

HOW SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCES CONSUMER DECISION- MAKING AMONG GEN Z

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Abstract

In today's digital age, social media has transformed from a communication tool into a major influencer of consumer behavior. This paper examines how platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube shape Gen Z's purchasing decisions through influencer marketing, personalized algorithms, and social validation. By exploring recent studies, this article highlights the growing power of online communities and digital trends in shaping the modern consumer mindset.

Keywords: social media, Gen Z, consumer behavior, influencer marketing, digital trends, social proof

Introduction

Have you ever bought something just because you saw it trending on TikTok or Instagram? You are not alone. In today's digital world, social media is no longer just a space for connecting with friends—it has become one of the most powerful forces shaping consumer choices, especially among Generation Z (those born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s). This study explores how social media influences the decisions Gen Z makes as consumers, particularly through influencers, algorithmic personalization, and social pressure.

The Power of Influence

Social media platforms have become the first stop for many Gen Z consumers when they are thinking about making a purchase. Recent studies show that 85% of Gen Z say their buying decisions have been influenced by social media (Britopian, 2024). For more than half of them (54%), that influence comes directly from influencer

recommendations. In other words, the modern sales pitch is often a short video on TikTok, a carousel post on Instagram, or a casual YouTube review. This effectiveness lies in trust. Unlike traditional advertising, social media posts feel personal and authentic—especially when they come from someone the audience follows regularly.

Micro-Influencers and Authenticity

The influencer economy is no longer dominated by celebrities. Micro-influencers, creators with between 10,000 and 100,000 followers, have emerged as some of the most persuasive voices online. According to a 2024 ResearchGate study, 82.4% of Gen Z have discovered new products through influencers, and 71.2% specifically say micro-influencers have affected their purchasing decisions.

The Role of Social Proof

The concept of social proof—the idea that people are more likely to act if they see others doing it—is amplified on social media. In fact, 24% of Gen Z say they are more likely to buy a product with high engagement, such as many likes and comments (Britopian, 2024). Social media has also influenced everyday choices, like what people eat. A 2025 New York Post survey found that 72% of Gen Z use social platforms for meal inspiration, with TikTok (84%) and Instagram (75%) leading the way. Notably, 44% have purchased groceries online based on influencer advice.

Conclusion

As algorithms grow more sophisticated and influencer marketing continues to evolve, understanding this relationship will be crucial—not only for brands but also for educators, policymakers, and anyone trying to grasp how decisions are made in a hyper-connected world. For Gen Z, social media is not just entertainment—it's a mirror reflecting their values, preferences, and aspirations.

References

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