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THE IMPACT OF DE INFLUENCING CONTENT ON GENERATION Z CONSUMER SKEPTICISM AND PURCHASE DECISIONS

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Consumer Skepticism, De-Influencing Content, Generation Z, Influencer Marketing, Purchase Decisions, Social Media	De-influencing content has been becoming a trend in social media which questions the traditional influencer marketing model by urging consumers to reconsider the product recommendation, promotional statements and over-consumption. The effect of de-influencing content on Generation Z consumer skepticism and buying consciousness was the subject of this study. The research design used was a quantitative, cross-sectional research design which was measured using a five point Likert scale and the data gathered were 300 Generation Z consumers. Purposive sampling was conducted for sampling, descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and linear regression were used for data analysis. The results revealed that de-influencing content was positively related to consumer skepticism with a mean of 3.91, SD = 0.71, $\beta = 0.62$, $R^2 = 0.384$, and $p < .001$, meaning that the more that consumers are exposed to de-influencing messages, the higher their levels of skepticism about influencer and product claims are. De-influencing content also showed a significant negative association with purchase decisions ($\beta = -0.35$, $R^2 = 0.123$, $p < .001$) and consumer skepticism showed a significant negative association with purchase decisions ($\beta = -0.41$, $R^2 = 0.168$, $p < .001$). The findings show that de-influencing can increase skepticism and lower purchase-oriented reactivities of Generation Z consumers. The study adds to research into consumer behaviour by placing de-influencing as a reverse persuasion technique which encourages consumers to think critically, to be authentic and to buy reflectively. Some implications for marketers, influencers and platforms to help them understand how consumer response to persuasive content on social media is changing.
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Introduction

The explosive growth of the social media landscape, nowadays orders are made more quickly and larger groups of influential consumers have gained a significant role as a source of information, recommendations and opinions about products and their consumption. These platforms have made it possible for influencers to broadcast commercial messages within a person's seemingly genuine lines of communication, such as TikTok, Instagram, or YouTube. Influencers have been able to integrate commercial messages into seemingly authentic. Likely platforms are TikTok, Instagram and YouTube, as they have enabled influencers to place commercial messages into personal, apparently "real" messages. So, with Generation Z getting a lot of their information from what is posted on their social media platforms, an influencer's content can play a pivotal role in the value of a product to choose, and whether or not the right one is chosen. The reports suggest influencer marketing is becoming more commonplace in marketing campaigns, more recent studies illustrate that authenticity, credibility, and trust remain relevant to Gen Z consumers' response to influencer marketing, too much of a good thing can also lead to doubts regarding the influencer's motives and selling mission (Singh, 2024).

In this context de-influencing campaign has emerged as a recent form of social media messaging, aiming to break free from over-consumption and the typical persuadability of influencers. De-influencing is mostly about messaging to dissuade purchasing a specific product, objects criticism for extreme product abstaining, communication of product drawbacks or re-branding the viewer's mindset regarding an unnecessary purchase. The de-influencing approach to influencers was described as a cause-oriented approach by Koivunen et al., (2025) and it was shown how de-influencing can support sustainable development, environments and individual well-being and promote intelligent, environmentally friendly consumption. De-influencing can emerge as a moral duty and anti-consumption process as this content is seen as genuine and informative and thus can improve their knowledge about their consumption decisions (Michaelidou et al., 2025). Elhajjar (2025) further concluded that de-influencers could be seen as more credible than traditional influencers, and that the de-influencing message can significantly influence attitudes toward a brand and purchase intention.

B2B content marketing is a highly specific kind of content and convincing consumers of the authenticity or credibility of a brand's content and the intentions it has for endorsing other brands' content will provide a prominent example of de-influencing. As sponsored product endorsements become more prevalent, they raise consumer suspicions and compromise trustworthiness ratings of endorsers, according to Penttinen et al. (2026), but de-influencing could regain consumer trust by offering more critical and consumer-based information. Recent studies also show direct links with de-influencing how Generation Z buys. From the 385 social media Generation Z users who were included in the study, Wiratha and Kemalasari (2025) found that de-influencing negatively influenced the intention to buy a technology product while source credibility was the mediation in the relationship between de-influencing and intention to buy. Future studies are required to examine the specific relationship between de-influencers, consumer doubts and consumer

purchasing behavior among members of Generation Z and to build a valuable platform for this study.

