

EFFECTS OF DIGITAL INFLUENCER ENDORSEMENTS ON ZOOMERS

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ABSTRACT: *The study investigates the effects of digital influencer endorsements on Generation Z or Zoomers' purchasing decisions, focusing on authenticity, entertainment value, trust, expertise, and trustworthiness. It addresses gaps in existing research by examining these factors across various platforms and demographics, challenging assumptions about their universal positivity, and exploring gender differences. The study intends to measure the effect of social media influencers on Zoomer respondents' purchasing decisions and profile the demographic traits of Zoomer respondents. It rigorously tests hypotheses to explore the relationships between purchasing decisions and influencer-related factors, aiming to develop an intervention program based on these findings to assist marketers and influencers in optimizing their strategies. Employing a descriptive survey method, data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire from 414 Gen Z respondents. The Mann-Whitney U Test and Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient were among the statistical techniques used. The results indicated strong positive correlations between the identified factors (authenticity: $r=.648$, entertainment value: $r=.687$, trust and credibility: $r=.707$, perceived expertise: $r=.744$, trustworthiness: $r=.756$) and Zoomers' purchasing decisions ($p<0.05$). A significant difference was found in the entertainment value factor ($p = 0.017$), where male respondents (Mean Rank = 235.02) rated it higher than females (Mean Rank = 200.50). The study concludes that social media influencers significantly shape Zoomers' purchasing decisions. Businesses should prioritize influencers with authenticity, trustworthiness, and expertise to build engaging and credible content. While gender generally does not influence perceptions of most influencer attributes, the greater impact of entertainment value among males' points to potential opportunities for targeted content strategies.*

Keywords: Digital Influencers, Zoomers, Purchasing Decisions

1. INTRODUCTION

The swift advancement of digital platforms has established social media influencers as significant drivers of consumer attitudes and behaviors, especially within Generation Z. This study investigates how influencers impact the purchasing decisions of Gen Z by concentrating on five critical factors: authenticity and reliability, entertainment value, trust and credibility, perceived expertise, and trustworthiness. Through examining these elements, the research aims to illuminate the processes by which influencers motivate, influence, or inhibit consumer choices among this digitally engaged and technologically adept generation.

The influence of social media personalities on Gen Z has been well-documented in marketing literature. Generation Z, characterized by their digital nativity and strong social media presence, frequently relies on influencers as trusted sources of information and trendsetters [1]. Research shows that influencers impact Gen Z more than traditional advertisements or celebrity endorsements, largely because of their relatability and peer-like connection with followers [2]. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube serve as the primary channels where these interactions take place, enhancing the immediacy and intimacy of influencer-consumer relationships [3].

Further, various studies have detailed specific influencer factors that affect purchasing decisions. Perceived authenticity—where followers believe the influencer's endorsements are genuine and not purely commercial—is a strong driver of purchasing behavior among Gen Z [4]. Trustworthiness and expertise are also critical; influencers who demonstrate knowledge about a product or consistently offer reliable recommendations are more likely to sway their audience's decisions [5]. Entertaining content that engages users emotionally or humorously also plays a role in maintaining follower attention and increasing the likelihood

of purchase [6]. These characteristics demonstrate the complexity of influencer impact.

Moreover, influencer marketing has been found to outperform many traditional marketing techniques in appealing to younger consumers [7]. The integration of storytelling and personal narratives by influencers fosters a deep connection with Gen Z audiences, often translating into greater brand loyalty and purchase intent [8]. While some research suggests gender differences may influence how these factors affect decision-making, evidence is inconsistent, leaving room for further inquiry [9]. This uncertainty underlines the importance of exploring demographic distinctions in the context of influencer effects.

