

THE IMPACT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON THE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR OF GENERATION Z AND MILLENNIALS

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Abstract: *The paper focuses on the impact of influencer marketing on the consumer behaviour of younger generations, that is, Generation Z and Generation Y (Millennials), emphasizing how influencers shape their perception, attitude, behaviour towards a brand. Using literature review methodology, the study highlights the results of recent research papers, which clearly indicate that there is a strong positive correlation between the influencer's credibility and customers' attitude towards the brand. The paper provides a substantial contribution to the existing body of literature by presenting insights into the consumer behaviour of younger generations. Similarly, potential negative long-term impacts of relying on influencers for endorsing products are also briefly discussed. In conclusion, influencer marketing could be proven advantageous for businesses, however, potential risks such as greenwashing and misalignment of brand-influencer values must be taken into consideration. Therefore, for the effectiveness of social media influencing, business owners should ensure and maintain consumer trust and prevent potential reputational as well as ethical risks.*

Keywords: *Influencer marketing, consumer behaviour, social media influencers, consumer trust, greenwashing*

1 Introduction

The existing literature (Pascalau & Urziceanu, 2020; Kaur, 2023) clearly states that traditional ways of marketing are slowly disappearing. In the present-day context, where the usage of social media platforms is on rise, especially among younger generations such as Generation Z (Gen Z) and Generation Y/Millennials (Gen Y), it is natural that businesses are shifting their marketing strategy and advertising approach. The main motive behind this is that they want to increase their visibility online, where youngsters are now spending majority of their time. In this context, it is essential for the companies to make such adjustments from time to time as per the evolving lifestyle of young consumers because this will help them to survive on the marketplace over a longer period of time and have a competitive advantage (Kaur et al., 2023). As a result, there is a surge in the number of businesses that indulge in social media and adopt influencer marketing as their marketing strategy (Statista, 2025).

Since Gen Z and Gen Y are the primary users of social media platforms, it is essential to know the impact of influencer marketing on their buying behaviour. There are numerous studies that have been done on this subject. On one side, the previous scholars argue that influencer marketing can have a positive impact on the consumer behaviour of younger generations. On the other side, there are researchers that warn business owners of potential long-term risks such as compromising brand credibility by associating with influencers who promote greenwashing claims or were part of controversies. Hence, there is no strong consensus among the scholars regarding this subject. Consequently, currently, there is a literature gap that prevails concerning the effectiveness of influencer marketing on the consumer behaviour of members from Gen Z and Gen Y. Moreover, the research topic is of utmost importance due to its practical implications in business industry. For instance, if an organization aims to target younger generation, should it rely on influencers to endorse

THE IMPACT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON THE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR OF GENERATION Z AND MILLENNIALS

the products and services? The present paper attempts to answer such questions with the help of literature review methodology by presenting various perspectives of recent researchers.

Hence, the aim of this study is to discuss the concept of influencer marketing in the current context by summarizing what recent researchers claim regarding its impact on young consumers' perception, attitude and behaviour. Therefore, the present article attempts to close the existing literature gap by providing more clarity on the given subject and answering the following Research Questions (RQs):

RQ 1: What is the impact of influencer marketing on consumer behaviour of Generation Z?

RQ 2: What is the impact of influencer marketing on consumer behaviour of Generation Y (Millennials)?

RQ 3: How do influencers lure members of younger generation to change their perception regarding a brand and impact their buying intention?

RQ 4: What are the most popular social media channels where Gen Zs and Millennials commonly come across content shared by influencers?

RQ 5: What are the potential long-term risks of relying on influencers for endorsing products or services of a company?

Responding to the above RQs with the help of relevant research papers on the existing subject provides the business managers, start-up owners as well as scholars of this field a comprehensive understanding regarding the impact of influencer marketing on the younger generations. This, in turn, can help them to strategize and plan accordingly while attracting potential customers from the youth.

2 Methodology

In order to answer the 5 RQs mentioned previously, a structured literature review methodology is employed for presenting relevant but different perspectives of scholars that studied this subject. In the first phase, relevant keywords were introduced in various search engines such as Google Scholar, Web of Science, Scopus and ScienceDirect. In the second phase, the irrelevant papers were filtered and screened for only including the paper which focused on Gen Zs and Millennials. Similarly, inclusion criteria also took into consideration papers that were of superior quality, well-written and had more citations, that is, are more impactful. Moreover, a preference was given to more recently published papers for capturing the highly dynamic nature of this field as well as the recent trends that are emerging as a result of increasing screen time of young audience. As a result, in total 44 records were selected for this paper and their distribution by year of publication can be observed in Figure 1.

