INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND LEARNING TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION (IJHLT)
VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3, OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2026
RCHUB PUBLISHER
ISSN: 3139-9185
DOI: https://doi.org/10.65725/IJHLT/1/3/006

FROM IMPULSE BUYING TO MINDFUL CONSUMPTION: EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF DE-INFLUENCING AND SOURCE CREDIBILITY ON GEN Z PURCHASE INTENTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of social media commerce has been largely driven by influencer marketing, which plays an important role in shaping consumer preferences and encouraging online impulse buying. However, the emerging trend of de-influencing is changing this pattern by encouraging consumers to question over-hyped products, avoid unnecessary purchases, and adopt more thoughtful consumption practices. This trend is particularly relevant to Generation Z (Gen Z), who are highly active on social media and frequently encounter influencer-generated content.

The present study, titled "From Impulse Buying to Mindful Consumption: Examining the Impact of De-influencing and Source Credibility on Gen Z Purchase Intentions," examines the influence of de-influencing and source credibility on the purchasing behaviour of Gen Z consumers. The study focuses on Gen Z's exposure to de-influencing content, their perceptions of the credibility of de-influencers and traditional influencers, and the role of source credibility in purchase decision-making. It also examines whether de-influencing can reduce digital impulse buying and encourage mindful and responsible consumption.

Primary data were collected through a structured digital questionnaire to understand respondents' social media usage, exposure to influencer and de-influencer content, perceptions of credibility,

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and purchasing behaviour. The study aims to provide insights into how de-influencing may influence purchase intentions and contribute to more conscious consumption among Gen Z consumers.

Keywords: De-influencing, Generation Z, Impulse Buying, Mindful Consumption, Source Credibility.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has transformed into a vast market where traditionally influencer marketing was responsible for stimulating customers' desire and urge to purchase something impulsively on social networks. However, the increasing fatigue with promotion makes people focus less on the consumerism and pay more attention to the need for authenticity. Hence, it creates a concept of "de-influencing," a trend that develops actively today and can have some implications for the future of social commerce. "De-influencing" implies the opposition to all sorts of promotion and product advertising on social media that emerges on TikTok in 2023. De-influencers try to encourage their followers not to spend money on products hyped by brands and to develop proper consumption behaviour.

Since Generation Z encounters both collaboration between influencers and brands and reviews about products from independent creators, this generation analyzes such contradictory information from the perspective of "source credibility," including the honesty, trustworthiness, and authenticity of the content creator. In order to find out how source credibility impacts Generation Z's purchase behaviour, the current paper, titled "From Impulse Buying to Mindful Consumption: Examining the Impact of De-influencing and Source Credibility on Gen Z Purchase Intentions," will analyze the effect of de-influencing content, its level of exposure and its role in sustainable consumption among young consumers.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the extent of Gen Z's exposure to de-influencing content on social media.
2. To compare the perceived credibility of de-influencers and traditional influencers among Gen Z.

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3. To examine the influence of source credibility on Gen Z's purchase decision-making.
4. To assess the impact of de-influencing on reducing digital impulse buying among Gen Z consumers.
5. To evaluate the social impact of de-influencing in promoting mindful and responsible consumption among Gen Z.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Valeria Penttinen, Robert Ciuchita and Susanne Pedersen (2026) – "Let me deinfluence you! The impacts of deinfluencing content"

The present research explores the effects of de-influencing content on the perceived credibility of influencers and purchase intentions of consumers. In the course of conducting a pilot study and four experiments involving 1,456 subjects, the researchers prove that de-influencing content increases the perception of trustworthiness of the influencers due to decreased doubt concerning their motivations. Moreover, this strategy promotes better-informed and more considered choices. On the other hand, trust decreases when the same influencers later promote goods they previously disapproved of. The research highlights the importance of being authentic and consistent in order to maintain trust.

