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Impact of Influencer Marketing on Gen Z Purchasing Behaviour: A Study of Bhopal Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract

In the digital age, social media has become a dominant platform influencing consumer decisions, especially among Generation Z (individuals born between 1997–2012). This study explores the impact of influencer marketing on the purchasing behavior of Gen Z consumers in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. A structured questionnaire was administered to 150 respondents aged between 18 and 27 years. The study employed basic statistical tools such as correlation and chi-square tests to identify relationships between influencer attributes and consumer purchasing intentions. The findings reveal a significant positive correlation between influencer credibility, content engagement, and Gen Z's buying behavior. Moreover, factors like trust, relatability, and perceived authenticity strongly affect purchase decisions. The paper concludes that influencer marketing is one of the most effective promotional tools for targeting Gen Z, suggesting that brands should prioritize genuine and value-driven influencer collaborations.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Gen Z, Consumer Behavior, Social Media, Purchase Intention, Bhopal

1. Introduction

In the modern digital era, marketing strategies have undergone a transformative shift. Traditional advertising methods such as print media and television are rapidly being replaced by social media marketing, which allows direct interaction with consumers. Among these digital strategies, influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful tool where brands collaborate with individuals who have established credibility and a substantial following on social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok.

Generation Z, commonly defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, constitutes one of the most digitally active consumer segments. According to Statista (2024), over 85% of Gen Z individuals in India use social media daily, making them highly susceptible to influencer-driven content. Influencers act as opinion leaders, shaping consumer preferences and decisions.

The city of Bhopal, known for its growing youth population and expanding digital literacy, provides an ideal demographic base for analyzing Gen Z consumer behaviour. This study investigates the relationship between influencer marketing and purchasing behaviour among Gen Z consumers in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Influencer Marketing and Consumer Behaviour

Freberg *et al.* (2011) define social media influencers as individuals who have built a reputation through their knowledge and expertise on specific topics. They influence audiences by sharing authentic and relatable content. Studies by Lou and Yuan (2019) highlight that credibility and trustworthiness are crucial determinants of influencer effectiveness.

2.2 Gen Z and Digital Consumption

Priporas *et al.* (2017) emphasize that Gen Z consumers prefer personalized and interactive content. They rely more on social proof (likes, comments, and shares) than traditional advertising.

2.3 Factors Influencing Purchase Intentions

Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) found that influencer attractiveness, expertise, and perceived similarity positively affect consumers' purchase intentions. Similarly, Schouten *et al.* (2020) reported that authenticity and transparency in endorsements enhance consumer trust.

2.4 Research Gap

While several studies have explored influencer marketing globally, limited research focuses on Tier-II Indian cities such as Bhopal. This study fills that gap by providing empirical evidence of how influencer marketing affects Gen Z purchasing decisions in this context.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To study the role of influencer marketing in shaping Gen Z purchasing behaviour in Bhopal.
2. To identify key factors such as trust, relatability, and authenticity influencing purchase intentions.
3. To determine the correlation between influencer credibility and Gen Z buying behaviour.

4. Hypotheses of the Study

H₁: There is a significant correlation between influencer credibility and Gen Z purchasing behaviour.

H₂: There is a significant association between gender and perception of influencer marketing.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The study follows a descriptive research design based on primary data collection.

5.2 Sample and Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was administered to 150 Gen Z respondents (aged 18–27) residing in Bhopal. Respondents were selected through convenience sampling. The questionnaire included demographic details and 20 statements measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree).

5.3 Data Analysis Tools

Data were analyzed using:

Descriptive statistics: Mean, percentage analysis

Inferential statistics: Correlation and Chi-square tests

5.4 Variables Considered

Independent Variables: Influencer credibility, content engagement, trust, authenticity, relatability

Dependent Variable: Purchase intention of Gen Z consumers

6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

6.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	66	44%
Gender	Female	84	56%
Age	18-21 years	48	32%
Age	22-24 years	68	45%
Age	25-27 years	34	23%
Education	Undergraduate	95	63%
Education	Postgraduate	55	37%

Interpretation

The sample comprises mainly young students and early professionals, with a higher proportion of females (56%). Most respondents are undergraduates aged 22–24 years, indicating active social media engagement.

6.2 Key Influencer Attributes and Their Impact

Attribute	Mean Score	Rank
Credibility (Trustworthiness)	4.32	1
Relatability	4.15	2
Authenticity	4.10	3
Content Quality	4.05	4
Attractiveness	3.85	5

Interpretation

Respondents value credibility and relatability most. Influencers perceived as genuine and trustworthy have the greatest impact on purchase decisions.

6.3 Correlation Analysis

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Interpretation
Influencer Credibility & Purchase Intention	0.72	Strong Positive Correlation
Relatability & Purchase Intention	0.68	Positive Correlation
Authenticity & Purchase Intention	0.64	Moderate Positive Correlation

Interpretation

There exists a strong and positive relationship between influencer credibility and Gen Z purchase intention, supporting H₁.

6.4 Chi-square Test: Gender and Perception of Influencer Marketing

Gender	Positive Perception	Neutral	Negative Perception	Total
Male	45	15	6	66
Female	66	12	6	84
Total	111	27	12	150

$$\chi^2 (\text{Calculated}) = 4.32; df = 2; p = 0.12 (p > 0.05)$$

Interpretation

Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, there is no significant association between gender and perception of influencer marketing. Thus, H₂ is rejected.

7. Findings

1. Influencer credibility has a strong positive influence on Gen Z's purchase decisions.
2. Trust and authenticity are the most significant determinants of influencer effectiveness.
3. Gender does not significantly affect perceptions of influencer marketing.
4. Social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube are the most preferred channels for following influencers.
5. Gen Z consumers are more likely to purchase products endorsed by relatable influencers than celebrity endorsers.

8. Suggestions

1. Brands should prioritize collaborations with micro-influencers who have strong audience trust and niche relevance.

2. Influencers must maintain transparency by disclosing paid promotions to preserve authenticity.
3. Marketers should use interactive content formats (reels, Q & As, polls) to strengthen engagement.
4. Policy-makers can develop ethical guidelines for influencer advertising to protect consumer interests.

Conclusion

The study concludes that influencer marketing significantly shapes Gen Z purchasing behavior in Bhopal. Credibility, authenticity, and relatability are the core attributes driving consumer trust and purchase intention. While gender differences are negligible, content engagement and perceived honesty play crucial roles. With India's youth increasingly dependent on digital media, influencer marketing will continue to dominate brand communication strategies. Marketers should, therefore, focus on long-term partnerships with influencers who reflect brand values and maintain genuine engagement with their audience.

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