

Impact of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Purchase Decisions Gen Z

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Abstract—Social media's explosive growth has completely changed how consumers research products and make decisions about what to buy. Particularly among Generation Z (Gen Z), a group distinguished by high levels of digital engagement and social media usage, social media influencers have become potent marketing agents that mold customer attitudes, perceptions, and purchasing behavior. This study looks at how Gen Z consumers' purchasing decisions are influenced by social media influencers. It investigates how consumer trust and purchase intentions are influenced by elements such as influencer trustworthiness, authenticity, competence, attractiveness, and content quality. According to the study, Gen Z consumers are more likely to be swayed by relatable and genuine influencers than by conventional advertising techniques. Product reviews, suggestions, unboxing videos, and lifestyle postings are examples of influencer-generated content that has a big impact on customer engagement, purchasing behavior, and brand exposure. Additionally, the study explores how various social media platforms might promote brand loyalty and facilitate influencer-consumer interactions. According to the research, Gen Z customers' perceptions of products are improved, information uncertainty is decreased, and planned and impulsive purchases are encouraged by social media influencers. The study advances knowledge of digital marketing tactics and offers insightful information to companies looking to successfully engage younger customers through influencer marketing. Additionally, it gives marketers advice on how to create genuine and significant influencer relationships that suit the tastes and demands of Generation Z consumers. Secondary data were systematically collected from peer-reviewed journals, industry reports, review papers, and scientific databases published between 2010 and 2026. The findings revealed a substantial increase in consumer preference toward clean-label, gluten-free, high-fiber, and protein-enriched bakery formulations. Statistical and graphical analyses further demonstrated significant growth in demand for sustainable and functional bakery products globally. The study concludes that continuous innovation, technological advancement, and consumer-oriented product development are essential for

improving industrial competitiveness and achieving sustainable growth in the bakery sector.

Index Terms—Influencer marketing, consumer behavior, digital marketing, Generation Z (Gen Z), social media influencers, and consumer purchasing decisions.

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media has completely changed how customers find, assess, and buy goods and services in the digital age. Social media influencers have become influential opinion leaders who use their online presence and content to influence customer behavior. On social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, influencers produce relatable and genuine content that helps marketers engage with their target audiences more successfully than they could with traditional advertising. Generally defined as people born between 1997 and 2012, Generation Z (Gen Z) is a highly tech-savvy consumer group that spends a lot of time on social media. When making purchases, this generation prioritizes personalized experiences, peer recommendations, and authenticity. Influencer marketing has therefore emerged as a crucial tactic for companies looking to connect with Gen Z customers. Influencers frequently use reviews, endorsements, and lifestyle-focused content to influence consumers' opinions of product quality, brand legitimacy, and buy intentions.

Influencer-driven marketing initiatives have become more important due to Gen Z's increasing reliance on social media for information and product recommendations. Businesses looking to increase customer engagement and boost sales must comprehend how social media influencers impact consumer purchasing decisions. Thus, this study looks at how Gen Z customers' purchase decisions are

affected by social media influencers and investigates the elements that support their power in the online market.

Objectives of the Study

- To investigate how Generation Z customers' shopping decisions are influenced by social media influencers.
- To determine the elements that influence Gen Z's acceptance of influencer recommendations, including credibility, trustworthiness, knowledge, and attractiveness.
- To examine how various social media sites influence Generation Z consumers' purchasing decisions.
- To assess how Gen Z consumers' brand knowledge, perception, and purchase intention are affected by influencer-generated content.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Lee, J. E., & Watkins, B. (2016). Social media's explosive expansion has drastically changed how people shop, especially Generation Z, who are digital natives and very active on sites like Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Snapchat. Influencers on social media have become effective marketing tools that can impact the attitudes, tastes, and buying decisions of consumers. According to recent studies, Gen Z responds better to influencer marketing than to traditional advertising because of its perceived relatability, authenticity, and participatory character. According to research by Lou and Yuan (2019), consumer trust and buy intentions are positively impacted by influencer credibility, attractiveness, and skill. In a similar vein, Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) found that because influencers maintain deeper relationships with their followers and share personal experiences, young consumers view them as more trustworthy than celebrities. The efficacy of product recommendations is increased by this perceived authenticity.

The impact of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on Gen Z's purchasing behavior has been emphasized in a number of studies. De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017) assert that brand awareness and consumer decision-making can be greatly impacted by influencers who have a larger and more active

following. Additionally, before making a purchase, Gen Z buyers usually rely on product demos, unboxing videos, and influencer reviews.

Lou, C., Tan, S. S., & Chen, X. (2019). Investigating consumer engagement with influencer-generated content. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 19(2), 72–88. A theoretical framework for comprehending influencer impact is provided by the Theory of Planned Behavior and Social Learning Theory. According to these views, people frequently copy the actions and decisions of people they look up to, including social media influencers. Influencer endorsements can therefore impact perceptions and promote consumer behavior.

III. INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

One of the most digitally connected consumer groups is Generation Z, which is commonly characterized as those born between 1997 and 2012. In contrast to earlier generations, Gen Z spends a lot of time on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Snapchat. Because of this, social media influencers are becoming a crucial source of knowledge, motivation, and suggestions for this group.

The results show that Gen Z consumers' shopping decisions are greatly influenced by social media influencers. As opinion leaders, influencers mold tastes, attitudes, and purchasing habits. Gen Z consumers often perceive influencers as relatable individuals rather than traditional celebrities. This relatability fosters a feeling of intimacy and motivates followers to believe product recommendations and take them into account when making a purchase.