2. Darian Harff and Doan Phuong Nhi Le (2026) – "Don't Buy It!" Influencers' Negative Product Reviews and Their Effects on Young Adults

This study examines the effect of positive and negative influencer product reviews among young adults. The experiment, which was pre-registered and included 210 participants from Vietnam, shows that negative reviews are seen as more helpful, and the influencers providing negative reviews are perceived as more credible. However, the results of the reviews failed to have any significant effect on brand image and purchasing intention. The authors argue that continuous exposure might be required to influence purchase behaviours. This study is relevant to the present research in terms of considering the effect of negative reviews and credibility of the sources.

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3. Andre Wiratha and Nur Kemalasari (2025) – "The Impact of De-influencing on Social Media on Gen Z's Purchase Intention: The Mediating Role of Source Credibility"

In this research work, the association between de-influence, source credibility, and purchase intention of Gen Z with regards to technology products is examined. A sample size of 385 Gen Z social media users was used in this study, where the data obtained was analyzed using the SEM-PLS method. The findings reveal that there exists a relationship between de-influence, source credibility, and purchase intention, where the source credibility acts as a mediator. Furthermore, the research findings show that when one de-influences, consumers tend to consider the quality of the product, price, and alternative options before making a purchase decision.

4. Yasmeen Elsantil, Samuel Babu Sekar, Eid Abo Hamza and Khaled Bedair (2025) – "From promotion to prevention: the influence of de-influencers on sustainable consumer behavioral intentions"

The current study aims at exploring the impact of de-influencers in determining sustainable consumer behavioural intentions in terms of credibility, authenticity, altruism, and sustainability of lifestyles. With the help of a survey involving 360 participants along with structural equation modelling, it has been found that credibility and authenticity have a positive impact on perceptions of altruism and de-influence. De-influence has a positive impact on consumer's behavioural intentions toward sustainable consumption. Also, it has been found that people committed to sustainable lifestyles tend to act sustainably. This study is relevant for current research due to its relation to credibility and de-influence and sustainable consumption behaviour.

5. Aidan Moir (2025) – "Deinfluencing TikTok During the Cost-of-Living Crisis: Neoliberal Logics of (Over)Consumption Across Popular Media"

This study focuses on the impact of de-influencing on TikTok in the context of the cost-of-living crisis and overconsumption. It is shown that the phenomenon of de-influencing encourages people to re-evaluate high-priced or viral goods, making them practice frugality. However, the study shows that the use of inexpensive goods instead of high-priced products becomes quite

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frequent rather than preventing consumers from buying things at all. The importance of personal experience in increasing the credibility of the deeds of de-influencers is also underlined.

6. Patrisia Pihkoluoma (2025) – "From Influence to De-influence: Exploring Gen Z Perceptions of Ethical Consumption and Fast-Fashion on TikTok"

This study evaluates the Gen Z attitudes towards de-influencing, ethical consumer behaviour, and fast fashion through semi-structured interviews with eight Gen Z consumers. The participants describe the de-influencing process as informative and educational, mentioning numerous cases of transformation from impulse and trend-related purchases to purchasing needs and quality-related products. De-influencing is considered as one of the elements that brings authenticity, transparency, and no business interest to the process. This research has relation to the current study because it evaluates the influence of Gen Z on the process of de-influencing.

7. Cennet Arman Zengi and Ayşenur Ören (2025) – "Rational Consumption, Digital Silence, And Deinfluencing: The Intersection of Microeconomics and Netnography on Instagram"

The research conducted an analysis of 74 public posts on Instagram based on netnography approach to explore consumer discourse concerning de-influencing. The key themes that emerged from the research include awareness about finances, sustainability, responsible consumption, authenticity, and transparency. In essence, the findings reveal that the messages posted under the category of de-influencing inspire consumers to think twice about their unnecessary purchases and promote responsible consumption. Further, the research is relevant to current research since it relates de-influencing to rational consumption and credibility of message sender.

