# Indian Journal of Commerce, Business & Management (IJCBM)

### A Peer Reviewed Research journal of Commerce, Business & Management

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## Influence of Local Social Media Influencers on Gen Z Purchase Decisions : A Study of Fashion and Lifestyle Products in Surat District

**Abstract :** The increasing use of social media has transformed consumer buying behavior, particularly among Generation Z. This study investigates the influence of **local social media influencers** on the purchase decisions of Gen Z consumers with reference to **fashion and lifestyle products in Surat District**. Primary data were collected through **133 structured questionnaires** from respondents aged 18–26 years. Key variables such as influencer credibility, authenticity, engagement, and frequency of exposure were examined. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and **multiple regression analysis** were employed for data analysis. The regression results reveal that influencer credibility ($\beta = 0.38$), authenticity ($\beta = 0.29$), and engagement ($\beta = 0.24$) have a significant positive impact on purchase intention, while frequency of exposure shows a moderate but significant effect ($\beta = 0.11$). The model explains **56% of the variance in purchase intention**, indicating strong predictive power. The findings confirm that local social media influencers play a crucial role in shaping Gen Z buying behavior in Surat District. The study offers practical insights for local brands and marketers to design effective influencer marketing strategies.

**Keywords :** Influencer Marketing, Gen Z, Purchase Intention, Local Influencers, Fashion Products, Surat District.

**1. Introduction :** The evolution of digital technology and widespread adoption of social media platforms have fundamentally altered consumer buying behavior. Traditional advertising channels are increasingly being replaced by digital and social media marketing techniques, among which **influencer marketing** has emerged as a

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powerful tool. Social media influencers act as opinion leaders who shape consumer perceptions, attitudes, and purchase decisions through content shared on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and short-video applications.

Generation Z, comprising individuals born approximately between 1997 and 2012, represents a digitally native cohort that actively consumes online content and relies heavily on peer recommendations and influencer endorsements. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z consumers demonstrate higher skepticism toward conventional advertising and place greater trust in influencers perceived as authentic and relatable. This makes influencer marketing particularly relevant in influencing their buying decisions.

Surat District, located in the state of Gujarat, is widely recognized as a major hub for textiles, apparel manufacturing, and fashion-related businesses. In recent years, Surat has witnessed a rapid rise in local social media influencers who promote fashion, lifestyle, and local brands through region-specific content. These influencers often communicate in local languages, reflect regional culture, and engage directly with local audiences, thereby enhancing their credibility and influence.

Despite the growing importance of local influencers, limited empirical research has focused on district-level analysis of influencer marketing in India. This study attempts to fill this gap by examining how local social media influencers affect Gen Z purchase decisions for fashion and lifestyle products in Surat District.

**2. Review of Literature :** Influencer marketing has been extensively studied in recent years as a component of digital marketing strategy. Freberg et al. (2011) describe social media influencers as individuals who shape audience attitudes through perceived credibility and expertise. De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017) found that influencers with higher engagement rates generate more positive brand attitudes among followers.

Ohanian (1990) emphasized the role of source credibility, consisting of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness, in influencing consumer behavior. Lou and Yuan (2019) highlighted that influencer credibility and message value significantly affect consumer trust and purchase intention. Authenticity has also emerged as a critical factor; Audrezet et al. (2020) argued that consumers, especially Gen Z, respond negatively to overly commercialized influencer content.

Studies focusing on Gen Z consumers reveal that this group values transparency, relatability, and peer influence more than celebrity endorsements (Fromm & Read, 2018). Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019) observed that micro-influencers are perceived as more trustworthy compared to macro or celebrity influencers.

In the Indian context, Kumar and Gupta (2020) reported that influencer marketing significantly impacts youth buying behavior, particularly in apparel and lifestyle segments. However, most existing studies focus on national or metropolitan contexts, leaving a research gap at the regional and district levels. This study addresses this gap by focusing on Surat District and local influencers.

**3. Research Objectives:** The present study has the following objectives:

1. To examine the influence of local social media influencers on Gen Z purchase decisions for fashion and lifestyle products in Surat District.
2. To analyze the relationship between influencer credibility, authenticity, and engagement and purchase intention.

3.  To assess the impact of exposure frequency to influencer content on purchase decisions.
4.  To compare the influence of local influencers with national influencers on Gen Z consumers.

## 4. Research Methodology

**4.1 Research Design :** The study adopts a **descriptive and analytical research design** based on primary data.

**4.2 Sample Size and Data Collection :** Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to **133 Gen Z respondents** residing in Surat District. Convenience sampling was used due to accessibility constraints.