Background of the Study

But credibility is always the most essential qualification to choose influencers, ability to gain familiarity/trust/relationship from their followers through social media. These attributes can give an attractive appearance to the influencers' recommendations as if their suggestions are more trusted than traditional ads. There have also been some grumblings concerning the potential for legal infringement of product endorsements (hidden sponsorships), exaggerated claims on products and the worth of the endorsement. New data suggests the transparency, genuineness, knowledge, and regular health care messages that create a positive impression on consumers are becoming more relevant when it comes to influencers. Several such characteristics were identified in the credible messages of de-influence by Khalil et al. (2025), which include: truthful communication, showing expertise, involvement and sincerity. It is a significant development for Generation Z as they typically consume a lot of advertising over social media, which often mixes messages with that of brands.

Some of the commercialization aspects, coupled with an overinformation culture cultivated by social media have led to de-influencing. Unlike more conventional influencer marketing where the aim is to highlight the goods desirability and fee hostages, De-influencing content could focus on the detriments of the product, want to have a product, price/cost, sustainability, and different choices. Michaelidou et al (2025) found – in their study on de-influencing – that de-influencing seemed to be a positive and ethical practice that can help consumers make informed and sustainable decisions and contribute to pro-environmental consumption patterns, which cover buying less. Koivunen et al., 2025 also defined de-influencing as a cause based communication that influences people to refrain from overconsumption and makes the invisible mindful for people.

De-influencing is more noticeable in Gen Z, enabling them to have greater influence to browse through social media posts, communities and authentic purchases they believe to be better. In recent years it has been an empirical fact that this is the case. To examine the effect of de-influencing content in ironing out the purchase intention of Generation Z consumers, Wiratha and Kemalasari (2025) tested them in 885 responses. To investigate how de-influencing content impacts purchase intention of Generation Z consumers, many respondents out of 385 were tested by Wiratha and Kemalasari (2025). What's more, as noted by new research by Penttinen et al. (2026), there's added evidence that de-influencing content can impact consumers' responses to influencers and products, particularly over the past few years due to the rising mistrust among consumer towards influencer-created posts. Taheran et al. (2026) studied how the influencers' negative feedback on the brands contributes to de-influencing, thereby emphasizing the role of consumers' affective reactions in the explanation of their reactions to de-influencing content.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore Redesigning content to see how it affects Generation Z consumer scepticism.
2. To find out if the impact of de-influencing content on Generation Z purchase decisions is an impact at all.
3. To examine the correlation between the skepticism of consumers and buying behavior for Gen Z.

Research Questions

- Q1. How does de-influencing affect Gen Z's skepticism?
- Q2. How does de-influencing content impact on Generation Z purchases?
- Q3. How are consumer's skepticism related with their purchasing action in generation Z?

Significance of the Study

This study is important in the ongoing body of de-influencing literature as it broadens evidence that reflects the impact of critical and anti-consumerist messages from social media content on "Generation Z" consumers. The research theoretically examines how the influence-communication, consumer skepticism, and consumer purchase relationship is shifting, moving away from the traditional concept of influencing consumers to consider those produced to discourage and question consumers' purchases. The results can be useful to digital marketers, brands, influencers and social media strategy experts to know how de-influencing impacts consumer attitudes towards promotional campaigns and buying decisions. The study can provide insights into how the "critical social media content" can motivate the "Generation Z" consumers to be more conscious and deliberate when consuming products. The results also help brands to create communication strategies formally that are more transparent and authentic, and to better inform influencers of the role of credibility and critical product communication on audience reactions.

Literature Review

De-Influencing Content and Consumer Behavior

De -Influenza, or a plea for the consumption of media, is a type of media communication that later resurfaces on social media designed to make the recipients think of recommending the product and be hesitant to make unnecessary purchases. As traditional influencer marketing aims to increase sales, promote conversion rates, etc., de-influencing is a segment of opposition in the message, ranging from product limitations to different ways to use the same product and criticism all the way. Other research articles that have emerged more recently on digital consumers behaviour indicate that Social Media influencers remain a significant part of youth's lives and influence their consumer choices particularly for Generation Z, who have purchase processes

broadly linked to the way they use social media and their social media habits, and where origin-based content by the creators is a key determinant in these processes (Barrueta-Pinto et al., 2025).