Figure 1. *Distribution of Included Publications by Year of Publication (2017–2025)*

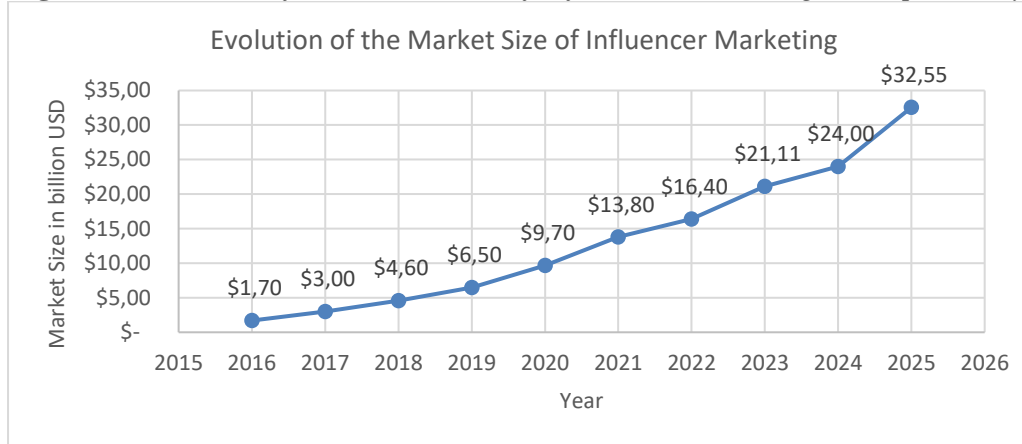


Therefore, the present study attempts to highlight some of the findings of the recent research works about the impact of influencer marketing on consumer behaviour of younger generations (more precisely, Gen Z and Y). Besides, conference articles, journal papers, studies and reports that emphasized the latest market trends were also selected for this paper to offer a more updated perspective regarding the concept. Therefore, this study presents the concept through a fresh perspective by critically analysing the latest studies.

3 Literature Review

3.1 Impact of influencer marketing on consumer behaviour

Figure 2. Evolution of the Market Size of Influencer Marketing in the past ten years (in billion USD)



Source: Statista, 2025

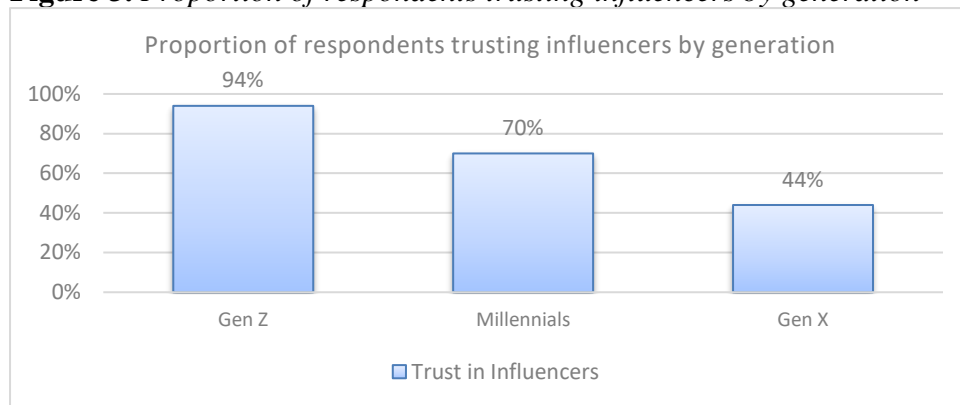
Firstly, as per the existing data (Figure 2), it is clear that the market size of influencer marketing is expanding over time. Figure 2 clearly indicates that in the past ten years, there has been a continuous increase in the market value of global influencer marketing and as of last year, this value reached 32.55 billion US dollars. This suggests that managers worldwide are recognizing the significance of influencer marketing and the organizations are adopting this marketing strategy for gaining a competitive advantage. Secondly, due to its increasing popularity, influencer marketing is an actively researched topic by scholars and a substantial amount of literature body suggests that it has a crucial impact on the consumer behaviour. Therefore, based on the aforementioned arguments, one may conclude that analysing the different perspectives of researchers and academics can provide a comprehensive understanding about what do they believe regarding this subject. Additionally, this can also allow one to extract essential insights regarding the preferences of consumers, such as the most popular social media platforms and so on. Besides, it is a well-known fact that the use of digital media tools such as social media is more common among consumers belonging to younger generation. Consequently, it is more relevant and meaningful to analyse only the studies that primarily focus on the change in consumer behaviour of younger generation as a result of influencer marketing. Therefore, Chen et al. (2024) claim that it is a subject of practical implications as the business owners can use the insights resulting from this literature analysis for decision-making in their own companies.