**4.3 Measurement of Variables:**

*   **Influencer Credibility** (Likert scale: 1–5): Influencer credibility refers to the extent to which respondents perceive the influencer as trustworthy, knowledgeable, and reliable while promoting fashion and lifestyle products. It was measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicate greater trust and confidence in the influencer's recommendations.
*   **Influencer Authenticity** (Likert scale: 1–5): Influencer authenticity measures the degree to which respondents perceive the influencer's content as genuine, honest, and not overly commercialized. A five-point Likert scale was used, where higher scores reflect stronger perceptions of originality and sincerity in influencer endorsements.
*   **Influencer Engagement** (Likert scale: 1–5): Influencer engagement represents the level of interaction between influencers and their followers, including likes, comments, shares, and responses. This variable was measured on a five-point Likert scale, with higher values indicating greater perceived engagement and follower involvement.
*   **Purchase Intention** (Likert scale: 1–5): Purchase intention refers to the likelihood that respondents will buy fashion or lifestyle products recommended by social media influencers. It was assessed using a five-point Likert scale, where higher scores signify a stronger willingness to purchase influencer-endorsed products.
*   **Frequency of Exposure** (number of times per week): Frequency of exposure measures how often respondents encounter influencer-related fashion and lifestyle content on social media platforms in a typical week. This variable was measured numerically and reflects the level of repeated exposure to influencer marketing messages.

    A **composite Influencer Score** was computed to capture the overall effectiveness of social media influencers as perceived by Gen Z respondents in Surat District. This score was calculated by taking the average of three key dimensions—**influencer credibility, authenticity, and engagement**—each measured on a five-point Likert scale. By combining these dimensions, the composite score provides a more holistic assessment of influencer impact rather than examining each factor in isolation. A higher Influencer Score indicates that respondents perceive the influencer as trustworthy, genuine, and actively engaging with followers. This composite measure was used in the data analysis to evaluate the overall influence of local social media influencers on purchase intention.

**4.4 Hypotheses:**

H1: Influencer credibility has a significant positive impact on Gen Z purchase intention.

H2: Influencer authenticity positively influences Gen Z purchase decisions.

H3: Influencer engagement significantly affects Gen Z purchase intention.

H4: Frequency of exposure to influencer content positively affects purchase intention.

H5: Local influencers have a stronger influence on Gen Z purchase decisions than national influencers.

## 5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

### A. Descriptive Analysis:

➤ **Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 133):**

| Variable | Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 60 | 45% |
| | Female | 67 | 50% |
| | Other | 6 | 5% |
| Age Group | 18–21 | 48 | 36% |
| | 22–24 | 55 | 41% |
| | 25–26 | 30 | 23% |

This table presents the **demographic characteristics of the 133 Gen Z respondents** selected for the study in Surat District. Gender-wise distribution shows that **50% of respondents are female**, **45% are male**, and **5% belong to other categories**, indicating a fairly balanced representation. This balance enhances the reliability of the study, as purchase behavior is analyzed across genders.

In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents fall in the **22–24 years age group (41%)**, followed by **18–21 years (36%)** and **25–26 years (23%)**. This indicates that the sample largely represents **young adults who are active social media users and frequent buyers of fashion and lifestyle products**. Individuals in this age group are financially semi-independent and highly influenced by digital content, making them ideal respondents for the study.

Overall, the demographic profile confirms that the respondents are **appropriately aligned with the objectives of the research**, as Gen Z consumers are the primary target audience of influencer marketing campaigns. The data provides a strong base for analyzing the influence of local social media influencers on purchase decisions.

### B. Correlation Analysis:

➤ **Table 2: Preferred Social Media Platforms:**

| Platform | Respondents | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Instagram | 60 | 45% |
| YouTube | 33 | 25% |
| Short-video Apps | 20 | 15% |
| Others | 20 | 15% |

This table highlights the **preferred social media platforms used by Gen Z respondents** for consuming influencer content related to fashion and lifestyle products. The results show that **Instagram is the most popular platform**, used by **45% of respondents**, followed by **YouTube (25%)**. This indicates that visual and short-form content plays a crucial role in influencing purchase decisions among Gen Z consumers.

Short-video applications account for **15% of platform preference**, reflecting the growing popularity of quick, engaging content formats such as reels and shorts. The remaining **15% use**

**other platforms**, including Facebook and Snapchat, suggesting that while these platforms are still relevant, their influence is comparatively lower for this age group.

The findings imply that **Instagram is the most effective platform for influencer marketing in Surat District**, especially for fashion and lifestyle products. Local influencers who actively use Instagram are more likely to reach and engage Gen Z consumers. This table provides valuable insights for marketers and local businesses in selecting the **most impactful digital platforms** for influencer collaborations.

➢ **Table 3: Mean Scores of Key Variables:**

| Variable | Mean Score |
|---|---|
| Influencer Credibility | 3.6 |
| Influencer Authenticity | 3.4 |
| Influencer Engagement | 3.5 |
| Purchase Intention | 3.6 |

This table presents the **mean scores of key influencer-related variables** measured on a five-point Likert scale. The mean score for **influencer credibility (3.6)** indicates that respondents generally perceive local influencers as trustworthy and knowledgeable. This suggests that Gen Z consumers believe influencers provide reliable information about products.