The effectiveness of the content depends more on their evaluation of the influencer's credibility and characteristic if it is effective or not. Based on the above study, the elements influencer credibility, social presence, and influencer inspiration have a positive effect on the purchase intention of Generation Z, then parasocial interaction is able to affect to build the elements well. Rizomyliotis et al. (2024) suggest that the credibility is also one of the factors that determine the brand's consideration as in the case of intention to buy, while the green consumption values are still important. The findings have significance for understanding de-influencing since critical product evaluations might be convincing just at the time when critical information is thought to be the least market-oriented.

Social media content impact is an essential topic of conversation when discussing the engagement of Generation Z, which is usually amongst digital media to find product, information, and even buy them. More recent (Župan et al., 2025), with a group of 252 respondents, a strong correlation between the activity of influencers, their presence in social networks, and the purchasing decisions of the Generation Z was also found. The results suggest that what these influencers are communicating has changed; it is now a product-they are now criticizing rather than promoting products- and this could impact the purchasing methods of the consumers.

Consumers' Trust in Social Media Marketing

Consumer skepticism is the question the consumers put on the truthfulness, credibility, motives and reliability of the marketing claims. The skepticism can play a particular role in the area of social media since messages can be embedded within entertainment, personal stories, promotion, reviews and recommendations by social media influencers. In terms of passing through the channels of communication of people or influencers, it can go as far as making it difficult for the users to accept it as their opinion as opposed to essentially some sort of marketing gimmick. Negative effects of perceived risks on the trust-purchase rationale continuum for influencer-promotion (Lakho & Khurram, 2025) has been emphasized in a recent study, which further suggests the importance of trust as a determinant in online buying of generation-Z.

The credibility of this promotion and the consumer's skepticism should be taken into account, as consumers may respond to a positive promotion in comparison with an evaluation of the product. When an influencer does not reflect on the cost of the product/service they recommend, followers may question if he has actually tried their product/service or simply going through a sales pitch in order to receive a commission. Conversely, anything that speaks of the product's defects, or expressly refuses to accept it will be considered more authentic. Bhatt et al. (2025) concluded that social media influencers are much of a force in the shaping of perceptions about brands and consumers' behaviors, particularly when it comes to Instagram and Snapchat. Such results could validate the ground based upon the new meaning or tone of messages shared by the influencers to consumers that could affect their critical evaluation to marketing communication.

The lacking consumer trust may actually be a huge psychological tie between social media content and buying preferences. Consumers' distrust may be a stimulating psychological mechanism that is associated with the willingness to purchase products through social media. When consumers begin questioning information about the promotion, they will likely undertake further information processing, albeit one that involves deviation from the initial concern of the promotion; a move to other items; searching for information that is independent of the promotion; or a deferment of sale. This is particularly important to the Generation Z generation who check out their shopping environment and in this already has content that it is recommended, content that has been sponsored, user-generated content, and even peer-generated reviews. Lakho & Khurram (2025) found that the attitude of the Generation Z consumers towards the social media promotion by the influencers in Pakistan is primarily based on trust, credibility and perceived risk.

Purchase Decision and Its Connection to Influencer Generated Content

Generation Z is a crucial consumer group because they are social media dependent and consider it one of their primary sources for acquiring information and assessing products and services to purchase. From the literature, influencer-created content impacts several phases of the consumer decision point; awareness, consideration on the product, evaluation of the brand and decision. The results of the article by Župan et al. (2025) fully agree with the results of literature review which has confirmed that the influencers and social networking platforms can have a significant impact on consumer behavior, especially when it comes to purchase decision. Keeping this in mind, Kaur (2025) reviewed and analyzed the latest research on Gen Z and Millennials' attitudes towards brands and influencers' credibility.

When it comes to more product choices, the power of influencers is no guarantee of purchase. Other factors include the credibility of information, perceived benefits and risks, authenticity of the source and consumers' consumption values are also evaluated. Rizomyliotis et al. (2024) demonstrated that brand consideration and purchase intent might be influenced by influencers' credibility and that value towards green consumption can impact these relationships. Babu et al. (2024) have also conducted a study on the same topic with the same factors proved successful for the purchase intention of the Generation Z. The findings suggest that the product line drawn to decrease consumption may not be promoting a negative behavior response that is specifically related to the traditional ads that aimed for increasing consumption.

