

# Impact of Social Media Influencer Trust and Engagement on Online Purchase Intention of Generation Z in Chennai City

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## Abstract

*This study examines the influence of social media influencer trust and engagement on the online purchase intention of Generation Z consumers in Chennai city. In the evolving digital marketing environment, influencer marketing has become a dominant strategy influencing consumer behavior, particularly among digitally active youth. The research focuses on key variables such as influencer trust, content engagement, perceived authenticity, and brand loyalty. A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data from 180 respondents using convenience sampling. Statistical tools such as percentage analysis, Cronbach's Alpha, correlation, and multiple regression were applied. The findings reveal that influencer trust and engagement significantly impact online purchase intention, with engagement emerging as the strongest predictor. The study provides practical insights for marketers to design effective influencer strategies.*

*Keywords: Influencer Trust, Social Media Engagement, Purchase Intention, Gen Z, Digital Marketing*

## Introduction

In recent years, digital marketing has transformed the way businesses communicate with consumers. Among various strategies, influencer marketing has gained prominence due to its ability to directly connect with target audiences. Social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube play a crucial role in shaping consumer preferences. Generation Z consumers are highly influenced by digital content and rely on influencers for product recommendations. Unlike traditional advertisements, influencer marketing builds trust through relatability and authenticity. This study focuses on analyzing how influencer trust and engagement impact the purchase intention of Gen Z consumers in Chennai city.

## Objectives

1. To examine the impact of influencer trust on purchase intention
2. To analyze the effect of social media engagement on purchase intention
3. To study the role of perceived authenticity
4. To evaluate the influence of brand loyalty
5. To determine the combined effect of all variables

## Review of Literature

Djafarova and Rushworth (2021) examined the impact of influencer credibility on purchase intention among Generation Z. The study found that trustworthiness and relatability of influencers significantly influence consumer buying decisions. The authors emphasized that Gen Z consumers prefer influencers who appear authentic rather than traditional celebrities.

Bhandari (2025) highlighted the importance of authenticity and relatability in influencer marketing. The study revealed that micro-influencers are more effective in influencing purchase intention due to their closer connection with followers, leading to higher engagement and trust.

Nadanyiova and Sujanska (2023) analyzed the role of social media influencers in consumer decision-making. Their findings indicated that influencers act as opinion leaders and create social proof, which strongly impacts consumer preferences and purchase decisions.

Sharma *et al.* (2024) identified that variables such as trust, engagement, and brand alignment significantly predict purchase decisions. The study concluded that influencer marketing is a multi-dimensional concept requiring a comprehensive analytical approach.

Fernandez-Cruz and Fernández-Díaz (2025) focused on psychological aspects and found that emotional connection, empathy, and consistency of influencers significantly affect consumer purchase intention.

Singh and Kaur (2025) emphasized that interaction between influencers and followers plays a crucial role in influencing buying behavior. Higher engagement levels increase trust and strengthen the impact of influencer recommendations.

Priya and Agrawal (2024) found that digital platforms and influencer interaction significantly influence Gen Z purchase behavior. Their study highlighted that increased engagement leads to higher purchase intention.

Rao and Mehta (2024) concluded that influencer marketing is highly effective due to increased digital exposure and dependency on social media among young consumers.

Sharma and Gupta (2025) examined long-term effects and found that influencer marketing not only affects purchase decisions but also enhances brand loyalty and repeat purchase behavior.

Khan *et al.* (2025) concluded that influencer marketing has become a dominant factor in modern consumer behavior, especially among Generation Z, due to rapid digital transformation.

### Hypotheses

- H1: Influencer trust significantly affects purchase intention
- H2: Social media engagement significantly affects purchase intention
- H3: Perceived authenticity significantly affects purchase intention
- H4: Brand loyalty significantly affects purchase intention

### Research Methodology

- Research Design: Descriptive & Analytical
- Sample Size: 180 respondents
- Sampling Method: Convenience Sampling
- Data Collection: Structured Questionnaire
- Tools Used:
  - Percentage Analysis
  - Cronbach's Alpha
  - Correlation Analysis
  - Multiple Regression

### Data Analysis

**Table 1: Reliability Test**

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Influencer Trust	0.841
Engagement	0.872
Authenticity	0.856
Brand Loyalty	0.833
Purchase Intention	0.889

☞ All values > 0.7 → Reliable

**Table 2: Correlation Analysis**

Variables	Purchase Intention
Influencer Trust	0.701**
Engagement	0.768**
Authenticity	0.732**
Brand Loyalty	0.710**

☞ All variables show *positive relationship*

**Table 3: Regression Analysis**

Variable	Beta	Significance
Influencer Trust	0.210	0.002
Engagement	0.305	0.000
Authenticity	0.245	0.001
Brand Loyalty	0.198	0.003

☞ *Engagement = Highest Impact*

### Findings

- Social media engagement has the strongest influence
- Influencer trust builds consumer confidence
- Authentic content increases buying intention
- Brand loyalty also plays a significant role

### Suggestions

- Use micro-influencers for better trust
- Focus on interactive content
- Maintain authenticity in promotions
- Align influencer with brand values

### Conclusion

The study concludes that influencer marketing significantly impacts the purchase intention of Generation Z consumers. Engagement and trust are the most important factors influencing buying behavior. Businesses should focus on authentic and engaging influencer strategies.

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## Author Biographies



**N. Kalpana** is a Research Scholar in Commerce at VELS Institute of Science Technology and Advanced Studies pursuing her Ph.D. Her research interests include digital marketing, influencer marketing, consumer behaviour, and social media marketing with special reference to Generation Z consumers. Her ongoing research focuses on the impact of influencer marketing on purchase decisions in Chennai city. She has presented papers in national and international conferences and contributed to academic publications in the field of commerce and management. She is actively involved in teaching, mentoring, and guiding students for academic development.



**Dr.A.Meenakshi** holds a Doctorate degree in Commerce. She has more than 18 years of teaching and research experience. Now she is working as Professor in Department of Commerce at Vels Institute of Science, Technology and Advanced Studies, Chennai. She received the Best Professor 2021 award for the rich experience in teaching and got Research Excellence 2024 award for her outstanding contribution in the research field, especially for authoring 40 academic research articles in Scopus and other UGC listed journals. She, as a competent result- oriented academician, possesses excellent interpersonal, communication and organizational skills with proven abilities to successfully manage a team and designing the curriculum. Dr. A. Meenakshi is a NAAC Criteria Co Ordinator and She produced two PhD scholars and guiding 6 scholars for their Doctorate.