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Socialinių Tinklų Grožio Influencerių Vizualinio Turinio Įtaka Z Kartos Grožio Prokuktų Pirkimo Sprendimams	The Impact of Social Media Beauty Influencers' Visual Content on Gen Z's Beauty Product Purchase Intensions

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INTRODUCTION

Today's technology is developing at a rapid rate. Because of this growth, web-based social networking has become a necessary component of both individual and collective daily lives (Rao & Kalyani, 2022). The creation of social media networking sites has made a vast difference in the average internet experience today. This shift in the market has also enabled internet users to influence other users (Shamim et al., 2024). In today's tech-driven world, where social media reaches far and wide, the consumer environment has changed dramatically. This is especially true for younger generations, such as Generation Z (Gen Z), whose purchase decisions are increasingly impacted by social media. Gen Z grew up in a world of societal instability, violence, and political turbulence; this generation has never known a world without instant connectivity and access to information and communication platforms (Schwieger & Ladwig, 2018). Furthermore, this consumer group expects a widespread availability of numerous new technologies and technological processes, providing customers with greater autonomy and speedier transactions (Priporas et al., 2017). Gen Z, who grew up in an era of instantaneous connection and information availability, is a generation of tech-savvy consumers with distinct tastes and expectations.

The same technological improvements also gave rise to social media networking platforms and the influencers accompanying them. Influencers can be defined as social media users who have gathered a sizable following and received notable notice across various social media platforms, with originality and uniqueness being the key stand-out traits of influencers (Casaló et al., 2018). Other fields, such as marketing also adapted to the shift of technology giving way to a term referred to as influencer marketing. Influencer marketing is a strategy where a company selects and incentivizes online influencers to engage with their social media followers, aiming to leverage the influencers' unique assets to promote the company's products or services, ultimately seeking to improve overall business performance; this includes metrics such as follower networks, personal branding, communication content, and follower trust; by doing so, they can reach more targeted client categories, develop positioning with greater market acceptance and relevance, and produce more innovative and trustworthy content (Leung et al., 2022). These benefits are expected to translate into positive consumer attitudes and behaviours, ultimately enhancing business performance. Companies increasingly feel that influencer marketing is an efficient way to disseminate information about their products and services (Beichert et al., 2024), and social media influencers are being viewed by Gen Z as well-educated friends whose opinions as well as advice they can follow (Singer et al., 2023) due to their close proximity. With this new form of marketing, the dynamic relationship between Gen Z and social media influencers started to emerge, shedding light on how visual content created by social media influencers impacts the purchase decisions of Generation Z. A particularly interesting point of

research is the dichotomy between the Gen Z and beauty influencers on social media. These influencers have the ability to create content about a range of different topics, including product reviews, fashion inspiration, and catering to certain skin tones and conditions (Sadiq et al., 2023). Gen Z is a generation, which is deeply affected by technology. Furthermore, they value consciousness and convenience, which most certainly contributes to their significant preference for e-retailers (Thangavel et al., 2022), a space where online influencers tend to be the most impactful.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore this relationship by studying the elements that highlight the impact of beauty influencer-generated visual content on Gen Z's purchasing intentions for beauty products. Visual content is important in marketing because it attracts customers, builds brand identity, increases social media activity, reinforces narrative, simplifies goods, assists SEO, and, ultimately, increases conversion rates (Sunarso et al., 2023). Furthermore, social media influencers have the ability to influence behaviour of individuals for the greater good or for personal benefit (Hudders & Lou, 2022). This study looks at the factors that influence Gen Z's purchase intentions for beauty goods based on beauty influencer-generated visual content, giving marketers the information they need to effectively connect with and win over this customer demographic.

A thorough examination of prior research reveals a complex interplay of factors, including the aspects of visual content, its informational and relevance factors, the context in which it is shared, the type of influencer who shares the content, the brand-influencer relationship qualities, and the intended viewer. These aspects all contribute to the question of how the influencer's visual content impacts Gen Z's purchase decisions, or in this specific case - how beauty influencer's visual content impacts the beauty products purchase decisions of Gen Z. In addition, some of the previous studies have also noted this as a research gap in the marketing field. For example, Ghalib and Ardiansyah (2023) state that research on the impact of influencers on Gen Z purchase decisions should be completed in locations other than the original study location (Jakarta), as expanding this topic to various locations and populations would allow for a more in-depth investigation of other viewpoints and behaviours. Furthermore, the same study suggested that future research should examine the impact of influencers on other social media platforms and include more criteria to better understand customer purchase intent. Furthermore, Rizwan and Qamar (2023) concluded that because their study focused on the effects of Instagram influencers on millennial and Generation-Z purchase intentions before and during COVID-19, future researchers should assess purchase intentions after the lockdowns are lifted and individuals are allowed to return to the marketplaces. The current time would be fitting for this study to fill this research gap. Thus, this study aims to close the present research gap - which comprises the major focus on influencer content performed by previous researchers - by focusing on the research gap of visual content's impact on Gen Z consumers in their purchase decisions.

The primary objective of this research is to figure out the relationship between influencer's visual content and Gen Z's purchase decisions (i.e. motivate the influencer's visual content's viewer to purchase goods or services or drive a wedge between the content viewer's opinion of the company and image displayed in the influencer-generated visual content). To accomplish this goal, the following research objectives have been delineated:

1. To explore the characteristics of social media influencers, with a focus on beauty influencers and the factors and significance of influencer marketing.

2. To explore the qualities of Gen Z and their roles and preferences as consumers.

3. To identify the role of social media and various platforms where influencers are basing their content and accumulating followers.

4. To identify the key factors of visual content on social media that influence the viewer, both of positive and negative valence.

5. To further examine the psychological and social influence of visual content.

6. To develop an empirical research methodology to analyze this influence.

7. To assess the scope of the impact of beauty influencer's visual content on Gen Z's purchase divisions of beauty products.

8. To provide insights based on the research findings and their influence on Gen Z's purchase decisions in the digital era.

There are three primary sections to the study. First, a thorough analysis of earlier studies relevant to influencer created content and brand perception based on the influencer-brand relationship, Gen Z qualities as consumers, social media and visual content are carried out. The research methodology used for this study is then explained. Third, the research findings and data analysis are presented in this section. Lastly, the study's limitations and recommendations are discussed, as well as the implications of the results.

1. REVIEW OF THE THEORY ON THE INFLUENCE OF VISUAL CONTENT CREATED BY INFLUENCERS ON PURCHASE DECISIONS OF GEN Z

1.1. Influencers and Influencer Marketing

A phenomenon called electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) emerged with the growth of social media marketing; eWOM is defined as digital marketing-derived information that is later believed to give way to influencers, who can now advertise goods and services of various companies based on their opinions shared with the public (Hendrayati & Pamungkas, 2020). E-WOM has been shown to improve a company's image by encouraging favourable ratings and assessments (Bilgin, 2018). The efficacy of eWOM demonstrates that social media users are more than just passive recipients of marketing messaging; they are also active players in constructing brand meaning (Uzunboylu et al., 2020). When it comes to how information is transmitted online, word-of-mouth marketing frequently provides a competitive edge, as demonstrated by Jasin (2022), whose study showed that eWOM has a favourable and substantial impact on brand perception. This might be because word-of-mouth marketing grows naturally from social environment perspectives, which are perceived as more honest, and there are no specific aims involved in educating other consumers (Nurgiyantoro, 2021). As eWOM continues to shape brand impression and drive customer behaviour, influencers have emerged as critical components of modern marketing strategies.

An influencer is defined as someone who has the authority, expertise, position, or relationship with their target audience to influence their purchase decisions (Sadiq et al., 2023). Influencer endorsements and recommendations for certain products or services may greatly boost a brand's visibility and income. Influencers' opinions have a significant impact on followers' interactions, suggestions, and purchase intentions (Pérez-Cabañero et al., 2023). The development of eWOM has altered the marketing landscape, with influencers playing a critical role in forming customer perceptions and increasing brand awareness. The organic nature of eWOM, along with the reliability of influencer referrals, make them extremely efficient tools for advertising products and services. Influencer marketing's explosive rise has led to significant shifts in both how consumers perceive brands and their online promotional campaigns, as well as how businesses think about and execute marketing strategies of their own (Leung et al., 2022). In the middle of the 2000s, when Facebook and YouTube were still cutting-edge media platforms, some of the earliest influencer ads went live with the rise of interactive and linked platforms (like TikTok) some twenty years later, influencers have turned into business owners, introducing their product lines and appointing agents to handle contract negotiations (Brooks et al., 2021). Influencer marketing has revolutionised how businesses

communicate with their customers. Understanding the complexities of influencer relationships enables businesses to effectively use this marketing strategy to boost sales and foster brand loyalty within their target audience.

The link between the influencer and the viewer plays an important role in the efficacy and popularity of influencer marketing. Content viewers are more likely to listen to the endorsement offered by an influencer when they feel that the influencer's account and personality complement each other (Casaló et al., 2018), this means, that influencers who are seen as similar to the viewer, showcase expertise as well as trustworthiness, greatly exchange trust in their branded posts (Tiwari et al., 2024; Shamim et al., 2024; Paul et al., 2024). Similarly, Hermawan's (2020) research found that for influencer marketing to be successful, it must make use of the influencer's charm, personality, attitude, and way of life (lifestyle) to represent the brand. In addition, when influencers offer informative and helpful content on their social media pages, their followers are more inclined to trust them, this trust can increase people's interest in the companies that these influencers endorse (Lou & Yuan, 2019). When followers of social media influencers find their material to be informative, their requirements for the influencer's competence are considered as met (Ki et al., 2020). This is not surprising as online users believe that the quality of the information shared on social media affects how important they think it is for people who are part of a conversation to share it (Dedeoglu, 2019). Research by Cao et al. (2021) also found that consumers' social media engagement may be increased by providing them with informational, trustworthy, and dependable social media material. Influencers may increase consumers' trust in a business and help it get exposure. People are more inclined to purchase from a brand if the influencer is perceived as credible, the influencer's understanding of the product is more significant than their attractiveness in convincing consumers to buy (Macheka et al., 2024). Using reputable influencers may help customers believe in the brand more. In other words, the success of influencer marketing depends on the influencer's ability to establish a genuine connection with their audience, leveraging their unique personality, lifestyle and trustworthiness to effectively promote brands through their content.

In addition to these factors, the inspirational aspect of influencers can be another trait contributing to their effectiveness in the social media landscape. Often the followers of influencers associate traits such as glamour, fun, and human connection with social media influencers, driven by their desires for self-improvement and escapism from their real lives; ultimately, these associations shape the overall perception of the influencers in the minds of their followers (Malik et al., 2023). People tend to think of influencers as ordinary people with a large following who have the power to affect and mould the decisions, actions, and/or opinions of others (Lou, 2021). To take advantage of this perceived closeness to their followers, influencers are often inclined to share incredibly more personal information about themselves. Based on research performed by Lacap et al. (2024), self-

disclosure has a significant and direct impact on parasocial relationships between the content's viewer and the influencer and also indirectly impacts the connection between social media interactions and these relationships. The same point was also proven by research conducted by Zhang et al. (2024). According to the cited research, the degree to which study participants enjoyed vlogs (video blogs) produced by influencers had a direct effect on their purchase behaviours, as well as an indirect influence through social media engagement, parasocial relationships, and the influencer's perceived credibility. Overall, influencers' success on social media is mostly determined by their inspiring traits, perceived relatability, and ability to develop parasocial interactions through self-disclosure.

On the other hand, not all influencers are created equal. Influencer-specific qualities like attractiveness, likeability, and similarity can all play a role in influencing consumer behaviour in the context of influencer marketing (Taillon et al., 2020). The results demonstrate that among Gen-Z consumers, local influencers have a greater impact on online brand endorsement. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the association between the influencer's online brand promotion and their place of origin is mediated by both perceived homophily and trustworthiness. The results also indicate that local influencers have an advantage over international ones in terms of perceived homophily and better levels of trustworthiness. In addition, local influencers have a stronger impact on Gen Z consumers' online brand endorsement, perceived similarity and trustworthiness mediate this relationship, and local influencers have an advantage over international ones (Rambocas & Metivier, 2024). The follower count of an influencer can also significantly influence their promotional effectiveness across social media platforms. Mega-influencers stand out because of their popularity and perceived leadership, which leads to stronger perceptions among their audience (Conde & Casais, 2023). Overall, the more followers an influencer has, the more likely it is that their followers will see eye-to-eye with their recommendations. However, followers may associate less with influencers that have gathered a significant following and start to resemble traditional celebrities rather than their peers, which diminishes engagement (Tafesse & Wood, 2021). The opposite also stands, if the influencer does not have a high follower count, the marketing performed by them will likely be considered less effective for other reasons. Micro-influencers face challenges that can prove them disadvantageous to brands seeking promotion as they often struggle with the pressure of heightened social expectations, feelings of being inauthentic, and mental stress, resulting in switching out their social media personas, separating their online and offline selves, or creating various multiple identities online (Bergs et al., 2023). Nevertheless, new influencers are more likely to push the boundaries of social media and innovate their content. This is because the rivalry among emerging social media influencers is fierce, pushing them to create social media content with more relevant information, powerful arguments, and greater video quality. This, of course, can benefit both brands and social media content viewers (Lee et al., 2021). Nevertheless, this personal struggle to deal with new-found

notoriety on social media can be endearing to some followers of said micro-influencers. If a brand wants to partner with an influencer known for their high trustworthiness, authenticity, and relatability, micro-influencers can still be the best choice, however, if the brand values expertise and attractiveness over the aforementioned qualities, mega-influencers may be more effective (Lv et al., 2023). While influencer follower count plays an important role in promotional effectiveness, the type of influencer best suited for a brand depends on specific marketing objectives. When choosing influencer marketing brands must carefully consider their target audience and the desired outcomes of each influencer category.