Despite extensive studies on influencer marketing, there are gaps that this research seeks to address. Most existing work tends to focus on individual platforms, specific product categories, or limited demographic segments, thereby restricting the scope of generalization. Additionally, the evolving digital ecosystem—with new platforms and influencer types emerging rapidly—necessitates updated exploration into how Gen Z evaluates authenticity and credibility in influencer content [10]. Finally, many studies treat influencer factors as universally positive, with less emphasis on the potential for negative impacts or differences by gender and age, areas this study aims to examine more critically.

This study centers on profiling the demographic characteristics of Generation Z respondents, specifically regarding age and gender, while assessing the influence of social media influencers on their purchasing decisions. It investigates the relationships between purchasing behavior and key influencer-related factors—including authenticity, entertainment value, trust, expertise, and trustworthiness—and aims to develop an intervention program based on these findings to assist marketers and influencers in optimizing their strategies. The study rigorously tests hypotheses that

explore not only the absence of relationships between these factors and purchasing decisions but also the potential negative impacts these elements may have, thereby challenging conventional assumptions in influencer marketing. Additionally, it examines gender differences to identify variations in how these factors affect male and female consumers within Gen Z. The outcomes are expected to provide nuanced insights that inform more effective, evidence-based, and ethically sound influencer marketing strategies tailored to the preferences and behaviors of Generation Z.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study employed a descriptive survey method. The researcher-made questionnaire served as the primary tool for data collection. Consultations were also held to address clarifying questions, authenticate the respondents' comments, and request additional information.

Statistical Methods:

a. Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient for the hypothesis of a significant relationship

b. The Mann-Whitney U Test is used to test for significant differences.

Participants:

The respondents belong to Generation Z (Zoomers) in the locality. Individuals in Generation Z were born between 1997 and 2012, which means that in 2025, their ages range from 13 to 28 years old.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Demographic profile of the respondents

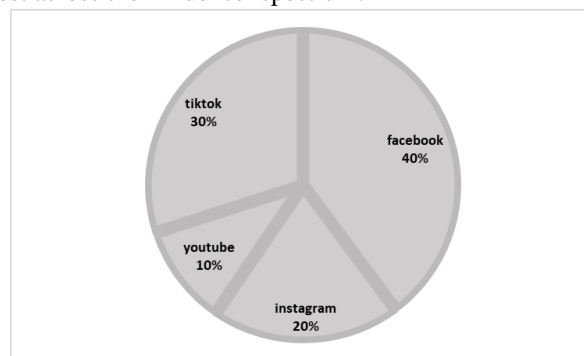
Age	Frequency	Percentage %
Below 20 years	0	0
21-30 years	313	76
Above 30 years old	101	24
Total	414	100
Gender		
Male	84	20
Female	330	80
Total	414	100

The demographic distribution of the respondents indicates that the majority, comprising 76% (n = 313), fall within the 21 to 30 years old age group, while 24% (n = 101) are above 30 years old. Results also show that no respondents were less than 20 years of age, suggesting that the study population primarily consists of young to middle-aged adults. In terms of gender, the data reveal a significant predominance of female participants, accounting for 80% (n = 330), whereas male respondents comprise only 20% (n = 84). This demographic profile reflects a sample that is largely young adult and female, which may have implications for the interpretation of findings related to purchasing decisions and the influence of social media.

Table 2. Types of Influencers Followed by Gen Z

Influencer type	Percentage
Micro-influencers(10K-100K followers)	24%
Macro-influencers(100K-1M followers)	30%
Mega-influencers (1M+ followers)	28%
Nano-influencers (1K-10K followers)	18%

The data in the table shows the distribution of different types of influencers followed by Generation Z, highlighting their preferences across follower count categories. Macro-influencers with 100K to 1M followers are the most popular, attracting 30% of Gen Z followers, closely followed by mega-influencers with over 1 million followers at 28%. Micro-influencers, with 10K to 100K followers, maintain considerable influence at 24%, indicating that a significant portion of Gen Z also values more relatable, smaller-scale creators. Nano-influencers, having the fewest followers (1K to 10K), hold the smallest share at 18%, which, while the least popular category, still represents a meaningful segment of Gen Z's influencer engagement. This suggests that Gen Z prefers influencers who offer a mix of large-scale reach and varying degrees of personal connection, showing balanced interest across the influencer spectrum.