More recent studies also provide examples of the gap in the engagement of consumer behaviors toward platforms and toward content. Rehman (2025) identified some distinctions between Instagram, TikTok and YouTube from the perspective of the type of influencers' content presented to consider regarding the trust, engagement and purchasing intentions of the Generation Z consumers. Another study in Pakistan shows the role of trust and perceived risk in the online buying behaviour of Generation Z, revealing that young consumers' buying decisions are shaped by their trust and level of perceived risk when purchasing online (Lakho & Khurram, 2025). The gap suggests it is worth investigating whether there was a resulting increase in scepticism and

whether this was found and subsequently had an influence on the consumer – Generation Z – purchase decision.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted qualitative and descriptive cross-sectional research design to investigate how de-influencing effects the skeptical attitudes and purchasing decisions of Generation Z consumers. The quantitative approach was suitable for this study because the variables were also measured numerically and working out the relationship between them using statistical procedures. A structured questionnaire was used to gather data at one time from respondents. The cross-sectional design allowed the researcher to gather data on: how respondents perceive de-influencing content; how consumers are skeptical of de-influencing content; and what respondents would do in terms of purchasing and connecting with content during the specified study period.

Population of the Study

The Study participants included members of Generation Z using social media easily like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. The study targeted the Generation Z as an crucial cross-section of digital consumers and as they are the group who often came across influencer-generated content, product suggestions, reviews, advertisements, and 'de-influencing' content on social media platforms. Target users were those who had experience of using the internet and social media platforms and were able to assess how critical or negative information relating to a product has affected their buying habits.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The 300 members of Generation Z consumers were sampled. The respondents were drawn using purpose sampling technique in which the respondents were the one that fulfilled the selected sampling requirements. Citizens were included if they were members of Generation Z, used the internet in their daily activities, are used to social media and regularly had the opportunity to encounter content related to influencers or products appearing during their daily use, and were aware of content that promoted or hindered the purchase of a product. The subjects who did not meet these criteria were not included in the study. The number of observations (300) was adequate for descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and regression analysis.

Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was structured online and primary data was collected. The questionnaire was sent via social media and online communication methods preferred by the generation of consumers (Generation Z). Participants were engaged in the study after receiving a brief explanation of the purpose of the study and that their participation is voluntary. To see if

respondents were from the target population, a screening question was added to the beginning of the questionnaire. In eligible respondents the main part of the questionnaire was started. Data collection lasted until sufficient number of 300 valid respondents was achieved.

Data collection for De-Influencing Content

De-influencing content was used as an independent variable in the study. Responses were quantified by items that asked how often they came across and agreed with various types of social media posts that featured reviews about products that may have been unnecessary, criticised certain popular choices, commented on problematic qualities of products, challenged extreme claims in promotion and asked to be more aware of how they consumed products. Students answered the following items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Scoring higher were those with higher perceptions of exposure to and influence of de-influencing content.

Consumer Skepticism measured through a combination of three scales

The level of consumer scepticism was treated as the first dependent variable. It was assessed on a basis of statements regarding the response subjects' skepticism about certain recommendations and claims of the social media influencers, behaviours concerning endorsements and the review of the products and commercial interests of the social media community. The items also measured the doubts raised by respondents about information regarding the products presented in social media, which are related to authenticity and reliability. A five-point Likert scale was used to record responses. The higher the score the more skeptical they were towards influencers' promotional content and product recommendations.

Results and Analysis

Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

Table 1.Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 300)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	132	44.0
	Female	168	56.0
Age	18–21 years	96	32.0
	22–25 years	128	42.7
	26–29 years	76	25.3
Education	Intermediate	42	14.0
	Bachelor's	156	52.0
	Master's	82	27.3
	Other	20	6.7

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Daily Social Media Use	Less than 2 hours	38	12.7
	2–4 hours	104	34.7
	5–7 hours	112	37.3
	More than 7 hours	46	15.3
Exposure to Influencer Content	Rarely	30	10.0
	Sometimes	74	24.7
	Often	126	42.0
	Very often	70	23.3