This leads to the next aspect that brands should take into account when implementing influencer marketing strategies - the influencer's chosen niche for content creation. Certain influencers are perceived by the public as being closely associated with particular brands. They do not consider these influencers to be distinct from the goods that they are well-versed in (Ren et al., 2023). Influencers focusing on apparel, accessories, makeup, shoes, and, services tend to have the highest impact on a brand; however, consumers largely rely on other avenues when considering making purchases of various gadgets, food, as well as jewellery, lowering the impact of influencers across these categories (Zak & Hasprova, 2020). Martínez-López et al. (2020) found that influencers should be viewed as potential customers or product specialists to build trust with their followers. This trust can lead to increased credibility, attention to the influencer's message, and increased interest in the product. In addition, the influencer's fit with the product and their following count complement each other, influencers with a significant following are often more well-liked and their product recommendations are more successful; nonetheless, for favourable outcomes, it is important that the product recommendation be consistent with the influencer's self-branded online persona. Another issue to consider is that followers' trust in the influencer positively effects their acceptance of endorsements; hence, followers' beliefs and behaviours are heavily impacted by their degree of confidence in the influencer (Kim & Kim, 2021). Influencers may earn greater clout with followers and on social media as their knowledge and renown in their speciality blog themes grow (Zhou et al., 2023). Overall, brands should prioritize influencers who specialize in categories that directly align with their products or services and understand that not all industries will provide equal results.

Another essential aspect of effective influencer marketing campaigns is also examining the influencer's past brand interactions. For example, when influencers prioritize commercial relationships and excessively promote products, their content can disintegrate their followers' trust and diminish the perceived credibility of their opinions and recommendations (Gamage & Ashill, 2023). Followers view influencers as more credible and have a more positive attitude towards them when they endorse goods that fit with their image. On the other hand, followers may see the influencer less favourably if they are aware that they are being compensated. Establishing credibility is crucial

for maintaining close relationships with followers and motivating them to take action, like making a purchase (Belanche et al., 2021). Nevertheless, influencers use authenticity strategies such as transparency, disclosure, personal experience, intimacy, relatability, and consistency in sponsored posts; these strategies contribute to presenting the influencer, the partner brand, and the services they provide in a specific way (Arnesson, 2023). Brands should be aware of this in order to ensure that their product placements are able to stand out among the other noise, which may be present on the influencer's social media.

Lastly, brands should also remember that influencers may be utilized in various ways, some of them rarely chosen by brands themselves. Influencers can operate as both company and personal content makers. Other roles that they can play are photographer, meet-and-greet host, event host, workshop holder, brand or company protagonist (ambassador), social media campaign planner, and concept creator (Huttula & Karjaluoto, 2023). In addition, it is worth noting that regardless of the degree of visual alignment between the influencer and the brand, followers may cease interacting with the brand if they stop interacting with their influencers (Argyris et al., 2020). The degree to which people interact with an influencer's postings can vary greatly depending on who they are as a person, since consumers follow influencers on social media mostly for their entertainment value, marketers should select influencers that appeal to their audiences (Ao et al., 2023). Social media influencers who are entertaining or humorous have a higher chance of interacting with followers than those who only provide informational content (Ren et al., 2023). All these aspects may be important for companies seeking a brand-influencer relationship as consumer perceptions of a product or service are shaped by their perceptions of the social media influencers who market it (Ooi et al., 2023). By effectively utilizing influencers of various follower counts, niches, and roles brands stand the best chance of gathering the best outcomes from their influencer marketing campaigns.

1.2. Impact of Social Media Beauty Influencers

A beauty influencer is a social media content creator who shares beauty-related material, primarily on cosmetics and makeup accessories; these influencers can specialize in a variety of topics, including product reviews, style inspiration, and catering to certain skin tones and conditions (Sadiq et al., 2023). For example, YouTube beauty vloggers (video blog creators) influence consumer purchasing behaviour, as long as the consumers regard these bloggers as legitimate sources of information and trust their opinions; in addition, the same research found that when it comes to younger generations, watching daily vlogs from their favourite beauty YouTuber has become more of an obsession than a relationship (Garg & Bakshi, 2024). This can be because influencers are frequently viewed as ideal images that followers want to resemble, individuals who emulate

influencers may make favourable comparisons in terms of knowledge, attractiveness, or even their lifestyle (Dinh & Lee, 2022). The barrier to being a successful influencer is less dictated by the influencer's knowledge level and more by their physical attractiveness and the amount of attachment the followers have to the social media influencer (Deng et al., 2022). Beauty influencers, with their capacity to inspire, educate, and connect with their audience on a personal level, have established their place as important individuals in the social media landscape.

These intimate ties between beauty influencers and their audiences may be extremely advantageous for businesses looking to establish new brand-influencer relationships. Social media is already a critical marketing tool in the beauty and wellness industries; sharing photos and videos is one of the most useful aspects of social media, and the majority of their customers prefer sites that allow for both photo and video content (Kaur & Kumar, 2022). For example, beauty video content on YouTube can help viewers create parasocial relationships with prominent beauty influencers and vicarious product experiences; in addition, when social media viewers can visualize what the beauty influencers explain in their videos, they are more likely to think that the content is interesting and useful, this shows that comprehending the influencer's message is critical for viewers to believe the information is trustworthy (Lee & Lee, 2022). When selling female-specific items like cosmetics and skincare, companies should choose influencers who are both attractive and adept at creating high-quality online content (Tsen & Cheng, 2021). Sponsored posts by social media influencers that show how different products may help followers reach self-improvement goals (such as imitating the influencer's look or utilizing a skincare product to attain healthy skin) are more likely to drive people to better themselves, the availability of these solutions can have a favourable impact on followers' sentiments towards the endorsed brand, intent to purchase, and engagement with content (Tian et al., 2023). Given the visual nature of various beauty goods and the power of visual storytelling, investing in high-quality social media content is critical for anyone hoping to capitalize on the impact of beauty influencers and engage with their audience on a deeper level.

However, this may not always be the case on all social media platforms, as some consumers can be rather sceptical of beauty influencer evaluations and marketing, frequently questioning their genuineness. According to research, consumers often emphasize the value of performing their own research, when it comes to beauty influencer promotions on Instagram (Konstantopoulou et al., 2019). This could be because consumers on social media channels are looking for useful information from fashion and beauty influencers rather than emotionally charged statements (Britt et al., 2020). There is also an additional site of the beauty world on social media which brands should be aware of. Social media platforms often promote the sexualisation of women, particularly among influencers who rely on the platform for a living and work in traditionally beauty and body-focused sectors such as fitness, fashion and beauty; this sexualisation becomes a strategic technique used by influencers to attain

success or match the platform's standards and brand expectations, which is frequently motivated by financial constraints (Bussy-Socrate & Sokolova, 2024). In order to effectively leverage the impact of beauty influencers on social media, brands must carefully assess their authenticity and credibility, ensuring that their sponsored content is relevant to their target audience's actual needs and wants, as well as preferences, all while avoiding overly sexualised content that may alienate certain consumer groups.

1.3. Gen Z as a Consumer Segment

Generation Z refers to individuals born between 1996 and 2012 (Schwieger & Ladwig, 2018) making them the demographic that follows Millennials and precedes Generation Alpha. Generation Z is also known as digital natives. Because they are digital natives, this generation is more comfortable with and accepting of social media advertising, as advertisements such as these blend in and look more genuine and real in their feeds (Childers & Boatwright, 2020). In addition, when it comes to what digital natives expect when it comes to advertising: ease of use, usefulness, entertainment, credibility, design, and personalization all positively impact Gen Z's attitudes toward online advertising (Lim et al., 2021). Gen Z tends to perceive itself as both strong and confident, but also a damaged and vulnerable generation, on platforms like TikTok they utilize videos to express how they see themselves and their life and these videos frequently play with the concept of time, demonstrating how Gen Z understands itself and its position in the world, as well as how it feels connected to other members of its generation (Stahl & Literat, 2022). In addition, the greatest degree of critical thinking digital abilities is indicated by Gen Z when compared to previous generations: Gen X and Gen Y (Lissitsa, 2024). Being digital natives, Gen Z has a variety of new technological tools and gadgets at their disposal, one of them being the smartphone, which is now an important part of Gen Z's lives. In addition, the constant use of smartphones indicates that smartphone addiction indirectly influences online compulsive buying through materialistic reward-seeking and social fear of exclusion (Mason et al., 2022). Although this can be considered a disadvantage for Gen Z, companies may view this as their window which allows them to reach this generation more easily.

When it comes to brand loyalty among Gen Z, this can be considered a complex case. While studies have shown a strong correlation between brand love and loyalty among consumers (Joshi & Garg, 2020), this relationship can vary across different industries. For instance, Gen Z may demonstrate high levels of loyalty toward luxury brands in terms of attitudes and behaviours, but their emotional connection to these brands might be less intense (Shin et al., 2022). On the other hand, when considering fashion-related social media ads, especially from non-luxury small-to-medium-sized companies, Gen Z consumers are influenced by a variety of factors; these factors include sales

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campaigns, cues from consumer-generated content, and high-quality, inspiring visual content (Senanu et al., 2023). Generation Z also tends to engage with brands more if their content is entertaining. The frequency with which Gen Z users use and interact with social media influences their emotional state, especially their very favourable brand perception; Gen Z consumers' love and passion for their selected brand may therefore lead to heightened cognitive and emotional connection (Suprawan et al., 2024). In truth, social commerce information-sharing activities are essential for facilitating social support, warmth, belongingness, and online trust among Generation Z platform users (Tseng et al., 2024). One way a company may be tempted to engage with their Gen Z audience is through memes or other online jokes. However, according to Gen Z memetic advertising is more effective for playful and non-serious companies that maintain a steady social media engagement than it is for brands that aim to capitalize on meme culture for financial benefit or for serious brands (Vardeman, 2024). Understanding these nuances can help brands effectively engage with Gen Z consumers and foster long-lasting loyalty.

In consequence, Generation Z is highly aware of and mindful of ethical and environmental concerns, making them socially conscious. However, their frugality frequently restricts their ability to regularly purchase ethically at this time in life; despite this, they are aware of social ethical concerns and are working to make a positive impact within their means (Djafarova & Foots, 2022). Gen Z is drawn to resale sites on social media because of their affordable costs, information about previously owned fashion products, and ability to make sustainable fashion choices while shopping online (Siregar et al., 2023). Generation Z, noted for its social consciousness, frequently associates this knowledge with brand loyalty. Zimand-Sheiner and Lissitsa (2024) investigated this link, focussing on SHEIN, a prominent online Chinese company. The study discovered that many participants were uninformed of SHEIN's environmental impact, and after learning about the negative impacts, their perceptions towards the brand moved significantly, resulting in lower purchase intentions. Generation Z places a high emphasis on trustworthiness and social responsibility, and buyers are willing to support organisations that respect moral standards. All in all, Generation Z has lower brand loyalty compared to previous generations (Thangavel et al., 2022). Generation Z plays a crucial role in spreading eWOM, and their attitudes towards products from socially responsible and environmentally sustainable companies, which significantly influence their creation of eWOM, even more so than previous generations (Mochla & Tsourvakas, 2024). In addition, Gen Z holds both brands and influencers accountable for irresponsible behaviour, such as when influencers promote content at the request of brands without proper disclosure; this is because Gen Z views the hidden promotion of brand agendas for profit as dishonest and unethical (Pradhan et al., 2022). As with the preceding millennial generation, Generation Z has the same likelihood to share experiences is particularly high when they purchase new items, encounter quality issues, discover promotional deals, have complaints,

or engage with brand content; these motivations drive them to share information with friends and family, help others, influence peers, and demonstrate brand loyalty (Dorie & Loranger, 2024). Gen Z extensively researches various products online and tends to rely heavily on peer reviews and influencer recommendations before making a purchase. Before making a purchase, Gen Z looks into things thoroughly online and mainly depends on recommendations from influencers and peer evaluations (Prasanna & Asi, 2024). Overall, Generation Z is socially conscious, however, they tend to purchase within their means and are likely to share their opinions and experiences with brands and their products or services.

As a generation deeply familiar with online shopping technologies, Gen Z consumers are highly engaged with brands' product stories throughout their shopping journey. They are particularly likely to shop through social media platforms and conduct thorough research to find reliable information before making a purchase decision (Chiu et al., 2023). Value consciousness and convenience are the dominant shopping aspects that influence Gen Z consumers, likely contributing to their strong preference for e-retailers. Additionally, they are prone to comparing and contrasting available products on e-commerce platforms before making their final purchase decision (Thangavel et al., 2022). On the other hand, Gen Z shoppers are still susceptible to engaging in impulsive buying behaviour due to a higher fear of missing out; this is mainly prevalent in females of the generation when compared to males (Chetioui & El Bouzidi, 2023). Djafarova & Bowes's (2021) study found that the majority of Gen Z's female participants admitted to making more impulsive purchases of fashion products when they used social media (specifically Instagram) and a large portion of participants stated that this was due to them having access to a greater selection of products, while in the past, they would have had to check the full website of the brand. In turn, they were directly influenced by Instagram's ability to update with the newest designs, which led to more impulsive purchases when shopping online. This may be because Gen Z consumers are particularly susceptible to impulse buying when exposed to factors like aesthetic appeal, scarcity promotions, and discounted prices (Muhammad et al., 2024). All of these factors can be found in today's digital promotional strategies. Given the generations' familiarity with online shopping and their engagement with brands online, Gen Z, especially females, are more likely to make purchases as well as impulsively on social media platforms. The opinions of friends and family on social media can also play a part and influence Generation Z's purchase decisions; if their friends and/or family recommend a product, they may be more likely to buy it based on the recommendation, rather than their own need for it (Le & Ngoc, 2024). Gen Z shoppers look for experiences derived from knowledge, entertainment, and social connections when using social media; new knowledge and meeting new people satisfy the demand for instant satisfaction to preserve social ties and guide the purchasing experience (Siregar et al., 2023). This highlights the impact of social dynamics on Gen Z's shopping behaviours. Although this

generation likes to research before making their purchases, they can also equally be swayed by the opinions of their peers or family to purchase an item, in addition, their inherent familiarity with technology and social media may lead them to make impulsive purchases which satisfies their need for social connection.

