

Social Media Influencers and Gen Z: A Study on Modern Purchasing Behaviour

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Citation: Sannaki, A. & Ganesh, S. (2026). *Social Media Influencers and Gen Z: A Study on Modern Purchasing Behaviour*. *Journal of Commerce, Economics & Computer Science*, 12(03), 209–214.

Abstract

The rapid development of social media has changed consumer behaviour, especially that of Generation Z, who is a very active user of digital technology. This current research focuses on how social media encourages the purchase behaviour of Generation Z, especially considering the use of social media, influencer marketing, influencer credibility, product quality, and pricing. A quantitative and descriptive research approach has been adopted, and data has been collected from 461 respondents of Generation Z between the ages of 18-25 through a structured questionnaire. Stratified random sampling has been adopted for sampling. According to the results of the research, the most used social networks are Instagram (87.2%), TikTok (81.5%), and YouTube (79.8%) with daily social media use being 3.2 hours. The most frequently followed type of influencers is micro-influencers (71.2%). Authenticity is the factor that got the highest mean score (4.28) when the impact of the factors on influencer credibility was assessed. Based on regression analysis, it can be stated that recommendations by influencers have the most significant positive impact on purchase behaviour ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < 0.001$), followed by product quality perception ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$). Price had a significant negative impact ($\beta = -0.22$, $p < 0.01$). This research achieves that social media and influencer marketing significantly affect Generation Z purchase decisions, along with product quality and price.

Keywords: Social Media, Generation Z, Influencer Marketing, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Purchase Decisions, Product Quality, Price.

Introduction

Born in the mid-1990s to early 2010s, the members of Generation Z comprise a generation of digital natives whose consumption behaviours are greatly affected by internet culture. In such a scenario, SMIs have emerged as powerful intermediaries that affect consumer trust, brand knowledge, and purchasing decisions. Understanding the dynamics of influence across many platforms becomes essential as marketers increasingly shift their budgets toward influencer marketing (Rehman, 2025).

People no longer base their purchasing decisions solely on commercials or brand marketing in the contemporary digital age. Rather, they read online customer reviews to learn about other users' actual experiences. Online reviews are crucial in influencing consumer perceptions when making purchases, making hotel reservations, or selecting a service. The public's perception of a brand is greatly influenced by these reviews, which have grown to be a reliable source of information. Customer pleasure, trust, and overall experience are the foundation of a brand's reputation (Kavya, Abirami, Arunkumar, & Deepakkumar, 2026).

Digital marketing strategies will therefore be best tailored to them. The voice is strengthened by the knowledge, connections, and experience of influencers, which makes it easier for consumers to make decisions while making purchases. They use social media sites like Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Snapchat, to mention a few. These areas are quickly developing into powerful and effective digital marketing tools. Due to these developments, businesses are now more dependent than ever on influencer marketing in an effort to attract Gen Z, the group with collective procuring authority (Anand, 2024).

According to the younger generation, social media influencers perform a decisive role on social media by providing entertaining content, promoting products from various brands, creating value for their followers by talking about popular products on the internet and other market platforms, and building trust and faith among their followers. Generally speaking, Generation Z purchases products based on their faith in one or more social media influencers. Organizations in India have cooperated with social media influencers to market their products, establish a brand on these platforms, and persuade Generation Z to support Elwyn brands in order to influence their purchasing decisions, generate social media buzz, and enhance their acuity of the variety (Fathima & Malagi, 2025).

Review of Literature

Using a sizable survey sample, Estrada, Zavala, & Sepulveda, (2025) examined the elements linked to influencer marketing in Generation Z purchasing decisions. Three main factors were found in the study: consistency in content creation, perception of reciprocity/benefits, and empathy of the influencer. Consumer trust and buying decisions were positively impacted by these factors.

Instagram marketing tools have a noteworthy impression on Gen Z's impulsive purchasing behaviour, particularly in the fashion business, according to Djafarova & Bowes, (2021). According to their research, young customers are greatly encouraged to make impulsive purchases by visual material, peer pressure, and social evidence.

According to a recent study by Tari et al. (2024), influencer marketing and product quality work together to significantly increase Generation Z customers' intentions to make purchases. The survey highlighted that while reviewing products online, current buyers frequently rely on recommendations from influencers.

According to Singh & Neha, (2023) study, "Research on the impact of social media on consumer purchases," companies all over the world have learned how important consumers are and are continuously observing for new methods to stay competitive. Businesses are using social networking as a new sales strategy to stay current and establish a connection with their patrons. This analysis aims to look into how clients' purchase decisions are influenced by informal organizations.

The study by Kour and Kaur (2020) highlights the significant stimulus of social media marketing on consumer buying behaviour. The research utilized a questionnaire developed on a five-point Likert scale and administered to 400 social media users in the Punjab region of India. The findings designate that conviction, alleged value, and positive reviews positively affect consumer buying behaviour on social media. The study employs statistical methods such as factor analysis and multiple linear regression to analyze the data. It is published in the International Journal of Advanced Science and Technology, providing valued intuitions for marketers and businesses in rising operative digital marketing tactics to advance customer engagement and achieve sustainable business growth.