While there is no doubt that influencers have a huge following due to various reasons (such as making engaging content) and not just because they promote products, it is essential to mention that according to a report published by Morning Consult (2019), most of the respondents from Gen Z and Millennials choose to follow certain influencers primarily due to their authenticity and trustworthiness, engaging personalities as well as more knowledge about something that the followers genuinely care about. This shows that influencers already have well-established relationship of trust with their followers. Using this trust factor, business owners can approach such influencers for getting known among young consumers and eventually, increase their popularity. If in case a brand succeeds in gaining immense fame among online community and capture word-of-mouth, this can significantly reflect in their sales volume and overall financial performance, which is the ultimate objective of all companies. Present research indicates that perceived influencer authenticity and credibility is a major factor of the followers' perception towards a brand and buying intention. When the followers of an influencer believe that the shared content is authentic and trustworthy, persuasion amplifies via both central as well as peripheral pathways. Consequently, investigating the function of persuasive

THE IMPACT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON THE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR OF GENERATION Z AND MILLENNIALS

knowledge in influencer marketing may yield additional research insights (Breves et al., 2021; Liu & Zheng, 2024). However, based on the presented arguments, it is clear that when a brand collaborates with not only a famous, but a trustworthy as well as reputable influencer, this can help the company in improving brand credibility and eventually, their perception towards the brand. This positive impact on the brand perception also affects buying intention on a long-term.

Figure 3. *Proportion of respondents trusting influencers by generation*



Source: Market.us. Scoop, 2025

As shown in the figure above, during a survey, a significantly high percentage of respondents from Gen Z (94%) affirmed that they trust influencers, followed by Millennials/ Gen Y (70%) and Gen X (44%). This clearly indicates that there is a stronger relationship between influencers and followers from younger generations (more precisely Gen Z and Gen Y). As a result, one may conclude that it is more efficient for business owners to use influencer marketing, especially if they intend to target people from younger generation. Similarly, this explains why that there are increasing research papers that study the impact of influencers on the consumer behaviour of this particular age group.

According to a survey (Radwan et al., 2021) conducted among youngsters from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), influencers attract the attention of young people by luring them to look for more information regarding the products and to visit sellers' websites. This may result in grabbing the attention of youngsters and keeping them engaged. Increased engagement rates have a significant impact on consumer trust and loyalty, thereby positively influencing the consumer behaviour (Al-Haraizah et al., 2025).

Nadanyiova and Sujanska (2023) explain that a purchaser's attitude towards advertising is significantly influenced by his perception of the influencer's credibility. This indicates that if a person associated with a lot of controversies is endorsing some products, this may result in potential consumers forming a negative viewpoint regarding the promoted items and the business in general. Therefore, it is advisable to only choose well-reputed influencers, whose values are also aligned with those of the company. A company may make the mistake of preferring a more well-known influencer for promoting their products. Nevertheless, it is essential to note that fame is not the only attribute that the business owners should prioritize while selecting an influencer. While an influencer with higher number of followers may double the reach of the product, a nano-influencer with relatable audience can make a more meaningful difference by bringing the right kind of audience to the business owners. For instance, if a mega fashion influencer promotes products for a food retail company, the likelihood of conversion will be lower. In contrast, if a nano fashion influencer promotes products of a fast fashion clothing, the probability of conversion is higher due to the like-minded audience. However, relying only on social media influencing and strategically choosing an adequate influencer is not a practical solution for capturing a word-of-mouth or growing a business.

According to a study (Moodley & Ntobaki, 2024), influencers have a significant impact on how consumers behave, and their perceived relatability and authenticity serve as key factors in this process. The findings, nevertheless, also highlight the potential risks of negative reviews, emphasizing the necessity for firms to properly monitor their relation with influencers. This implies that as much as choosing the correct marketing channel is important for reaching the target audience, it is also a prerequisite to have a good product quality, which genuinely satisfies the consumers. Relying solely on social media influencing will not result in long-term success. In other words, influencer marketing is a powerful weapon that can be used by a company for further enhancing the chances of success.

