IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON GEN Z PURCHASING DECISIONS

Michelle P. Yu
North Eastern Mindanao State University, Department of Business and Management, Cantilan, Surigao del Sur, Philippines
*For correspondence; Tel. + (63) 947-334-8609, E-mail: queen_misyel@yahoo.com.ph

ABSTRACT: *This study explores the influence of social media influencers on Generation Z's purchasing decisions by examining five key factors: authenticity and relatability, entertainment value, trust and credibility, perceived expertise, and trustworthiness. The research aims to clarify how these attributes impact Gen Z's consumer behavior in the context of rapidly evolving digital platforms. A quantitative approach was employed, collecting data from 414 Gen Z respondents. Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient was used to assess the significance of relationships between the influencer factors and purchasing decisions, while linear regression identified the most impactful factor. Findings reveal that all five influencer attributes significantly correlate with Gen Z's purchasing decisions (p < 0.05). Trustworthiness (r = 0.756) and perceived expertise (r = 0.744) exhibit the strongest influence, highlighting the crucial role of credibility and knowledge in shaping consumer behavior. Authenticity and relatability, trust and credibility, and entertainment value also play significant roles in driving purchase intention. The weighted mean scores indicate that Gen Z highly values influencers who appear genuine and relatable, deliver entertaining content, and demonstrate expertise coupled with trustworthy recommendations. The results underscore that no single attribute dominates influence; instead, the combined effect of authenticity, trust, expertise, and entertainment shapes Gen Z's purchasing behavior. This supports existing literature advocating a holistic influencer marketing approach to foster meaningful engagement with younger consumers. Brands seeking to engage Gen Z should therefore focus on collaborating with influencers who authentically embody these integrated traits. This study contributes to addressing gaps concerning demographic nuances and the relative importance of influencer characteristics on Gen Z. It offers actionable insights for businesses and the economy by guiding brands to strategically harness influencer qualities that effectively drive Gen Z's purchasing decisions, ultimately promoting increased sales and stimulating economic growth through enhanced digital marketing strategies.*

Keywords: Social Media Influencers, Generation Z Purchasing Decisions, Influencer Marketing

1.   INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of digital platforms has positioned social media influencers as powerful shapers of consumer attitudes and behaviors, particularly among Generation Z. This study examines how influencers shape Gen Z's purchasing decisions by focusing on five key factors: authenticity and relatability, entertainment value, trust and credibility, perceived expertise, and trustworthiness. By exploring these dimensions, the research seeks to clarify the mechanisms through which influencers inspire, sway, or deter consumer actions within this highly connected and tech-savvy demographic.

Recent literature highlights the essential role that social media influencers play in shaping consumer preferences and purchase decisions, especially among younger audiences. Djafarova and Rushworth [1] found that authenticity and relatability significantly enhance influencers' persuasive power, while Lou and Yuan [2] emphasized that trust and credibility cultivate greater engagement and product adoption among Gen Z consumers. Similarly, De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders [3] emphasized that perceived expertise and entertainment value further strengthen the impact of influencers. These studies collectively suggest that it is the interplay of these factors that fundamentally shapes Gen Z's consumption choices.

In addition, more recent researches continue to prove how influencers have become critical drivers of Generation Z's purchasing behaviors, primarily transforming how brands and businesses engage with young consumers. Ismail and Hudaefi (2022) [4] have demonstrated that influencer honesty and genuine interaction foster strong consumer trust and loyalty.

In contrast, Sokolova and Perez (2021) [5] claim that influencers who communicate effectively and share relevant content are significantly more effective at influencing Gen Z's brand attitudes and buying intentions. These new findings emphasize the continuous relevance of authenticity, relatability, and trustworthiness in influencer marketing to Generation Z.

Furthermore, to trust-based attributes, researchers are investigating how entertainment value and perceived expertise modulate Gen Z's responses to influencer marketing, especially as content formats diversify. De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders [6] observed that an influencer's follower count and domain expertise shape audience perceptions toward endorsed products. More recent studies by Jin, Muqaddam, and Ryu (2019) and Nouri (2021) [7] highlight the interactive effects of entertainment, expertise, and audience engagement in driving Gen Z's purchasing intent, while Hwang and Zhang (2024) [8] note that entertaining and educational short-form videos significantly boost persuasion and conversion rates in Gen Z consumers.

