

Understanding the Buying Behavior of Generation Z Consumers in India: The Parasocial Mediating Role of Influencers on Consumption Tendency

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to look at how social media exposure affects Generation Z consumers in India's perception of product value, intent to buy, and consumption habits. The study also investigated the effects on these consumer outcomes of influencers' perceived social and physical attractiveness and certain features, like visual appeal, authenticity, perceived usefulness, and social validation. A purposive sample approach was used in conjunction with a qualitative research design to administer structured questionnaires to 750 Generation Z consumers, ages 12 to 22. Regression analysis was used to examine 620 viable replies once partial responses were filtered out to evaluate the proposed hypotheses. The results showed that research participants' perceptions of the worth of items, propensity to buy, and consumption habits were all considerably increased by social media exposure. Furthermore, perceived value, buying intent, Para Social Interaction (PSI), and consumption habits were all highly influenced by influencers' physical and social attractiveness. The study's findings highlight how important social media influencers and platforms are in influencing the attitudes and actions of Generation Z customers. With the use of these data, marketers and brands can create customized marketing plans that appeal to Gen Z's desires for social validation, visual appeal, and authenticity.

Keywords: Generation Z; Social Media Exposure; Perceived Value; Purchase Intent; Consumption Patterns; Influencers; Para Social Interaction (PSI).

1. Introduction

Since Generation Z was raised via digital communication, researchers have dubbed them "digital natives" (Adeola et al. 2020; Reinikainen et al. 2020; Smith 2019). Because users check Instagram at least five times a day, they can be exposed to digital advertisements on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram (Chen 2018). With 32% of the world's population in Generation Z, the group is predicted to have a significant influence on worldwide sales. The exponential expansion of e-commerce and information technology has led to a rise in online shopping (Liu et al. 2017).

Customers can debate their online buying experiences through new media, which empowers and decentralizes society (Wunsch-Vincent, & Vickery, 2007). while incorporating information while making purchases, users prefer user-generated content (text, photographs, videos, etc.) (Thoumrunroje 2014). Social media cannot function without user-generated content, thus it is imperative to enhance the interactive elements of this material and research how consumers' purchasing decisions are impacted by it. The interactive impacts of user-generated content on online purchase intentions have not been well studied, despite the increase of content marketing (Müller & Christandl, 2019).

The rise of social media has made it possible to produce and share an infinite amount of material with an audience, which is advantageous for both common people and celebrities. This has led to the emergence of micro-celebrities. Even those who are not renowned can use social media to develop a "public persona" that draws a sizable following (Marwick, 2015). Micro-celebrities interact with their audience in between e-WOM and brand endorsement (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Because they are more likable than traditional celebrities, micro-celebrities have an impact on audience purchasing intentions (Lisichkova & Othman 2017).

Micro-celebrities are less popular and influential than traditional celebrities (Gräve 2017); nevertheless, Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) demonstrate that the reverse is true. A possible digital advertising tactic is online social networking (Brettel et al., 2015; Carlson & Lee, 2015). According to Dehghani and Tumer (2015), the Facebook-sponsored advertising

area has facilitated the dissemination of marketing messages by establishing connections between manufacturers, enterprises, and buyers.

In contrast to banner advertising, Facebook-sponsored content may be customized depending on a user's past online searches, which increases its efficacy in terms of consumer targeting (Barreto, 2013). According to Villiard and Moreno (2012), Facebook allows users to edit adverts within their narrative or sponsored content area. Research conducted in the past on Facebook advertising examined the connection between social media and "word of mouth" advertising (Yang, 2012). Seldom is social media advertising, a brand-new interactive advertising format, studied.

Influencers are those who amass a sizable social media following and coach others (Leung et al., 2022a; Vrontis et al., 2021). On social media platforms like YouTube and Instagram, 70% of Gen Z users follow at least one influencer (Kantar, 2020). 50. Martínez-López et al. (2020) claim that Gen Z sees influencers as peers and thinks they are more trustworthy and dependable than celebrities. In addition, 44% of Gen Z bases their purchase decisions on suggestions from influential individuals, according to Kantar (2020).