8. Tanya Bhutani (2025) – "PR Unmasked: How Consumer Skepticism Fuels the De-Influencing Trend on Social Media"

In this study, the connection between consumer scepticism, influencer marketing, and de-influencing in social media was examined. Qualitative analysis was used, with an examination of 300 Instagram posts and semi-structured interviews with 15 influencers. From the results of the study, it has been found that consumer scepticism motivates consumers to question their posts

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and increases the need for authenticity and transparency. De-influencing, on the other hand, increases consumer empowerment through the questioning of overvalued products and suggesting more affordable or eco-friendly substitutes. However, the study also found out that de-influencing can also be incorporated in a promotion strategy. This study is related to the current study in terms of consumer scepticism, source credibility, and de-influencing.

9. Alexandru-Cosmin Apostol and Romeo Asiminei (2025) – "De-Influencing as a Means of Preventing Overconsumption"

The purpose of the current research is to examine de-influencing as a strategy of counteracting the problem of overconsumption and sustainability of consumption becoming increasingly urgent. The paper examines the ways in which de-influencers dissuade people from unnecessary spending, criticize highly promoted products, and promote the idea of consumers' need-based decisions. Transparency, authenticity, and credibility are presented as important characteristics of de-influencing, especially in relation to Generation Z and Millennials. The research considers the possibility of de-influencing being a way to decrease impulsive purchases and to encourage sustainable alternatives to these purchases. At the same time, the research acknowledges that recommendations of an alternative can be considered a way of creating another kind of consumption in some cases.

RESEARCH GAP

Even though recent research has been carried out to find out how de-influencing fosters trust and motivates sustainable consumption, an apparent gap exists in the literature. Previous research focuses mainly on foreign samples including Singaporean students and Vietnamese youth. Furthermore, many researchers use a small number of participants or focus on specific industries, such as fast fashion or tech products. Therefore, there is an urgent need for an extensive quantitative study to examine the overall trend of moving from impulsive buying to mindful consumerism.

Furthermore, existing studies demonstrate inconsistent results on whether de-influencing changes purchasing behaviour. Some researchers claim that critical comments prevent people from buying certain products, whereas others state that although people trust de-influencers, this level

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of trust is not enough to change their purchasing behaviours. This study is intended to fill in these gaps. It will be aimed at investigating whether trust in a de-influencer decreases impulsive online purchases.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

POPULATION

The population for this study comprises individuals of the Generation Z demographic exposed to digital content.

SAMPLE SIZE

The sample size for the study is **70 respondents**.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The study adopts the **Simple Random Sampling Technique**, wherein each individual in the identified population has an equal and independent chance of being selected for the study.

DATA COLLECTION

The study is based on **primary data** collected directly from the respondents.

PRIMARY DATA

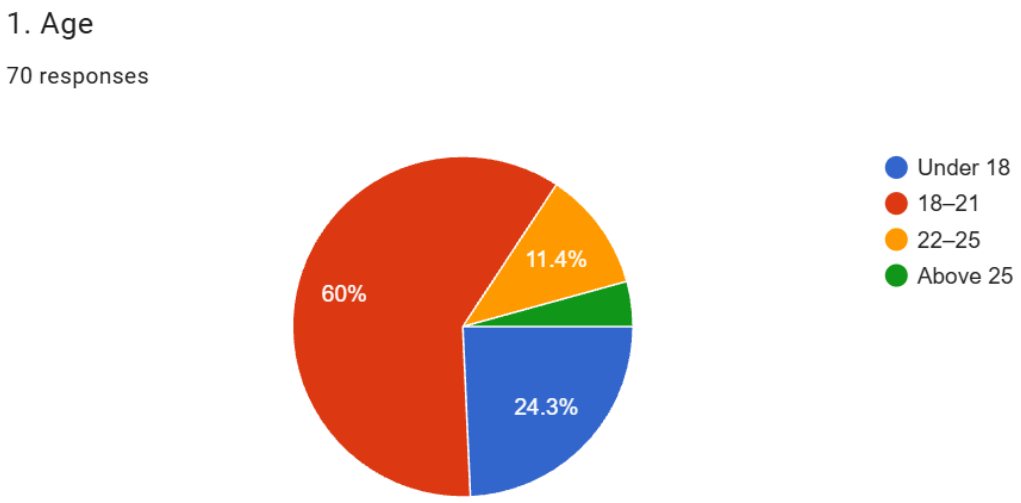
Primary data was collected using a **structured questionnaire administered through Google Forms**.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

