



The Influence of Social Media Influencers on Millennial and Gen Z Consumers

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Abstract : The study looks at the effect of social media influencers on the purchasing behavior of Generation Z and Millennials. It examines how different generations interact with influencers through trust, relatability and authenticity. The study explores different platform preferences, content engagement and purchasing decisions using a Google Forms survey that was sent out throughout Singapore, India and the UAE. Results showed a difference in Millennials and Gen Z perforations. Influencer marketing successfully cultivates brand loyalty which is demonstrated by case studies of companies of beauty and sport. Furthermore, it also emphasizes how social responsibility and Fear Of Missing Out affect consumer decisions. Brands need to tailor strategies in order to gain preferences from different age groups enhancing inclusivity and consumer trust.

Index terms: Millennial, Gen Z, Influencer marketing, Social Media

1. Introduction

Social media has changed the way businesses connect with people, especially Millennials and Generation Z, who are two of the most influential consumer groups today. Millennials, born between 1981 and 1996, are adaptable digital consumers who prioritise digital authenticity often leaning to platforms like Instagram and YouTube for in-depth reviews and recommendations. Conversely, Generation Z born between 1997- 2012, are digital natives who gravitate towards platforms like Tik Tok and Snapchat, seeking creativity that aligns with the value of individuality, diversity and social consciousness (Giancaterino, 2023). For both groups authenticity is key, consumers are more likely to trust influencers who are relatable, transparent and brand-worthy as well as ones with honest recommendations. Factors like the type of context, influencer count and role of people they engage with. Additionally, both generations value interactive campaigns and user-generated material, which strengthen bonds and increase brand awareness. Generation Z is more interested in visually appealing, creating posting that highlights relatability and flexibility, rather than Millenials, who prefer precise, structured information (Fadiora, 2024). In an increasingly competitive digital marketplace brands must capitalize on this preference, in order to establish trust.

1.1 Affect during COVID-19

During COVID-19 even too, influencers became more important thereby helping brands stay connected with audiences through relatability and being socially responsible (Kapitan, et al 2021). This study examines how authenticity affects trust and engagement, while Millennials often value detailed reviews and educational content, Generation Z is drawn to influencers who creatively integrate products into their everyday lives,

reflecting their focus on inclusivity and social justice (Azer et al., 2023). With influencers adjusting to new realities by promoting relatable content and supporting social causes, the COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated social media's role as a platform for community engagement. This resonated especially with Generation Z, who favor particular influencers like Olivia Rodrigo and how these factors ultimately influence their purchasing decisions, offering insightful information to help firms navigate the ever-changing world of digital marketing (Lu et al., 2023). Millennials, use YouTube to find detailed reviews and recommendations from influencers they trust.

1.2 Fenty Beauty

Fenty Beauty launched by Rihanna in 2017, changed the beauty industry by introducing a range of products and feeding diverse skin tones. The brand ethos aligns with “Beauty for all” and has rapidly been becoming famous worldwide among both Millennials and Generation Z. A key factor in the brand's meteoric rise was its strategic use of influencer marketing to amplify its message. It focused on collaborating with a diverse group of beauty influencers ranging from micro-influencers to global celebrities, who represented various ethnicities, skin tones and genders. This diversity not only reflected the brand's value but also ensured relatability for everyone (Onar, 2024, May 29). By choosing influencers aligned with their inclusive philosophy, Fenty Beauty effectively communicated by showing that their products were designed for everyone. One notable campaign involved beauty influencers creating content demonstrating how the products performed on different skin types and tones. Influencers shared tutorials, first impressions and personal stories, showcasing variety for foundation ranges. These authentic reviews resonated with the audience who felt, seen and represented. For Gen Z, it tapped into their prioritization of diversity and social responsibility. In a research by Nieslson, it was found that only five African American women believed the beauty industry represented them. Beautycon media reported that over 70 percent of women of colour struggled to find products to match their skin tone (Maribe, 2020). Fenty Beauty in response launched 40 shades and later expanded to 50 for all skin types and tones. A 2017 campaign video featured 11 women of various skin tones, ethnicities, body types, and religious backgrounds, conveying a powerful message: Beauty has no singular definition. This approach resonated deeply with consumers, reinforcing that makeup should enhance natural beauty rather than impose a standard.

