

# The Effect of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Intention in Gen Z

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**Abstract.** This study aims to analyze the influence of social media marketing on purchase intention in generation Z. The focus of this research is on specific elements in social media marketing, such as content quality, posting frequency, and the type of platform used. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. Participants consisted of individuals aged 17-30, including college students, workers, and students, who actively use social media. Data was collected through in-depth interviews to explore participants' perceptions of social media marketing and its influence on their purchase intentions. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and insights regarding the relationship between social media marketing elements and purchase intention. The results of this study show: (1) Engaging content and frequent interactions make important contributions to shaping purchase intentions in generation Z. (2) Some social media platforms are more influential than others in driving consumer decisions. (3) The findings provide insights that can be applied to design effective social media marketing strategies for generation Z.

**Keywords:** Social Media Marketing, Purchase Intention, Gen Z, Social Media Influence, Online Interactions.

## Introduction

In an era of rapid globalization, companies around the world must now navigate the challenges and dynamics of an ever-evolving international marketplace. The opportunities that arise through globalization come with challenges, such as shifting consumer preferences, rapid technological developments, and increasing economic uncertainty. Therefore, companies that want to compete in the global market need to develop marketing strategies that are appropriate and responsive to these changes, where global marketing research plays an important role in understanding the shifts that are occurring. (Suhairi et al., 2024)..

Digital technologies, particularly big data analytics, artificial intelligence (AI), and advances in digitization, have changed the approach to marketing research. It enables companies to gain deeper insights into market behavior, accelerate data analysis, and improve accuracy in decision-making. Digital transformation has also brought significant changes in the education and business sectors, increasing cross-cultural interactions and enabling greater collaboration at an international level, making education more inclusive and helping businesses become more adaptive to dynamic market needs. (Dina Destari, 2023).

In the business world, digital marketing is now the backbone of effective communication strategies to reach consumers, where the use of social media allows companies to interact in real-time and increase consumer engagement. Social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, have become very effective marketing tools, especially for MSMEs that have limited resources for traditional marketing. Through these platforms, small and medium-sized businesses can expand their reach to a wider audience, increase exposure, and boost sales, ultimately supporting inclusive and sustainable economic growth. (Cendana, 2019; Pratiwi et al., 2023)

In particular, social media plays an important role in improving people's economic well-being by creating new jobs and economic opportunities. By utilizing platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, MSMEs and local businesses can increase customer engagement, strengthen competitiveness in the digital market, and introduce local products to a global audience. These platforms also support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in supporting entrepreneurship and poverty alleviation through economic empowerment at the rural level. (Herdiyani et al., 2022; Shabilla et al., 2021)..

In addition, social media has greatly influenced the behavior of Generation Z consumers, who are known to be very active in the digital environment. They utilize social media as a source of product information, read reviews, and seek guidance before making a purchase. On platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, marketing content packed with attractive visual elements and informative information has a strong

influence on their purchase intentions. (Fadhilah & Saputra, 2021; Mulyawan et al., 2021).. Generation Z often form their opinions through electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), where recommendations from influencers have a major influence on their purchasing decisions, both directly through in-depth information and indirectly through the visual appeal of the content they see. (Husna & Mairita, 2024; Regina, 2024)

Marketing strategies using influencers, which span a wide range of categories from micro to mega-influencers, are becoming popular as they are able to convey product information in a more authentic and relatable manner. This is important for Generation Z who tend to appreciate content that feels more personalized. The visual marketing produced by these influencers provides a more interactive and immersive experience for the audience, increasing consumer interest and trust in the brand. (Handayani, 2023).

Further research shows that content quality has a major influence on consumer purchase intentions on digital platforms. Content that is visually appealing, relevant, and tailored to the audience's interests is able to increase brand awareness, attract purchase intent, and build consumer loyalty. For example, on Instagram, the quality of engaging content not only serves to attract audience attention but also strengthens interactions that motivate active engagement from consumers. (Fajar Ansari et al., 2022). The same was found in television advertising, where ad creativity and frequency of viewing had a positive impact on purchase intention, thus demonstrating the importance of content elements such as visuals, messages, and audience relevance in shaping purchasing decisions across different media (Sukmana et al., 2019). (Sukmana et al., 2018).