Social Media Usage Patterns of Gen Z

The pie chart illustrates the social media usage patterns of Gen Z, highlighting a clear preference for Facebook, which accounts for the largest share at 40%. TikTok follows with a significant 30%, reflecting its popularity among younger audiences for short-form video content. Instagram holds a 20% share, indicating its continued relevance as a platform for visual engagement and social interaction. YouTube, despite being a major content platform, has the smallest share at 10%, indicating that while it is widely used, it may not be as dominant in daily social media interactions for Gen Z compared to the others. Overall, the data suggests that while Gen Z values diverse social media platforms, Facebook and TikTok are their primary choices, with Instagram and YouTube playing secondary but still important roles in their daily digital habits.

Correlation of authenticity factor and Gen Z's Purchasing decisions

The correlation result between purchasing decision and authenticity factor shows an r-value of 0.648, indicating a

strong positive correlation. This implies that customers are more inclined to buy a product if they believe it to be more genuine. The p-value of 0.000, being significantly lower than the 0.05 level, provides evidence that the relationship between the two variables is statistically significant. Therefore, the study rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that the authenticity factor positively impacts Gen Z's Purchasing decisions.

Correlation of the entertainment value factor and Gen Z's Purchasing decisions

The correlation result between purchasing decision and entertainment value factor shows an r-value of 0.687, indicating a strong positive correlation. This suggests that consumers are more likely to make a purchase when the product provides a high level of entertainment or enjoyment. The p-value of 0.000, being significantly lower than the 0.05 level, provides evidence that the relationship between the two variables is statistically significant. Therefore, the study rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that the entertainment value factor positively impacts Gen Z's Purchasing decisions.

Correlation of trust and credibility factor and Gen Z's Purchasing decisions

The correlation results between purchasing decision and trust and credibility factor shows an r-value of 0.707, indicating a very strong positive correlation. This suggests that as consumers' trust and confidence in a product or brand increase, their likelihood of making a purchase also increase. The p-value of 0.000, being significantly lower than the 0.05 level, provides evidence that the relationship between the two variables is statistically significant. Therefore, the study rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that trust and credibility factor positively impact Gen Z's Purchasing decisions.

Correlation of perceived expertise factor and Gen Z's Purchasing decisions

The correlation result between purchasing decision and perceived expertise factor shows an r-value of 0.744, indicating a very strong positive correlation. This implies that the more consumers perceive a source or brand as knowledgeable and competent, the more likely they are to make a purchase. The p-value of 0.000, being significantly lower than the 0.05 level, provides evidence that the relationship between the two variables is statistically significant. Therefore, the study rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that the perceived expertise factor positively impacts Gen Z's Purchasing decisions.

Correlation of trustworthiness factor and Gen Z's Purchasing decisions

The correlation result between purchasing decision and trustworthiness factor shows an r-value of 0.756, indicating a very strong positive correlation. This implies that as the trustworthiness of a product, brand, or endorser increases, the likelihood of consumers purchasing the product also increases. The p-value of 0.000, being significantly lower than the 0.05 level, provides evidence that the relationship between the two variables is statistically significant. Therefore, the study rejects the null hypothesis and concludes

that the trustworthiness factor positively impacts Gen Z's Purchasing decisions.

Correlation of Social media influencers and Gen Z's Purchasing decisions

The correlation analysis between social media influencers and purchasing decision reveals an r-value of 0.720, indicating a strong positive correlation. This implies that individuals who are more influenced by social media influencers tend to show higher purchasing engagement or intent. The p-value of 0.046, which is less than the 0.05 significance level, provides strong statistical evidence that the relationship between the two variables is highly significant. As a result, the study rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that social media influencers positively impact Gen Z's Purchasing decisions.