1.4. The Role of Social Media Platforms

Social media has made it possible for everyday internet users to share their experiences and thoughts online, allowing their voices to be recognized by a large number of people. Because of the accessibility and relatively low threshold of social media channels, practically anybody may contribute their thoughts and experiences on a variety of themes, resulting in inconsistent quality of shared material (Zhuang et al., 2023). Typically, people utilize social media for two primary reasons: creating content themselves or consuming the created content. These factors can impact how frequently individuals connect with companies on social media. People who are more interested in learning or expressing themselves are more inclined to follow businesses and engage in conversations (Qin, 2020). People are more likely to engage with social media networks that offer a wide range of features and content. The type of content provided on a platform may also influence how users interact with it; for example, Instagram prioritises quick, personal encounters, whereas Pinterest focusses on themes and ideas (Cao et al., 2021). In general, social media channels allow users to interact directly with one another and with companies, as well as consume and create content using a number of built-in tools.

Social media networks also enable marketers to interact with their target audience in an authentic yet economical manner (Li & Xie, 2019). Social media has been used extensively not only as a well-liked and reasonably priced tool for destination marketing, image, and advertising purposes but also as a vital conduit for communication between users (clients, visitors, businesses, organizations, etc.) to create and share content and/or knowledge in real-time, influencing the behaviour of suppliers and customers in the modern world (Adamış & Pınarbaşı, 2022). For example, young entrepreneurs regularly use Instagram, Snapchat, and, to a lesser extent, YouTube to promote their businesses; they combine social media networks with traditional marketing tactics to persuade customers to buy their products. Using both social media and offline venues for communication, sales, and customer service, these entrepreneurs may raise brand recognition, attract more customers, and deepen ties with them (Bellaaj, 2023). The social and personal relevance of advertising on social media is positively associated with customers' confidence in the co-ownership of their information with these online platforms, the sense of co-ownership dramatically reduces their emotions of vulnerability, resulting in more favourable opinions

towards both the advertising and the social media platform (Chen et al., 2023). The rise of social media created a new medium for advertisers to explore and utilize. A positive outcome may be obtained across a wide range of social media channels if the content is tailored to the platforms' capabilities and user preferences.

In terms of Gen Z - Young people, in particular, utilize social media to remain in touch with their friends and classmates while also enjoying online entertainment (Raza et al., 2020). This generation is more prone to disclose personal information online when they are feeling anxious or lonely, this is particularly true if they believe their organization has a fair and transparent privacy policy, if they are plagued by negative thoughts, or if they fear they are losing out on enjoyable activities that other people are doing (Lyngdoh et al., 2022). In terms of digital marketing, Gen Z is more likely to find digital marketing and advertising relevant and authentic if it comes from someone they adore and respect; these individuals are frequently social media influencers or personal close friends (Munsch, 2021). Content's relevance on social media is subjective. For example, advertising relevance online may be divided into two categories: personal and social; the user's perceived conversation value and social motivation. Publishing personally and socially relevant advertising boosts consumer discussion value and social incentive, which can lead to higher engagement (Geng et al., 2021). In general, social media users tend to enjoy personalized material on social media, which is relevant and convenient. Despite understanding the targeting underlying adverts, many people do not mind commercial material that is relevant to their interests, this is especially true for the younger generations (Eg et al., 2023). In order to better understand the various aspects of specific social media channels, a deeper analysis is conducted of the chosen channels, which have been known to heavily feature visual content. As an example, here are some of the most popular social media channels specifics:

- **Instagram.** In the realm of visual content, observing a large number of Instagram visuals over time might reveal style patterns, including the emergence and collapse of a specific aesthetic associated with the network (Rogers, 2021). Additionally, Instagram has the highest levels of social media co-creation among its users, with users checking in with a dual focus on social interaction and entertainment (Pelletier et al., 2020). Instagram visual communication allows individuals to have an ongoing series of brief contacts that together create a shared meaning and sense of community (Ehrlén & Villi, 2020). Notably, influencers also have built communities of their own on the platform. Influencers' credibility, as perceived by their followers on Instagram, directly influences the nature of their parasocial relationships and, consequently, their impact on consumer purchasing behaviour through e-WOM (Wahab et al., 2024). Instagram, as a social media tool, has been cleverly used for commercial advantage, particularly through selfies, which have

become important assets in the digital market (Abidin, 2016). Consumers may get more interested in a company because of the type of person an influencer is and the material they post on Instagram. For example, consumers are more likely to interact with an influencer's Instagram posts about a company if they believe the influencer is knowledgeable about the product, feel like they are similar to them, and have a high level of trust, consumers may have a favourable impression of the brand as a result and click on associated links (Mir & Salo., 2023). One way to diminish this trust is for influencers to post content, which does not align with the online brand they have created for themselves. However, well-aligned influencer-product pairings on Instagram may inspire followers to learn more about the product, but they do not affect their desire to interact with the influencer (Belanche et al., 2020). Additionally, Instagram is a leading platform for entertainment and collaborative brand interactions (Pelletier et al., 2020). In terms of visual content, content with expressive aesthetics tends to gain considerably more likes and comments than content with classical aesthetics, demonstrating that Instagram users favour visually innovative and creative content (Kusumasondjaja, 2020). Instagram is one of the most popular social media channels today, which heavily features visual content and boasts a variety of influencers on the platform.

- **Facebook.** This platform focuses on facilitating connections between users, enabling them to establish groups based on shared interests or brands. Facebook allows for diverse content sharing by both users and marketers. This feature eliminates constraints on character count, clickable links, and video/graphic requirements on other platforms, allowing for greater free-form communication (Pelletier et al., 2020). Despite being the largest total network and popular among marketing professionals, Facebook reports lower levels of usage intentions and co-creation. However, this does not change the fact that Facebook users want informational and social advantages from the network. Even though there are challenges, the Facebook network consists of friends who are often well-known connections, whereas other social networking platforms may not be as intimate (Pelletier et al., 2020). Brand-related material that is entertaining and educational has the greatest impact on Facebook brand pages, viewers mostly use brand pages in a passive manner, watching movies, reading images, and leaving product reviews - especially when there is visual information involved (Kujur & Singh, 2020). Using this platform may provide a more personal connection than others, which can be beneficial if one wants to target a certain set of individuals on a personal level. However, sharing anything from a personal account is extremely unlikely to reach a larger audience. Nonetheless, Facebook offers other capabilities that social media influencers may use to create their communities.

According to Wellman (2021) research, influencers who first build relationships with their followers on other social media platforms may create a self-sustaining Facebook group to maintain those ties with minimal effort on their part, continuously reaping the benefits of their followers' ongoing engagement. Overall, Facebook is not the most prominent platform when it comes to influencers and influencer marketing, however, it can still be beneficial for influencers and brands alike, if they seek a more personal approach to their social media presence.

- **TikTok.** TikTok has fast become a must-have application for the typical social media user. Many platform users believe that TikTok would be a fantastic resource for finding relatable material that would allow them to escape the grind of daily life and would be a beneficial means of making new friends, however, prior to the release of TikTok, other social media platforms had distinct functions and had distinct connotations in people's lives; escape was not one of them (Schellewald, 2023). TikTok's features and culture encourage users to be real. The app's "For You" button, anonymous identities, and emphasis on videos make it easy for people to feel as if they can be themselves without being criticised. This, combined with the belief that everyone should just be themselves, leads people to regard both humorous and emotional content as authentic. This suggests that TikTok might be a place for people to share their emotions and receive assistance from others (Barta & Andalibi, 2021). In addition, in contrast to other platforms, TikTok dispels the myth of algorithmic meddling by stressing the importance of its algorithms in moulding user experience and boosting user-generated content (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022). TikTok entrepreneurs typically use the platform to market their enterprises, create word-of-mouth, and develop client connections, exhibiting a strong customer-centric attitude (Chen et al., 2024). This is a worthwhile move since, on TikTok, recurring consumers are more likely to make purchases based on their loyalty for the influencer, whereas potential customers are more affected by their commitment to the platform (Zhao & Wagner, 2023). TikTok users want influencers to be authentic and trustworthy. Working with reliable and trustworthy influencers allows companies to better how people perceive their message, increase trust with customers, and foster deeper brand loyalty (Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2024). In addition, entertaining experiences that users have with the TikTok app - such as role projection, enjoyment, arousal, and escape - have a beneficial impact on both their desire to use the app and, eventually, their actual usage (Abbasi et al. 2023). In addition, people are more inclined to follow TikTok influencers that post original material, they like the interesting and thrilling experiences that this type of social media content provides, and they see these influencers as experts in their fields, in turn, being unique is essential to become a great

TikTok influencer. As a rule, people follow TikTok accounts because they want to have fun, not because they want to be guided by influencers (Barta et al., 2023). TikTok viewers often look for innovative and creative aspects in videos to judge whether a message is authentic. This might be because they are looking for new material, knowing that TikTok's characteristics allow for unique video productions (Chu et al., 2022). TikTok is a video-based social media platform, which offers entertaining and informative content, often featuring various influencers who share brand reviews.

It is critical to understand the key characteristics of social media platforms for all parties involved: influencers, businesses looking to form brand-influencer partnerships and increase brand awareness or sales, and Generation Z, who may use these social media channels to purchase goods or services, either directly through apps and business pages or through influencer recommendations.

1.5. Visual Content and Its Impact on Marketing

Content is king on social media, and it is becoming more visual (Zhang et al., 2024). Diverse forms of visual information contribute to and strengthen commonality in different ways (Ehrlén & Villi, 2020). Depending on the niche of the content, developing high-quality campaigns and a strong presence on social media is critical for customer engagement (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2021) Undoubtedly, visual content is a great way to capture the viewers' attention across various social media channels. For brands this means that the usage of social media platforms can add greatly to the distribution of shared knowledge in a larger context; this information can take the shape of text, photographs, or videos (Özkent, 2022). In truth, increased engagement was seen across a range of social media platforms thanks to interactive elements that incorporated point-of-view, as well as the storytelling quality in visual content; furthermore, image framing is an important factor in raising engagement on Instagram, for example, the ways in which subjects are shown, particularly the low point of view, which suggests control over the spectator, tend to attract a lot of likes and comments on Facebook and Instagram (Dhanesh et al., 2022). Social media material with distinctive aspects, such as photographs, videos, and text, may be spread across numerous social media platforms, increasing reach and user engagement.

In marketing, this is important, because consumers' emotional reaction influences their commitment to the brand posting the content; aesthetic qualities and entertainment value of brand postings are strongly linked with viewer engagement (Bashir et al., 2018). Aesthetic appeal may be promoted by the social media platform itself. For example, on Instagram (a platform largely focused

on visuals), posts from brands with dynamic aesthetic imagery get more likes and comments compared to those that have conventional aesthetics; the number of likes and comments is also significantly influenced by the visual aesthetics and display format when brand material was presented in an audio-visual style with an expressive aesthetic, it received more responses than when it was presented in a visual-only format with classical aesthetics (Kusumasondjaja, 2020). In addition, posts with images or videos that correspond with the typical uses of social media are more likely to be shared by users. On Facebook, for instance, people enjoy messages that evoke strong emotions in them, whether those emotions are conveyed via words or images. On the other hand, informational and emotive postings are liked by users on Twitter (Ahmadi et al., 2022). In addition, visual content should be used by marketers because one's preferences for visual content can say a lot about one's personality. Research conducted by Thomson & Greenwood (2017), identified three types of social media users when it comes to their preference for visual content; feature lovers (use social media to keep tabs on their friends' and coworkers' lives or to establish and preserve parasocial connections with role models, these people prefer more colourful and vibrant images), newshounds (use social media to monitor news and had the most emotional response to images depicting tragedy, politics, and world culture, shunning images of animals and those deemed basic.), and optimists (use social media for entertainment, and react most strongly to pictures that are amusing, upbeat, or optimistic). However, even if many individuals find entertaining or interesting information on social media, this does not automatically imply that they would actively comment or share it (Cheung et al., 2022). There are numerous nuances that influence social media visual content; however, when it comes to visual content created on or for social media, this may prove to be an advantageous avenue for influencers and marketers to sway their audience, capture their attention, and elicit specific emotions.

As far as Gen Z is concerned, the consumers of this generation are moving away from traditional text-based information and towards interactive, graphically rich media, this change is indicative of a larger digital trend and emphasizes the necessity for marketers and content producers to modify their approaches in order to engage this audience (Kullolli & Trebick, 2023). When a company uses pictures to effectively express its narrative visually, it may evoke strong feelings in consumers and deepen their bond with the brand (Lim & Childs, 2020). Finally, visual components like images, graphics, and videos may elicit strong feelings and have an instant impact, which makes them useful for narrative and communication (Ryu, 2024). This leads to the fact that marketers can use visual content in the style, which is favored by their target audience to drive increased engagement to their social media content.