Digital platforms, social media marketing, influencer recommendations, online reviews, visual content, trust, and perceived value have all emerged as significant factors influencing customer purchasing behaviour, according to the examined studies. In instance, research illustrates that when making verdicts about what to buy, Generation Z and other tech-savvy customers rely supplementary on social media material and online recommendations. These results offer a compact theoretical underpinning for inspecting how digital technologies affect consumer purchasing behaviour in the current investigation.

Even though quite a lot of studies have scrutinized the influence of social media, influencer marketing, online reviews, and digital platforms on consumer buying behaviour, certain research gaps remain. Furthermost prevailing revisions have fascinated on general social media users or Generation Z consumers, with limited attention given to consumers across different age, income, educational, and geographical groups. Supplementary, various studies have scrutinized individual digital marketing factors

such as influencer credibility, social media content, trust, or online reviews separately rather than examining the combined influence of digital technologies on overall consumer buying behaviour.

There is also a geographical gap in the existing literature. A considerable quantity of studies have been directed at the national or state level, while comparatively limited pragmatic research has focused specifically on Belagavi District of Karnataka. The consumer market in Belagavi has been influenced by the increasing use of smartphones, e-commerce platforms, social media, digital payments, artificial intelligence, and personalised product recommendations. However, the extent to which these technologies influence consumers' purchasing decisions requires further investigation.

Statement of the Problem

The collective impact of social media has greatly affected the buying behaviour of Generation Z. This research is intended to examine the extent to which social media impacts their purchasing behaviour especially the total social media content, content producers, influencers, online reviews, and peer effect. It seeks to identify the key determinants of buying behaviour of Generation Z and comprehend their degree of social media involvement. The results could aid organizations in forecasting consumer behaviour and crafting appropriate marketing and shopping approaches for Generation Z.

Objectives of the Study

- To study the pattern of social media usage among Generation Z.
- To observe the effect of social media content and influencers on the buying behaviour of Generation Z.
- To identify the factors influencing the purchase decisions of Generation Z.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study makes use of the descriptive and quantitative research design for exploring the impact of social media on the purchase behaviour of Generation Z consumers. The sample size used for this study consists of 461 subjects between 18 to 25 years old. The data is collected through a well-designed questionnaire.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

461 respondents are the study's intended sample size. To guaranty sufficient representation of the Generation Z population for the quantitative component, stratified random sampling is used. Age, gender, and residence area (rural/urban) are used to stratify the respondents since these demographic traits may have an impact on how they use social media and make purchases online. In order to guaranty proper representation of the various demographic groupings, respondents are then chosen at random from each stratum.

Tools for Data Collection

In order to improve reliability and validity, the survey questionnaire was developed using the body of current literature, including a few recently validated measures. Items from recommended scales, such as the Social Media Usage Scale (SMS) based on Rosen et al., 2013, the Influencer Credibility Scale based on Ohanian, 1990, and the Purchase Decision Involvement Scale based on Mittal, 1989, are included in the adopted questionnaire. These modifications guaranty that the tool can be used to the theoretical framework while making an impact in the crowded markets of Gen Z consumers and social media influencers. A draft review, expert panel review, and pilot test with thirty Gen Z consumers are used to evaluate the content validity of the questionnaire. The reliability of the instrument, including its phrasing and online administration requirements, is enhanced by participant feedback.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Descriptive analysis of frequencies and percentages will be used to provide general information about the sample once the quantitative data has been evaluated using SPSS software. The information gathered from the questionnaires and measurement scales will be summarized using descriptive statistics like means and frequency distributions. Additionally, the study will employ multiple regressions to ascertain the degree to which factors impact purchase intentions and correlation analysis to test for relationships between variables. Latent elements pertaining to Gen Z's perceptions of influencers and

their impact on purchase behaviour will be revealed with the aid of factor analysis. Descriptive analysis of frequencies and percentages will be used to provide general information about the sample once the quantitative data has been evaluated using SPSS software.

Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 461)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Age	18–21 years	241	52.3
	22–25 years	220	47.7
Gender	Female	239	51.8
	Male	222	48.2
Location	Urban	325	70.5
	Rural	136	29.5
Total		461	100.0

The table shows that 52.3% (241) of the respondents belonged to the 18–21 years age group, while 47.7% (220) were aged 22–25 years. Concerning gender distribution, 51.8% (239) of the respondents were women and 48.2% (222) were men. As far as geographical locations are concerned, most of the participants, namely 70.5% (325), came from urban settings while 29.5% (136) came from rural areas. So, it is clear that the main population of this sample was young, urban and Generation Z.

Table 2: Social Media Usage Patterns of Generation Z

Social Media Platform	Frequency	Percentage
Instagram	402	87.2
TikTok	376	81.5
YouTube	368	79.8

Instagram was the most commonly used platform for all the participants at 87.2 percent (402) usage. TikTok was used by 81.5 percent (376), and YouTube by 79.8 percent (368). This reveals that the use of visually based social media platforms is prevalent among Generation Z.