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Table 1: Basic Details

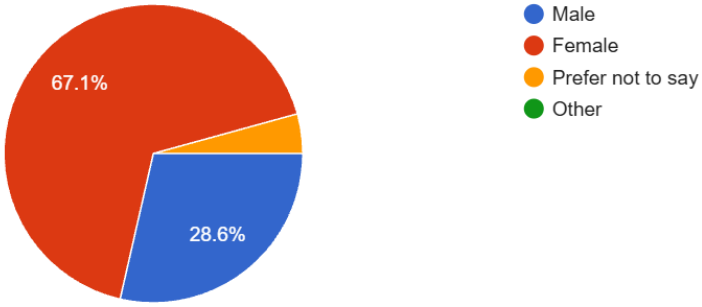
S. NO.	QUESTIONS	OPTIONS	RESPONSES	RESPONSES IN %
1.	Age	Under 18	17	24.3 %
		18–21 years	42	60 %
		22–25 years	8	11.4%
		Above 25	3	4.3%
2.	Gender	Male	20	28.6 %
		Female	47	67.1%
		Prefer not to say	3	4.3%
		Other	0	-
3.	Which social media platform do you use most to discover new products?	Instagram	39	55.7%
		Youtube	15	21.4 %
		Snapchat	3	4.3 %
		Pinterest	4	5.7%
		Others	9	12.9%
4.	How frequently do you purchase products online?	Never	1	1.4 %
		Rarely	19	27.1 %
		Sometimes	22	31.4 %
		Often	17	24.3%
		Very often	11	15.7%



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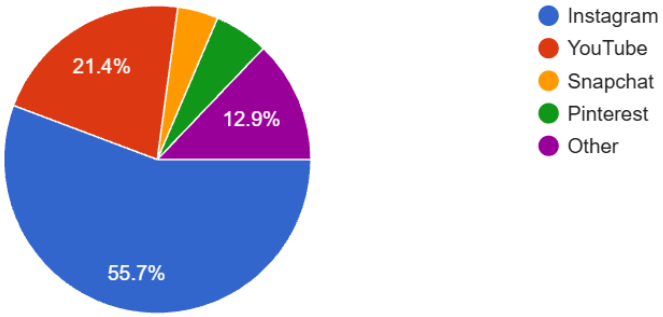
2. Gender

70 responses



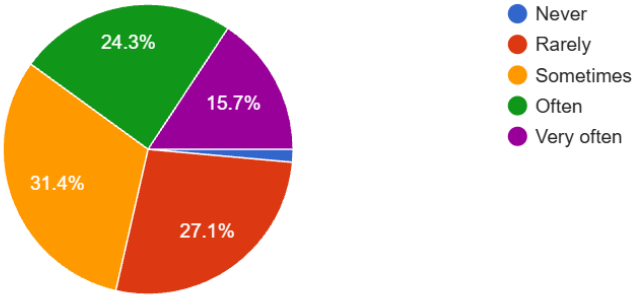
3. Which social media platform do you use most to discover new products?