Since influencers have a significant impact on Gen Z's purchasing patterns, businesses are attempting more and more to harness the power of their recommendations. In 2021, Influencer Intelligence published a blog post (Barnett, 2021) stating that 45% of marketers believe they should have total control over the captions and aesthetics of influencer posts. Similarly, 39% of marketers in the US and UK and 55% of marketers in Germany also believe they should have total control over influencer content across all media.

According to Leung et al., (2022b) Gen Z is conscious about businesses using influencers in their marketing campaigns, they nevertheless want influencers and brands to provide information ethically. Moreover, "followers" have shunned or stopped following "influencers" due to false advertising, misleading endorsements, and "the promotion" of unattainable or "unsustainable lifestyles" (Venn, 2021). The relationship between "Volvo and Chriselle Lim, a well-known influencer" in the lifestyle, fashion, and beauty industries, is one instance of "influencer marketing" gone bad. In a departure from her typical work, Lim collaborated with Volvo to produce a polished film emphasizing the company's commitment to safety and the environment. Her followers, the majority of whom were Gen Z, responded negatively to this post, questioning the authenticity of the material and the reliability of "the influencer" and the company (Sid, 2022).

Notwithstanding these incidents, corporations persist in allocating a significant amount of "their marketing budget to influencer marketing," aiming to appeal to Generation Z (Martínez-López et al., 2020). It is projected that brands will spend US\$13.8 billion on influencer marketing by 2021 (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2021). It is therefore important to comprehend the circumstances in which Gen Z steers clear of "influencers" and their advice and even the companies that hire them.

Gen Zers anticipate authentic information from influencers rather than giving in to the sway of marketers (Lou & Kim, 2019). According to Francis and Hoefel (2018), they also anticipate that companies would be sincere and refrain from any morally reprehensible behavior. Gen Zers, on the other hand, feel dubious, irritated, spammed, and duped if they believe influencers are blatantly pushing businesses and purposefully promoting goods (Childers & Boatwright, 2021). Additionally, because they cherish their relationships with influencers and companies, they become enraged when their trust is betrayed (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). These irate customers frequently proceed to launch scathing social media tirades against the companies (Goldring & Azab, 2021). As a result, companies must comprehend the channels and timing of Gen Zers' displeasure expression.

This study intends to address the following research concerns on the parasocial mediating function and its role in order to mitigate the negative effects of social media influence

RQ1: Does social media exposure significantly influence three key factors among Gen Z consumers perceived value of products, purchase intent, and consumption patterns?

- RQ2: How do specific factors (visual appeal and authenticity, perceived utility, and social validation) interact on Instagram to influence Gen Z consumers' perceived value of products, purchase intent, and consumption patterns?

- RQ3: How do influencers' perceived social attractiveness and physical attractiveness influence Parasocial Interaction (PSI), and subsequently influence product value perception and purchase intent among Gen Z consumers?

The goal of the study is to learn more about the buying habits of Gen Z consumers in India, with an emphasis on the influencers' parasocial mediating role on consumption tendency. To find any current research gaps, the study will first examine earlier works in this field. Subsequently, these deficiencies will be highlighted by the study, providing the foundation for the formulation of its goals and hypotheses. The study methodology that was utilized will next be covered, giving an overview of the techniques for gathering and analyzing data. After that, a detailed presentation of the research and conclusions will be made, providing insight into the complex interplay between Indian Gen Z consumer behavior and influencers. The study's conclusions will be examined, along with their ramifications and recommendations for marketers, influencers, and legislators who want to effectively interact with this audience.

2. Review of Literature

Nowadays, influencers are gaining people's affection because of their exceptional output, remarkable presence, and substantial following (De Veirman, et al. 2017). According to Rishi and Kuthuru (2021), there is a significant impact that the concepts of onboarding influencers have on individuals, particularly the younger demographic. Ads may be made more successful by thinking of them as marketing strategies and constructing them from the viewpoint of the consumer, claim Shimp and Andrews (2013). Armstrong et al. (2014) investigated two forms of consumer involvement in purchasing behavior based on large or minor variations in brands and high or low interest among consumers. A critical method for buy behavior is the choice interaction approach, which considers the events leading up to and involving a purchase and depicts the decision-making process (Karimi, 2013). The process by which consumers make decisions about what to buy and how to acquire needs-satisfying products, concepts, or services is known as consumer decision-making (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2009).