Additionally, according to Radwan et al. (2021), it is proven that interest, demand, buying intention, attitude, perception as well as behaviour are also highly impacted by an influencer's social media activities. All this indicates that social media has transformed the way one perceives, interacts and communicates, thereby pushing sellers to adjust to the market dynamics and recent shifts. On top of this, as mentioned by previous research (Kaur, 2023), the traditional ways of marketing are slowly disappearing. This is an indication for the businesses to not rely anymore on conventional methods for reaching their audience, thereby further emphasizing the relevance and significance of influencer marketing in the present market. Moreover, a growing online presence of the new generations as well as an annual increase in the number of hours spent by them on social media channels further necessitates the companies to reorient their marketing strategies toward more personalized and digitalized approaches such as influencer marketing. Furthermore, due to a reduced attention span of youngsters because of high consumption of short-form video content (Asif & Kazi, 2024), it is even more challenging currently for the businesses to increase their conversion and influence consumer behaviour. Only engaging content shared on the adequate channel by an influencer whose values align with the business has the potential to make a meaningful difference in the buying decision.

The above arguments justify that since the last two decades; social media platforms have become a marketing communication hub for organizations. Brands attempt to reshape consumers' perception towards them as this can ultimately impact their buying decision. In this context, influencer marketing acts as a weapon for those marketers who want to change the perception of young customers by directly communicating to them through influencers.

3.2 Impact of influencer marketing on consumer behaviour of Generation Z

According to present researchers (Nadanyiova & Sujanska, 2023), Generation Z or Gen Z represent the largest segment for influencer marketing since they are the most active on social media platforms. This is the audience which was born between 1997 and 2012 and since they started growing up in a digital age, they have never experienced a period without internet (Trifan & Pantea, 2024).

Gen Z is considered to be dynamic, flexible, fast-paced, and, social media platforms like Instagram provide intriguing, tempting, captivating material in smaller portions, which not only grabs their attention but also maintain their engagement rate (Bhatt, Vyas & Vohra, 2025). Nevertheless, the most surprising fact is that although influencer marketing has gained recognition as a marketing communication instrument, there is still a lack of research that concentrates on its impact on Generation Z (Nadanyiova & Sujanska, 2023). Therefore, future scholars and researchers must focus on the younger generations while studying this concept due to its increased practical implications (Chen et al., 2024). Being a tech-savvy (Trifan & Pantea, 2024), Gen Zs are relatively more digitally literate, smarter and even more active than the older generations. Moreover, Gen Zs are considered to be one of the most socially conscious generations, which is the reason why brands that promote sustainability, diversity, inclusion and social justice, are valued by this generation (Bhatt, Vyas & Vohra, 2025).

Table 1. *Commonly used social network channels, their popularity and usage trend among Gen Zs*

Social Networking channels	Popularity among Gen Z	Usage Trends
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THE IMPACT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON THE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR OF GENERATION Z AND MILLENNIALS

TikTok	Extremely famous and rapidly expanding platform	Preferably used for short trends and challenges
Instagram	Very renowned, particularly for lifestyle, beauty, and fashion	Majorly used for sharing pictures, influencer posts, stories.
YouTube	Very common, particularly for instructional and longer-form content	Used for watching/uploading vlogs, tutorials, music videos, content consumption and entertainment purposes
Snapchat	Though usage has decreased, it is still popular.	Primarily used for sharing temporary content, messaging close friends and filters
Twitter	Gen Z uses it more often for news and brief updates, but it is less popular.	Used to share view, ideas on trendy subjects, and memes.

Source: Mishra, 2025

As per the results of a recent study conducted by Mishra (2025), on average Gen Zs spend at least 2 hours on daily basis on social media channels such as Instagram, YouTube and TikTok and these are the channels where they commonly come across content shared by influencers. Similarly, according to some scholars (Nadanyiova & Sujanska, 2023), Instagram is the best social network site for influencer marketing among Generation Z. The popularity of Instagram Reels has made influencer marketing especially successful in the field of social media marketing (Bhatt, Vyas & Vohra, 2025). This is primarily due to the fact that Instagram has over a billion monthly users, making it the most popular and rapidly expanding social media platform. Based on the provided arguments, social media influencing provides a variety of opportunities for marketers to target all generations, but particularly the younger ones as Instagram is mostly famous amongst Gen Zs. Similarly, Jain (2024) asserts that unlike older generations, Gen Z is most likely to trust what influencers say about a product, thereby positioning influencer marketing as a strong asset for a company aiming to shape purchasing decision and consumer behaviour.