Significant difference between purchasing decisions and the identified factors when grouped by gender

<i>Purchasing Decision and</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U Value</i>	<i>Z Score</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Authenticity Factor	Male	207.54	13857.000	-.003	.998	Retain H ₀	No Significant Difference
	Female	207.49					
Entertainment Value Factor	Male	235.02	11548.500	-2.378	.017	Reject H ₀	Significant Difference
	Female	200.50					
Trust and Credibility Factor	Male	218.46	12939.000	-.950	.342	Retain H ₀	No Significant Difference
	Female	204.71					
Perceived Expertise Factor	Male	216.88	13072.000	-.819	.413	Retain H ₀	No Significant Difference
	Female	205.11					
Trustworthiness Factor	Male	211.96	13485.500	-.389	.697	Retain H ₀	No Significant Difference
	Female	206.37					

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test reveal that gender does not significantly impact the perceptions on most social media influencers' factors related to purchasing decisions, which includes authenticity ($p = 0.998$), trust and credibility ($p = 0.342$), perceived expertise ($p = 0.413$), and trustworthiness ($p = 0.697$), as all p-values are greater than the 0.05 significance level. This indicates that male and female respondents generally perceive these factors similarly, leading to the retention of the null hypothesis in each case. However, a significant difference was found in the entertainment value factor ($p = 0.017$), where male respondents (Mean Rank = 235.02) rated it higher than females (Mean Rank = 200.50). This suggests that gender plays a role in how entertainment value influences purchasing decisions, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis for this factor.

Significant difference between purchasing decisions and the identified factors when grouped by gender. (Consolidated)

<i>Social Media Influencer's Factors and</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U Value</i>	<i>Z Score</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Purchasing Decision	Male	218.59	12928.500	-.952	.341	Retain H ₀	No Significant Difference
	Female	204.68					

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test reveal that gender does not significantly impact the purchasing decisions of Gen Z's as influenced by social media factors. The mean rank for male respondents is 218.59, which is slightly higher than the

204.68 mean rank for female respondents, suggests that the male respondents rated higher compared to the female respondents. However, the U value of 12,928.500, with a corresponding Z score of -0.952 and a p-value of 0.341, indicates that the difference is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the study retains the null hypothesis and concludes that there is no significant difference between purchasing decisions and the identified factors when grouped by gender.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The study clearly confirms that digital influencers significantly affect the purchasing decisions of Generation Z. Key influencer attributes—including authenticity, trustworthiness, and perceived expertise, credibility, and entertainment value—show strong positive correlations with Gen Z's purchasing decisions. These findings underscore the influential role that relatable and credible content creators play in shaping consumer attitudes and choices within this digitally engaged group. While male and female respondents generally perceive influencer qualities similarly, entertainment value notably has a stronger effect on males, highlighting defined differences in how content resonates across gender lines.

For businesses aiming to connect effectively with Generation Z, the results emphasize the necessity of selecting influencers who not only have large followers but also demonstrate genuine authenticity, expertise, and trustworthiness. Developing long-term partnerships with such influencers can boost the credibility and impact of branded content, thereby enhancing consumer trust and fostering deeper brand loyalty. Additionally, the importance of entertaining content, particularly for male audiences, presents an opportunity for targeted marketing strategies that tailor messaging to specific segments within Gen Z, ensuring greater engagement and relevance.

Based on these insights, companies should craft influencer marketing campaigns that prioritize authenticity and expertise while intertwining entertaining elements to maximize appeal. Implementing gender-conscious content strategies can further augment marketing effectiveness, enabling brands to build stronger, more trusting connections with Generation Z. By adopting such evidence-based approaches, businesses can drive higher effectiveness in turning prospects into customers, deepen consumer relationships, and maintain competitiveness in the fast-evolving social media landscape that shapes this influential generation's purchasing behavior.

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