The brand's authenticity, emphasis on customer needs, and commitment to inclusivity helped it forge a strong connection with its audience. Fenty Beauty also leveraged social media platforms effectively with Instagram and YouTube (Pricillia, 2024). The use of hashtags like #fentyface and #Profilter further amplified the campaign reach, allowing consumers to be more engaged. The success of Fenty Beauty illustrates the power of combining inclusivity with marketing. By aligning its brand values with its marketing strategies, Fenty Beauty not only disrupted the beauty industry but also set a new standard for representing beauty and diversity (HavStrategy, 2023). The brand's ability to engage Millennials and Gen Z through influencers who embodied its core values results in a loyal customer base enduring cultural significance too. Fenty Beauty's Instagram page today has 3.5 million followers and it includes a range of beauty influencers reposts as well as pictures of the cosmetic lines products.

Nevertheless, Rihanna, who has over 62 million followers, does make an appearance on the Fenty Beauty website and reminds her followers of her connection to the brand but also allows it to succeed on its own. She also has promoted her cosmetic line on her own social media page for more exposure. For example, some of her celebrity friends were using her products on their page and she reposted it to her page. Rihanna is both the creator and top influencer for the Fenty brand, a combination that boosts the brand's visibility and success. Thus, celebrity endorsement has since then evolved with the extensive change that has happened in the advertising and celebrity field, which opened up a range of new possibilities. According to Martin Roll

“endorsement” is a channel of brand communication in which a celebrity acts as the brand’s spokesperson and certifies the brand’s claim and position by extending his/her personality, popularity, status in society or expertise in the field to the Brand” (Ismail, 2018).

1.3 Glossier

Glossier, founded by Emily Weiss in 2014, is a famous brand dedicated to genuineness and community involvement. They have produced campaigns recently like their Cloud Paint and new skincare products. Glossier’s “Skin First, Makeup Second” mantra emphasizes the importance of skincare as the foundation and basis of any makeup routine. The philosophy aligns with a broader trend toward natural beauty, where consumers prioritize healthy skin over heavy makeup. By positioning skincare as a priority, glossier effectively differentiates itself from traditional beauty brands that often focus solely on makeup. When developing new items, Glossier often polls its audience about their preferences, leading to products that genuinely resonate with users.

Participants consistently identify Instagram as their preferred platform for engaging with the brand. Features like “Send to,” “Comments,” “Tagging,” and “Stories” promote sharing and discussion, while user posts and interactions provide valuable insights into the products. Consumers often turn to Instagram to stay updated on new product launches, ask questions, and seek recommendations for purchases. This dynamic exchange not only enhances customer trust but also positions Instagram as a space for discovering novel ways to use products or determine their suitability for personal needs. Glossier’s branded beauty chat group, Into the Gloss on Facebook, extends these conversations by offering a forum for beauty enthusiasts to discuss their experiences (Paintsil, Kim, 2022).

The aesthetic of the Cloud Paint campaign drew inspiration from sunset hues, emphasizing the idea that beauty should feel effortless and natural, reinforcing the message that Glossier products are designed for everyday use rather than just special occasions.

Glossier uses word-of-mouth marketing, encouraging customers to become brand advocates. This strategy leveraged the trust consumers have in recommendations from friends and social media influencers rather than traditional advertising methods. Approximately 70 percent of Glossier online sales from peer-to-peer referrals with a significant portion linked to their Instagram brand ambassadors (Extole, 2022). They strategically partner with micro-influencers who resonate with their target demographic. These influencers are often given unique promo codes to incentivize sales, creating a mutually beneficial relationship where both the influencer and Glossier gain from increased visibility and sales. This grassroots approach allows Glossier to maintain a genuine connection with its audience while expanding its market presence (Nee, 2024).

The brand also invests in experiential marketing by creating engaging content that entertains while promoting products. Their blog serves as a hub for beauty enthusiasts, offering tutorials, reviews, and inspiration that go beyond mere product promotion. This strategy not only drives traffic but also cultivates a loyal community around shared interests in beauty (Brand Vision Insights, 2024). In summary, Glossier's marketing strategy effectively combines peer-to-peer recommendations, community engagement, influencer collaborations, aesthetic branding, and experiential content to create a powerful brand presence that resonates deeply with its audience.