Table 3: Types of Influencers Followed by Generation Z (N = 461)

Influencer Type	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Micro-influencers (10K–100K followers)	328	71.2
Macro-influencers (100K–1M followers)	269	58.3
Mega-influencers (1M+ followers)	196	42.6
Nano-influencers (1K–10K followers)	145	31.5

The table indicates that micro-influencers were the most commonly followed, with 71.2% (328) of respondents. This was followed by macro-influencers at 58.3% (269) and mega-influencers at 42.6% (196). Nano-influencers were followed by 31.5% (145) of respondents. The findings suggest that Generation Z shows a stronger preference for micro-influencers, who may be perceived as more relatable, authentic, and accessible.

Table 4: Factors Affecting Social Media Influencer Credibility

Factor	Mean Score
Perceived authenticity	4.28
Expertise in niche	4.15
Consistency in content	3.92
Engagement with followers	3.84
Transparency about sponsorships	3.71

As indicated from the results above, the level of perceived authenticity emerged as the most significant variable that influences social media influencer credibility, having the highest mean score at 4.28. The next most significant variable was the expertise of the niche at a mean score of 4.15. The other variables that influenced the credibility of social media influencers were consistency in the post and engagement with the followers at mean scores of 3.92 and 3.84, respectively. The least variable in terms of influence on credibility had the lowest mean score of 3.71.

Table 5: Factors Influencing Purchase Decisions of Generation Z

Purchase Decision Factor	Beta (β)	Significance (p-value)	Influence
Influencer recommendations	0.43	< 0.001	Positive and significant
Perceived product quality	0.38	< 0.001	Positive and significant
Price	-0.22	< 0.01	Negative and significant

From the results of the regression analysis, it is evident that the most influential factor that positively impacted the purchasing behaviour of Generation Z was recommendations from influencers ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < 0.001$). The quality of the product was also significantly positively influencing ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$). Price, on the other hand, was negatively influencing ($\beta = -0.22$, $p < 0.01$). It means that higher prices could negatively impact purchase intentions.

Hypothesis	Null Hypothesis (H_0)	Alternative Hypothesis (H_1)
H1	There is no significant relationship between social media usage and the buying behaviour of Generation Z.	There is a significant relationship between social media usage and the buying behaviour of Generation Z.
H2	Perceived product quality does not have a significant positive influence on the purchase decisions of Generation Z.	Perceived product quality has a significant positive influence on the purchase decisions of Generation Z.
H3	Price does not have a significant negative influence on the purchase decisions of Generation Z.	Price has a significant negative influence on the purchase decisions of Generation Z.

Discussion

The findings from the study reveal that social media has a vital role to play in influencing the purchasing behaviour of Generation Z. Instagram proved to be the most frequently used social media site, followed by TikTok and YouTube. It is evident from the frequent use of such social media sites that Generation Z is highly associated with visual and video-based digital content. The daily average social media use time of 3.2 hours also reinforces the role played by social media in the daily life of younger consumers.

It was also found that micro-influencers formed the most popular category of influencers followed by macro-, mega-, and nano-influencers. It can be implied from the above findings that Generation Z might be very much inclined towards relatable and accessible influencers.

In terms of the credibility of the influencers, perceived authenticity was seen to be the highest (4.28), followed by the expertise of the influencer in the niche (4.15). Perceived credibility is further driven by consistency of content, engagement with followers, and transparency in sponsors. The results show that Generation Z consumers value the credibility of the influencers to be credible, knowledgeable and consistent.

Furthermore, from the regression analysis results, it was shown that influencer recommendations exerted a strong and significant influence on purchase decisions ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, the perception of quality of the products was found to be significant positively influencing purchase decisions ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$), whereas the price exerted a significant negative influence on the purchase decision ($\beta = -0.22$, $p < 0.01$). Therefore, while influencers' recommendation is an important factor for promoting the purchase intention among Generation Z consumers, they still value product-related factors like quality and price.

It is evident from the results obtained that social media and influencers have become an important aspect of Generation Z purchase environment. Authenticated influencers may help shape consumer preferences and purchase intentions, while product quality and appropriate price still matter.

Conclusion

The study confirms the influence of social media on the buying behaviour of Generation Z. Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube were the most commonly used social media platforms, showing that Generation Z has a preference for visual and video based digital media.

Social media influencers were found to have a major influence on purchases with influencer recommendations having the greatest impact on purchase behaviour ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < 0.001$). Perceived

product quality was found to have a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$) while price had a significant negative effect ($\beta = -0.22$, $p < 0.01$).

The study proves the significance of the social media use, influencer credibility, perceived product quality and price in influencing the purchasing behaviour of Generation Z. It is especially important for influencers to possess authenticity and expertise. Therefore, companies should consider developing credible social media marketing practices in addition to good product quality and pricing.

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