The sex prevalence was revealed from the demographic data to be that of 168 (56.0%) female and 132 (44.0%) male respondents. In terms of age, the largest group consisted of respondents aged 22–25 years (42.7%), followed by those aged 18–21 years (32.0%) and 26–29 years (25.3%). The distribution showed the sample age was mostly young adults and in the younger generation (Generation Z). In the educational category, there were 156 respondents or 52.0% who held a bachelor's degree, which was the highest; and 82 respondents or 27.3% who held a master's degree. It also showed that the respondents had a relatively high level of social media engagement. 112 respondents (37.3%) used social media 5–7 hours a day and 104 (34.7%) used them 2–4 hours a day. 46 others replied (15.3%) spending more than 7 hours a day on social media. Thirty-eight (12.7%) said they use it less than 2 hours a day. The number of exposure to influencer's content also showed high level of engagement in influencer-based communication. 42.0% of respondents, or 126, said they came across influencer content on a fair deal of frequency and 70 said very often. Compared, 24.7% (74) of respondents had occasion to be exposed and 10.0% (30) had rare exposure.

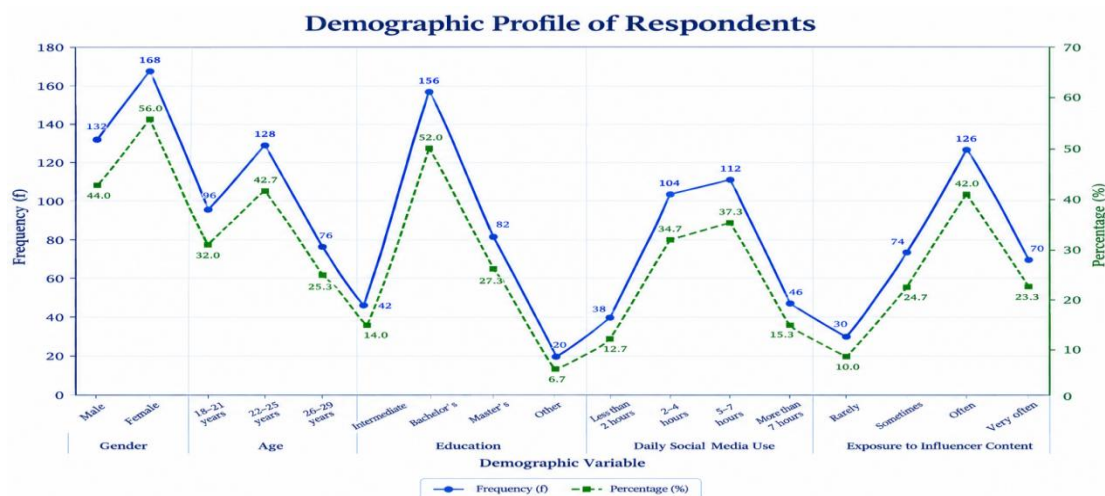


Figure 1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 300)

Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Descriptive statistics were calculated to determine the central tendency and variability of the three principal constructs: De-Influencing Content (DIC), Consumer Skepticism (CS), and Purchase Decisions (PD).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
De-Influencing Content	300	1.80	5.00	3.91	0.71
Consumer Skepticism	300	1.67	5.00	3.84	0.76
Purchase Decisions	300	1.60	5.00	3.42	0.83

The mean score for De-Influencing Content was $M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.71$, which was the highest among the three variables. The relatively high mean, suggesting a consensus, led to the conclusion that respondents generally agreed that they did come across and were effected by material that challenged product endorsements, discouraged over-consuming of products, raised consumer awareness about product restrictions, and encouraged questioning of product from a critical or informed perspective. The standard deviation was 0.71 representing moderate variation of the respondents' perceptions. Consumer Skepticism was measured with an average of 3.84 ($SD = 0.76$). The result showed that the respondents from generation Z have a moderate level of cynicism about product recommendations and promotional claims that are made by influencers. Mean score for Purchase Decisions (3.42, $SD = 0.83$) was lower than the mean score for de-influencing content and consumer skepticism. The outcome showed a moderate-high purchase decision responses. The higher the standard deviation, the more variation among those who responded and the more differences they had in terms of their reactions when they purchase.