Ultimately, the success of social media marketing lies in a consistent, relevant and interactive strategy, which can effectively build brand awareness among Generation Z and increase consumer engagement. This study aims to further analyze the influence of social media marketing on Generation Z's purchase intention, focusing on the most influential elements of digital marketing, such as content quality, posting frequency, and type of platform used. The findings are expected to provide more comprehensive insights into effective marketing strategies in an increasingly competitive digital age, especially for companies looking to expand their reach and strengthen brand loyalty among the younger generation.

## **Methods**

In the era of globalization and digitalization, marketing approaches have undergone a major transformation. Social media is now an important tool for building relationships with consumers, especially Generation Z who are highly active in the digital world. Elements such as content quality, frequency of posts, and the type of platform used allow companies to reach their audience in a more personalized and interactive way. This research aims to explore how these elements influence Generation Z's purchase intention.

The study involved participants aged 17 to 30, including university students, workers and students who actively use social media. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, ensuring that they had a direct connection to the research topic, such as an active habit of using social media (for example, Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube) and frequent online shopping transactions.

The data in this study was collected through semi-structured interviews. The interview guide was designed to elicit information related to key elements in social media marketing, such as content quality, frequency of posts, and platform preference. The interview process was conducted both in person and online through video calls, with an average duration of 15 to 30 minutes for each participant.

The data analysis stage used a thematic approach. Interview recordings were transcribed and then analyzed to find key themes that illustrated the relationship between social media marketing elements and purchase intent. The analysis focused on certain patterns, such as preference for visual content, consistency in interaction, and the influence of different social media platforms.

This research adopts a qualitative method with a case study approach. This approach was chosen to gain deeper insights into Generation Z's experiences and views regarding social media marketing. This case study specifically highlights the use of popular platforms such as Instagram and TikTok to understand the extent to which digital marketing elements influence young consumers' purchasing decisions.

## Result and Discussion

Table 1: List of Interview Participants

No.	Participant Code	Status	Age	Favorite Platform
1	P1	Student	21	TikTok
2	P2	Student	20	Instagram, TikTok
3	P3	Supermarket Employee	21	TikTok
4	P4	High school students	18	TikTok, Instagram
5	P5	Student	22	Instagram
6	P6	Restaurant Employee	23	TikTok, Youtube
7	P7	High school students	18	TikTok, Instagram
8	P8	Office Employee	24	TikTok

## Research Results

This research explores the relationship between social media marketing elements and Generation Z's purchase intention through three key findings: content quality, consistency of posts, and platform preference. These three elements are interrelated in creating an effective and relevant marketing strategy for this digital generation.

Table. 2 : Relationship of social media marketing elements

No.	Elements of Social Media Marketing	Key Findings	Explanation
1	Content Quality	The quality of content is a major factor in attracting Generation Z's attention.	Attention-grabbing content tends to have strong visual elements (bright colors, modern design), relevance to audience needs, as well as emotional value such as inspiring stories or real user experiences.
2	Consistency of Posts	Consistent posts and interactions increase customer loyalty.	A moderate but consistent frequency of posts, coupled with interactions such as answering comments or using interactive features (polls, quizzes), helps build a more personalized relationship with the audience.
3	Upload Preferences	TikTok and Instagram are the main platforms for marketing for Generation Z.	TikTok excels at creating content that can easily go viral and attract attention in a short period of time. Instagram is used for visual branding through features like Reels, Stories, and Shopping that make product exploration easy.

### 1. Content Quality as a Key Factor

Participants emphasized that quality content is a key element in forming a first impression of a brand. Eye-catching content usually has strong visual elements, such as the use of bright colors, modern designs, and visual elements that capitalize on current trends. In addition, the narrative or message conveyed through the content should be relevant to the audience's needs, provide solutions to their problems, or reflect the lifestyle they aspire to. Some participants mentioned that content that features emotional value, such as inspirational stories or real user experiences, has greater appeal than direct promotional content. This shows the importance of a more authentic and personalized soft selling approach.

### 2. Frequency of Posts and Consistency of Interaction

Generation Z values brands that are consistent in uploading content and engaging with their audience. Consistency is not only about how often a brand posts, but also about the brand's presence in answering comments, liking consumer posts, or resharing *user-generated content*.

