

FROM INFLUENCE TO INTENTION: THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON GEN Z'S E-COMMERCE PURCHASING DECISION

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ABSTRACT

Digitalization has changed the way people behave, especially how they search for information and shop online. Social media influencers have become important figures in today's world especially among Gen Z, as they are the most digitally savvy generation. Nonetheless, there is still a significant gap in understanding of how influencer credibility and engagement strategies affect purchasing decisions on an e-commerce platform like Tokopedia. Through an in-depth literature review, this study uses a qualitative approach to study Generation Z's ideas of influencers and how they affect consumer behaviour. According to the findings, the credibility of an influencer in terms of expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness plays an important role in the creation of emotions leading to the buying. In addition, comments, live streaming, and interactive content greatly benefit consumers. Gen Z are more likely to react positively to influencers whose personal beliefs align with their products, rather than only selling generic promotional messages. This insights illustrate that business practitioners and educators should prioritize influencer credibility and consider a two-way digital engagement while constructing effective marketing and communication strategies.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing; Generation Z; Source Credibility; Purchase Decision; E-Commerce Tokopedia

A. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, consumers increasingly rely on digital technology and online platforms to search for information and make purchases. Consumers now have better access to information on products to compare prices and reviews which makes them more confident to make purchases (Adha et al., 2020; Sastra, Okta & Wijaya, 2023). Digital transformation has raised consumer's expectations for transparency and speed of service. This drive companies to innovate and keep up with the fast-changing market demands. For instance, customers now expect a personal, responsive shopping experience – and the ultimate way to ensure that experience is by embedding digital technology into the business strategy. Although there is plenty of research on digital transformation and consumer behaviour, there is still a gap on how do social media influencers., as one of the main strategies on digital marketing, impact consumer decision-making. More specifically, in Indonesia. How do these influencers with unique credibility and interactions shape consumer on their purchasing behaviour in platforms like Tokopedia? While the existing studies talk about either online consumer behaviour, in general, or influencer marketing effectiveness in broader terms, there are not many specifically focused studies. This gap is particularly relevant considering Generation Z's digital fluency and their unique expectations for authenticity in brand communication. To remain relevant in this

digital age and remain competitive, it is important for companies to thoroughly understand the influence of digital technology on the behaviour of users.

Indonesia has become the largest online market in the Southeast Asia region due to its rapidly growing e-commerce sector. The value of Indonesia's e-commerce market in 2023 is expected to reach around USD 73 billion, a jump from the previous years. As one of the main players in this market, Tokopedia is able to control around 35% of the market share. The e-commerce platform is a leading local site that has almost the same strength as other regional players (Ciptowening et al., 2021). Tokopedia's success has catch attention from many stakeholders, and the success of Tokopedia itself is inseparable from Tokopedia's approach itself that empowers local traders, promoting a user-friendly interface, and also the neat integration of logistics, as well as complete digital payment services that are efficient. Tokopedia has become one of the most popular online marketplaces in Indonesia. They have more than 12 million registered sellers to boost e-commerce adoption. Tokopedia dominates the market because it understands Indonesian consumers who are becoming connected, digital and online-savvy, and contributes to their effort to offer services. E-commerce influencers can persuade potential customers to purchase products, including those that are sold in Tokopedia.

Influencers utilize their social networks (Ariyani et al., 2024; Susilowati & Agustiya, 2022) to create brand image and encourage audience interaction. The research reveals that relevant content and high engagement in social media can influence consumer purchasing decisions (Ariyani et al. Suppose that 2024; Chandra & Sari, 2021). Influencer marketing campaigns may may not only provide information about a brand product, but it will also give trust and goodwill to the brand (Adiawaty et al., 2022; Khosasih, 2023). These days, social media influencers are some of the main players in digital marketing campaigns. By offering genuine and believable content, close relationships are formed with the audience which often turn into parasocial relationships. Consumers are more likely to trust the expert advice given to them by influencers. Having emotional connection with the audience and their credibility and capability are the important elements to developing consumers' purchasing intentions (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016).

The ever-changing landscape of advertising in the era of digital marketing has led to the growing trend of influencer endorsement. The influencers are not only the deliverers of the messages who conveys the messages the brand ask them too, but they also shape opinions (Hapsari & Sukardani, 2018). In addition, Gen Z's shopping behavior and characteristics include accepting recommendations and reviews from influencers more than advertising (Dwitama et al., 2024; Kusuma & Suniantara, 2022). According to research, e-WOM can have a positive impact towards consumer's purchasing decision that strengthens the power of trust and shared experience between influencer and consumer that increases consumer's purchase intention (Ardana & Rastini, 2018). In short, marketing strategy with influencer must be based on a strong understanding of the target, and content relevancy (Maulana & Asra, 2019; Sandora, 2020). Using qualitative methods, this study aims to investigate more about how generation Z perceives the role of influencers in e-commerce and what drives them to make purchase decisions. This research is expected to bring benefits for the business people and marketers in designing effective and targeted marketing strategies in this digital age (Maulana & Asra, 2019). One of the aspects that is a serious concern to the world of digital marketing today is how Gen Z consumption behavior is getting impacted by influencers as the

characteristics of this generation are very technological, that they mainly often use social media as a reference when making purchasing decisions.