70 responses



4. How frequently do you purchase products online?

70 responses

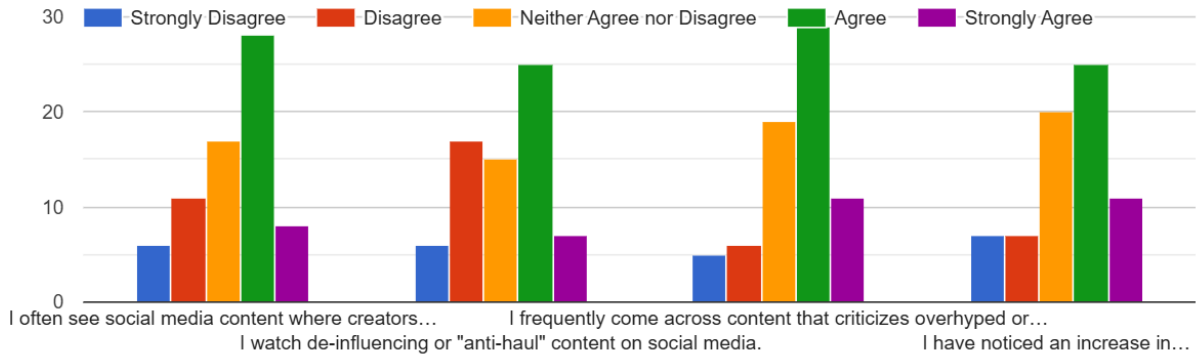


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Table 2: Exposure to De-influencing

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I often see social media content where creators advise people not to buy certain trending products.	8.57%	15.71%	24.28%	40%	11.42%
I watch de-influencing or "anti-haul" content on social media.	8.57%	24.28%	21.42%	35.71%	10%
I frequently come across content that criticizes overhyped or viral products.	7.14%	8.57%	27.14%	41.42 %	15.71%
I have noticed an increase in de-influencing content on social media..	10%	10%	28.57%	35.71%	15.71%

Table 2 indicates that 41.42% of respondents agreed that they frequently come across content that criticizes overhyped or viral products.

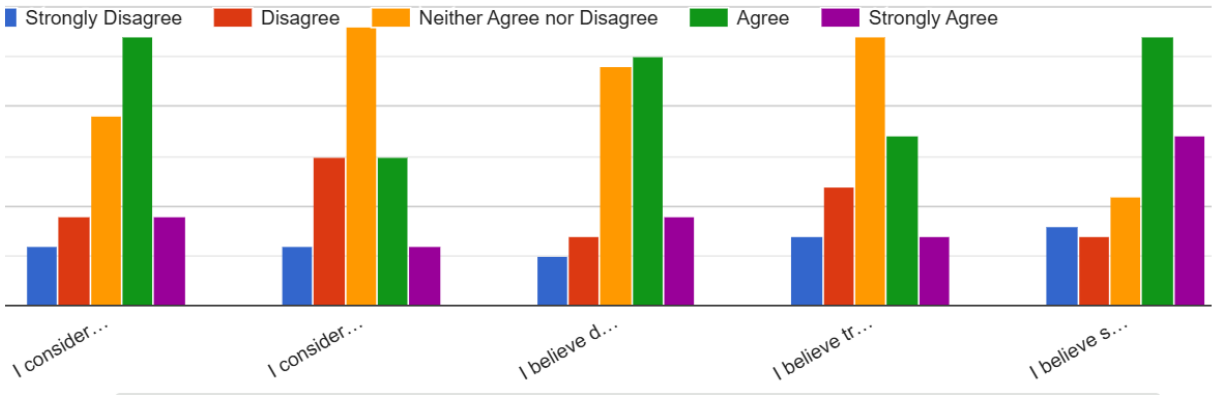


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Table 3: Source Credibility

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I consider de-influencers to be trustworthy sources of product information.	8.57%	12.85%	27.14%	38.57%	12.85%
I consider traditional influencers to be trustworthy sources of product information**.**	8.57%	21.42%	40%	21.42%	8.57%
I believe de-influencers provide honest opinions about products.	7.14%	10%	34.28%	35.71%	12.85%
I believe traditional influencers provide honest opinions about products.	10%	17.14%	38.57%	24.28%	10%
I believe sponsored content can affect the objectivity of an influencer's product recommendation.	11.42%	10%	15.71%	38.57%	24.28%

Table 3 indicates that 40% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that they consider traditional influencers to be trustworthy sources of product information.

