

Role of Instagram Influencers in Shaping Brand Trust among Gen Z at Qoruz, HSR Layout, Bangalore

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Abstract

This study examines how Instagram influencer marketing affects brand trust among Generation Z consumers. As traditional advertising becomes less effective, influencers play a key role in shaping perceptions and purchase behavior. The research focuses on influencer attributes such as authenticity, expertise, and content alignment. Using a descriptive quantitative approach, data was collected from 154 Gen Z respondents, with high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.869). Non-parametric tests like Spearman's correlation and Kruskal-Wallis were used for analysis. The findings show that expertise and content-product fit strongly influence trust, while skepticism remains, with 43.5% neutral about influencer authenticity. Ad fatigue is a concern, as 55.2% believe excessive sponsored content harms brand image. Long-term collaborations are seen as more credible by over 54% of respondents. The study concludes that demographic factors have little impact on trust. Instead, brands should focus on authenticity, transparency, niche expertise, and long-term partnerships to build lasting credibility with Gen Z.

Keywords: Brand Trust, Consumer Perception, Generation Z, Instagram Influencers, Influencer Marketing, Source Credibility,

Introduction

Social media has transformed modern marketing, with Instagram influencers playing a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and building brand trust. Unlike traditional advertising, influencer marketing relies on authenticity, relatability, and engagement to influence purchasing behavior. Brand trust, which reflects consumer confidence in a brand's reliability and intentions, is essential for fostering loyalty. Generation Z, a digitally native and socially aware group, places high importance on transparency, inclusivity, and genuine content.

Influencers ranging from nano to celebrity levels help establish trust through key factors such as authenticity, expertise, transparency, and social proof, making them highly effective in reaching this segment.

Influencer marketing has grown into a global industry worth over \$20 billion, driven by increased smartphone usage and social media adoption. In India, the sector is expanding rapidly, supported by a booming creator economy and rising digital engagement, especially in regions like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka where local influencers create culturally relevant content. Post-pandemic, brands have increasingly shifted toward digital strategies, emphasizing long-term collaborations, micro and nano influencers, and platform diversification across Instagram, YouTube, and other channels. Current trends also highlight the importance of social commerce integration and authenticity, as consumers become more skeptical of overly commercialized content.

Qoruz, a Bengaluru-based influencer marketing platform, represents this shift toward data-driven marketing. Founded in 2015, it uses AI and analytics to help brands identify suitable influencers, execute campaigns, and measure performance effectively. The company offers services such as influencer discovery, multi-platform campaign execution, SaaS-based tools, and end-to-end campaign management, along with content creation and performance tracking. By addressing challenges like fake followers and lack of measurable metrics, Qoruz enables brands to build meaningful, transparent, and impactful influencer campaigns, reinforcing trust and long-term engagement among Generation Z consumers.

Literature Review

Honesty and trustworthiness of influencers positively influence the credibility of such individuals and brand trust of consumers. Besides, the intermediary effect of credibility on the relationship between the influencer attributes and brand trust was also noted (Abdul Rahman et al., 2025). Micro-influencers are more popular than celebrities because they can provide trustworthy and authentic content. In addition, consumers are likely to make purchases after consuming honest and credible information. Marketers usually collaborate with micro-influencers who have similar values and interact with the audience (Avinash Kumar Mishra 2025). Both transparency and expertise are important determinants of the credibility of an influencer, resulting in positive consumer behavior. On the contrary, absence of transparency and perceived untrustworthiness of an influencer lower consumers' trust and effectiveness of the marketing strategy (Azhar et al., 2025). Approaches such as creation of authentic content, proper sponsorship disclosure, creation of long-term relations, and multiplatform approach contribute substantially to brand trust formation (Ben. H. 2025). Influencer popularity affects social media engagement and consumer trust but fails to directly affect purchase decisions. On the contrary, both variables mentioned positively impact purchase decisions and mediate the impact of the variable under discussion (Fitriasari. D et al., 2025). Authenticity appears to be the main driver of trust, especially for Generation Z, whereas millennials seem to rely more on the credibility and expertise of influencers (Harun et al., 2025). A high degree of correlation between the level of credibility of influencers, which involves the assessment of their expertise, trustworthiness, and physical attractiveness, and brand trust (Kashvi Talesara 2025). Attractiveness, expertise, ease of use, and usefulness have a positive effect on purchase intentions. Moreover, ease of use acts as a mediator between attractiveness and expertise of influencers and purchase intentions (Rodney Duffett, Ayabonga Mxunyelwa 2025). Both opinion leadership and parasocial interaction have positive relationships with brand trust and brand identification; however, brand trust also has a positive influence on brand identification. Moreover, brand trust is an important mediator between influencer attributes and brand identification (Ji-Young Kim et al., 2024). The ever-changing environment of influencer marketing and its importance in today's business strategy:

some of the trends include rising popularity of micro and nano influencers, platform diversification, data-driven tactics, social commerce, and the application of virtual influencers and immersive technology (Mittal Diksha, Mathur Shirpa 2024).

Objectives of the Study

- To identify the key factors that influence Generation Z's perception of brand credibility through Instagram influencers.
- To examine the impact of Instagram influencers on brand trust among Generation Z consumers.
- To suggest ways brands can use Instagram influencers to strengthen trust among Generation Z.

Research Methodology

The concept of data collection refers to the act of collecting data concerning variables of interest so that researchers can make use of it to solve their research questions, develop their hypotheses, and draw out results. The major purpose of data collection is to collect top-notch data for analysis. Data collection can be conducted using primary and secondary approaches. Primary data refers to data obtained first hand from respondents while secondary data entails data collected from sources such as journals, books, and online databases. In this case, primary data was obtained by distributing questionnaires to Generation Z participants who are the users of Instagram. On the other hand, secondary data was collected from literature sources about social media marketing, influencer marketing, and consumer behavior. The design adopted in this research paper is the descriptive approach, which allows researchers to analyze the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of the respondents towards the influence of Instagram influencers on brands among Generation Z. A sampling method was adopted whereby systematic sampling techniques were used in the process of choosing participants among the population. In this research, a non-probability convenience sampling technique was adopted where samples were chosen depending on their accessibility and availability. Given that the population is very large and unknown, the Cochran formula was adopted in calculating an ideal sample size, which comes out to be about 384 respondents at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. Statistical methods such as Spearman's Correlation, Mann Whitney U Test, and Kruskal Wallis Test have been used in data analysis to convert the collected raw data into useful insights.

Difference among the age group of respondents with respect to the factors influencing perception of brand credibility

The analysis shows that there is no significant difference among age groups in how they perceive factors influencing brand credibility. Respondents across different age categories tend to value similar attributes such as authenticity, expertise, and transparency. This suggests that age is not a major determinant in shaping perceptions of brand credibility in this study.

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant difference in the perception of brand credibility through Instagram influencers across different age groups of respondents.

Table 1 Test for Significant Difference in the Perception of Brand Credibility through Instagram Influencers Across Different Age Groups of Respondents

Factors influencing perception of brand credibility	Different age groups					Chi square value	P value
	18 – 19 years	20 – 21 years	22 – 23 years	24 – 25 years	26 years		
Influencer Genuineness	86.93	93.96	73.32	79.39	61.29	4.095	0.393
Mentioning of sponsored posts	81.61	81.93	73.52	81.77	46.17	3.085	0.544
Influencers’ knowledge	77.83	89.50	78.30	75.75	73.78	1.188	0.880
Influencers’ promotion with content	106.61	79.50	76.85	76.92	59.54	6.635	0.156
Engagement of influencers	92.88	81.64	82.13	67.92	81.44	5.446	0.245

Source: Primary data

As all the p-values are above 0.05, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, meaning that there is no significant difference in how brand credibility is perceived through Instagram influencers depending on age group. This implies that the influence of social media advertising on brand perception is equal for all age groups.

Difference among male and female respondents with respect to the brand trust influenced by Instagram influencers

The analysis compares male and female respondents in terms of how Instagram influencers affect their level of brand trust. It helps determine whether gender differences influence trust perceptions and responses to influencer marketing.