Despite the continued growth of e-commerce, there is still a limited understanding of the psychological and social mechanisms of the influence on purchasing decisions. Particularly in a context such as the Tokopedia platform towards the Gen Z. This gap in the research highlights the need to investigate influencers as strategic players in e-commerce, which influence the perception of consumers as well as the direction of preferences and loyalty of brands. The results of this study are expected to contribute in providing answers to the basic problems faced by marketers. Starting from a more effective influencer choice, the communication strategy of campaigns, and the overall marketing strategy that need to be consumer-centric. This study aims to examine the role of influencers in the purchasing decision-making by Generation Z of the Tokopedia platform more deeply using qualitative approaches as a method that makes it easier for the researcher to trace meaning and motives from the consumer side more contextual and comprehensive.

B. METHODS

This research is aimed to learn the role of influencers in the buying decision by Gen Z at the Tokopedia e-commerce platform using qualitative research methods with literature review. The research design is exploratory and descriptive in nature to explain the relevant social phenomenon. The analysis concentrates on recent scientific publications which contain theories from the digital marketing scope, consumer behaviour and social influence aspects. The literature consists of articles published in credible journal, academic book, and research report published over the last five years. Databases like Google Scholar, Scopus, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink and others are also explored.

This study is about the behavior of Gen Z who are actively shopping on the Tokopedia platform and how influencers may influence their purchase decision. Even though the respondents are indirectly involved, the information reviewed consists of previous studies involving Generation Z as the main target group. The selection of analysis material was based on the relevance to the object of the study. Inclusion criteria were set on publications that specifically mention influencers, purchasing decisions, and e-commerce. Secondary sources are used to support the interpretation and data construction as well.

The technique of data collection was through documentation studies and systematic searches using certain keywords, namely, "influencer marketing," "consumer decision-making," "Gen Z," and "e-commerce behaviour." Data were analysed using content analysis to find key themes and repeated meanings as patterns. The process includes data reduction, classification, and inductive inference. The reliability of the data was ensured through the triangulated nature of sources and clarification of authors from different theoretical views. The final results come in the form of an in-depth interpretive narrative.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Generation Z's Perception of Influencer Credibility.

The study found that credibility of influencers is the dominant factor that influences Generation Z's purchase intention. The current generation seems to assess influencers not only from the quantity of followers, but also from the authenticity, consistency of the message, and the influencer's personal values that is in line with the brand being promoted. Based on the

literature review by Japutra & Keni (2020), the Source Credibility Model theory by Hovland et al. that includes source credibility, source trustworthiness and source attractiveness, is highly applicable in explaining effective marketing communication. Generation Z trusts influencers who they see as 'real' and those who have had genuine experiences with the recommended product more than they a formal product promotion would. Because of this, believing something to be trustworthy makes a person feel more emotional towards it. In the end, it also affects their purchase decision. These results support the idea that influencers selection should also be considered. The quality of the relationship between the influencer and the audience is also vital, not just their popularity. A marketing strategy may not be effective towards gen Z if there is a mismatch between brand values and the image and message brought by the influencer (Djuned & Husna, 2022). This study suggests that companies must choose influencers whose values and communication styles match their Generation Z's target audience to ensure promotions are received positively. By selecting personalities with matching values, businesses will attract the right audience as well.

People born between 1995 and 2010 are part of Generation Z. Generation Z is showing interest in influencers for social media marketing purposes. Influencer credibility positively impacts the purchasing behaviour of Generation Z according to research. According to Tamarima et al., the purchasing decisions of this cohort are influenced by virtual influencers, customer engagement, parasocial interaction and influencer credibility. This suggests Generation Z are sensitive towards digital content information from influencers (Tamarima et al., 2025).

The capability of an influencer can be measured through various dimensions such as expertise and trustworthiness. In a more local context, Isalman et al. proven this research by finding that perceptions of product quality and influencer credibility plays a critical mediation relationship to purchase intention (Isalman et al., 2023). The results reveal that Generation Z tend to trust experts and trustworthy sources so they may be influenced by the long-term commitment of these influencers and their recommendation of products. Communication created through influencers doesn't only include advertisement of the products but emotional interaction with the audience. Research by Lubis shows that social media influencers who have a close relationship with their followers on social media such as Instagram can shape followers' perceptions of the message conveyed. It means Generation Z evaluates an influencer's credibility (Lubis, 2024). Thus, they will probably trust an influencer who manages to successfully build a parasocial relationship.