1.4 NIKE

Nike is a famous company that markets to Gen Z and Millennials using technologies and various business strategies to create an emotional connection with their audience by emphasizing their values and beliefs that

align with their company slogans. This addition complements the theme of emotional connection and branding philosophy. By highlighting individual achievements and the desire for excellence, advertisements such as "Just Do It" motivates and uplift the next generation (Flynn, 2015). Nike uses hashtags like #justdoit to encourage community interaction on social media, which increases brand exposure and creates a feeling of community among followers. This illustrates Nike's use of sponsorship as an additional audience engagement strategy and aligns well with the community-building discourse.

Furthermore, Nike's investment in augmented reality technology through apps like Nike Fit enhances the shopping experience by allowing users to see items in their surroundings, appealing to younger consumers' tech-savvy inclination (Raval, 2023). This addition smoothly continues the discussion on innovative technology and cost-effective strategies. The

company's emphasis on social responsibility appeals especially to Gen Z, who admire companies that support social concerns; programs like the Nike Community Impact Fund reflect their ideals and build loyalty. Nike successfully draws in and retains the allegiance of Millennials and Gen Z customers by fusing real storytelling, community involvement, cutting-edge technology, and a dedication to social responsibility.

1.5 Relatable Storytelling

Influencers often use storytelling techniques to share how products fit into their lives. By weaving personal experiences around products, they create relatable content that resonates emotionally with followers. This relatability helps potential customers feel like they are receiving recommendations from friends rather than traditional advertisements. (Dave, 2017). Furthermore, by introducing sympathetic personalities and promoting two-way communication, influencers can inspire followers to share their ideas and experiences. Building trust requires being genuine in your delivery and consistent in your messaging since followers are more likely to interact with influencers who share their values. According to Pereira (2019), relatable storytelling ultimately turns marketing into deep connections that impact consumer choices and foster brand loyalty.

1.6 Fear Of Missing Out

Value-driven marketing by both Millennials and Generation Z are where brands and influencers prioritize transparency, inclusivity and social responsibility; with the younger generation actively diversifying and mental health awareness being a key component of influencer efforts, this trend represents a larger cultural change toward ethical consumption that is changing the way goods and services are advertised. Another significant factor influencing consumer behavior is Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) especially among younger consumers. By presenting well-chosen information that emphasizes experiences, goods, and lifestyles, social media exacerbates FOMO (Bergman, 2023). Higher engagement rates are frequently observed by influencers who use this psychology in their content creation. The distinction between browsing and purchasing has become more hazy due to the incorporation of e-commerce into social networking platforms, resulting in a smooth shopping experience. Users can now make purchases straight from the platform thanks to features like Instagram, Tik Tok, and YouTube purchasing (Builderfly, 2022). This in regard, Millennials and Gen Z are leading a trend showing a preference for online shopping events rather than product showcases.

2. Method

A Google Forms survey was used to examine how social media influencers affect Millennials and Gen Z. To learn more about how these two generational groups interact with influencer material, questions related to their trust in influencers and their purchasing decisions were included with a

combination of multiple choice and Likert scale response formats. The purpose of the survey was to investigate content preferences and the two groups' opinions on it. Statement questions like “Millennials prefer detailed reviews and structured information, while Gen Z values creativity, diversity, and visually appealing content.” were included with a 3-point Likert scale (Agree/Disagree/Uncertain).

WhatsApp was used to send out the surveys making it simple to access, reach a wider audience and guarantee responses from a varied population. The researcher also shared it on social media sites such as Instagram and chose participants from Singapore and India, two nations with significant influencer cultures and increased digital engagement. The goal was to record a range of viewpoints impacted by cultural and economic differences, therefore the researcher chose these areas. Participants in the sample ranged in age from 18-42, guaranteeing that both Gen Z and Millennials were represented. Overall, data collection was extended over two weeks.

Results - 1.6

The research aimed to analyse the differences in consumer behaviour between Millennials (ages 25-34) and Gen Z (Under 18) regarding influencer content. The data was gathered from Singapore, Dubai and India due to convenience. The survey gathered responses from over 30 respondents.

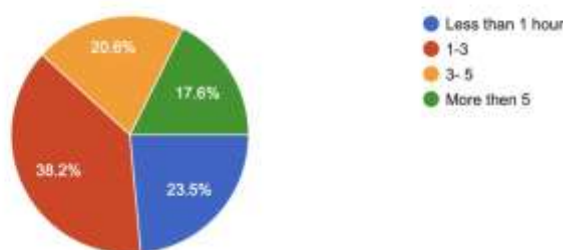
From the responses to the first few questions, it is evident that Gen Z favour TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat, while millennials prefer YouTube and Facebook. Gen Z primarily engaged with Instagram (100%) indicating a preference for short-form and visual dynamic content. Whereas Facebook was more popular with millennials especially those aged 24-35. One reason could be the development and popularity of the respective apps during each group's adolescence and young adulthood which signifies favoritism.

