 0.001$). Since $p < 0.05$, H4 is accepted. This indicates that emotional connection with influencers strongly increases purchase intention among Generation Z.

9. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This study looked at how different parts of influencer marketing—credibility, attractiveness, advertising effectiveness, and parasocial relationships—shape Gen Z's intention to buy. Here's what stood out.

First, the scales we used to measure these things held up well. Cronbach's alpha values for everything were above 0.70, so the tools were reliable and made sense for the rest of the analysis.

When we dug into the basic stats, we saw that Gen Z generally felt pretty good about influencer marketing. Attractiveness scored the highest, so people really liked how influencers present themselves and their content style. Still, when it came to actually wanting to buy something, the scores were only moderate. So, even though Gen Z engages with influencer content, other things affect whether they'll open their wallets.

Looking at the correlations, every influencer marketing factor had a strong positive link to purchase intention. Parasocial relationships—the feeling of having a personal connection with the influencer—came out on top, followed by how effective the advertising seemed, then attractiveness, and finally credibility. Clearly, that sense of emotional connection matters a lot.

The regression analysis went further. The model explained nearly 70% of what drives Gen Z's purchase intention, which is pretty solid. Parasocial relationships again stood out as the most powerful factor, with credibility also making a significant impact. But interestingly, when you look at everything together, attractiveness and advertising effectiveness lost their significance in predicting purchase intent.

To sum it up, it is not just about how an influencer looks or how informative their ads are. For Gen Z, it is the psychological and emotional factors—feeling connected and trusting the influencer—that really push them toward making a purchase. So, while influencer marketing works, it is the deeper bonds that make the biggest difference.

Overall, the study confirms that influencer marketing significantly impacts purchase intention among Generation Z, particularly through emotional connection and credibility.

10. CONCLUSION

The present study examined the impact of influencer marketing on the purchase intention of Generation Z, with particular focus on credibility, attractiveness, advertising effectiveness, and parasocial relationship. In the context of increasing digital engagement and the growing dominance of social media platforms, understanding the mechanisms through which influencer marketing shapes consumer behavior is both timely and relevant.

The findings of the study indicate that influencer marketing significantly influences purchase intention among Generation Z. The regression model demonstrated strong explanatory power, suggesting that influencer-related factors account for a substantial proportion of variation in purchase intention. Among the examined predictors, parasocial relationship emerged as the most influential factor, followed by credibility. This suggests that emotional connection and perceived trustworthiness play a critical role in shaping Gen Z's buying decisions.

Although attractiveness and advertising effectiveness showed positive relationships with purchase intention, they were not statistically significant predictors when analyzed alongside credibility and parasocial relationship. This implies that while visual appeal and promotional content may attract attention, they are not sufficient on their own to drive purchasing decisions. Instead, psychological engagement and authenticity appear to be more powerful determinants of consumer behavior in the digital environment.

The study reinforces the importance of relational and trust-based marketing strategies in influencer collaborations. Generation Z consumers respond more strongly to influencers with whom they feel emotionally connected and whom they perceive as credible. These findings contribute to the broader understanding of digital marketing effectiveness and provide empirical evidence supporting the role of emotional and psychological factors in online purchase decision-making.

In conclusion, influencer marketing is an effective promotional strategy for influencing Generation Z purchase intention, particularly when it fosters credibility and emotional bonding. Brands seeking to target this demographic should prioritize authentic, trustworthy, and relationship-driven influencer partnerships to achieve stronger marketing outcomes.

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