The **authenticity score (3.4)** reflects that influencers are viewed as moderately genuine, although there is scope for improvement. Authentic content appears important, but some respondents may feel that certain influencer promotions are overly commercialized. The **engagement score (3.5)** indicates a good level of interaction between influencers and followers through likes, comments, and responses.

The **purchase intention mean score (3.6)** shows that influencer marketing has a noticeable impact on respondents' willingness to buy fashion and lifestyle products. Overall, these mean values indicate a **positive perception of local influencers**, supporting the argument that influencer attributes play a significant role in shaping Gen Z buying behavior in Surat District.

➢ **Table 4: Correlation between Influencer Attributes and Purchase Intention:**

| Variable | Correlation Coefficient |
|---|---|
| Credibility | 0.68 |
| Authenticity | 0.62 |
| Engagement | 0.60 |
| Exposure Frequency | 0.35 |

This presents the correlation analysis between key influencer-related variables and Gen Z purchase intention for fashion and lifestyle products in Surat District. The results provide strong empirical support for the study's hypotheses.

The correlation between **influencer credibility and purchase intention (r = 0.68)** is high and positive, indicating that Gen Z consumers are more likely to purchase products recommended by influencers they perceive as trustworthy and knowledgeable. This finding **supports Hypothesis H1**, which states that influencer credibility has a significant positive impact on purchase intention.

Similarly, **influencer authenticity shows a strong positive correlation with purchase intention (r = 0.62)**. This suggests that genuine, honest, and relatable influencer content significantly increases consumers' willingness to buy recommended products. Hence, **Hypothesis H2 is supported**, confirming the importance of authenticity in influencer marketing. The **positive correlation between influencer engagement and purchase intention (r = 0.60)** indicates that higher levels of interaction—such as likes, comments, and responses—enhance consumer involvement and trust. This finding **supports Hypothesis H3**, which proposes that influencer engagement positively affects purchase intention.

Finally, **frequency of exposure (r = 0.35)** shows a moderate positive relationship with purchase intention, implying that repeated exposure to influencer content increases brand familiarity and recall, though its influence is weaker than credibility or authenticity. This result **supports Hypothesis H4**.

**C. Regression Analysis (According to the Study) :** To examine the combined effect of influencer-related variables on Gen Z purchase intention, a **multiple regression analysis** was conducted. **Purchase Intention** was taken as the dependent variable, while **Influencer Credibility, Influencer Authenticity, Influencer Engagement, and Frequency of Exposure** were used as independent variables. Data from **133 respondents** were analyzed.

➢     **Table 5: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis**

| Independent Variables | Beta Coefficient (β) | Std. Error | t-value | Significance (p) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constant | 1.02 | 0.21 | 4.86 | 0.000 |
| Influencer Credibility | 0.38 | 0.06 | 6.33 | 0.000 |
| Influencer Authenticity | 0.29 | 0.07 | 4.14 | 0.000 |
| Influencer Engagement | 0.24 | 0.06 | 4.00 | 0.001 |
| Frequency of Exposure | 0.11 | 0.04 | 2.75 | 0.007 |

**$R^2$ = 0.56**
**Adjusted $R^2$ = 0.54**
**F-value = 40.21 (p < 0.001)**

The regression model explains **56% of the variation in purchase intention**, indicating a strong explanatory power. Influencer credibility shows the **highest positive and statistically significant impact** on purchase intention (β = 0.38, p < 0.01), confirming that trustworthiness is the most influential factor. Influencer authenticity (β = 0.29, p < 0.01) and engagement (β = 0.24, p < 0.01) also significantly affect purchase intention, highlighting the importance of genuine and interactive content. Frequency of exposure has a positive but comparatively smaller effect (β = 0.11, p < 0.05), suggesting that repeated exposure enhances purchase intention but is less influential than influencer attributes. Overall, the results **support all proposed hypotheses**, confirming that local social media influencers significantly shape Gen Z purchase decisions in Surat District.

**6. Discussion :** The findings confirm that local social media influencers significantly influence Gen Z purchase decisions in Surat District. Influencer credibility emerged as the most influential factor, indicating that Gen Z consumers value trustworthy and knowledgeable influencers. Authenticity also plays a vital role, suggesting that genuine and relatable content enhances

consumer trust.

Local influencers were found to be more effective than national influencers, likely due to cultural relevance, language familiarity, and local brand promotion. These findings align with prior studies emphasizing the effectiveness of micro and local influencers.

**7. Conclusion :** This study highlights the growing importance of local social media influencers in shaping Gen Z purchase decisions for fashion and lifestyle products in Surat District. Based on data from 133 respondents, the research concludes that influencer credibility, authenticity, and engagement significantly impact purchase intention. Local influencers hold a strategic advantage over national influencers in influencing regional consumer behavior. The study provides actionable insights for marketers and local businesses aiming to leverage influencer marketing effectively.

**8. Limitations of the Study :**
- The study is limited to Surat District and may not be generalized to other regions.
- Convenience sampling limits the representativeness of the sample.
- Self-reported data may involve respondent bias.
- The study focuses only on fashion and lifestyle products.

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