Participants felt that brands that post too frequently without providing a variety of content tend to make the audience feel bored. In contrast, a moderate frequency of posts with content that is always relevant and fresh is more effective in maintaining consumer attention. Some participants also mentioned that they feel more connected with brands that use interactive features such as polls, question and answer sessions, or quizzes in their posts.

### 3. Social Media Platform Preferences

TikTok and Instagram are the two platforms most frequently used by Generation Z to discover and interact with brands. TikTok is considered a platform that encourages creativity, with short video content that is often memorable and viral. Instagram, on the other hand, is the top choice for exploring brands visually, especially through features such as Reels, Stories and Shopping that make the immediate buying process easier.

Some participants also mentioned YouTube as a platform they use for more in-depth product reviews or tutorials. However, Facebook is starting to lose traction among Generation Z, who tend to find it less relevant and overly formal than other platforms.

## Discussion

Table 3: Interview Findings

Participant Code	Key Themes in the Interview	Platforms of interest	Influence on Purchase Intention
P1	Attractive visual content quality	TikTok	Engaging content drives purchases
P2	Consistency of posts and interactions	Instagram, TikTok	Interaction increases trust
P3	Clear and educational information	TikTok	Product reviews increase purchase intention
P4	Use of influencers	TikTok, Instagram	Influencers influence decisions
P5	Inspiring content	Instagram	Inspirational messages increase purchase intention
P6	Purchase directly from the platform	TikTok, Youtube	Ease of buying directly via the platform
P7	User stories and reviews	TikTok, Instagram	Positive testimonials drive purchase decisions
P8	Lifestyle relevant to the audience	TikTok	Brand relevance increases loyalty

### 1. The Importance of Content Quality in Building Emotional Connections

This finding is in line with the theory of Fadhilah & Saputra (2021), which states that quality content has the ability to attract attention and build emotional connections with audiences. Generation Z as digital natives have the ability to sort out information quickly, so visually appealing and relevant content is the main key in influencing their decisions.

Content that utilizes visual elements such as color, graphics, and short videos can create a more engaging experience than text or static images. In addition, personalized narratives, such as real-life stories or genuine reviews from other users, can build consumer trust in brands. This shows that a soft selling approach by inserting emotional value in content is much more effective than explicit promotion.

Research participants indicated that visual elements greatly influence the first impression of a brand on social media. Strong visual content is one way to grab the audience's attention, especially in platforms like Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube that focus on visual aspects.

Moreover, a modern design shows that the brand understands the trends and lifestyle of their audience. An up-to-date design not only gives the impression that the brand is relevant, but also strengthens their visual identity in the eyes of consumers. This is especially important as Generation Z tends to follow the latest trends and are more attracted to brands that look fresh, dynamic, and in line with their preferences.

In addition to static visual elements such as design and color, the use of current trends is also an important part of shaping content quality. Generation Z tends to follow certain trending topics or hashtags that are popular on social media. Therefore, content that utilizes trending elements, such as the use of music or viral memes, can make brands look more up-to-date and relevant to what the audience is talking about.

Apart from visual elements, the relevance of the content also determines whether the audience will be interested or not. Generation Z is very sensitive to information that they consider relevant to their lives. Therefore, the message or narrative in the content should touch on the needs or desires of the audience.

### 2. Consistency in Increasing Customer Loyalty

The frequency of uploads and consistent interactions gives the impression that the brand is active, caring, and attentive to its audience. This supports the theory of Sukmana et al. (2018), which states that a regular brand presence on social media can create trust and increase consumer loyalty.

However, in-depth interviews with participants showed that consistency is not enough. The content uploaded must provide value to the audience, whether in the form of information, entertainment, or solutions. When brands post too often without providing variety, audiences tend to ignore or even unfollow the account. Therefore, it is important for brands to combine consistency with creativity to stay relevant in the eyes of consumers.

Generation Z highly values consistency in content uploads by brands. However, this consistency is not just limited to the frequency of uploads, but also includes the quality and relevance of the content itself. Brands that upload content regularly, with varied and fresh content, are more likely to attract and retain the attention and loyalty of this young audience.