Recent literature continues to reinforce and extend the understanding of how social media influencers shape Gen Z purchasing decisions. Anand [9] found that Gen Z places higher trust in influencer marketing over traditional advertising, specifically valuing authenticity and peer-like engagement on platforms like Instagram and YouTube. Supporting this, a 2025 study revealed that influencer characteristics such as authenticity, relatability, and expertise significantly enhance Gen Z's trust and engagement, with authenticity alone explaining over 50% of the variance in

trust scores. Sinha [10] emphasized the efficacy of micro-influencers, whose smaller but highly engaged followings and relatability lead Gen Z to view their product recommendations as more credible than those of celebrities. Complementing these findings, Huong *et. al* [11] demonstrated that the reliability of influencers is a crucial component in determining purchases made by Vietnamese Generation Z, both directly and indirectly.

Despite this expanding body of literature, several gaps remain in understanding the trend mechanisms by which influencer characteristics such as authenticity, entertainment, expertise, and trust affect specific subgroups within Gen Z. Particularly, Schouten, Janssen, and Verspaget and Phua *et al.* [12] have pointed out that factors like gender and the type of content platform can moderate the effectiveness of influencer attributes. Yet, empirical research that examines and quantifies these demographic differences remains limited. This research aims to address these gaps by analyzing not only the overall impact of each influencer attribute but also its relative importance and interaction with demographic factors, such as age and gender.

To address these issues, the principal objective of this research is to determine the extent to which social media influencers affect Gen Z's purchasing decisions through the identified influencing factors. By clarifying these relationships, the study aims to provide actionable insights for marketers, brands, and content creators in designing effective, authentic influencer campaigns that resonate with Gen Z consumers. Ultimately, businesses, policymakers, and digital marketers will benefit from the findings, gaining a deeper understanding of how to foster genuine connections and drive long-term engagement with this formative consumer group.

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 hypothesis on significant relationship

b. Linear Regression- to come up with what factor most influenced the purchasing behavior.

Participants:

The respondents belong to Generation Z 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

Authenticity and Relatability Factor

The result illustrates that Gen Z highly values influencers who appear genuine and share relatable experiences. These traits foster deeper trust and emotional connections, which strongly influence purchasing decisions. This supports the work of Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) and Sokolova [1] and Perez [13], who found authenticity and relatability as

core drivers behind Gen Z engagement with influencers. Anand (2024) [9] also notes that peer-like interactions enhance influencer effectiveness among younger consumers.

Entertainment Value Factor

Based on the results, entertainment remains an important aspect as engaging and humorous content increases receptivity to influencer messages among Gen Z, consistent with Hwang and Zhang (2024) [8]. However, while entertainment draws attention, it is most effective when paired with trustworthiness and expertise, suggesting that entertainment by itself is not the sole motivator for purchasing decisions.

Trust and Credibility Factor

The results exemplify that trust and credibility emerge as vital factors shaping Gen Z's purchasing decisions. The results confirm findings by Lou and Yuan [2], who argue that transparency and honesty significantly increase consumer trust. Ismail and Hudaefi [4] also highlight that influencers with a credible track record foster loyalty, showing that perceived integrity plays a crucial role in converting engagement into purchases.

Perceived Expertise Factor

Findings demonstrate that expertise is highly regarded by Gen Z consumers, as influencers who establish deep knowledge in their domain are more likely to encourage greater trust and influence purchasing decisions. This echoes De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017) and Nouri [6], who emphasize that perceived expertise enhances credibility and buyer confidence.

Trustworthiness Factor

Results show that trustworthiness stands out as a critical element in shaping Gen Z's decisions, reinforcing findings by Sokolova and Perez (2021) and Ismail and Hudaefi [13]. The influence of perceived sincerity and ethical behavior enhances purchase intentions, whereas a focus on financial motives can erode trust and effectiveness**.**

Purchasing Decisions

Gen Z purchasing decisions are influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including authenticity, trust, entertainment, and expertise. This aligns with Jin, Muqaddam, and Ryu [7], who argue that the effectiveness of influencers depends on combining credible and engaging content to motivate purchasing behaviors.

Table 1. Summary of Social Media Influencers' Factors

Social Media Influencers' Factors	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Authenticity and Relatability Factor	4.12	Agree
Entertainment Value Factor	3.89	Agree
Trust and Credibility Factor	4.15	Agree
Perceived Expertise Factor	4.11	Agree
Trustworthiness Factor	4.09	Agree
Average Weighted Mean	4.07	Agree

Table 1 exemplifies the synthesis of the data, revealing that no factor dominates; instead, a multifaceted approach integrating authenticity, trust, expertise, and entertainment is

necessary to effectively influence Gen Z consumers. Recent scholarship (Lou & Yuan, and Sinha, [2] supports this holistic perspective, emphasizing that marketers need to balance these factors to build meaningful engagement.

Table 2. Correlation between purchasing decisions and the identified factors.