The impact of onboarding influencers in marketing on Millennials is enormous (Chatzigeorgiou, 2017). These days, influencers are gaining popularity on the Internet because of their amazing work and presence, which draws attention to brands (Levin, 2020). According to Audrezet et al. (2018), marketers have identified them as the contemporary strategy that has witnessed a notable surge in collaborations with marketing organizations throughout time. Numerous businesses have used various marketing and advertising strategies that have improved consumer brand recognition, which has directly resulted in more sales and deals (Barreda, et al. 2015). Following these influencers is becoming more and more popular as a way to ensure they don't miss any stuff. Commercial advertising appeals using FOMO (fear of missing out) have been used in the marketing field (Hodkinson, 2019). It can be used in other domains. The influence of "NoMophobia" on investment decisions was studied by Shiva et al. (2020), who used the notion of compensating the internet to highlight the fallacy of gamblers.

According to Kadekova and Holienčinova (2018), brands get together with these influencers to offer feedback, critiques, and suggestions. High brand consciousness is shown in children whose parents are aware of the brand, according to Nelson and McLeod's (2005) findings. Therefore, customers are now aware of brands at a young age in their life (Kumar, 2019). According to research by Choi and Lewallen (2018) on Instagram, parents post their children's material on social media, which greatly increases the digital image of children. These days, younger customers are more aware of businesses because they are more cognizant of social media. (Thomas and others, 2018). Many genres of producers are overflowing Instagram and other social media platforms, influencing not just younger generations but also individuals of all ages (Dolan, et al. 2016).

According to Arora et al. (2019), social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are the primary venues for influential marketing activities. According to Tajudeen et al. (2018), influencers can provide options and lower the cost of reaching the target audience. Influencers' material and messages are perceived as honest, personal, non-commercial, controllable, trustworthy, and deserving of their like. They also raise awareness. According to their content, influencers may be broadly categorized into four groups: infotainers, entertainers, informers, and snoopers (Gross & Wangenheim, 2018). The recipients of social media are snoopers. Their motivation stems from the simple pleasure of

creating and disseminating material (Gross, 2020). Snoopers frequently divulge to their audience private information that should be kept private (Gross & Wangenheim, 2018).

Influencers have grown so much as a result of social media that they are now considered brands in and of themselves (Jun & Yi, 2020). In addition, influencer marketing has been a common strategy used by conventional firms to establish a desired brand image and to develop favorable interactions with Gen Z (Chapple & Cownie, 2017; Harrison, 2018). According to Scholz (2021) and Gutfreund (2016), “Gen Zers expect influencers” to offer them precise details on topics of interest, and the study demonstrated that the suggestions of influencers have a more significant effect on Gen Z's purchase and consumption behavior than traditional advertisements (Dunkley, 2017). According to Jun & Yi, 2020; Ki & Kim, 2019; Leung et al., 2022a, influencer brands may be distinguished by their uniqueness, ordinariness, and activity.

As a result, customers view influencers' endorsements as recommendations from other customers and anticipate their message to be genuine and noncommercial (Leung et al., 2022b). According to Lee et al. (2009), there are “four reasons why consumers actively choose to avoid or reject a brand”: (1) unfulfilled brand promises (also known as experiential avoidance); (2) promises that are symbolically unappealing (also known as identity avoidance); (3) promises that are socially or morally detrimental (also known as moral avoidance), and (4) promises that are functionally inadequate (also known as deficit value avoidance). According to Reinikainen et al. (2021), Gen Z regards influencers as peers who provide honest perspectives, instead of serving as “the voices of commercialization.” As a result, “influencers” are viewed as the opposite of “hegemonic brands, which Gen Z perceives as opportunistic” (Fournier & Avery, 2011).