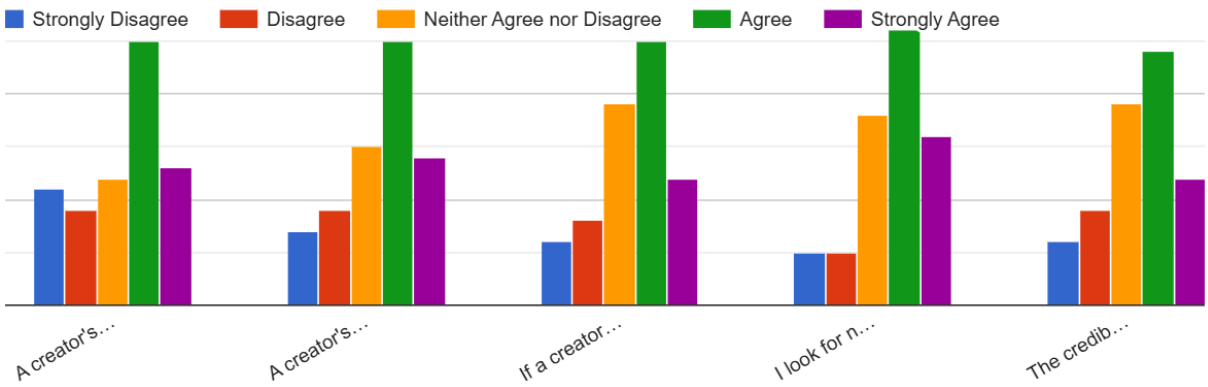


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Table 4: Source Credibility and Purchase Decisions

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
A creator's honesty influences whether I consider their product recommendation.	15.71%	12.85%	17.14%	35.71%	18.57%
A creator's knowledge or expertise influences whether I trust their product recommendation.	10%	12.85%	21.42%	35.71%	20%
If a creator I trust criticizes a product or brand, I am less likely to purchase it.	8.57%	11.42%	27.14%	35.71%	17.14%
I look for negative reviews or de-influencing content before making an expensive purchase.	7.14%	7.14%	25.71%	37.14%	22.85%
The credibility of a social media creator influences my purchase intention.	8.57%	12.85%	27.14%	34.28%	17.14%

Table 4 indicates that 37.14% of respondents agreed that they look for negative reviews or de-influencing content before making an expensive purchase.

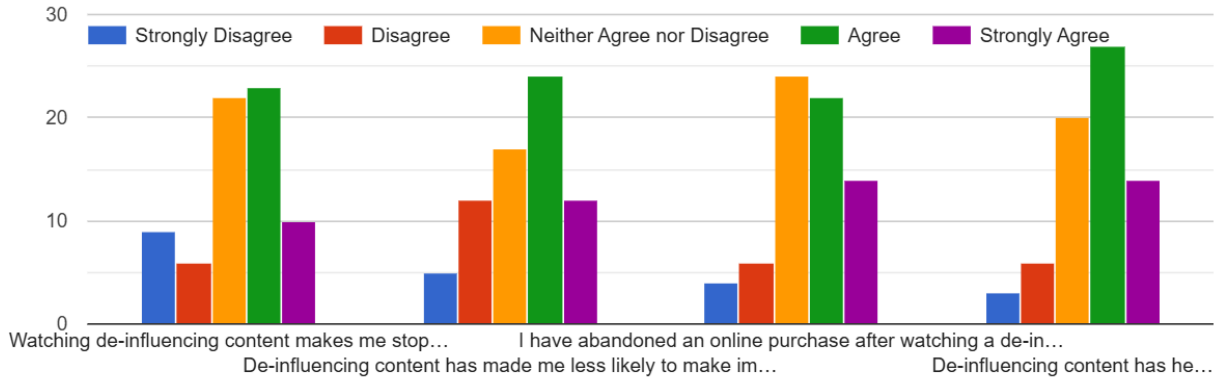


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Table 5: De-influencing and Impulse Buying

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Watching de-influencing content makes me stop and think before making a spontaneous online purchase**.**	12.85%	8.57%	31.42%	32.85%	14.28%
De-influencing content has made me less likely to make immediate online purchases.	7.14%	17.14%	24.28%	34.28%	17.14%
I have abandoned an online purchase after watching a de-influencer discuss the product.	5.71%	8.57%	34.28%	31.42%	20%
De-influencing content has helped me avoid unnecessary spending.	4.28%	8.57%	28.57%	38.57%	20%

Table 5 indicates that 38.57% of respondents agreed that de-influencing content has helped them avoid unnecessary spending.