Video content. Original video has become a key focus of brands' content strategies (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018). This is not surprising, because video significantly outperforms text-based posts in terms of click-through rates, with an average of 24 times more clicks; moreover, video content attracts

the most comments of any other media type, with over four times the number of comments compared to textual content (Moran et al., 2020). The same conclusion was also brought by Kusumasondjaja, S. (2020) research, where it was found that brand video content received more likes and comments than static content. Video content is often categorized by its length, short-form, and long-form videos; both of video formats are effective tools for marketing. The short video has recently emerged as the internet's new best tool following network broadcasting due to its properties such as short duration, high level of enjoyment, ease of creation, and sharing (Liu et al., 2018). Short video content was also found to have a direct impact on sales and positively influence performance (Addo et al., 2022). Gen Z tends to be particularly interested in short-form video material on Instagram and TikTok (Prasanna & Asi, 2024). In general, digital advertising and marketing that is short in length including music and humor, as well as the usage of social media influencers has a positive impact on Gen Z (Munsch, 2021). Nevertheless, long-form video content can also demonstrate high levels of relatability, elaboration, innovativeness, and skillfulness when created by influencers on a social media channel - YouTube (Rohde & Mau, 2021). Another important part of video content are the video thumbnails. Video view-through rates are correlated with thumbnail visual characteristics, indicating that thumbnails can affect prospective viewers' decisions to click and watch the video; thumbnails featuring celebrities, contrasts in brightness and colour, and a decent level of image quality can all work exceptionally well to influence social media users to click on the featured content (Koh & Cui, 2022). Video content can be viewed on a range of devices, one of them would be the smartphone. Mobile videos engage viewers' sense of immersion, social presence, as well as entertainment (Wang, 2020). For instance, mobile vertical video ads elicit greater interest and engagement from viewers than horizontal video ads, which are better suited for larger screens on devices like TVs or computers, this is because mobile users find it easier to watch full-screen mobile videos on their smartphones when the ads are vertical rather than horizontal because they don't require turning the phone. It's significant to note that the age of the device's user also matters because younger mobile users - Gen Z process mobile vertical video advertising more naturally than do Generations X and Y (Mulier et al., 2021). Live streaming video is another form of video that is worth discussingBoth sociability and visual effects have a beneficial impact on customers' perceptions of value and social presence in a livestreaming setting. Furthermore, consumers' purchase intentions are positively impacted by perceived utility and reported delight (Zhu et al., 2023). A higher perceived value may arise from broadcasters and audiences addressing consumer needs, such as encouraging knowledge sharing and emotional enjoyment, through social interaction and communication (Chong et al., 2023). Customers get a more real viewing experience thanks to the social impact indicators of social presence and synchrony that are specific to live streaming tactics; this can lead to an increase in search and subscription intents from the content's viewers (Ang et al., 2018). Customers are drawn in by the

streamers' remarks and product presentations since they can understand the details of the items more quickly and intuitively than they could with traditional online shopping (Zheng et al., 2023). All things considered, marketing experts and influencers use video format - whether it be live or pre-recorded - to increase the reach of their content.

Static image. Global brands effectively engage social media, publish an average of three messages per week, and primarily employ photos to attract and retain consumers (Kim et al., 2015). In addition, a directly viewable image can increase engagement in social media posts (Li & Xie, 2019). Visual content, and images especially, have a key communication function on social media platforms other than Instagram and Flickr, and platform structures and cultures have a significant impact on the flow of photos between users (Pearce et al., 2018). The quality of the image is also beneficial when it comes to posting them on online platforms - professionally taken pictures tend to boost the number of retweets relative to pictures taken by amateur photographers (Li & Xie, 2019). Influencers who post static images more often than videos receive more likes from followers; this is because photographs are less prone to induce sensory overload due to their simplicity (Tafesse & Wood, 2023). A possible downside to this type of social media content is that images and other static visual content are easier to alter than video. Although some influencers might be tempted to modify their content for aesthetic appeal, the study shows that content viewers rated influencers as more authentic when their images were not enhanced, resulting in more positive attitudes toward the post and the recommended product (Zhang et al., 2024). This is a crucial subject matter for Gen Z consumers, who prioritize visual imagery as a means of satisfying their emotive requirements when they purchase products online (Siregar et al, 2023). Among regular social media users not all of them share images the same way. For example, women are more likely to share images than men, especially on Snapchat. However, men more actively share photographs on Twitter, particularly those related to their hobbies; males also tend to edit images and use photo organizing apps, while females often apply filters and post a few images in a single post - using albums/carousels features on social media apps (Thelwall & Vis, 2017). The subject of an image posted online also matters. When the influencer served as the source, brand awareness increased for photographs that focused on the product; however, when the brand acted as the source, brand recognition was the same for all image types (Jin & Ryu, 2020). Digital visual engagement is enhanced by direct gaze, particularly when the product is exhibited prominently in the foreground, however, on the other hand, an indirect gaze is more successful in promoting digital visual engagement when the product is less noticeable (Valentini et al., 2018). The tone of the image also adds to its effects. For example, while motivating photos inspire content viewers to continue via goal-setting and peer support, inspirational photos inspire people to explore and discover (Ehrlén & Villi, 2020). In addition, regardless of the photo angle, the overall fixation time of the viewer is considerably greater for customer-centric and product-centric images

than for any symbolic images (Zhou & Xue, 2021). Given all the different aspects of the image, it can be a great way to maintain a brand's presence online.

Aesthetics can be an important part of a brand's or an individual's social media presence. Regardless of brand layout or content, colour coherence has a big impact on flow and aesthetic experience, which in turn affects how successful social media marketing is (Luarn et al., 2024). The aesthetic quality of social media material is defined as the perceived aesthetic value and attractiveness of visual content (photos or videos) submitted through the various channels of social media to a broad online audience (Bazi et al., 2023). During the research performed by Aladwani, (2017) the quality of social media material has been shown to promote continuous attention, active confidence, and feedback openness; a corporation may improve its relationship with its online audience by creating high-quality social media content that is suited to users' attitudes, interests, and abilities. Social media users' inclinations to participate in social commerce are influenced by visual aesthetics both directly and indirectly (Yang et al., 2021). Aesthetic value generally generates emotions such as inspiration, experience, and habitual enjoyment; social and educational qualities are additional motivators for social media users (Aljukhadar et al., 2020).Ad recognition reduces perceived influencer integrity and raises post-scepticism, which can have a detrimental effect on positive brand views, word-of-mouth intentions, and purchase intentions, nevertheless, when sponsored content features a particularly noticeable visual appearance in terms of colour or brightness, these impacts can be mitigated (Brüns & Meißner, 2023). Visual appeal is ultimately crucial to social media marketing. By focussing on colour coherence and creating visually appealing content that appeals to customers, brands may boost engagement and preserve a good relationship with their online audience.

In turn, both brands, influencers, and regular social media users can tell a lot just by posing a visual. Appealing storytelling is reported to have tremendous effects on consumers' perceptions, particularly in the branding context. (Karampournioti & Wiedmann, 2021). Categorizations of storytelling can be broken down to first-person versus third-person storytelling, consumer brand storytelling versus brand narrative by a corporation, and snapshot versus staged image storytelling. (Fan et al., 2023). Surprisingly when viewing photographs from a first-person perspective, viewers typically spend the most time and attention on images that are focused on the consumer as well as those that are focused on the product; additionally, when viewing photos from a third-person perspective, the majority of focus is paid to photos focused on the product (Zhou & Xue, 2021). Storytelling is more impactful and compelling than simple statement arguments because consumers like to digest information in narrative formats (Ben Aicha & Bouzaabia, 2023). Visual storytelling integrates narrative development with visual aspects; social media narratives include posters, photo collage posters, illustration posters, memes, GIFs, videos, and so on (Nada, 2023). Overall, visual

storytelling is more powerful than clear statements. Integrating tales with visual components allows brands to create memorable experiences that engage with customers and form their perceptions.

1.6. Psychological and Social Influence of Visual Content

There are two primary paths to compulsive social media consumption: behavioural, based on habit, and motivational, based on fear of missing out (FOMO) (Lervik-Olsen et al., 2024). Generation Z customers' decision-making processes are significantly shaped by the FOMO, which directly impacts their purchasing behaviour (Saavedra & Bautista, 2020). Because this generation grew up in the digital age and is extensively involved in social media and other online networks, they are more vulnerable to FOMO due to their constant exposure to new items and trends online. Generation Z's excessive usage of social media might generate FOMO, which can have a negative impact on their lives, including low self-esteem, reduced productivity, anxiety, sorrow, and other mental health problems (Fitria et al., 2024). In addition, when it comes to Generation Z, there is a strong and positive correlation between FOMO and problematic smartphone use (Adrian & Sahrani, 2021). Being digital natives does not help Generation Z in this regard either. In addition, this FOMO is particularly present in Gen Z females. Female customers are more prone to make impulsive purchases due to greater degrees of consumerism, pleasure-seeking purchasing motivations, and FOMO (Chetioui et al., 2023). FOMO for fashionable items can be triggered by social comparisons to social media influencers, which can impact purchasing decisions. People may choose to compare themselves to idealised media images or to others they believe are in a better situation than themselves, which can lead to FOMO (Dinh & Lee, 2022). FOMO, informational incentives, interaction, and influencer knowledge are all important variables that affect customers' decision to keep using social commerce platforms, however, regular usage of social media for shopping might have a negative effect on mental health, overindulgence may result in intense social interactions as well as more serious issues like compulsive shopping and psychological anxiety (Li et al., 2021). Those with higher FOMO are more likely to look into the profiles of social media influencers, which increases the possibility of making frequent purchases of suggested items and boosts satisfaction levels (Lee et al., 2021). It has been established that visual material on social media may lead to impulsive purchases, emphasising the need of organisations having an effective visual content strategy (Fujiwara & Martin, 2023). Overall, FOMO and excessive social media use can have a negative impact on Gen Z's well-being, resulting in problems such as melancholy, anxiety, and low self-esteem. FOMO may lead to impulsive purchases, thus this may have an influence on their spending patterns as well. Additionally, because of their greater degrees of consumerism and pleasure-seeking, Gen Z females are especially vulnerable to FOMO.

The number of views on YouTube videos, the number of likes and shares on posts, and the number of fans or followers on social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter may all be used to demonstrate the social proof idea (Ioanid & Militaru, 2015). An influencer's impact on customer purchase intentions varies depending on how many followers they have and whether or not they receive recommendations from social media groups (Abdul Talib & Mat Saat, 2017). Social proof, commonly assessed by the number of likes a post receives, is critical in creating credibility and trust. Content with a larger like count is often seen as more trustworthy, resulting in more positive attitudes towards the company (Seo et al., 2019). Online user reviews also help to create trust and reputation. They can assist validate product authenticity and reduce perceived risks (Patwa et al., 2024). Furthermore, eWOM can be used to convey the reputation of the brand, the product, and related goods, influencing consumer perceptions and purchase decisions (Amblee & Bui, 2014). Customers' relationships with retailers can be strengthened by social proof tools like blogs, social networks, and forums, which also entice users to spend more time on these sites (Arunkumar et al., 2023). For example, regardless of product placement, when advertising is incorporated into influencers' daily lives, it may positively affect perceptions on platforms like Instagram, where users are looking for amusement and are aware of regular product endorsements (Herrando & Martín-De Hoyos, 2022). In summary, social proof is a critical factor in shaping the attitudes and actions of consumers. Brands and influencers may successfully communicate with their audience and generate revenue by comprehending and utilizing social proof.

There is a strong correlation between enhanced follower engagement and visual congruence, which emphasizes common interests between influencers and their followers (Argyris et al., 2020). Followers frequently connect with influencers' visual content because of their first-person point-of-views, and the content's capacity to transfer them into both social and intimate circumstances (Feng et al., 2020). Influencers' displays of aesthetics and effort connect with consumers' attitudes to sway their decisions to purchase from a brand (Xie et al., 2023). Parasocial ties with influencers are significantly influenced by design quality and originality of content, and consumers' online brand-related actions are influenced by both identification and parasocial relationships (Cheung et al., 2022). Another way influencers engage their followers emotionally is through emotions and expressions. Follower engagement is greatly impacted by the quantity and kind of emotion an influencer uses in their social media content (Holiday et al., 2023). Influencers who smile in their content have a positive influence on consumers' attitudes and behavioural intentions by conveying a sense of warmth and gratitude, though simply smiling has a positive effect on a wide range of product categories and advertising message orientations (Kim & Read, 2022). Influencer playfulness has a significant influence on the viewer's alternate quality perception and contentment, whilst content expertise has an impact on social media engagement, alternative quality perception, and happiness (Kim and Baek,

2022). Aesthetic presentations, emotional expressiveness, visual consistency, first-person perspectives, and amusing characteristics from influencers are all variables that increase follower engagement. Influencers may achieve their goals and effectively interact with their audience by carefully blending these aspects.

Another element that too may contribute to why the general public finds influencers so appealing is the parasocial relationships associated with them. The association between parasocial ties and purchase intentions is strengthened by informational impact and perceived credibility. The one-sided interaction between viewers and influencers has been brought about by social media, influencers and their followers may now communicate directly; this has had a favourable effect on consumers' decisions to purchase goods that influencers suggest, in addition, people are now more inclined to believe information from influencers because to social media (Su et al., 2021). Empathic people are more inclined to identify strongly with fictional characters or prominent personalities. With these people, they also often have greater connections and feel happier, more devoted, and more connected (Scherer et al., 2021). The content that influencers provide might give the impression that they and their followers are acquainted on a more intimate level, thus followers are more inclined to develop parasocial ties with influencers that look more prestigious, knowledgeable, and physically appealing to them (Aw & Chuah, 2021). Compared to relationships with mainstream celebrities, many fans believe that their relationships with micro-celebrities are more mutual (Xu et al., 2022). Social media influencers' sponsored posts may appear less like advertisements and more like regular posts when they disclose details of their personal life on Instagram, in addition, their followers may become less conscious of being persuaded to make a purchase as a result of this appearance (Kim, 2021). People are more likely to be interested in the goods or services that a social media influencer advertises when they have a strong emotional connection to them because they perceive them to be attractive or relatable individuals (Yuan & Lou, 2020). In the case of influencers live streaming visual content, while watching live streamers, viewers frequently develop a close bond with them as well. They may have intense feelings about the content in the streamer's feed, adore being a part of the community, and have strong fandom. Because you can watch live streams at any time and converse with them and other fans on many platforms such as Discord, Twitter, and Facebook, connecting with live streamers is simple for the average viewer (Kowert & Daniel, 2021). Parasocial relationships can be a powerful avenue for influencers to explore in order to maximize and leverage their influence over their audience. Brands should be conscious of this when selecting the correct influencer for their collaborations, since strong communities may lead to increased product or service sales on social media.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Problem, Goal, Model, and Hypotheses

Research problem – What impact does beauty influencer's visual content have on Generation Z's beauty purchase decisions?