Nevertheless, Gen Z views these as morally repugnant behaviors by influencers when they believe that they are under the authority of brands (Cocker et al., 2021). In other words, if Gen Z feels that influencers have caved into brand control and followed directions, they will see information from influencers as commercial and hence dishonest. As a result, they could blame the influencers for breaking the agreement, which might make them feel bad about themselves (Cocker et al., 2021). That is, according to Gen Z, influencers who engage in such transgressions are morally reprehensible and deserving of criticism (Cocker et al., 2021; Jun & Yi, 2020). Moral avoidance behavior is therefore sparked by this (Lee et al., 2009).

The body of research on Gen Z consumer behavior indicates several important gaps that need to be filled. First of all, there is a dearth of knowledge about the para-social mediating function of influencers, which creates a vacuum in our understanding of the precise ways in which influencers affect this demographic's purchase patterns. Second, there is a dearth of empirical research on the para-social mediating function of influencers on the purchasing behavior of Generation Z, underscoring the need for additional data-driven investigations. Furthermore, the majority of the research focuses on well-known social media influencers, ignoring the wide variety of influencer kinds that Gen Z customers interact with, such as micro-influencers or niche influencers.

Furthermore, the majority of studies are carried out in Western environments, ignoring any cross-cultural differences in the efficacy of influencers among Gen Z customers worldwide. Finally, there is a lack of attention paid to the durability and long-term consequences of influencer-consumer connections, suggesting a knowledge gap about the elements that contribute to the longevity and long-term effects of influencer influence. Closing these gaps will lead to a more thorough knowledge of how Indian Gen Z consumer behavior and influencers interact.

The study develops the following research aims and hypotheses in light of the previously mentioned research question and research gap.

3. Objectives

- To investigate whether social media exposure has a significant positive influence on three key factors among Gen Z consumers perceived value of products, purchase intent, and consumption patterns.
- To analyze how specific factors (visual appeal and authenticity, perceived utility, and social validation) interact on Instagram to influence Gen Z consumers' perceived value of products, purchase intent, and consumption patterns.

- To explore how influencers' perceived social attractiveness and physical attractiveness influence Para Social Interaction (PSI), and subsequently influence the perceived value of products, purchase intent, and consumption patterns. among Gen Z consumers.

4. Hypothesis

H1: Social media exposure has a significant positive influence on the perceived value of products, purchase intent, and consumption patterns among Gen Z consumers.

H2: The specific factors (visual appeal and authenticity, perceived utility, and social validation) on Instagram interact to influence the perceived value of products, purchase intent, and consumption patterns among Gen Z consumers.

H3: Influencers perceived social attractiveness and physical attractiveness influence Para Social Interaction (PSI) among Gen Z consumers, subsequently influencing the perceived value of products, purchase intent, and consumption patterns.

5. Methodology

This study used a qualitative research approach to look at the purchasing habits of Generation Z customers in the Indian environment, especially those who are between the ages of 12 and 22. A purposive sample strategy was used to send 750 structured questionnaires to possible participants. 654 surveys were completed, resulting in an 87.2% response rate. After removing incomplete contributions, 620 replies were deemed suitable for additional analysis during evaluation.

The study had three objectives. Firstly, it sought to ascertain how social media exposure influenced Gen Z consumers' perceptions of product value, intent to buy, and consumption patterns; secondly, examine the interaction between certain Instagram-related factors—visual appeal and authenticity, perceived utility, and social validation—and the aforementioned consumer outcomes; and thirdly, look into the mediating role that influencers' perceived social and physical attractiveness played in Para Social Interaction (PSI), which in turn influenced consumers' perceptions of product value, intent to buy, and consumption patterns (H3). Strict adherence to ethical rules and participant anonymity were maintained throughout the research process as the gathered data is subjected to qualitative analysis methodologies to find patterns, themes, and linkages relevant to the study objectives.