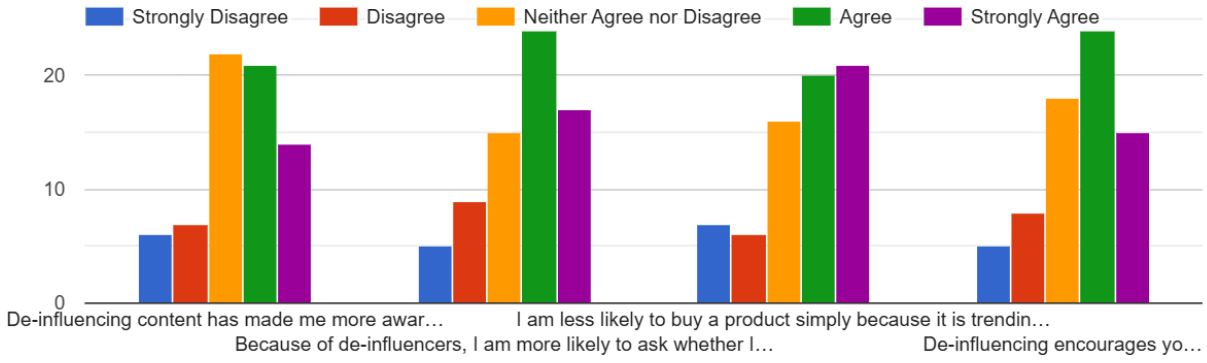


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Table 6: Mindful and Responsible Consumption

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
De-influencing content has made me more aware of my spending habits.	8.57%	10%	31.42%	30%	20%
Because of de-influencers, I am more likely to ask whether I genuinely need a product before buying it.	7.14%	12.85%	21.42%	34.28%	24.28%
I am less likely to buy a product simply because it is trending on social media.	10%	8.57%	22.85%	28.57%	30%
De-influencing encourages young consumers to make more responsible purchasing decisions.	7.14%	11.42%	25.71%	34.28%	21.42%

Table 6 indicates that 34.28% of respondents agreed that because of de-influencers, they are more likely to ask whether they genuinely need a product before buying it.

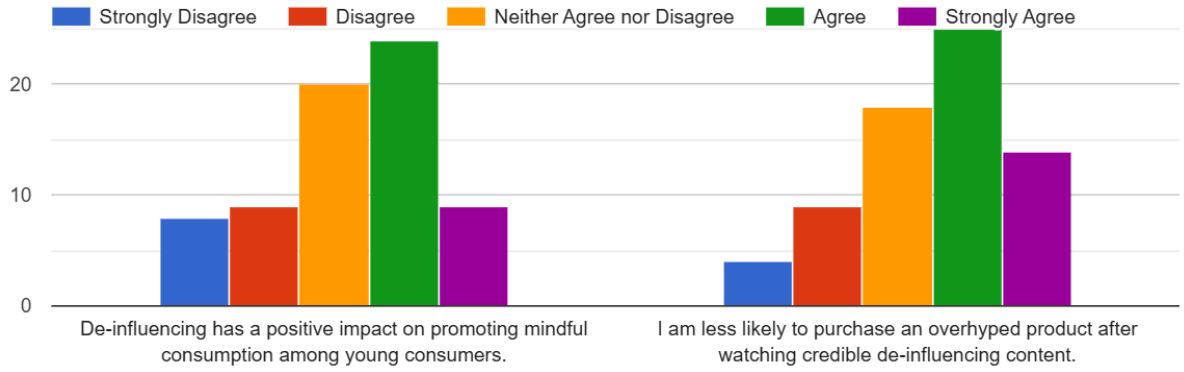


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Table 7: Overall Impact and Purchase Intention

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
De-influencing has a positive impact on promoting mindful consumption among young consumers.	11.42%	12.85%	28.57%	34.28%	12.85%
I am less likely to purchase an overhyped product after watching credible de-influencing content.	5.71%	12.85%	25.71%	35.71%	20%

Table 7 indicates that 35.71% of respondents agreed that they are less likely to purchase an overhyped product after watching credible de-influencing content.