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant difference in brand trust influenced by Instagram influencers between male and female respondents

Table 2 Test for Significant Difference in Brand Trust Influenced by Instagram Influencers Between Male and Female Respondents

Impact of Instagram influencers on brand trust	Gender		Z value	P value
	Male	Female		
Help of influencers in promotion	77.44	77.53	0.012	0.990
Building trust	77.64	77.44	0.027	0.979
Influencers’ content	80.20	76.31	0.533	0.594
Influencer recommendation	87.78	72.99	2.010	0.044*
Viewing of influencer content	81.73	75.64	0.823	0.411

Note: 1. * denotes significant at 5% level

Source: Primary data

The null hypothesis is not accepted, when considering the factor of Influencer recommendation and find that gender plays a significant role in determining the effect of these recommendations on the trust in brands. For all other factors, however, the null hypothesis is accepted, which means that both male and female subjects have fairly similar views regarding this factor.

Relationship between influencer marketing strategies on building brand trust among Generation Z consumers

The analysis explores how different influencer marketing strategies contribute to building brand trust among Generation Z consumers. It highlights the extent to which factors like authenticity, expertise, and engagement influence trust development.

Table 3 Test for Significant Relationship Between Influencer Marketing Strategies on Building Brand Trust Among Generation Z Consumers

	Brand Trust	Strategies for improvement	P value
Brand Trust	1.000	.566**	.000
Strategies for improvement	.566**	1.000	.000

Source: Primary data

Correlation coefficient is statistically significant to indicate a positive association between influencer marketing and the establishment of brand trust by Generation Z customers.

Findings of the Study

- The age does not have a significantly impact on how consumers perceive brand credibility, indicating that influencers affect brand credibility similarly across all age groups from 18 to 26 years.
- Influencer genuineness and engagement of influencers, consistently scored high across most age groups, highlighting these as core pillars of credibility.
- Mentioning of sponsored posts, had the highest p-value (0.544) suggesting that Gen Z's perception of credibility is relatively unaffected by whether a post is labeled as sponsored or not.
- There is a significant difference between males and females regarding influencer recommendation, where men appear more influenced by direct recommendations compared to women.
- Despite the difference in recommendations, other factors show no significant difference between genders, suggesting the baseline appeal of influencers is universal.
- Influencers' content score for males (80.20) was higher than for females (76.31), suggesting male Gen Z consumers may be more content-driven in their trust-building process.
- There is a statistically significant relationship between influencer marketing strategies and building brand trust ($r = 0.566$, $p < 0.01$), showing that as marketing strategies improve, brand trust increases systematically.

Suggestions of the Study

- Since men are more influenced by direct recommendations, brands targeting males can focus on "call-to-action" content and for female audiences, brands can focus towards "buy this" content.

- Since influencers' knowledge scored consistently across age groups, brands can partner with subject matter experts (SMEs) rather than celebrities to maintain a high baseline of credibility.
- As Gen Z is largely indifferent to sponsored post disclosures, brands can be upfront about sponsorships which does not hurt credibility and maintains ethical standards.
- As age does not significantly change on credibility perception, brands can prioritize finding influencers who are authentic and engaging rather than trying to find a perfect age match.
- Since the 18–26 age group reacts similarly to influencer factors, marketing campaigns can be broader and more inclusive, allowing for a more efficient, single-stream content strategy.
- Brands can continuously evolve their influencer strategies by investing in high-production or high-value educational content which directly result in higher brand trust.

Conclusion

From the study regarding the effects of influencer marketing on the level of trust associated with a particular brand among Generation Z customers, it can be concluded that while the elements of trust, authenticity, and content engagement are viewed the same in all demographic strata, the conversion capabilities of influencer recommendations differ significantly depending on income, profession, and place of residence. By applying Cochran's Formula to obtain an adequate sample of people, the study managed to prove that the elements of influencer competence, openness in sponsorship, and authenticity serve as uniform criteria that ensure credibility.

From the results, it is shown that the demographic variable does not significantly influence the process of building brand trust since the key principles behind credibility will remain constant for everyone. Since brand trust cannot be earned simply based on one's demographic characteristics, companies need to take deliberate actions in order to establish brand trust with Gen Z. The key in establishing such brand trust is by going beyond simple demographic targeting through an influencer strategy that relies on niche knowledge, transparency, and valuable content.

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