Consumer behaviour, according to Jain (2024), consists of all the emotional, psychological as well as social processes that a person undergoes while choosing, buying, using and disposing any product or service. It highlights how a consumer interacts with a company along with several stimuli or factors that affect their final purchasing decision. Nevertheless, the strength of relationship between Gen Z consumer and influencer marketing is a multi-faceted and complex topic. To better understand this aforementioned statement, one may look at the findings of a study conducted by Mishra (2025).

Based on a questionnaire distributed among Gen Zs, Mishra (2025) concluded that 72% of them bought a product majorly due to a recommendation by some influencer. This implies that influencers pose a strong influence on the purchasing decision of Gen Zs. This behaviour is not limited only to certain categories of products. Although, fashion and beauty products are most commonly bought as a result of listening to influencers, Gen Zs are often seen buying food and electronics primarily due to influencers' recommendations. Nevertheless, it is also important to consider the frequency of their influence. For instance, only 25% of the respondents claimed to buy products "often" because influencers promoted them. Therefore, one may conclude that although influencer marketing impacts purchasing decision of Gen Zs but it may not work all the time. Additionally, if the content of a particular influencer is relevant for their followers, the probability of impacting the final purchase decision also increases. This is because only relevant and engaging content reaches comparatively larger audience partly due to the reduction of attention span among younger people because of increased consumption of short-form video content (Asif & Kazi, 2024). Hence, one may conclude that trust factor (Mishra, 2025) as well as content engagement (Al-Haraizah et al., 2025) also play a crucial role in deciding whether purchasing decision will be affected by an influencer's recommendation. Jain (2024) explains this phenomenon in his words as follows: *"the relationship between influencer marketing and Gen Z consumer behaviour is complex and multifaceted, influenced by various factors, including cultural context and psychological triggers like Fear of Missing Out"*

(FOMO).” In reality, influencers that belong to Generation Z, are at present more than mere content producers. In fact, their role has shifted completely and currently, they are recognized as role models, experts on different domains such as lifestyle, fashion, beauty, fitness, food, travel etc. Due to their relevant content which gets viral, influencers gain popularity easily and get a status quo which allows them to “influence” the buying decision of customers. Pradhan et al. (2023) mention that social media influencers are perceived by Gen Zs as peers, which is why they trust and rely on their opinions. Moreover, approximately 44% of the members of this generation buy products based on some influencer’s recommendation.

Besides, Generation Z is also known for the fact that it values sustainability much more than other generations. For instance, Pradhan et al. (2023) claim that in the past, many Gen Zs unfollowed influencers who were indulged in the endorsement of “*unrealistic or unsustainable lifestyles and misinterpretation*”. Kurek and Górowski (2025) also show in their recent study that Gen Z does not only represent an ecologically aware population but is also willing to take initiatives when the opportunity arises, which clearly shows that their behaviour is aligned with their perception and attitude. This is why; they also act on their pro-environmental values financially, thereby buying ecological products (Kaur & Trifan, 2024). Influencers are reliable people who have the power to shift attitudes and promote ethical consumer behaviour, particularly when they support sustainable living and products that are more environmental-friendly.

The major players in this process are social media influencers who have developed significant fan bases and acquired trust of millions of people. They provide sustainability initiatives a human face, enhancing their relatability and audience appeal (Panwar et al., 2025). By collaborating with sustainability-minded influencers, brands may strengthen their legitimacy and customer trust while more successfully promoting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) proposed by (Kaur et al., 2024) United Nations (UN). According to recent research (Jain, 2024), Gen Z consumers are increasingly being mindful and hence, prioritizing social issues that are promoted by several brands. Therefore, in this context, influencer marketing provides a unique opportunity for the companies to collaborate with influencers who support and speak for the same causes that can resonate with potential consumers of this age group. This can ultimately help the brands in boosting their credibility among Gen Zs. In fact, as per a study conducted by McKinsey & Company, people of this age group are more willing to buy products that are socially responsible. This is an indication that brands should try to preferably collaborate with influencers that are purpose-driven and therefore, align with the values, beliefs and principles of Gen Zs. This will ultimately help the brands in building a community which consists of like-minded consumers.