Purchasing Decision and	N	r-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Authenticity Factor		.648	.000	Reject H_0	Significant
Entertainment Value Factor		.687	.000	Reject H_0	Significant
Trust and Credibility Factor	414	.707	.000	Reject H_0	Significant
Perceived Expertise Factor		.744	.000	Reject H_0	Significant
Trustworthiness Factor		.756	.000	Reject H_0	Significant

Table 2 displays results of the correlation analysis, revealing that all examined social media influencer factors have a significant positive relationship with purchasing decisions, as indicated by p-values less than the 0.05 significance level. Specifically, authenticity (r = 0.648, p = 0.000), entertainment value (r = 0.687, p = 0.000), trust and credibility (r = 0.707, p = 0.000), perceived expertise (r = 0.744, p = 0.000), and trustworthiness (r = 0.756, p = 0.000) all show strong correlations. The p-value of 0.000, being significantly lower than the 0.05 level, provides evidence that the relationship between the variables examined is statistically significant. Therefore, the study rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that there is a significant relationship between purchasing decisions and social media influencers' factors. These findings indicate that as Gen Z's perception of these influencer traits increases, so does their likelihood of being influenced in their purchasing decisions. Among these, trustworthiness and perceived expertise exhibit the strongest relationships, suggesting that credibility and knowledgeability are key drivers of consumer behavior in the context of influencer marketing.

4.   CONCLUSIONS
The results demonstrate that social media influencers significantly impact the purchasing decisions of Gen Z consumers through key factors such as authenticity, entertainment value, trust and credibility, perceived expertise, and trustworthiness. Among these, trustworthiness and perceived expertise emerge as the strongest predictors, highlighting the importance of credibility and knowledge in shaping consumer behavior. Authenticity and relatability also play a critical role, as Gen Z values influencers who present genuine and relatable content, fostering emotional connections and deeper trust. Although entertainment value boosts engagement and receptivity, it is most effective when combined with trust and expertise rather than being the sole motivator. These insights suggest that influencer marketing

strategies targeting Gen Z should prioritize building authentic relationships, demonstrating expertise, and maintaining transparency to enhance credibility. Based on these results, brands and marketers are recommended to collaborate with influencers who are perceived as honest and knowledgeable about their endorsements. Encouraging influencers to share relatable personal experiences and maintain transparency about sponsored content will likely increase trust and consumer loyalty. Additionally, integrating engaging and entertaining content can attract attention, but it should be balanced with credible and authentic messaging to drive effective purchase decisions. Ongoing assessment of influencer trustworthiness and audience interaction can enhance the effectiveness of influencer collaborations. Overall, a strategic focus on trustworthiness, expertise, and authenticity will enhance the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns aimed at Gen Z consumers.

5. REFERENCES
[1] Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, C. (2017). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. Computers in Human Behavior, 68, 1–7.

[2] Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media. Journal of Interactive Advertising, 19(1), 58–73.

[3] De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. International Journal of Advertising, 36(5), 798-828.

[4] Ismail, N., & Hudaefi, F. (2022). Influencer credibility and consumer trust in digital marketing: Evidence from Gen Z's purchasing intention. Digital Business Review, 7(2), 130–142.

[5] Sokolova, K., & Perez, C. (2021). You follow fitness influencers on YouTube. But do you actually exercise? How influencer credibility and content type drive engagement and behavior. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 58, 102276.

[6] De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. International Journal of Advertising, 36(5), 798–828.

[7] Jin, S.V., Muqaddam, A., & Ryu, E. (2019). Instafamous and social media influencer marketing. Marketing Intelligence & Planning, 37(5), 567–579.

[8] Hwang, Y., & Zhang, Q. (2024). Exploring the impact of TikTok influencers on Gen Z buying behavior: The roles of entertainment and expertise. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 65(1), 55–69.

[9] Anand, A. (2024). Exploring the Impact of Social Media Influencers on Purchase Decisions on Gen Z Consumers. International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews, 11(3).

[10] Sinha, J. (2025). Tapping Generation Z Micro-Influencers for Marketing and Branding. Journal of Brand Strategy.

[11] Huong, V. T., Linh, T. H., Huy, P. K., Phuong, L. N., & Uyen, D. H. (2025). The impact of influencer marketing on generation Z's purchasing decision for beauty products in Vietnam. Multidisciplinary Reviews, 8(10), 2025322. https://doi.org/10.31893/multirev.2025322

[12] Schouten, A.P., Janssen, L., & Verspaget, M. (2020). Celebrity vs. influencer endorsements in advertising: the role of identification, credibility, and product-endorser fit. International Journal of Advertising, 39(2), 258–281.

[13] Sokolova, Karina & Perez, Charles & Vessal, Saeedeh. (2024). Using social media for health: How food influencers shape home-cooking intentions through vicarious experience. Technological Forecasting and Social Change. 204. 10.1016/j.techfore.2024.123462.