Research aim – To identify the links between influencer visual content and Generations Z's purchase decisions, specifically how the visual content affects viewers' impressions and attitudes about the product which the influencer is partnering with as well as the influencer themselves. By investigating the features, factors, and influence of influencer's visual content on Generations Z's purchase decisions, the study aims to discover the role of influencers as brand partners in the digital era.

According to the aim of the research, several objectives were established for this empirical study:

1. To identify the key factors that influence the impact of influencer's visual content on Gen Z's purchase decision;
2. To identify the direction of influence between all factors that have impact on Gen Z's purchase decisions on social media;
3. To determine the level of influence of each factor on Gen Z's purchase decisions;
4. To identify the relationship between factors influencing Gen Z to engage with the influencer's visual content.

Research model based on the literature analysis and the objectives of the paper have been created (see: Fig. 1).

The model proposes that:

- Content characteristics (content visual aesthetics, content informativeness, content authenticity, content relevance, and content entertainment) have a direct influence on how the content's viewers perceive the brand's image or attitude toward the brand.
- Attitude toward the brand acts as a mediator between content characteristics and purchase intention. This means that the way viewers perceive the brand's image, influenced by content characteristics, in turn affects their intention to make a purchase.
- Purchase intention is the final dependent variable, and it is influenced by the positive or negative attitudes developed through the content's characteristics.

Figure 1

Research model
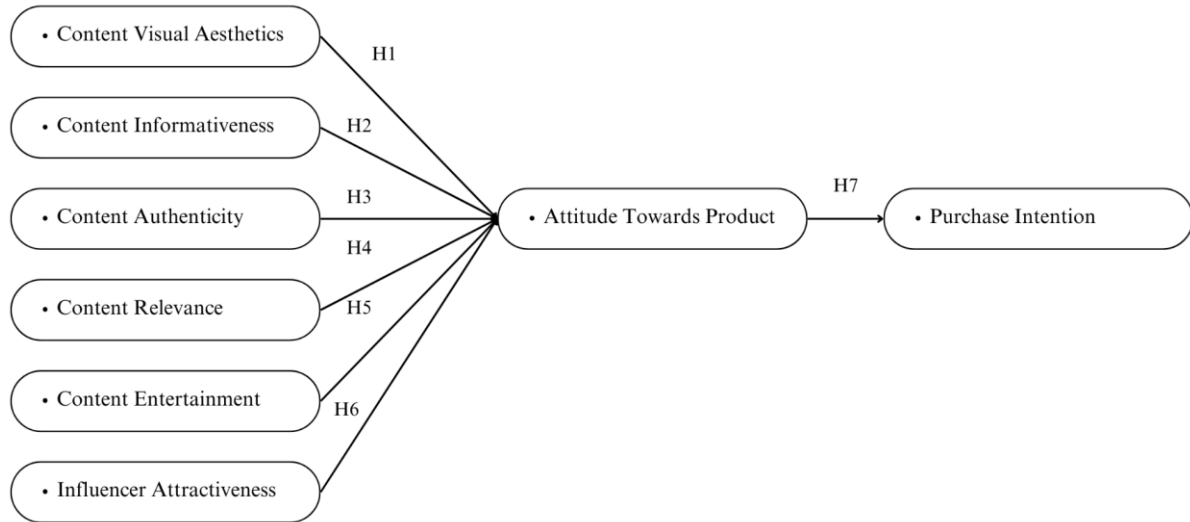
Source: Compiled by the author, based on literature analysis.

The suggested model is based on the SOR (Stimulus-Organism-Response) model, which provides the most appropriate theoretical foundation for fundamental psychological and psychiatric concepts. The SOR model allows for the analysis of psychological structures and processes that mediate the relationship between stimulus and behaviour (Buxbaum, 2016). Overall, this framework provides a complete approach to understanding how external stimuli impact internal cognitive and emotional processes, resulting in behavioural reactions, and serves as an appropriate foundation for this study.

The visual visual aesthetics refer to the visual appeal of content elements such as colors, layout, images, and overall design. The aesthetic quality of social media content has an impact on the content viewer's engagement's cognitive, emotive, and behavioural components (Bazi et al., 2023). Visual aesthetics has been shown to critically affect a variety of constructs such as perceived usability, satisfaction, and pleasure (Moshagen & Thielsch, 2010). Visual components like photographs, graphics, and videos may elicit strong emotions and have an instant impact, making them useful tools for narrative and message delivery (Ryu, 2024). When employed, images can successfully represent their message visually, it may generate powerful sentiments in consumers, and enhance the connection they have with the brand (Lim & Childs, 2020). Influencers' visual content taps into followers' desire for personal connection by offering a first-person perspective and immersing them in a variety of

social and intimate settings (Feng et al., 2020). The design of content has a significant impact on parasocial connections with influencers, and both identification and parasocial relationships affect consumers' online brand-related behaviours (Cheung et al., 2022). Influencers' thoroughly curated aesthetic presentations, combined with the obvious effort they put into the social media content creation, construct a deep relationship with customers' views and preferences; in turn, this relationship between the influencer's aesthetic and the consumer's aspirations may have a significant impact on how customers perceive a product advertised by the influencer, ultimately influencing their purchasing decisions (Xie et al., 2023). The successful use of visual elements like style and design of the content in marketing, particularly through influencers, may establish strong emotional connections with customers, improve brand perception, and, ultimately, drive purchase behaviour.

As a consequence, this study indicates that high visual style/aesthetic is a crucial quality of influencer visual content since it may directly affect Gen Z's online engagement, and higher visual aesthetics positively influence Gen Z's attitude toward the product.

H1: Higher visual aesthetics positively influence Gen Z's attitude toward the product.

People are more inclined to trust influencers who post useful and informative content on social media, which can raise interest in the products these influencers support (Lou & Yuan, 2019). When followers find an influencer's post informative, they believe in their competence (Ki et al., 2020). This is not surprising considering that internet users believe the relevance of sharing information on social media is impacted by the quality of the material shared (Dedeoglu, 2019. Cao et al. (2021) found that providing consumers with entertaining, trustworthy, and informational social media content can increase user engagement. In terms of Gen Z, informational content is also important. This generation is more likely to make purchases using social media platforms and perform comprehensive research before making a decision (Chiu et al., 2023). Social media platforms enable the dissemination of shared information in a broader context, including text, photos, and videos (Özkent, 2022). Overall, informational social media appears to be critical for establishing trust with Generation Z consumers and driving sales.

Given the significance of informational visual material for Gen Z, influencers who consistently post such visual content, may foster trust, enhance brand interest, and drive purchase intentions. Thus, based on these findings from previous research, this study aims to suggest that higher content informativeness positively influences Gen Z's attitude toward the product:

H2: Higher content informativeness positively influences Gen Z's attitude toward the product.

Gen Z is more likely to find digital marketing and advertising authentic if it comes from someone they adore and respect; these individuals are frequently social media influencers or personal close friends (Munsch, 2021). In order to show authenticity on social media, influencers use strategies such as transparency, disclosure, personal experience, intimacy, relatability, and consistency in sponsored posts (Arnesson, 2023). Consumers believe an influencer is more authentic if they maintain consistency with their brand image. However, if an influencer does not appear to be authentic, the public will likely chastise them (Shoenberger & Kim, 2022). In terms of visual content, consumers often believe that influencers are more authentic when they do not modify their photographs. This can help consumers get a more positive perception of the influencer's posts and the things they advocate for (Zhang et al., 2024). In digital marketing, Generation Z appreciates authenticity, and influencers who constantly display openness, relatability, and consistency across their social media visual content may earn confidence and influence purchasing choices.

To connect with Gen Z consumers and increase engagement and conversions, influencers must be authentic in both their messaging and visual material. Based on this, this research aims to suggest that higher content authenticity positively influences Gen Z's attitude toward the product.

H3: Higher content authenticity positively influences Gen Z's attitude toward the product.

Although the relevance of content is inherently subjective and varies from person to person, the relevance of social media advertising can be categorized into two dimensions: personal relevance and social relevance (Geng et al., 2021). Social media users tend to enjoy personalized material on social media, which is relevant and convenient. Despite understanding the targeting underlying adverts, many people do not mind commercial material that is relevant to their interests. This is especially true for the younger generations (Eg et al., 2023). When customers find social media content meaningful, valuable, and attention-grabbing, they may be more inclined to participate in the brand's social media community (McClure & Seock, 2020). Influencers use a variety of strategies to maintain their personal brand and audience relationships through relevant content, such as showcasing products on their social media that reflect their own image and are relevant to their audience and creating content tailored to their audience's needs (Wellman et al., 2020). By focusing on material that is relevant to the target audience, companies and influencers improve the ability to interact with social media users and form meaningful connections.

The notion of relevance is multifaceted in social media, influencing user engagement, brand and product perception, and influencer connections. Thus, this study suggests that higher content relevance positively influences Gen Z's attitude toward the product:

H4: Higher content relevance positively influences Gen Z's attitude toward the product.

Often the followers of influencers associate traits such as fun with the influencers. Social media influencers who are entertaining or humorous have a higher chance of interacting with followers than those who only provide informational content (Ren et al., 2023). People who follow influencers on social media expect them to offer entertaining and useful information, which can affect whether they choose to purchase anything (Saima & Khan, 2020). Influencer advertising works best when it blends with broader entertainment, grabbing young peoples' attention with engaging, entertaining content rather than attempting to establish a perceived bond with the influencer (Vizcaíno-Verdú, 2024). In general, social media users are more likely to engage with a brand online if the content is interesting, helpful or entertaining (Odoom, 2023). Therefore, influencers who can effectively blend entertainment with their content are more likely to cultivate loyal followings and drive engagement for the products they feature on their social media.

In turn, this study aims to suggest that the entertainment value of an influencer's visual content positively impacts Gen Z's attitude toward the product:

H5: Higher entertainment value of influencer's visual content positively impacts Gen Z's attitude toward the product.

Many influencers utilise their personal looks to promote products on social media, particularly beauty influencers and for a good reason. For example, when an influencer is perceived as more physically attractive, people visit their channel or social media posts more frequently and stay on them longer (Lu & Chen, 2023). In addition, when making judgements on dermatological product purchases, consumers are more likely to perceive influencers who are physically attractive and have had great product experiences as reliable information sources (AlFarraj et al., 2021). The attractiveness of an influencer can significantly impact consumer attitudes and, consequently, their purchasing intentions (Macheka et al., 2024). For brands, partnering with a highly attractive influencer appears to be more advantageous than partnering with an influencer who is considered less attractive; in addition, a very attractive influencers appear to use their attractiveness to their advantage when it comes to both female and male receivers (Von Mettenheim & Wiedmann, 2021). A extremely appealing influencer was never determined to be harmful. When it comes to Gen Z, the attractiveness

of social media influencers has a significant impact on this generation's cosmetic product purchasing intentions, implying that customers evaluate the influencer's personal characteristics when making purchases. However, Gen Z is also described as being more technologically connected, socially conscious, and focused on individuality. This group appreciates how a brand is perceived as much as the quality of the products it provides (Rizomyliotis et al., 2024). In the end, the physical appearance of influencers may have a considerable impact on consumer behaviour, particularly among younger generations such as Gen Z, who are heavily impacted by social media.

With this, the study aims to suggest influencer's attractiveness as part of the visual content positively impacts Gen Z's attitude toward the product.

H6: Influencer's attractiveness as part of the visual content positively impacts Gen Z's attitude toward the product.

Social media is utilized by organizations of all sizes, including micro-enterprises, and plays an important part in marketing. Businesses may engage their target audience online more successfully by generating valuable and persuasive content (Erwin et al., 2023). Word-of-mouth on social media is also an effective instrument for influencing purchasing decisions, which is a significant benefit of e-WOM (Park et al., 2021). A positive attitude towards a brand, such as trust, greatly increases purchase intent. For example, brand trust and the perceived value of the product influence brand choice, increasing the chance of purchase (Dam, 2020). When customers are more involved with a brand, they create stronger ties, with brand love and engagement changing their views and, ultimately, influencing their purchasing decisions (Verma, 2020). When companies focus on fostering positive brand attitudes and attitudes towards their products, it may not only strengthen consumer loyalty but also drive their willingness to choose and purchase their products.

With this, the study aims to suggest that a positive attitude toward the product can lead to a higher purchase intention among Gen Z.

H7: A positive attitude toward the product leads to a higher purchase intention among Gen Z.

2.2. Methods and Approaches to the Data Collection Process

To explore the impact of influencer's visual content on Gen Z's purchase intentions the study adopts a quantitative research approach. This research approach has been selected to gain a detailed

perspective of the impact of influencers' visual content, its impact on Gen Z, and the generation's purchase intentions when viewing visual content generated by influencers.

After analyzing previous studies about influencing factors on influencer content and purchase decisions, it was found that most of the authors used quantitative research methods to collect the data. For example, the quantitative method of primary data collection is observed in the study of Pradhan, D., Kuanr, A., Pahi, S. A., & Akram, M. S. (2022). Influencer marketing: When and why Gen Z consumers avoid influencers and endorsed brands; in the study of Su, B.-C., Wu, L.-W., Chang, Y.-Y.-C., & Hong, R.-H. (2021). Influencers on social media as references: Understanding the importance of parasocial relationships; in the study of Wahab, H.K.A., Alam, F. and Lahuerta-Otero, E. (2024), Social media stars: how influencers shape consumer's behaviour on Instagram. The mentioned studies have objectives similar to those of the current study. In addition, the results of observed studies are evaluated as reliable and reasonable.