Nevertheless, the growing interest of Gen Zs and the general public in living sustainably (Buşa et al., 2021; Kaur et al., 2023; Sidor et al., 2024) and buying sustainable products also leads to an increased risk of a phenomenon known as *greenwashing*. The exaggeration, misinterpretation, deception or distortion of a company's environmental impact is referred to as greenwashing (Moilanen, 2023). There is a potential risk of influencers (intentionally or unintentionally) exaggerating the environmental impact of a product, which may mislead the audience. This can impact the influencer's credibility and customer trust. Therefore, the popularity of influencers may be used by companies to boost their performance. However, it also raises ethical issues such as providing false information which cannot be validated by third parties. Furthermore, the problem is not limited to the fact that influencers may act as a medium for catalysing greenwashing and spreading false green claims among the younger generations who are genuinely concerned about the environment. In fact, on a long run, such unethical practices can lead to green scepticism, a phenomenon in which consumers will doubt all green businesses, regardless of their transparency and authenticity. This will eventually result in reduction of effectiveness of green marketing and lower consumer trust even in companies that are sincerely attempting to use influencer marketing for spreading the word for their genuine environmental efforts. Hence, such ethical concerns associated with influencer marketing should be

THE IMPACT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON THE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR OF GENERATION Z AND MILLENNIALS

properly addressed in order to avoid undermining the effectiveness of influencer marketing in shaping the consumer behaviour of young generations. Pradhan et al. (2023) argue that Gen Z believe that the brands employ influencers for monetizing their fandom and popularity. In this context, this age group will most probably hold responsible both the influencer and the brand responsible for compromising their trust. Therefore, Pradhan et al. (2023) express that influencers as well as brands – both are equally responsible to maintain transparency in their relation with the followers/potential consumers. More precisely, consumers can start to have negative emotions towards the influencer and brand if they believe that any ethical or moral principles have been disregarded or compromised. Similarly, they may even use coping mechanisms including brand avoidance, negative word-of-mouth, and seeking retribution to reduce their own suffering caused by the betrayal from the brand.

While on one side, Gen Zs show more interest in buying ecological products promoted by influencers due to their increased mindfulness, on the other side, the promotion of lavish and luxurious lifestyle by influencers also encourages them to lead an unsustainable life. For instance, oftentimes, influencers show-off idealistic life through various photos, short videos and reels, which in reality seems economically unfeasible and to some extent, even unattainable. This promotion of unrealistic lifestyle on social media platforms by famous influencers not only corrupts the positive sides of consumer behaviour, but it also raises serious ethical questions about mental health and sustainability.

Glamorizing consumerism along with the spread of fast fashion clothing trend with the help of influencers result in promotion of habits that are environmentally destructive. Therefore, although Gen Zs - who are usually known and famous for their strong commitment to sustainability – are also at the risk of finding themselves stuck in a loop of consumption endorsed and promoted by influencers. Similarly, the ideal lifestyles promoted by influencers often leave a significant negative impact on the mental health of Gen Zs due to constant comparison.

Therefore, based on the above arguments that are put forth, one may conclude that influencer marketing has a multi-faceted as well as a complex impact on the consumer behaviour of Gen Zs. While influencers continue to pave their way and significantly shift consumer behaviour, companies should strictly stick to being authentic, transparent and ethical in establishing and maintaining a strong relationship with Gen Z consumers for ensuring long-term success.

3.3 Impact of influencer marketing on consumer behaviour of Generation Y / Millennials

Consumers that belong to Generation Y (also commonly known as Millennials) are born between 1981 and 1996. These individuals outshine because they are drawn towards authenticity and transparency (Moodley & Ntobaki, 2024). Due to their enormous number and purchasing power, Millennials are an important segment of present and future market, yet marketing professionals and companies are finding it difficult to reach this young audience. These people are tech-savvy, knowledgeable, and connected since they grew up in a world full with media and information. They are also described as being more self-assured, conscious, and unique than those from earlier generations. Currently, it is also considered one of the most empowered generation of consumers (Dalziel & De Klerk, 2021).