6. Results

6.1 Demographic Profile

Table 1: Demographic Profile

S No.	Demographic Factors	Category	N	Percent
1.	Gender	Female	284	45.8%
		Male	336	54.2%
2.	Age	12-15 Years	140	22.6%
		16-19 Years	260	41.9%
		20-22 Years	220	35.5%
3.	Qualification	Secondary Education	68	11.0%
		Undergraduate	110	17.7%
		Graduate	152	24.5%

		Post-Graduate	218	35.2%
		Others	72	11.6%
4.	City/Residence	Ahmedabad	73	11.8%
		Bangalore	63	10.2%
		Chennai	55	8.9%
		Delhi	124	20.0%
		Hyderabad	45	7.3%
		Kolkata	102	16.5%
		Mumbai	60	9.7%
		Pune	58	9.4%
		Others	40	6.5%
5.	Monthly Income	No Income	135	21.8%
		Less than 10k	138	22.3%
		10-20k	233	37.6%
		More than 20k	114	18.4%
6.	Hours spent daily on social media platforms	Less than 2 Hours	175	28.2%
		2-5 Hours	222	35.8%
		6-9 Hours	133	21.5%
		More than 9 Hours	90	14.5%

Table 1 displays demographic information gathered from a representative sample of people in different categories. First, the sample's gender distribution shows that women make up 45.8% (284 respondents) and men make up 54.2% (336 respondents). In terms of age, the majority of respondents (260) are between the ages of 16 and 19, accounting for 41.9% of the sample; 20 to 22 years old account for 35.5% of the sample, while 12 to 15 years old account for 22.6% of the sample. Post-graduates make up the largest category in terms of education, accounting for 35.2% (218 respondents), followed by graduates, who make up 24.5% (152 respondents). In terms of residency, Delhi has the most representation (20.0%; 124 respondents), followed by Kolkata (16.5%; 102 respondents). When it comes to income, the majority of respondents (233)—37.6%—fall into the 10–20k group, while 138 respondents—22.3%—earn less than \$10,000. Finally, when it comes to the frequency of daily social media use, the 2–5 hours group is most common (35.8%; 222 respondents), with less than 2 hours coming in second at 28.2% (175 respondents).

6.2 Hypothesis Testing

H1: Social media exposure has a significant positive influence on the perceived value of products, purchase intent, and consumption patterns among Gen Z consumers.

Table 2: Regression

Hypothesis	Regression Weights	Beta Coefficient	R2	F	t-value	p-value	Hypotheses Result
H1	Social media exposure -> perceived value of products	0.429	0.214	167.814	12.954	0.000	Supported
	Social media exposure -> Purchase Intents	0.052	.007	4.138	2.078	0.038	
	Social media exposure -> consumption patterns	0.055	.008	5.284	2.299	0.022	

The hypothesis looks at whether exposure to social media influences how much people think items are worth, whether they intend to buy them, and how they consume them (see Table 2). Regressing the dependent variables of purchase intent, consumption habits, and perceived product value on the predictive variable of social media exposure was done to test hypothesis H1. Social media exposure is shown to be significantly associated with improvements in the perceived value of items, purchase intent, and consumption habits ($b = .429, .025, \text{ and } .055$, $p < .005$). $F = 12.954, 2.078, \text{ and } 2.299$, $p < 0.05$). These results unequivocally show that exposure to social media positively influences perceptions of product value, purchase intent, and consumption habits. Moreover, the alternative hypothesis is accepted as the R^2 values .214, .007, and .008 show that the model explains 21.4% of the variance in perceived product value, 5.2% of the variation in purchase intent, and 5.5% of the variation in consumption habits.

H2: The specific factors (visual appeal and authenticity, perceived utility, and social validation) on Instagram interact to influence the perceived value of products, purchase intent, and consumption patterns among Gen Z consumers.

Table 3: Regression

Hypothesis	Regression Weights	Beta Coefficient	R2	F	t-value	p-value	Hypotheses Result
	visual appeal and authenticity -> perceived value of products	0.240	0.130	45.937	6.496	0.000	
	perceived utility and social validation ->	0.201			5.496	0.000	

H2	perceived value of products						Supported
	visual appeal and authenticity -> Purchase Intents	0.123	.090	30.341	4.800	0.000	
	perceived utility and social validation -> Purchase Intents	0.126			4.966	0.000	
	visual appeal and authenticity -> Consumption patterns	0.030	.010	3.140	2.072	0.024	
	perceived utility and social validation -> consumption patterns	0.090			2.499	0.013	