The current research adopts a quantitative research design using an online survey questionnaire. The survey research approach is commonly utilized in marketing (Hulland et al., 2018). Traditional online surveys have the significant benefit of being organized in terms of questions, response categories, sequencing, moving from one question to the next, and so on, however, the fact that some persons do not have internet access must be addressed while sampling; furthermore, the incorporation of photographs, videos, and other media may encourage survey participants to finish questionnaires and increase their likelihood of participating again (Evans et al., 2018). Therefore, the survey questionnaire is an appropriate research tool for this study.

The target audience for this study is Generation Z consumers. According to Schwieger & Ladwig (2018), people born between 1996 and 2012 are considered Generation Z. Therefore, the target population was determined to be those aged from 28 to 12 years old at the time of the study.

2.3. Structure of the Questionnaire and Scales

An online questionnaire was used to collect responses in this study. To alert respondents that this survey is solely for Generation Z customers (born after 1996), who actively follow influencers on their social media channels, the following note was added at the beginning of the survey: "Please be aware that the survey will focus on the purchase intentions of Generation Z customers (born between 1996 and 2012). If your birth year is not included in the necessary range, please skip this survey. Furthermore, this study's focus is on influencers and their product endorsements. To ensure that the study's goals are accomplished, only people who actively follow influencers are invited to participate in the online survey.".

The questionnaire (see: Appendix 1) consists of one visual stimulus followed by seven groups of questions. The visual stimulus in question is a photo from a social media beauty influencer Jess Hunt (@jesshunt2 on Instagram). At the time, Jess had over 1.7 million followers on Instagram. The chosen image displays Jess with Refy Beauty Plum Lip Collection and the goal of the post is to promote the collection's launch. The first group of questions measures purchase intention - three statements have to be evaluated by using a 5-point Likert scale, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The next group of questions contains five items to measure attitude towards the brand, and they are also evaluated by using a 5-point Likert scale, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The next group of questions contains four items to measure the influencer content entertainment, and they are also evaluated by using a 5-point Likert scale, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The following group of questions contain three questions and is evaluated by using a 5-point Likert scale, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", these questions measure influencer content's relevance towards the viewer. The next set of questions, too, is also evaluated by using a 5-point Likert scale, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", this group has 7 questions and is intended to measure the influencer's content's authenticity. The next group of questions aims to measure the influencer's content informativeness and has three questions, they are evaluated by using a 5-point Likert scale, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The second to last group of questions has three questions and aims to measure the influencer's content visual aesthetics. This group of questions is evaluated by using a 5-point Likert scale, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The second to last group of questions has three questions and aims to measure the influencer's content visual aesthetics. The last group of questions is also evaluated by using a 5-point Likert scale, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". This group of questions aims to evaluate the importance of an influencer's physical attractiveness and has four questions.

Table 1

Scales of the questionnaire.

Constructs	Original Scale	Adapted Scale	Source	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Purchase Intention	● I will probably purchase the recommended product;	● I will probably purchase the recommended product;	Gupta et al., (2023)	0.94

	● I intend to purchase the recommended product; ● It is possible that I will purchase the recommended product.	● I intend to purchase the recommended product; ● It is possible that I will purchase the recommended product.		
Attitudes Towards the Product	● Brand X is good ● Brand X is pleasant ● Brand X is favorable	● The recommended product is good; ● The recommended product is pleasant; ● The recommended product is favorable.	Colliande & Dahlén, (2011)	0.93
Content Entertainment	● The channels of [SMI] are fun to watch or read; ● The channels of [SMI] are amusing; ● I enjoy browsing the channels of [SMI]; ● I think the channels of [SMI] are fun.	● The post of the social media influencer was fun to view; ● The post of the social media influencer was amusing; ● I enjoyed browsing the post of the social media influencer;	Cheung et al., (2022).	0.902

		● I think the social media post of the influencer was fun.		
Content Relevance	● The content shared with by the influencers helps me resolve doubt when I plan my trip; ● The content shared by the influencer organize trips in a more efficient way; ● In general, the content shared by the influencer is useful to plan trips.	● The content shared by the influencer helps me resolve doubt when I purchase the advertised product; ● The content shared by the influencer helps me learn about the advertised product in a more efficient way; ● In general, the content shared by the influencer is useful to me.	Carvalho (2024).	0.953
Content Authenticity	● Is sincere; ● Comes off as genuine; ● Gives very honest reviews on bands; ● Promotes products they would usually	● The influencer's content is sincere; ● The influencer comes off as genuine; ● The influencer gives very honest reviews	Shehzala et al., (2024).	0.946

	use; ● Not only posts about the good in their lives but also hardships; ● Talks about their flaws and is not ashamed of showing them off in public; ● Is very knowledgeable in their field.	on the product; ● The influencer promotes a product they would usually use; ● The influencer not only posts about the good in their lives but also hardships; ● Talks influencer talks about their flaws and is not ashamed of showing them off in public; ● The influencer is very knowledgeable in their field.		
Content Informativeness	● The content posted is effective; ● The content posted is helpful; ● The content posted is functional; ● The content posted is necessary; ● The content	● The visual content posted is effective; ● The visual content posted is helpful; ● The visual content posted is functional; ● The visual content posted is necessary; ● The visual	Lou & Yuan, (2019).	0.884

	posted is practical.	content posted is practical.		
Content Visual Aesthetics	● I think the Looks are visually attractive; ● I think the Looks are aesthetically appealing; ● The Looks appealed to my visual senses.	● I think the influencers' post is visually attractive; ● I think influencers' post is aesthetically appealing; ● Influencers' post appealed to my visual senses.	Vazquez et al., (2021).	0.93
Influencer Attractiveness	● [Name of social influencer] is attractive; ● [Name of social influencer] is charismatic; ● [Name of social influencer] is good-looking; ● The physical makeup of [name of social influencer] is admirable.	● The influencer is attractive; ● The influencer influencer is charismatic; ● The influencer is good-looking; ● The physical makeup of the influencer is admirable.	Wiedman n & von Mettenhe im (2021).	0.925

Source: Compiled by the author based on previous research.

To find out how influencer-generated visual content affects the purchase decisions of Gen Z, the study focused on social media beauty influencer followers, particularly those who interact with their content on a regular basis. The selection of respondents will be conducted using multiple online

channels, such as Instagram and Facebook and email invitations, to ensure a representative and diverse sample of the target population. The selection criteria made sure that the respondents actively followed social media influencers, which ensured that their opinions and actions were related to the objectives of the study.

2.4. Sample Size, Sampling Technique and the Target Audience

In order to find out the impact of influencer's visual content on Gen Z's purchase intentions, the study focused on regular social media users, where the influencers are present. The questionnaire's sample size was estimated by taking into account previous studies that have been conducted to determine the impact of influencer content, social media visual content, Gen Z's purchase intentions and other similar topics. Thus, the responses to the survey will be collected via multiple social media channels, such as Instagram, Facebook and online community groups, to ensure a representative and diverse sample of the target population. The average sample size used in prior research represents the minimum number of respondents required for the study to be valid. This method of calculating sample size is commonly utilized in studies including online survey questionnaires. The selection criteria required that respondents actively follow social media influencers, ensuring that their thoughts and behaviours were relevant to the study's aims. There will be only one version of the questionnaire created using Google Forms.

Table 2

The sample size of the printed studies

No.	Name of research	Authors	Year	Sample size
1	Influencer Endorsements: How Advertising Disclosure and Source Credibility Affect Consumer Purchase Intention on Social Media.	Weismueller et al.	2020	306
2	Influencer marketing on TikTok: The effectiveness of humor and followers' hedonic experience.	Barta et al.	2023	217
3	Stop the unattainable ideal for an	Aw & Chuah	2021	361

	ordinary me! Fostering parasocial relationships with social media influencers: The role of self-discrepancy.			
4	Influencer marketing on TikTok: The effectiveness of humor and followers' hedonic experience	Barta et al.	2023	217
5	Building influencers' credibility on Instagram: Effects on followers' attitudes and behavioral responses toward the influencer.	Belanche et al.	2021	341
6	Followers' reactions to influencers' Instagram posts.	Belanche et al.	2020	304
7	Exploring the impact of beauty vloggers' credible attributes, parasocial interaction, and trust on consumer purchase intention in influencer marketing.	Garg & Bakshi	2024	357
8	An investigation of the nexus between online impulsive buying and cognitive dissonance among Gen Z shoppers: Are female shoppers different?	Chetioui & El Bouzidi	2023	333
9	Impact of Celebrity, Micro-Celebrity, and Virtual Influencers on Chinese Gen Z's Purchase Intention Through Social Media.	Chiu & Ho	2023	50
10	"I want to be as trendy as influencers" – how "fear of	Dinh & Lee	2022	243

		Average:	273
missing out" leads to buying intention for products endorsed by social media influencers.			

Source: Compiled by the author, based on previous research

As seen in the table above (see Table 2), the sample sizes in earlier research ranged from 50 to 361. Taking all of these studies into account, the average number of participants in the study should be about 273 to ensure that this research is representative of the population under consideration. To ensure that 273 respondents are sufficient to reflect the target group under consideration, the following sample size calculation formula is used:

$$n = z^2p(1-p)/e^2$$

- n – sample size;
- p – population proportion;
- e – margin of error;
- z – confidence level.

The study will be distributed in Lithuania through social media channels and online community groups. As a reminder, the target audience for this study is Generation Z. According to Schwieger & Ladwig (2018), people born between 1996 and 2012 are considered Generation Z. Therefore, the target population was determined to be those aged from 28 to 12 years old. According to the Lithuanian Portal of Official Statistics (Oficialios statistikos portalas), the number of people fitting this age range is approximately 584,630. Thus, with a 95% confidence level, 50% of the population, and a margin of error of 7%, the determined minimum number of respondents is 196.

This study will utilize the average number of previously done surveys on this issue - **273**.

3. ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH RESULTS OF THE IMPACT OF INFLUENCER'S VISUAL CONTENT ON GEN Z'S PURCHASE INTENTION

3.1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents of the survey

One of the main goals of the research was to identify the factors, which have an impact on the purchase intention of unsustainable products among Generation Z consumers. To establish the influence of the factors, 278 responses were collected during the online survey process. The survey indicated that it only targeted those born between 1996 and 2012. However, due to the fact that age filter questions were developed for identifying relevant respondents, 5 responses did not meet the criteria, thus analyses were done with 273 variants of responses.

According to the gathered data, the age group with the biggest representation among respondents was 23 years old, accounting for 35.90% of all participants. This group was made up of a grand total of 98 respondents. The second-largest age group consist of individuals aged 22 years old, making up a total of 20.88% of all surveyed. This group consists of 57 total responses. Lastly, following these two largest groups, the third largest group of respondents aged 24 were the next most common group with a total of 50 responses. This group accounts for 18.32% of the total survey respondents. Table 3 provides a more detailed breakdown of the age distribution and corresponding response rates from all people who answered the survey.

Table 3

The distribution of the respondents by age

Valid	Age	Frequency	Percent
	18	2	0.73%
	19	2	0.73%
	20	8	2.93%
	21	20	7.33%
	22	57	20.88%

	23	98	35.90%
	24	50	18.32%
	25	19	6.96%
	26	14	5.13%
	27	3	1.10%

Source: compiled by the author, based on survey results

According to the survey statistics, the majority of respondents were female, making up 97.80% (267 participants). Male respondents accounted for 1.10% (3 participants), while another 1.10% chose not to disclose their gender. The largely female presence shows that beauty purchase intentions are largely more important to women, who are more inclined to interact with beauty influencers on social media. This is consistent with prior studies, which found a high association between female audiences and beauty-related influencer marketing (Tsen & Cheng, 2021; Macheka et al., 2024). Table 4 summarises and breaks down the gender distribution in-depth.

Table 4

The distribution of the respondents by gender

Valid	Gender	Frequency	Percent
	Male	3	1.10%
	Female	267	97.80%
	Prefer not to say	3	1.10%

Source: compiled by the author, based on survey results

3.2. Reliability of the scales

As a means to verify that the scales which have been used in this research can be used in data analysis and are reliable, the reliability of the constructs must be measured. Cronbach's alpha was used in order to measure the internal consistency among items. The results of the constructs' dependability differ from earlier research. This might be related to the fact that statements for each contract were incorporated into the study topic frameworks. Despite this, none of the assertions were eliminated from the factors. Cronbach's alpha values between 0.7 and 0.8 indicate acceptable reliability, suggesting that the variables are suitable for future research analysis. Furthermore, these results confirm the internal consistency of the scales used in this study, validating their appropriateness for regression and other advanced statistical analyses. A detailed breakdown of scale reliability is provided in Table 5.

Table 5

Reliability analysis of scales

Name	Same size	No. of items per scale	Cronbach's alpha
Purchase Intention	273	3	0.765
Attitudes Towards the Product	273	3	0.754
Content Entertainment	273	4	0.862
Content Relevance	273	3	0.855
Content Authenticity	273	7	0.730
Content Informativeness	273	5	0.755
Content Visual Aesthetics	273	3	0.795
Influencer Attractiveness	273	4	0.856

Source: made by the author based on statistical analysis

As seen in the table above (see Table 5), all of the scales are dependable, with Cronbach's alpha values greater than 0.7.

3.3. Analysis of direct impacts

A regression analysis was performed using the previously established research model to determine the influence of direct impacts of factors such as attitude towards the product and content-related factors (Content Visual Aesthetics, Content Informativeness, Content Authenticity, Content Relevance, Content Entertainment, and Influencer Attractiveness) on Purchase Intention.