The existing research (Moodley & Ntobaki, 2024) indicates that at least 70% of the millennials are currently following influencers on various social media channels like TikTok, YouTube and Instagram for knowing their opinions regarding new products and services. Since, influencers now endorse products within the context of their own life, this helps in creating narratives that can easily resonate with millennials. As a result, influencer marketing does not only represent a way of marketing communication or a product placement, it rather incorporates products into the lifestyles of these influencers. On a long-term basis, such reliability boosts credibility among the customers and creates a positive brand image, especially amongst Millennials who value transparency (Moodley & Ntobaki, 2024).

Nevertheless, it is important to mention that Millennials are active online for various other reasons. For instance, young social media users are increasingly active on social media to gain normative approval from peer groups, and they are more inclined to believe what their friends are doing than what their parents or teachers think they should be doing. This approval seeking behaviour sometimes also fascinate and attract them to certain influencers that promote lavish and luxurious lifestyle. Although engaging and communicating with celebrities and other influencers, including virtual influencers, on social networking sites has grown common among these groups, it is still unclear how attitudes towards virtual influencers affect Generation Y consumers' intention to buy (Yap & Ismail, 2022). Therefore, a more detailed study on this subject is recommended for future.

According to Bevan-Dye and Motaung (2023), an important trait of Generation Y customers from the standpoint of marketing communication is their scepticism of conventional marketing communications, which they believe to be excessively calculated and deceptive. Therefore, brands must shift from a customer-centric strategy to a life-centric strategy by developing a genuine brand engagement experience in order to successfully appeal to digitally-astute young adults who want to feel connected. Influencers' talent to provide authentic, engaging and entertaining content is crucial in influencing the attitudes and behaviour of consumers. According to Rachmad (2024), influencers create content that reflects the interests of their audience, which makes marketing messages seem less invasive and more in line with the consumer's personality. This customised touch raises engagement as well as conversion rates in addition to brand exposure (Migkos et al., 2025).

Social media platforms represent an ideal instrument for connecting millennials with influencers since they are more receptive to peer suggestions when making decisions such as buying a product or service. Influencers are more trusted by consumers than brands when it comes to product marketing. Since millennials are not persuaded by traditional celebrity advertisements, brands find it even more difficult to get their attention. Instead, they prefer non-celebrity influencers to endorse products via feedback based on their own experiences while using the product as well as reviews from authentic customers including influencers (Sardar & Dutta, 2020). These reviews are trusted by Millennial consumers since they are perceived as a reliable and genuine source. Due to this, Dalziel & De Klerk (2021) assert that besides their preference for reviews by non-celebrity influencers *“coupled with their access to product and service information through both traditional and digital media makes Generation Y individuals the most informed consumers in history.”*

As a significant portion of the world's population, Generation Y customers find value in a variety of product categories and are expected to soon have greater spending power than any previous generational cohort (Bevan-Dye & Motaung, 2023). According to Chatzigeorgiou (2017), influencer marketing is a major factor in millennials' decision-making process, especially when it comes to selecting a rural tourist location. The majority of millennials judge an influencer's personality based on what they share online, the activities they showcase through images, videos, and posts, as well as the total number of followers they possess. Moreover, Sardar & Dutta (2020) also found out in their study that even in fashion industry, millennials' perception and behaviour regarding influencer marketing are positively correlated. Bevan-Dye and Motaung (2023) also affirm that innovative designs, brand awareness, zeal for new fashion trends, and a propensity for luxurious status consumption describe this group of young adult customers. Because of these tendencies and their rising purchasing power, Generation Y consumers are a significant target audience for the fashion apparel industry.

According to the findings of a qualitative study (Heinonen, 2021) performed among Millennials in Finland, it is proven that people of this age group view social media influencers positively as they feel more connected to influencers. In addition, they also claimed that the longer they had been following them, the more connected they felt with these influencers. Moreover, according to the respondents, reliability and uniqueness were deemed the most significant traits of influencers. All marketers who use social media influencers for marketing are aware of these facts.

THE IMPACT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON THE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR OF GENERATION Z AND MILLENNIALS

Furthermore, the research also indicated that Instagram is the most effective social media site for influencer marketing among Finnish Millennials.