The findings of a regression analysis examining the influence of many elements (visual appeal, authenticity, perceived usefulness, and social validation) on the perceived value of items, intents to purchase, and consumption habits are shown in Table 3. The R-squared (R2) values, beta coefficients, F-statistics, t-values, and associated p-values of H2 are all examined. With beta values of 0.240 and 0.201, respectively, the study revealed that the perceived value of items is favorably influenced by perceived usefulness and social validation, as well as visual appeal and authenticity. The given t-values and p-values indicate that these correlations are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). When it comes to purchase intentions, perceived usefulness and social validation, as well as visual appeal and authenticity, all play important roles. Based on the t- and p-values, the beta coefficients for these factors are 0.123 and 0.126, respectively, and both are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The data points to a lesser impact of these factors on consumption patterns. While the influence of perceived utility and social validation is less strong (Beta coefficient not provided), it is still statistically significant ($p = 0.013$) and indicates that the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Visual appeal and authenticity have a Beta coefficient of 0.030, which is statistically significant ($p = 0.024$).

H3: Influencers perceived social attractiveness and physical attractiveness influence Para Social Interaction (PSI) among Gen Z consumers, subsequently influencing the perceived value of products, purchase intent, and consumption patterns.

Table 4: Regression

Hypothesis	Regression Weights	Beta Coefficient	R2	F	t-value	p-value	Hypotheses Result
	perceived social attractiveness and physical attractiveness -> Para Social Interaction (PSI)	0.384	0.117	81.555	9.031	0.000	

H1	perceived social attractiveness and physical attractiveness -> perceived value of products	0.381	0.098	67.412	8.210	0.000	Supported
	perceived social attractiveness and physical attractiveness -> Purchase Intents	0.476	.335	311.618	17.653	0.000	
	perceived social attractiveness and physical attractiveness -> Consumption patterns	0.071	.008	5.131	2.265	0.024	

As indicated in Table 4, the hypothesis looks at the relationship between perceived social and physical attractiveness and Para Social Interaction (PSI), Purchase Intent, and product value perception. Perceived social attractiveness and physical beauty were the predictor variables on which the dependent variables Para Social Interaction (PSI), perceived product value, purchase intent, and consumption habits were regressed to test hypothesis H1. The results show that physical and perceived social attractiveness are important factors in boosting Para Social Interaction (PSI), perceived value of products, purchase intent, and consumption patterns ($b = .384, .381, .476, \text{ and } .071$, $p < .005$). The factors that influence these factors are $F = 81.555, 67.412, 311.618, \text{ and } 5.131$, $p < 0.05$. These results unequivocally show that perceived physical and social attractiveness have positive influence on buying intentions, consumption habits, PSI (parasocial interaction), and perceived product value. Additionally, the model is accepted for the alternative hypothesis because of the R^2 values of .117, .098, .335, and .008 show that it explains 11.7% of the variation in Para Social Interaction (PSI), 9.8% of the variation in product perceived value, 33.5% of the variation in Purchase Intent, and 0.8% of the variation in consumption patterns.

7. Discussion

Consistent with the specified assumptions, the study's findings illuminate the noteworthy influence of social media exposure on the perceived value of items, purchase intent, and consumption habits among India's Generation Z consumers. The correlation that exists between exposure to social media and these consumer outcomes is favorable, which highlights the crucial role that digital platforms play in influencing customer behavior in modern marketplaces.

The current study validates the claim that social media exposure enhances customers' perceptions of product value and influences their purchasing decisions, which is in line with previous studies (Smith, 2019; Geurin 2023). Positive beta coefficients and statistically significant p-values indicate that social media platforms are useful for marketers to convey product value propositions to Gen Z customers, which in turn influences their propensity to make purchases and their patterns of consumption.

The study also explored the particular elements of Instagram—visual appeal, perceived utility, authenticity, and social validation—that influence how much people value things, whether they intend to buy them, and how they consume them. The results corroborate other research that highlights the value of visual appeal and genuineness in drawing in customers and cultivating favorable brand impressions (Oandasan, 2022; Gong et al. 2020). The claim that these elements,

when properly utilized on social media platforms, might favorably influence customer attitudes and actions is supported by the substantial beta coefficients and p-values.