Correlation 1: Trust in De-influencers and Purchase Behaviour Change

H0: There is no significant relationship between trust in de-influencers and change in purchase behaviour.

H1: There is a significant relationship between trust in de-influencers and change in purchase behaviour.

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Statistic	Value
N	70
Pearson's r	0.706
p-value	< 0.001 (8.99×10^{-12})
Result	Significant, strong positive correlation

Interpretation: Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected. There is a strong, statistically significant positive correlation ($r = 0.706$) between trust in de-influencers and purchase behaviour change — respondents who trust de-influencers more strongly report greater changes in their purchase behaviour.

Correlation 2: De-influencing Content Exposure and Purchase Behaviour Change

H0: There is no significant relationship between exposure to de-influencing content and change in purchase behaviour.

H1: There is a significant relationship between exposure to de-influencing content and change in purchase behaviour.

Statistic	Value
N	70
Pearson's r	0.697
p-value	< 0.001 (2.06×10^{-11})
Result	Significant, strong positive correlation

Interpretation: Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected. There is a strong, statistically significant positive correlation ($r = 0.697$) between exposure to de-influencing content and purchase behaviour change — greater exposure is associated with greater change in purchasing behaviour.

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One-Way ANOVA: Purchase Behaviour Change across Age Groups

H0: The mean Purchase Behaviour Change score does not differ significantly across age groups.

H1: The mean Purchase Behaviour Change score differs significantly across at least one age group.

Group Descriptives

Age group	n	Mean	SD
Under 18	17	3.434	1.108
18–21	42	3.432	0.863
22–25	8	3.750	1.234
Above 25	3	3.792	1.092

ANOVA Summary Table

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.008	3	0.336	0.351	0.789
Within Groups	63.239	66	0.958		
Total	64.248	69			

Interpretation: $F(3, 66) = 0.351$, $p = 0.789$. Since $p > 0.05$, the null hypothesis is retained (not rejected). There is no statistically significant difference in Purchase Behaviour Change scores across age groups — the influence of de-influencing content on purchasing behaviour is broadly consistent across all age groups surveyed.

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND LEARNING TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION (IJHLT)
VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3, OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2026
RCHUB PUBLISHER
ISSN: 3139-9185
DOI: https://doi.org/10.65725/IJHLT/1/3/006

CONCLUSION

Traditional influencer marketing has been the driving force behind the growth of digital commerce, generating consumer desire and encouraging instant impulse buying. This research study however confirms that there is a major cultural shift underway among Generation Z. Perpetual sponsored ads and hyper-consumerism have driven young digital consumers to migrate toward authenticity, transparency and mindful consumption. And the change is reflected in the rise of "de-influencing," a potent backlash that promotes critical thinking and financial responsibility over mindless trend-chasing.

The key data gathered shows that Gen Z are actively looking for hard-hitting product reviews. Young consumers are wary of traditional influencers, believing that financial sponsorships compromise a creator's objectivity. Instead they put immense trust in de-influencers who provide honest unbiased feedback. The statistical analysis of the present study mathematically affirms this shift, demonstrating a strong and significant correlation between the trust invested in credible creators and a direct change in purchasing habits. The data confirms that exposure to de-influencing content among young consumers increases the likelihood of pausing and assessing their real needs before making unnecessary digital purchases. Importantly, ANOVA testing revealed this behavioral change is consistent across all surveyed age demographics, suggesting a broad generational movement rather than a minor niche.

To summarize, this study finds that de-influencing is a powerful accelerator of responsible shopping, and not just a trend. Gen Z is using critical online content as a psychological brake against overconsumption, prioritizing source credibility over esthetic promotion. The change sends a clear message to today's brands and digital marketers that in an over-saturated digital space, the most effective way to win the trust of youth consumers is through transparency, honesty and authentic product value.

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