Another research (Moodley & Ntobaki, 2024) conducted among South African Millennials show that influencer marketing has a positive impact on the perception of consumers towards companies. In contrast to traditional advertising, which is more impersonal, influencers improve brand image by presenting goods in friendly and authentic ways. In line with previous literature (Syed et al., 2023), the study also emphasized that influencers that are viewed as engaging, trustworthy and reliable are more successful in boosting favourable brand perceptions. The findings of this study (Moodley & Ntobaki, 2024), nevertheless, also highlight the possible risks of negative ratings or reviews, accentuating the necessity for companies to effectively handle their relationship with influencers. Similarly, a study (Dalziel & De Klerk, 2021) conducted among female Millennials conclude that because of their subjective norms, female Generation Y customers have a positive attitude towards beauty items. Additionally, the results imply that the subjective norms of this cohort are predicted by media influence. The results emphasise the strategic value of using media influence, and subjective standards into beauty marketing communication strategies that go beyond traditional media channels (for instance, online product review sites and social media influencers). Based on the aforementioned arguments, one may conclude that traditional ways of marketing are slowly losing their importance among business owners – a fact which is also mentioned by recent scholars (Kaur, 2023).

As per the results of another survey conducted among Serbian Millennials (Vukmirović et al., 2020), digital media is becoming increasingly important and valuable to Serbian Gen Y in terms of gathering information and learning new things. In any case, a sizable portion of the respondents exhibited scepticism about the validity of online content produced by other online users, such as YouTubers, bloggers, or influencers. Additionally, even though they depend on social media sites for recreational purposes and education, Serbian Millennials don't find the content that they consume to be real or credible. This shows that even though majority of the people agree that their buying behaviour is positively impacted because of influencer marketing, there are still many millennials in certain regions who disagree with the aforementioned statement and show scepticism towards content shared by the influencers.

Another study (Chopra et al., 2021) conducted among Millennials from India emphasize that marketers would need to concentrate on finding the appropriate influencers and leveraging them to boost brand engagement by determining the main group of individuals (target audience) for whom the message would be pertinent in order to implement an effective strategy. Moreover, although the majority of market research surveys show that "recommendations from friends or family" are always the most reliable source of knowledge, consumers' perception of influencers as an extension of their friends suggests that the question should be "how" rather than "why" to successfully adopt influencer marketing. Besides, Chopra et al. (2021) also believe that influencers can serve as mediators in the development of relationships, empathy, or consumer connections.

However, employing the appropriate influencers for a given product category is crucial since personal relevance is more significant than peer influence. Finding appropriate influencers for the chosen target audience who can advance the brand narrative while also developing a close relationship with their followers is therefore an additional challenge for marketers and business owners. Influencers should be utilized selectively to target a specific audience, especially when the goal is to maximize the conversion rates (Chopra et al., 2021).

Influencer marketing has been successful, but its legitimacy is threatened by problems like influencer fraud and transparency. According to Antoniou (2024), unethical behaviour, such as undeclared sponsorships, can damage consumer confidence and eventually lower the effectiveness of campaigns. This issue is made even more complicated by the constantly shifting character of digital consumer behaviour, since engagement patterns and preferences change quickly. In order to overcome

these obstacles, Campbell and Farrell (2020) recommended that organizations should choose influencers strategically, focusing on audience demographics and alignment with company values. To preserve confidence and promote significant customer interaction, this thorough process of selection is crucial (Migkos et al., 2025).

4 Conclusion

Based on the critical review conducted in this study, one may conclude that influencer marketing has a strong impact on the perception of younger generations as well as their behaviour as consumers. This is why businesses are increasingly collaborating with influencers to be more visible online, attract the target audience and enhance their overall performance. Indeed, it is proven to be a powerful method to target a larger set of people, especially the member of the younger generations (Gen Zs and Millennials).

Nevertheless, the existing literature also identifies some potential ethical concerns that may raise serious questions for companies that use this strategy to promote their products or services - the most common one being greenwashing. Considering the increasing interest of Gen Zs and the general public (Oprea et al., 2023) in sustainability, the risk of greenwashing increases manifolds. This is simply because the business owners that may be promoting their products claiming that they are completely sustainable, might be misleading millions of people by collaborating with mega influencers to circulate false information to an even larger number of audiences.

Therefore, future researchers are recommended to research more thoroughly regarding the relationship between influencer marketing and greenwashing as the rise of this marketing strategy may lead to client scepticism, circulation of false information as well as narratives, loss of trust in companies and so on. Similarly, business owners are advised to perform their due diligence prior to contacting or collaborating with any influencer as this may result in jeopardizing their own image if the influencer was a part of any controversies in the past.

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THE IMPACT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON THE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR OF GENERATION Z AND MILLENNIALS

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