The study found that including content-related characteristics in addition to Attitude Towards the Product improves the explanatory power of Purchase Intention ($R^2 = 0.481$) compared to the baseline model ($R^2 = 0.394$). The comparison of the baseline model (Attitude Toward the Product) and the extended model (Attitude plus content-related factors) is summarized in Table 6, showing the explanatory power (R^2) and fit statistics for each model.

Table 6

Model Summary

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate
Baseline Model	0.628	0.394	0.392	0.4442
Extended Model	0.551	0.304	0.288	0.48087

Source: made by the author based on statistical analysis.

The R^2 values show that the baseline model, which includes only Attitude Toward the Product, explains 39.4% of the variance in Purchase Intention. Adding content-related factors in the extended model reduces the R^2 to 30.4%, highlighting the differential contributions of these predictors. This suggests that content-related factors significantly enhance the understanding of purchase intention. The regression coefficients for direct factors influencing Purchase Intention, including both attitude and content-related variables, are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Factors Influencing Gen Z's Purchase Intention

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t-Value	Sig. (p-value)
(Constant)	0.446	0.25	-	1.782	0.076
Attitude Toward the Product	0.579	0.061	0.544	9.516	<0.001
Content Entertainment	-0.024	0.051	-0.031	-0.478	0.633
Content Relevance	-0.139	0.053	-0.158	-2.641	0.009
Content Authenticity	0.074	0.059	0.069	1.259	0.209
Content Informativeness	0.276	0.078	0.219	3.527	<0.001
Content Visual Aesthetics	-0.01	0.062	-0.01	-0.168	0.867
Influencer Attractiveness	0.095	0.027	0.16	3.463	<0.001

Source: made by the author based on statistical analysis.

The study shows that content informativeness ($\beta = 0.219$, $p < 0.001$) and influencer attractiveness ($\beta = 0.160$, $p < 0.001$) have a considerable positive impact on purchase intention. Relevance ($\beta = -0.158$, $p = 0.009$) shows a substantial negative effect, indicating an intricate relationship. Other characteristics, such as entertainment, authenticity, and visual aesthetics, did not have a significant direct impact on purchase intention ($p > 0.05$).

Overall, the findings emphasise the relevance of Attitude Towards the Product as a key predictor of Purchase Intention, while also revealing that some content-related characteristics, notably Informativeness and Influencer Attractiveness, have a significant impact on purchase intentions. According to ANOVA, the overall model is significant ($p < 0.001$), confirming the importance of the analyzed factors in predicting Purchase Intention. Table 8 presents the ANOVA results, confirming the statistical significance of both the baseline and extended models.

Table 8

ANOVA Summary

Model	Sum of Squares (Regression)	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Baseline Model	34.663	1	34.663	175.501	<0.001
Extended Model	26.712	6	4.452	19.253	<0.001

Source: made by the author based on statistical analysis.

Both the baseline and extended models are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), as shown in Table 8, confirming that the independent variables included in each model have a meaningful impact on Purchase Intention.

The research found conflicting results regarding the impact of social media beauty influencers' visual content on Gen Z's beauty purchasing intentions. Firstly, **H2** (H2: Higher content informativeness positively influences Gen Z's attitude toward the product), **H4** (Higher content relevance positively influences Gen Z's attitude toward the product), **H5** (Higher entertainment value of influencer's visual content positively impacts Gen Z's attitude toward the product), **H6** (H6: Influencer's attractiveness as part of the visual content positively impacts Gen Z's attitude toward the product), and **H7** (H7: A positive attitude toward the product leads to a higher purchase intention among Gen Z) are accepted as content informativeness ($t = 5.181$, $p < 0.001$), content relevance ($t = 2.006$, $p = 0.046$), content entertainment ($t = 3.508$, $p < 0.001$), and influencer attractiveness ($t = 2.328$, $p = 0.021$) are significantly related to Gen Z's attitude toward the product, and attitude toward the product significantly predicts purchase intention ($t = 9.516$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 9

Factors influencing Gen Z's attitude toward the beauty product

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t-Value	Sig. (p-value)
Content Visual Aesthetics	0.054	0.062	0.054	0.83	0.407
Content Informativeness	0.33	0.078	0.33	5.181	<0.001

Content Authenticity	0.026	0.059		0.026	0.446	0.656
Content Relevance	0.128	0.053		0.128	2.006	0.046
Content Entertainment	0.236	0.051		0.236	3.508	<0.001
Influencer Attractiveness	0.115	0.027		0.115	2.328	0.021

Source: made by the author based on statistical analysis.

These results can be supported by previous research, for example, it was shown that the most common kind of appeal that marketers shared on social media was informational (Kusumasondjaja, 2018). In terms of content relevance - customers may feel more comfortable expressing their own thoughts or sentiments in order to build deeper social ties or project a favourable social image if advertisements are relevant to them via their objectives, experiences, and expertise (Geng et al., 2021). Relevant social media advertisements have a significant impact on advertising effectiveness, including greater attention to advertisements and lower ad avoidance (Jung, 2017). The findings of this study align with previous research on social media advertising, particularly regarding the impact of brand-sponsored content and influencer-created content.

For entertainment, these results are also supported by previous research. For example, prior research conducted by Bazi et al., (2023) found that the social media content's ability to be entertaining determines how well it generates customer brand engagement. Brands strive to achieve entertaining quality by creatively designing their content with elements like emotion, drama, and music, which captivate audiences and create lasting impressions; customers interact with such content not only to build brand awareness but also to be entertained, experience enjoyment, feel appreciated, and be motivated to take meaningful actions (Guttena et al., 2024). Social media entertainment is virtually essential for creating high-performing social media content. This is because the connection between content and performance is stronger when mediated by entertainment, highlighting its critical role in engaging audiences and driving results (Dzogbenuku et al., 2022). Based on this study and previous research, it is evident that entertainment is an important component of social media content and plays a critical part in meeting viewer expectations when engaging with content provided by businesses and influencers.

In terms of influencer attractiveness - the appeal of influencers impacts consumer trust and boosts brand visibility (Macheka et al., 2024). According to prior study results, the attractiveness of

an influencer plays a significant impact in moulding Gen Z's purchase intentions for cosmetic items, demonstrating that consumers place tremendous significance on influencers' looks and personality when making purchasing decisions (Rizomyliotis et al., 2024). Per Ma et al., (2024) research - an influencer's attractiveness immediately captures the audience's attention, encouraging them to engage with the produced social media content and sparking interest in the promoted products; attractive influencers are perceived as more credible, making their claims about product quality more convincing.

Finally, having a positive attitude towards a product significantly improves purchasing intention. According to prior research, consumers' brand attitudes are an important competing element affecting their purchase intents, frequently determining their selections alongside other variables such as price, quality, as well as other personal preferences (Arachchi & Samarasinghe, 2023). In addition, another research found that engagement with a brand's social media fosters a positive attitude toward the brand's social media page, which subsequently impacts future purchase intentions from the brand (McClure & Seock, 2020). In the case of this research the same can be said about the fact that positive attitude towards a social media page or its content will significantly increase purchase intentions of the advertised product.

However, **H1** (H1: Higher visual aesthetics positively influence Gen Z's attitude toward the product) and **H3** (H3: Higher content authenticity positively influences Gen Z's attitude toward the product) are rejected, as content visual aesthetics (t = 0.830, p = 0.407) and content authenticity (t = 0.446, p = 0.656) do not significantly influence Gen Z's attitude toward the beauty product.

In terms of H1, this result is highly surprising, however, it can be justified based on some of the previous research. Gen Z appreciates visually appealing content, their attitude toward a product is influenced more by factors like perceived authenticity, relevance, and informativeness of the content. (Kohler et al., 2023). Overemphasis on aesthetics without real sustenance in social media content may be perceived as shallow, failing to establish real connections or trust with this target audience. In terms of authenticity, when an influencer's images are not edited, content viewers are more likely to like the post and the endorsed product. However, the effectiveness of picture editing varies depending on the type of post: it is more important in informational posts but less effective in storytelling posts (Zhang et al., 2024). In our situation, the image's objective was explicitly informative, since it depicted an influencer promoting the imminent debut of a lip product. According to previous study - local influencers have a greater impact on online brand advocacy among Generation Z consumers, the same study also discovered that trustworthiness and perceived likeness (homophily) have an important impact in connecting influencers' countries of origin to online brand promotion (Rambocas & Metivier, 2024). Thus, local influencers are regarded to be more trustworthy and relevant than overseas influencers, resulting in greater efficacy in influencing consumer attitudes and behaviours.

This is due to the cultural and social congruence between local influencers and their followers, who share common values, language, and social conventions, fostering a feeling of relatability and authenticity. Cultural variations may make it difficult for international influencers to develop the same level of connection, leading to impressions of detachment or irrelevance. This study used an influencer from the United Kingdom as a visual stimulus, however the research was carried out in Lithuania. This reveals a possible cultural divide that might affect the impact of the influencer's material. Differences in beauty standards, communication approaches, and consumer expectations between the two areas may have influenced how the content was received by the Lithuanian audience.

These findings suggest that informativeness, relevance, entertainment value, and influencer attractiveness are key factors in shaping Gen Z's attitudes, which subsequently drive purchase intention towards beauty products, whereas visual aesthetics and authenticity are less impactful in this context. Table 10 summarizes the outcomes of hypotheses H1-H7, highlighting the significance of each tested relationship.

Table 10

The results regarding the hypothesis

Hypothesis	Status
H1: Higher visual aesthetics positively influence Gen Z's attitude toward the product.	Rejected
H2: Higher content informativeness positively influences Gen Z's attitude toward the product.	Accepted
H3: Higher content authenticity positively influences Gen Z's attitude toward the product.	Rejected
H4: Higher content relevance positively influences Gen Z's attitude toward the product.	Accepted
H5: Higher entertainment value of influencer's visual content positively impacts Gen Z's attitude toward the product.	Accepted
H6: Influencer's attractiveness as part of the visual content positively impacts Gen Z's attitude toward the product.	Accepted
H7: A positive attitude toward the product leads to a higher purchase intention among Gen Z.	Accepted

The findings of this research showcase that Gen Z's purchase intentions of beauty products may be effectively predicted by their attitude towards the product, as well as significant visual content-related factors such content informativeness, relevance, entertainment value, and influencer attractiveness. These characteristics have an immense impact on Generation Z perceptions because they directly influence their opinions of both the visual content created by the influencer for brand-influencer partnership and the promoted product. This, ultimately impacts their purchasing intentions. For example, content informativeness gives Gen Z the necessary knowledge to make informed decisions, whereas content relevance ensures that the shared material is relevant to their individual needs and interests, resulting in a greater connection with the content. Similarly, the entertainment value of influencer posts engages Generation Z by capturing and holding their attention, while the influencer's physical attractiveness boosts trust and credibility, confirming the positive attitudes towards the beauty product.

In contrast, visual aesthetics and content authenticity were found to have no substantial direct influence on Generation Z's opinion towards the beauty product. This research implies that, while visually appealing and supposedly authentic information might increase overall engagement, they are insufficient to generate significant purchase intentions in this group. The disregard for visual aesthetics may represent Gen Z's preference for substance over style; they prioritise material that is instructive and relevant above content that is only visually beautiful and can intimidate the viewer by looking "too good to be true" or attainable for them. Similarly, while Gen Z values authenticity in influencer marketing, its direct impact on their attitude towards a product may be eclipsed by other criteria, such as the influencer's reliability and skill, or the informativeness of the material itself.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The main purpose of the research was to identify the relationship between beauty influencer visual content and Generations Z's purchase decisions of beauty products, specifically if the visual content affects viewers' impressions and attitudes about the beauty product which the beauty influencer is partnering with and subsequently impacts the purchase intention. By investigating the features and impact of influencers' visual content on Generation Z's purchase decisions, the study aims to discover the role of influencers as brand partners in the digital era.

The analysis of current research shows the importance of exploring how the visual content created by beauty influencers on social media influences the purchasing intentions of Generation Z when it comes to beauty products. This question is especially pertinent because the existing knowledge on the effects of social media visual material is sparse. According to the literature study, Generation Z, as digital natives, is especially sensitive to social media advertising due to variables such as social proof and Fear of Missing Out. Per literature review, despite this generation's rising focus on holding corporations and influencers responsible, misaligned purchase patterns remain an issue, owing to their modest financial resources and understanding of sustainable practices. Consequently, the primary goal of this study was to investigate this link by examining the factors that emphasise the impact of beauty influencer-generated visual material on Gen Z's purchase intentions for various beauty products.

To address this, the research examines a range of factors influencing consumer behaviour and perceptions of influencer content. Earlier studies have highlighted the significance of visual influence, informativeness, and authenticity in shaping consumer impressions on social media channels. Expanding on these findings, this study focuses on specific features of influencer content, including visual aesthetics, informativeness, authenticity, relevance, entertainment value, and the attractiveness of the influencer as a visual medium. These components are analyzed within a conceptual framework that connects Gen Z's attitudes toward products with their purchase intentions. This approach is based on the well-established fact that attitudes have a substantial effect on purchase behaviour. Furthermore, the study emphasises influencers' dual function as brand partners and content creators, which shapes customer impressions of both the items they promote and their own brand.

The findings show that several factors, such as informativeness, relevance, entertainment value, and influencer attractiveness, significantly shape Gen Z's attitudes towards the product and subsequently their purchase intentions of beauty products. A particularly notable insight is that a

favourable attitude toward a product strongly drives purchase behaviour, highlighting the importance of influencers creating strategic, impactful visual content to leave a positive impression.