Gen Z take influencers' trustworthiness into account when making buying choices and in their responses to ads and promotions. On the other hand, how ads and recommendations are processed depends a lot on TikTok content. Still the study of user interactivity on Tik Tok needs further investigation on this regards (Yendra et al., 2024).

The study shows that interaction and engagement are key factors towards making influencer credible among Gen Z. Thus, this explains how influencer's credibility affects the consumption behaviour and decision-making process of Gen Z to further plan marketing strategies for the younger generation in today's marketing era.

Influencers' Engagement Strategy in Influencing Purchase Decision

The second focus of this research explores how consumers' purchase intentions and decisions can be impacted by the influencer's strategy. The interaction isn't just one-way communication; it includes two-way involvement such as replies to comments, use of live

streaming features, and co-creation with followers. The Engagement Theory in digital marketing suggests that active consumer participation in the influencer communication ecosystem is vital to developing brand loyalty and increasing purchase conversions. The literature review revealed that responsive and community-oriented forms of interaction create a warm atmosphere conducive to a sense of belonging to the promoted brand. This has proven to be effective especially in platforms which provide an integration of the social media with the online shopping experience like Tokopedia. These results reveal a clear strategy for not-yet-interactive influencer campaigns. The effectiveness of influencer-based marketing increases when consumers are allowed to take part directly in the content either through quizzes, short surveys or chats. Thus, creating two-way communication not only helps strengthen social relations but also helps in increasing the chances of conversion in product purchases.

Influencer's strategy in affecting purchase decision have become the highlight of modern-day marketing research. This is especially true for research in the context of Generation Z, as they are increasingly integrated with social media platforms. Interactions that seem credible and emotionally-inducing may attract high engagement contents that can influence your purchasing decision (Schultz, 2000). Influencers who build closer and more personal relationships with their followers create a real connection with consumers, increase the likelihood of the followers taking action. Brands should select influencers who have the emotional bond with their target audience rather than just having influencer selection based on follower counts.

Moreover, the attitude of consumers also plays a significant role in decision-making. According to Saktiana & Miftahuddin (2021), consumers have a positive influence on purchasing decisions when they have favourable attitudes towards the product and the price perception. In other words, these influencers need to convey far more than just a promo. They also have to create a positive image and deliver the product value in relevant messages. By using engaging stories that inform people more about the advantages of the product, influencers can help consumers better understand their buying decisions.

In another study, Khairina & Restya (2023) also stated that the purchasing decisions were affected by the marketing mix strategy element. This included product quality as well as price. Influencers must adapt content for consumer value and expectations. If the content is creative and interesting, it can encourage more engagement while optimizing positive perceptions of the marketed product. Moreover, we can't ignore the influence of price and promotions. Wijaya et al. (2022) stated that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use affecting competitive prices significantly influences consumer purchasing decisions on e-commerce platforms. A Generation Z influencer who offers deals or discounts would be more price-sensitive in online transactions.

Finally, influencers that manage to catch Gen-Z's attention must produce content that is interesting, relevant, with strong credibility and has an emotional connection. To optimally influence purchasing decisions, one has to leverage interactions, consumer attitudes and perceptions, and added value as price and product benefits.

D. CONCLUSION

The results show that the influencer's credibility and interaction strategies have a significant impact on Generation Z's purchasing decision making for Tokopedia e-commerce (a local Indonesia e-commerce platform) The influencer credibility can be defined and built with

experience, or personal connection to oneself. This may lead to the increased probability and strength of trust and support for the recommended product. Similarly, two-way communication strategies through comments, live streaming, co-creating content and other responsive interactions can bring the consumers to the brand as well. The findings confirm that an influencer campaign will need more than a particular influencer with many followers. However, it mostly relies on the relationships with the people. So, it can require some research to find someone who can accurately convey your brand message. Additionally, you want someone who speaks the same language as your audience. This study has several theoretical implications for the academic literature that enhances the validity of digital marketing and consumer behaviour studies. Furthermore, it is particularly so in the Gen Z context which has its own set of unique characteristics, especially regarding the information processing and purchase decision-making. The findings of this study can most likely be adapted to Islamic Basic Education, particularly in reinforcing digital literacy and developing a curriculum that teaches critical skills for assessing information obtained from social media and influencers as younger children need to be empowered so that they learn that they are not just consumers, but also analysts of information that can impact their decisions. For marketers, the result of this research may improve the selection of influencers they use and the overall strategy of their engaging contents. This research used a literature review framework that does not intend to collect primary empirical data directly from the respondents. As such, the result cannot be generalized beyond this study. Further research should be conducted using a different approach, either through interviews or observation of Generation Z behaviour on some e-commerce platforms to capture a bigger understanding of the study.

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