In addition to consistency in uploading content, participants emphasized the importance of active interaction between brands and their audiences. Generation Z considers that brands that interact directly with them in various ways, such as responding to comments, liking posts, or even resharing user-generated content, show that the brand cares and values its audience.

A moderate frequency of posts is key to keeping the audience interested without feeling overwhelmed. Participants indicated that while they like brands that are active on social media, they tend to connect more with brands that don't post too frequently, but always ensure that the content shared is relevant and of value to the audience.

### 3. The Influence of Social Media Platforms on Decision Making

The choice of social media platform plays an important role in determining the effectiveness of a marketing campaign. TikTok with its short video format is able to create a huge impact in a short period of time, making it a top choice for campaigns that require quick attention. On the other hand, Instagram is more suitable for building a more structured branding through visual content and shopping features that directly link to e-commerce platforms.

Participants also emphasized that platforms like YouTube remain relevant, especially for products that require more detailed explanations or in-depth reviews. This suggests that brands should tailor their strategies to the characteristics of each platform in order to maximize their impact on consumers.

TikTok has become a key platform for Generation Z, mainly due to its ability to encourage creativity in content creation. The platform is known for its short videos that are often memorable and have the potential to go viral in no time. Content on TikTok focuses heavily on audience engagement with a more relaxed and innovative format, allowing users to express themselves freely and spontaneously.

While TikTok relies on creativity through short videos, Instagram focuses more on visuals and a strong aesthetic experience. Generation Z uses Instagram to visually explore brands, with photos and videos showcasing products or lifestyles they want to emulate. Features like Reels, Stories, and Instagram Shopping make it easier for brands to reach their audience and encourage them to make purchases directly from the platform. Instagram also offers a very strong brand aesthetic, where visual quality is the main thing that will attract Generation Z. Brands that are able to combine elements of creativity and visual consistency can increase brand awareness and drive purchase intent through the platform.

While TikTok and Instagram are more dominant among Generation Z for brand discovery, YouTube remains the top choice for more in-depth content such as product reviews and tutorials. Many participants mentioned that they often use YouTube to watch product reviews that give them more information regarding the quality and functionality of the product before they decide to buy. Additionally, tutorials related to the use of products or how to apply them in everyday life are also in high demand.

This study provides valuable insights for companies aiming to engage Generation Z through digital marketing strategies. One of the key aspects to consider is the quality of content. Generation Z tends to favor content that is not only visually appealing but also relevant and authentic. Therefore, businesses should focus on creating content with modern designs, vibrant colors, and elements that align with current trends.

Messages that resonate with their lifestyle and values—such as offering solutions to their problems or reflecting their aspirations—are more likely to be effective. A subtle approach, such as sharing emotional stories, real user experiences, or more personalized narratives, is generally better received. Additionally, brands that emphasize authenticity and transparency are more likely to earn their trust.

Building direct interaction with consumers is another essential aspect of fostering closer relationships. Generation Z seeks not only high-quality products or services but also a sense of connection with the brands they support. Responding promptly to comments or direct messages demonstrates care and attentiveness. Features like polls, quizzes, or Q&A sessions can also enhance consumer engagement. Inviting them to contribute through user-generated content is an effective way to strengthen the sense of community and connection with the brand.

Selecting the right social media platform is equally important. TikTok, for instance, is highly effective for creative campaigns that rely on viral content and capture attention quickly. Meanwhile, Instagram is better suited for brands that aim to build a strong visual identity, particularly for lifestyle or fashion products. Features such as Reels, Stories, and Instagram Shopping offer seamless engagement opportunities and facilitate the purchasing process.

By prioritizing high-quality content, fostering meaningful interactions, and choosing the appropriate platforms, companies can effectively reach Generation Z and build strong, lasting relationships with them.

## Conclusion

The conclusion of this study is that social media marketing has a significant influence on Generation Z's purchase intention. Key elements in social media marketing, such as content quality, posting frequency, and the type of platform used, were shown to play an important role in shaping the purchase decisions of these young consumers. Interesting and relevant content, as well as consistent interaction with the audience, increases engagement and trust, which ultimately drives purchase intent. In addition, social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram proved to be more influential than other platforms in influencing purchase decisions. These findings provide valuable insights for companies in designing more effective and relevant marketing strategies, focusing on the elements that attract Generation Z most in the digital age.

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