Interestingly, the study uncovered a few unexpected distinctions. While informativeness, entertainment value, and beauty all affected opinions positively, content relevance had a significant but unfavourable impact. This implies that highly focused or extremely relevant information may not always meet Gen Z's standards, thereby lowering the perceived value of the product or the influencer's message. This surprising discovery presents fascinating questions that require more investigation.

Furthermore, contrary to conventional belief, the study discovered that visual aesthetics and authenticity had no direct influence on purchase-related attitudes. This contradicts the widely held idea that visually appealing or authentic material always plays an important role in forming consumer perceptions. Instead, these elements may have an impact in other situations, but they were not decisive in generating purchase intentions in this case. Finally, the study demonstrates a substantial relationship between a positive attitude towards a product and the possibility of purchasing. This highlights the significance of influencer content that not only adds value through information and entertainment but also builds an emotional connection with the product. By doing so, companies and influencers may successfully impact consumer behaviour and increase their attractiveness to Generation Z.

Recommendations

1) This study explored the impact of social media beauty influencers' visual content on Gen Z's attitudes and purchase intentions on beauty products, aiming to better understand the role of visual content features in shaping consumer behaviour. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to help marketers and influencers develop more effective strategies for engaging Gen Z consumers:

2) Gen Z values clear and detailed information about the products they intent to purchase. Content that emphasises features, benefits, and practical applications - such as tutorials, reviews, and educational posts - can greatly improve Gen Z's attitude toward a beauty product. Providing informative social media content that highlights key aspects of the advertised product helps reinforce its qualities and features in their minds. By combining visually engaging and educational content, marketers can build trust, boost positive perceptions, and ultimately increase the purchase intention.

3) Entertainment plays a crucial role in capturing and maintaining Gen Z's attention. To make their social media content more engaging, influencers could use features such as story-telling, humour, or dynamic visuals. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram are

great for this sort of visually appealing content that keeps Gen Z engaged while still communicating the company's message during influencer-brand partnerships.

4) Influencer attractiveness is a strong driver of positive attitudes toward products. Collaborating with influencers who are charismatic, relatable, and aligned with the brand's image and values can amplify their impact. This can be especially true for beauty-related products as it helps associate a beautiful face with a product that will help you achieve the desirable result. These influencers should resonate with Gen Z's aspirations and lifestyles, creating a natural connection that enhances their appeal.

5) Interestingly, overly relevant content may have a negative effect, potentially due to oversaturation or perceived inauthenticity. Influencer posts can look basic if they all target the audience the same way. To avoid cookie-cutter content, marketers should carefully customise their efforts to reflect Gen Z's thoughts and interests without appearing forced or overly targeted. Authenticity in relevancy is critical to finding the proper balance.

6) While visually appealing and authentic content often adds value, these factors did not have a significant impact on purchase intentions in this study. Marketers might achieve greater success by prioritizing content that both informs and entertains Gen Z, as these elements significantly influence their purchasing intentions. This might also explain the decrease in overly-filtered and manicured Instagram feeds over the last few years. A new style is gaining favour that appears more natural and organic, as opposed to highly visually groomed and out of reach for the general public.

7) A favourable attitude toward a product strongly predicts purchase intentions. To foster this, companies and influencers should emphasise the quality and worth of their goods in ways that are consistent with Gen Z's beliefs and goals. Engaging information that fosters trust and elicits an emotional response is very helpful in establishing positive attitudes.

8) The research revealed a mixed impact of factors like relevance highlighting the need for data-driven strategies. Marketers should leverage analytics, audience feedback, and A/B testing to identify what resonates best with Gen Z. These insights can inform more effective content creation and enable timely adjustments to campaigns for optimal results.

Limitations and further research

This study has some notable limitations that could be addressed by future research. First, it assesses Gen Z's purchase intentions rather than their actual purchasing behaviour. While previous research indicates a strong link between the two, future studies should incorporate actual purchase data to corroborate these findings and offer a more complete picture of consumer behaviour.

Second, the research is limited to beauty products promoted by social media influencers. This narrow focus may restrict the applicability of the results to other product categories. Since the impact of visual content likely varies across different types of products, future studies could explore a broader range of industries to enhance the findings' relevance.

Third, the study may be affected by self-selection bias. Participants who are very interested in social media and influencer culture may have been more inclined to participate, skewing the results. To boost generalisation, future research must try to include a more varied participant pool.

Finally, the reliance on self-administered questionnaires introduces potential limitations, as participants may interpret or respond to survey items inconsistently. To solve this, future research may use alternate approaches, such as focus groups or experiments, to confirm the findings. Expanding the research to additional platforms and cultural contexts might improve the findings' validity and effectiveness.

Future research could build on the findings of this research by examining how influencer visual content impacts a broader range of product categories beyond the beauty industry, such as fashion, technology, or lifestyle, to assess whether the identified factors consistently influence consumer behavior. Studies could also examine the relationships between influencer-generated visual content created by local influencers versus non-local influencers. Additionally, investigating the mediating or moderating roles of factors like trust, brand loyalty, or platform engagement could enhance understanding of the mechanisms linking visual content to purchase decisions. Finally, expanding the study's geographic scope to include Gen Z audiences across diverse regions or cultural contexts could provide valuable insights into tailoring influencer marketing strategies for global or localized markets.

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THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA BEAUTY INFLUENCERS' VISUAL CONTENT ON GEN Z'S BEAUTY PURCHASE INTENSIONS

GODA VARNAITĖ

Master thesis

MARKETING AND INTEGRATED COMMUNICATION

Vilnius University, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration

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Vilnius, 2024

SUMMARY

55 pages, 7 tables, 1 figure, 218 references.

This master thesis explores the connection between beauty influencer visual content and Gen Z's beauty product purchasing intentions. By analyzing the characteristics and effects of influencer visual content, the study aims to shed light on their role as brand partners in the digital age. The thesis is divided into three key sections: a literature review, research methodology and findings, and conclusions with practical recommendations.

The literature review highlights the impact of social media beauty influencers, the significance of various platforms, and the psychological and social impact of visual content on consumer behavior. Building on this, the study develops the research methodology centered on a questionnaire designed to evaluate the impact of influencer visual content on Gen Z's beauty purchasing intentions. Data collected through the survey was analyzed using SPSS software, with reliability confirmed via Cronbach's Alpha (all scales exceeded 0.7). Statistical tools, including regression analysis, were used to explore the link between beauty influencer content and Gen Z's purchase intentions of beauty products.

The findings revealed that factors like informativeness, entertainment value, and the influencer's attractiveness significantly influence Gen Z's attitudes, which strongly drive purchase intentions. However, elements such as visual aesthetics and content authenticity showed no notable impact. These insights were compared with similar research in other contexts to identify trends and differences. The conclusions and recommendations summarize the core findings, offering actionable advice for brands and influencers on optimizing content strategies to better engage Gen Z audiences. The study provides guidance for marketers and influencers seeking to strengthen their partnerships and effectiveness in the ever-evolving digital marketing landscape.

SOCIALINIŲ TINKLŲ GROŽIO INFLUENCERIŲ VIZUALINIO TURINIO ĮTAKA Z KARTOS GROŽIO PRODUKTŲ PIRKIMO SPRENDIMAMS

GODA VARNAITĖ

Magistro baigiamasis darbas

RINKODARA IR INTEGRUOTA KOMUNIKACIJA

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Vilnius, 2024

SANTRAUKA

55 puslapiai, 7 lentelės, 1 paveikslas, 218 šaltinių.

Šis magistro darbas nagrinėja ryšį tarp grožio influencerių vizualinio turinio ir Z kartos ketinimų pirkti grožio produktus. Analizuojant influencerių vizualinio turinio ypatybes ir poveikį, tyrimu siekiama atskleisti jų vaidmenį kaip prekės ženklų partnerių skaitmeninėje eroje.

Darbas suskirstytas į tris pagrindines dalis: literatūros apžvalgą, tyrimo metodologiją ir rezultatus bei išvadas su praktinėmis rekomendacijomis.

Literatūros apžvalgoje pabrėžiamas socialinių tinklų grožio influencerių poveikis, įvairių platformų reikšmė bei vizualinio turinio psichologinis ir socialinis poveikis vartotojų elgsenai. Remiantis šia apžvalga, buvo parengta tyrimo metodologija, grindžiama klausimynu, skirtu įvertinti influencerių vizualinio turinio poveikį Z kartos grožio produktų pirkimo ketinimams. Surinkti duomenys buvo analizuojami naudojant SPSS įrangą, o duomenų patikimumas patvirtintas Cronbacho Alfa metodu (visi skalės rodikliai viršijo 0,7). Statistinei analizei buvo naudojami regresijos analizės įrankiai, siekiant nustatyti ryšį tarp grožio influencerių turinio ir Z kartos pirkimo ketinimų. Rezultatai parodė, kad tokie veiksniai kaip informatyvumas, pramoginė vertė ir influencerių patrauklumas reikšmingai veikia Z kartos požiūrį, kuris stipriai lemia pirkimo ketinimus. Tačiau tokie elementai kaip vizualinė estetika ir turinio autentiškumas neturėjo reikšmingo poveikio. Šie įžvalgos buvo palygintos su panašiais tyrimais kitame kontekste, siekiant nustatyti tendencijas ir skirtumus. Išvados ir rekomendacijos apibendrina pagrindines tyrimo įžvalgas, pateikdamos naudingus patarimus prekės ženklams ir influenceriams, kaip optimizuoti turinio strategijas, siekiant efektyviau įtraukti Z kartos auditoriją. Tyrimas suteikia gairių rinkodaros specialistams ir influenceriams, siekiantiems stiprinti savo partnerystes bei efektyvumą nuolat kintančioje skaitmeninės rinkodaros aplinkoje.

ANNEXES

Appendix 1

Questionnaire

Hello,

You are invited to participate in the survey, which focuses on the impact of influencer's visual content on Gen Z's purchase intention.

Please be aware that the survey will focus on the purchase intentions of Generation Z customers (born between 1996 and 2012). If your birth year is not included in the necessary range, please skip this survey. Furthermore, this study's focus is on influencers and their product endorsements. To ensure that the study's goals are accomplished, only people who actively follow influencers are invited to participate in the online survey.

This survey has 9 blocks of questions and will take roughly 7-10 minutes to complete. It is completely anonymous, and your responses will only be used for research purposes.

If you happen to have any questions, please contact me via email at goda.varnaite@evaf.stud.vu.lt.

Thank you for participating.

Please take a moment to examine a carousel post from a popular social media beauty influencer which features a sponsored promotion of a beauty product.
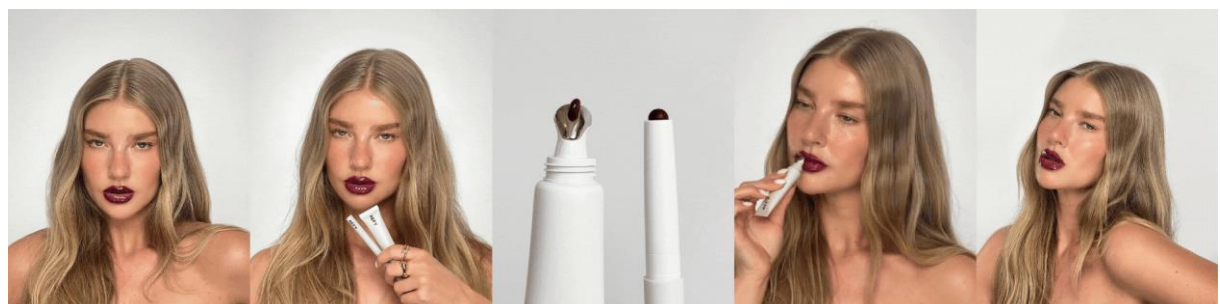
The influencer's name is Jess Hunt (@jesshunt2 on Instagram), she is a beauty and fashion influencer with more than 1.7 million followers on the platform.

Post's caption:

"The look of A/W. Coming tomorrow 6pm BST. @refybeauty Plum Lip Collection.

Sign up via the link in bio!"

After reviewing the influencer posts, please proceed with the questions below. Out of the presented questions, choose the most appropriate answer for each statement, which corresponds most closely to your desired response.

1. Purchase Intention	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I will probably purchase the recommended product;					
I intend to purchase the recommended product;					
It is possible that I will purchase the recommended product.					
2. Attitudes Towards the Product Advertised by the Influencer	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The recommended product is good;					
The recommended product is pleasant;					
The recommended product is favorable.					
3. Content Entertainment	Strongly	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly

	Disagree		Agree nor Disagree		Agree
The post of the social media influencer is fun to view;					
The post of the social media influencer is amusing;					
I enjoyed browsing the post of the social media influencer;					
I think the social media post of the influencer was fun.					
4. Content Relevance	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The content shared by the influencer helps me resolve doubt when I purchase the advertised product;					
The content shared by the influencer helps me learn about the advertised product in a more efficient way;					
In general, the content shared by the influencer is useful to me.					
5. Content Authenticity	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The influencer's content is sincere;					
The influencer comes off as genuine;					
The influencer gives very honest					

reviews on the product.					
The influencer promotes a product they would usually use.					
The influencer not only posts about the good in their lives but also hardships;					
The influencer talks about their flaws and is not ashamed of showing them off in public;					
The influencer is very knowledgeable in their field.					
6. Content Informativeness	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The visual content posted is effective;					
The visual content posted is helpful;					
The visual content posted is functional;					
The visual content posted is necessary;					
The visual content posted is practical;					
7. Content Visual Aesthetics	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I think influencer's post is visually attractive.					

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I think influencer's post is aesthetically appealing;					
Influencer's post appealed to my visual senses.					
8. Influencer's Attractivness	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The influencer is attractive;					
The influencer is charismatic;					
The influencer is good-looking;					
The physical makeup of the influencer is admirable.					
9. Your age (please enter your age here).					
10. Your gender.					
11. Your nationality (please enter your age here).					