Influencer marketing has an impact on several phases of the customer decision-making process, such as need identification, information search, alternative evaluation, buy decision, and post-purchase assessment. Gen Z customers are more likely to become aware of businesses and express interest in them when influencers highlight products through reviews, tutorials, unboxing videos, or lifestyle material. Particularly in categories like fashion, cosmetics, technology, fitness, and lifestyle products, a large number of respondents said they have made purchases based on suggestions from influencers.

Additionally, social media's interactive and visual features strengthen influencers' ability to persuade. Influencers and followers can interact directly through features like tales, reels, live sessions, and comments, which increases the influence on purchasing decisions. As a result, social media influencers are becoming very important in determining how Gen Z consumers behave.

Influencers' unique qualities play a major role in how effective influencer marketing is. According to the report, among the most significant elements influencing Gen Z consumers' acceptance of influencer recommendations are reliability, trustworthiness, knowledge, and attractiveness.

Credibility - One of the main factors influencing customer trust is credibility. Gen Z customers are very conscious of promotional information and are able to discern between suggestions that are sincere and those that are solely for profit. Influencers who often offer frank evaluations and open disclosures are seen as more reliable. Because followers trust these influencers' opinions, they have a greater chance of influencing purchasing decisions.

Trustworthiness - Credibility and trustworthiness go hand in hand. Influencers who exhibit honesty, integrity, and authenticity are preferred by Gen Z consumers. Transparent communication, personal narrative, and regular interactions all contribute to the development of trust. When followers have faith in an influencer, they are more inclined to follow their advice and buy the goods they recommend.

Knowledge and expertise - Expertise and knowledge are also important. Influencers who are specialists in their profession are thought to have specialized expertise. For instance, due of their experience, technology influencers who review devices or fitness influencers who discuss health items are regarded as more trustworthy. Gen Z buyers appreciate recommendations from influencers who exhibit skill and expertise, and they frequently look for comprehensive product information.

Attractiveness - In addition to physical beauty, attractiveness encompasses personality, communication abilities, lifestyle, and content quality. Influencers who are attractive are better at drawing

attention and increasing levels of engagement. Consumers in Generation Z are frequently motivated by influencers whose lifestyles reflect their goals and passions. However, the study indicates that purchase decisions are more influenced by authenticity and reliability than by physical appearance alone.

Overall, the findings show that the most important factors are credibility and trustworthiness, which are followed by skill and beauty. Influencers are better at influencing Gen Z consumers and influencing their purchasing decisions when they successfully blend these attributes.

IV. VARIOUS SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

Instagram - Instagram's visual nature and vast influencer network make it one of the most powerful platforms. Influencers may efficiently promote products thanks to features like posts, reels, tales, and shopping integrations. Instagram is a strong medium for influencing consumer purchases, especially for fashion, beauty, travel, and lifestyle influencers.

YouTube - Because it allows for in-depth product reviews and long-form material, YouTube is another extremely powerful medium. Before making a purchase, Gen Z shoppers usually study products on YouTube. YouTube influencers can offer in-depth product demonstrations, comparisons, and lessons to assist customers in making more thorough product evaluations.

TikTok - Among Gen Z users, TikTok has grown quickly, and it now plays a significant role in shaping consumer trends. TikTok is very interesting because of its short-form videos, viral challenges, and real content. Products that appear in viral TikTok videos frequently see notable gains in sales and popularity. Influencer-generated content also spreads quickly because to the platform's algorithm.

Facebook and Snapchat - Though their influence is typically less than that of Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok among younger audiences, Facebook and Snapchat nevertheless have an impact on consumer behavior. While Snapchat shapes customer preferences through transient and engaging content, Facebook is still helpful for community debates and evaluations.

According to the study's findings, YouTube is essential for offering comprehensive information that facilitates well-informed decision-making, while Instagram and TikTok are particularly successful in driving instant customer interest and impulse purchases. In order to increase engagement and conversion among Gen Z consumers, marketers should implement influencer techniques tailored to various platforms.

Brand knowledge - When influencers frequently highlight items and talk about their features, advantages, and usage experiences, brand awareness rises. Gen Z customers learn about brands and their value propositions through exposure to influencer content. This increased understanding helps consumers make more assured purchases by lowering uncertainty.

Brand perception - Influencer-generated material has a significant impact on brand perception as well. Influencers influence consumers' perceptions of a brand by linking it to particular identities, values, and lifestyles. Positive brand perceptions are influenced by genuine experiences and positive reviews. Customers are more likely to form favorable opinions of a brand when influencers share its beliefs and image.

Purchase intention - The possibility that customers will purchase a product in the future is known as purchase intention. The results show a significant positive correlation between purchase intention and influencer-generated content. Product demos, genuine storytelling, and interesting content pique customers' interest and encourage purchases. Customers in Generation Z are especially receptive to content that is authentic and pertinent to them.

Additionally, the study emphasizes how crucial user engagement is. Influencer content gains credibility and visibility through likes, comments, shares, and interactions, which amplifies its influence on brand perception and buy intention. Furthermore, peer conversations and user-generated comments frequently support influencer recommendations, generating a social proof effect that promotes purchases.

V. CONCLUSION

The study comes to the conclusion that Generation Z consumers' purchasing decisions are significantly influenced by social media influencers. The acceptance of suggestions is significantly influenced by influencer attributes like knowledge, attractiveness, credibility, and trustworthiness. The social media sites that have the biggest impact on consumer purchase behavior are YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. Additionally, influencer-generated content raises buy intentions, improves brand understanding, and fosters favorable brand impressions. These results highlight the increasing significance of influencer marketing as a tactical instrument for companies looking to interact with and sway Generation Z customers in the digital era.

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