Figure 1

Responses to the Hours Spent on Social Media

How many hours per day do you spend on social media?

34 responses



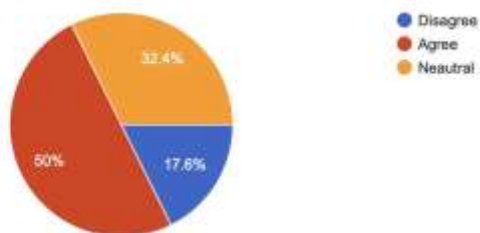
Gen Z spent a large portion of time on social media in comparison to millennials, having over 5+ hours daily whereas millennials had 1-3 hours. This shows Gen Z had greater engagement time suggesting a stronger influence from such creators.

Figure 2

Difference in Preference of Content Type

Millennials prefer detailed reviews and structured information, while Gen Z values creativity, diversity, and visually appealing content.

34 responses



Additionally, Gen Z often develops a greater trust in influencers emphasizing that Gen Z respondents agreed more frequently that they value authenticity and relatable content, such as personal stories, achievements etc. On the other hand, Millennials show mixed responses valuing more structured written reviews, and preferring fewer visuals and more traditional writing.

Figure 3

Pie chart Illustrating the Response to Question on Preference of Influencers

Consumers are more likely to trust influencers who are relatable, transparent, and aligned with their values.

34 responses

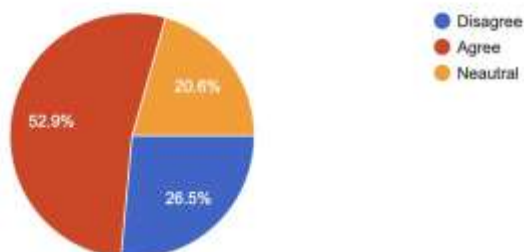
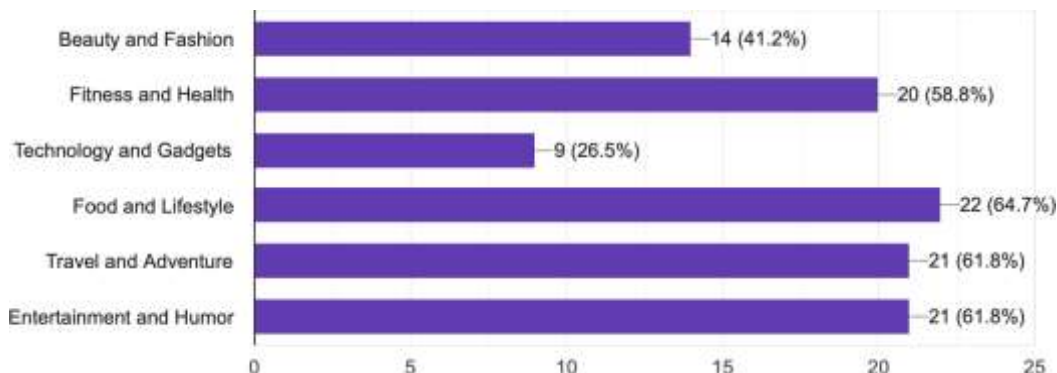


Figure 4

Responses to Preference of Content on Social Media



From the data collection, it is evident that millennials often lean towards health and fitness niches, whereas Gen Z gravitates towards beauty, fashion, and entertainment (Figure 4). The role of influencers in purchasing decisions for Gen Z participants shows high engagement with marketing. In today's day and age, it is important to gain further insights into Gen Z's preference for diversity in content more than millennials.

Conclusion - 1.7

In conclusion, this research paper examines how different generations are affected by influencers on social media. It highlights how individuals are affected by brands including Nike, Glossier and Fenty Beauty. It shows the different marketing strategies that large brands use and the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Furthermore, it highlights how social media has had a large impact on people generations whether it being Gen Z or Millennials, including the similarities and differences that are prominent. A survey allowed for a better understanding of individual's views on social media, thereby understanding the dynamics of different age groups. However, since the sample was limited to India, Singapore and the UAE the results cannot be generalized. Future studies can expand on this idea and include a more representative sample.

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