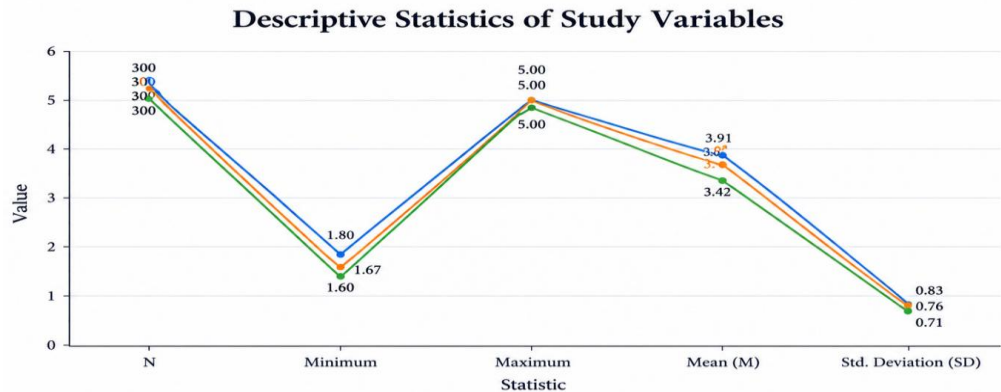


Figure 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships among de-influencing content, consumer skepticism, and purchase decisions.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Matrix of Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3
1. De-Influencing Content	1		
2. Consumer Skepticism	.62	1	
3. Purchase Decisions	-.35	-.41	1

$p < .01$ (two-tailed)

There was also a strong positive correlation between de-influencing content and consumer skepticism ($r = .62, p < .01$). This finding suggested that the higher the exposure of de-influencing content, the higher the skew towards recommendations from influencers and promotional claims. Those who were exposed to more critical and anti-consumer material also were more likely to doubt the motives of influencers and product claims more often. Negative and statistically significant relationships were found between de-influencing content and purchase decisions ($r = -.35, p < .01$). This result showed that de-influencing content was negatively correlated with purchasing responses, because the more potent the de-influencing content was, the lower the purchasing responses were, and vice versa. The more the respondents were aware of content that deems an unnecessary purchase or doubts product recommendations, the more they seemed to lose motivation towards purchasing. Overall there was also a negative and significant relationship between consumer scepticism and purchase decisions ($r = -.41, p < .01$). The finding indicated that a high skepticism about the recommendations from the influencers was associated with low purchase responses in general. It also seemed as though consumers doubted both the promotion and the intent of the influencer were more likely to cause re-thinking of a purchase.

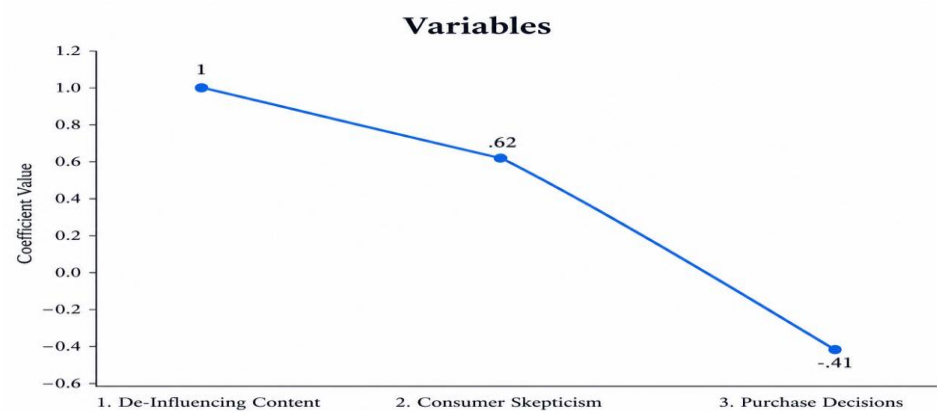


Figure 3. Pearson Correlation Matrix of Study Variables

Impact of De-Influencing Content on Consumer Skepticism

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether de-influencing content significantly predicted consumer skepticism among Generation Z consumers.