Curiously, the study also revealed the influencers' perceived physical and social attractiveness as a mediating factor in Para Social Interaction (PSI), which increases the influence on consumption habits, purchasing intent, and perceived value. This research is consistent with the body of literature that emphasizes influencers' potent ability to build relationships with customers and increase brand engagement (Tanwar et al. 2023; Argyris et al. 2020). The beauty features of influencers are found to have a considerable role in explaining the variance in both consumer outcomes, as indicated by the large R-squared values for both purchase intent and PSI.

The fact that the discovered factors' influence differed for each of the dependent variables is notable, nevertheless. The influence of perceived usefulness and social validation was more varied, especially in influencing consumption habits, although visual appeal and authenticity consistently showed substantial positive connections across the outcomes. This variation highlights the complex processes that go into customer decision-making, which are impacted by a wide range of variables other than just the features of a product (Houdek et al. 2018).

To sum up, the study's conclusions offer insightful information to marketers and companies who want to successfully interact with Generation Z customers on social media. Through an awareness of the complex interactions between variables that shape customer attitudes and actions, marketers may create marketing tactics that are more powerful and suited to the tastes and ideals of this generation of digital natives.

8. Conclusion

The conclusion drawn from the quantitative analysis and review of the literature is that before making a purchase, businesses should decide which target demographic they wish to educate about their brands. Secondly, they must determine the goals of their influencer campaign and then craft the message to be distributed accordingly. When choosing whether to concentrate on social presence or domain scope in order to accomplish the specified targets, businesses should take into account the influencer campaign's objectives, target audience, and message. After establishing the emphasis, companies want to ascertain which of the four influencer types most closely matches their requirements. Lastly, companies should start looking for influencers in the categories they have selected. Snoopers, Informers, Entertainers, and Infotainers are examples of influencers, however this list is not exhaustive. Owing to the intense dynamics on social media, new influencers appear often, and other subtypes may add to the proposed typology (Brown & Fiorella, 2013).

The identifying variables are provided and evaluated empirically, and the peculiarities of each type's influencers are examined. Social media influencers are considered a dependable marketing tactic since individuals voluntarily copy them for encouragement. Influencer marketing is perceived as sincere, likable, and trustworthy. Influencers are pro-customers who, in their unique manner, disseminate the company's message to their followers to raise brand awareness and encourage buying behavior. Influencer marketing makes it more likely for customers to reply to messages and ask questions than more traditional marketing strategies since it provides a greater opportunity for customer interaction.

The study's findings have a significant influence on marketers, businesses, and influencers who are attempting to understand consumer behaviour in this dynamic environment, particularly in India's Generation Z market. The study's confirmation of the critical influence that exposure to social media plays, together with the subtle effects of certain Instagram variables and influencers' characteristics, highlights the necessity of using targeted and deliberate ways to effectively engage this technologically sophisticated audience. Through the use of the research's insights, brands can develop targeted marketing strategies that appeal to Gen Z's preferences for authenticity, aesthetic appeal, and social validation. This will strengthen the bond between the brand and the consumer and lead to favorable consumer outcomes, such as an increase in purchase intent and consumption patterns.

Notwithstanding, it is crucial to recognize the constraints of the research to guarantee a fair and impartial analysis of the results. First off, the research's emphasis on Indian Generation Z consumers may restrict the applicability of its conclusions to other cultural situations or demographic groupings. Second, relying solely on information provided by respondents via structured surveys runs the risk of introducing response bias and failing to fully reflect the intricacy of consumer decision-making processes. To give a more thorough knowledge of the complex interactions between variables

influencing Gen Z's purchasing behavior, future research might benefit from using mixed-method techniques that combine observational and experimental methodologies.

In summary, the research provides insightful information on the variables influencing the attitudes and actions of Generation Z customers within the framework of social media marketing, but it also identifies areas that require more investigation and improvement. Future research can further our understanding of consumer behavior in the digital age by addressing the limitations that have been identified and expanding on the current findings. This will enable us to develop more compelling marketing strategies that are specifically tailored to the distinct traits and preferences of Generation Z consumers worldwide.

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