Table 4.Regression Analysis of De-Influencing Content Predicting Consumer Skepticism

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	P
Constant	1.42	0.18	—	7.89	<.001
De-Influencing Content	0.62	0.04	.62	15.63	<.001
Model Statistics			Value		
R			.62		
R ²			.384		
Adjusted R ²			.382		
F			244.30		
p			<.001		

The regression results indicated that the de-influencing content was significantly predicted de-influenced content ($\beta = .62$, $t = 15.63$, and $p < .001$) when content skepticism was modeled. When content skepticism was modeled, the regression results indicated that de-influencing content was significantly predicted ($\beta = .62$, $t = 15.63$ and $p < .001$). The positive beta coefficient value suggested that there was a positive relationship between exposure to the de-influencing content and consumer skepticism index. As a positive value for beta, it was suggested that there was a positive relationship between exposure to de-influencing content and the consumer's skepticism index. The significance of the predictor itself indicated that the relationship observed does not seem to have happened by chance within this sample. The regression coefficient also showed this regression had a relatively good relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The model had an R value of .62, which indicates a strong relationship between de-influencing content and consumer skepticism. The R² value of .384 showed that 38.4% on the variance of consumer skepticism could be predicted from the de-influencing content. After adjusting, the R² value for the model was 0.382 which was very close to the R² value, thus the explanatory power of the model was not changed. The overall regression model was statistically significant at $p < .001$ (F-statistic of 244.30) indicating that the overall regression model accounted for a significant amount of variation in consumer doubt.

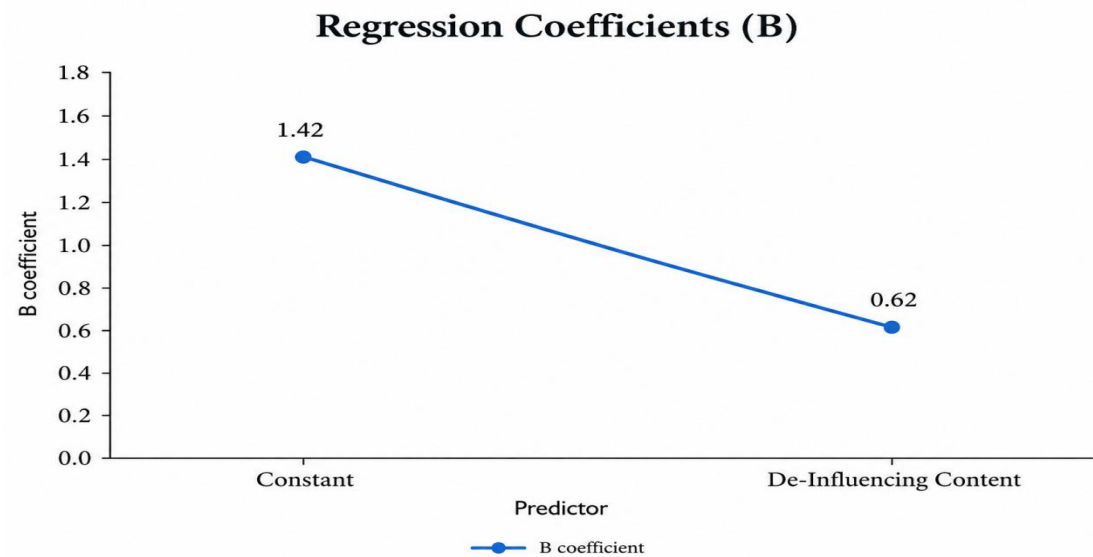


Figure 4. Regression Analysis of De-Influencing Content Predicting Consumer Skepticism

Impact of De-Influencing Content on Purchase Decisions

A regression analysis was conducted to determine whether de-influencing content significantly influenced Generation Z purchase decisions.

Table 5. Regression Analysis of De-Influencing Content Predicting Purchase Decisions

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	p
Constant	4.79	0.21	—	22.81	<.001
De-Influencing Content	−0.35	0.05	−.35	−6.43	<.001

Model Statistics	Value
R	.35
R ²	.123
Adjusted R ²	.120
F	41.34
p	<.001

In the results, de-influencing negatively and significantly predicted purchase decisions, with $\beta = -0.35$, $t = -6.43$, $p < .001$. The negative beta coefficient of the de-influencing content suggested lower purchase decision scores tied to more exposure to de-influencing content. This led to an exploration of the possibility this type of messages could prevent certain respondents from making purchases, especially if they challenged the utility of the product, questioned product

quality, or highlighted thoughts of "wasteful consumption. This finding inspired a discussion on how some of those messages might discourage certain respondents from making a purchase, particularly when the message called into question the usefulness of the product, the quality of the product, and thoughts of "wasteful consumption. The equation's correlation coefficient was .35, which equates as being moderate. Approximately 12.3% of the variance in purchase decisions could be attributed to the content de-influencing, as represented by the R^2 value of .123. The adjusted R^2 had a value of .120, which was not very different from the unadjusted value, indicating the stability of the model's performance. The overall model was a significant model that was measured by F (41.34) and p (.001). The second research objective related to the impact de-influencing content had on purchase also lent support by the results. The R^2 value also suggested that there were factors other than de-influencing content which influenced purchase decision. Other factors that might determine buying behavior include price, product quality, brand loyalty, personal preferences, income, perceived usefulness, and recommendations from other information sources.

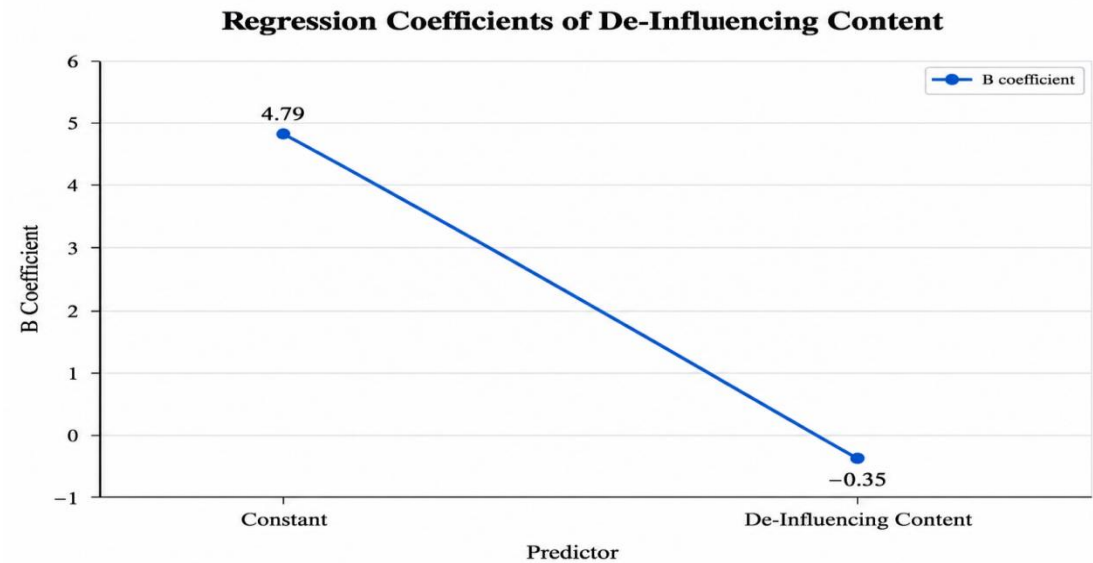


Figure 5. Regression Analysis of De-Influencing Content Predicting Purchase Decisions

Discussion

The de-influencing effect is a dynamic change in digital persuasion that has led individuals to more reflective social media usage without the need to push products, and to be more aware consumers. Recently, the concept of de-influenza has come along as a way to skirm the over-consumption, attract the people consuming this product, but at the same time hit them hard on their sustainability, persons' welfare and responsible buying issues. (Koivunen, Haanpää, & Saraniemi, 2025). From this standpoint, de-influencing content may bolster consumers' critical review of promotional messages as the communication tone is different from that of traditional

brands influencers' content. One can extend to discuss authenticity and responsible consumption as an indication of a younger generation's interest in less commercial and more consumer-centric products.

Trust shifts in social media environments provide another understanding of the relationship of de-influencing and consumer skepticism. When de-influencing content, it will often challenge unrealistic product claims, needless consumption, and a typical influencer endorsement that can stimulate an audience to take a closer look at promotional messages. The de-influencing movement has its roots embedded in ideas of credibility, veracity, and trust's change in online community as summarized by Khaili et al. (2025). Therefore a communication can inform the consumer, thereby contributing to him or her forming a knowledge of differentiating a recommended product from commercial persuasion. The rise in transparency and authenticity of digital content is a change for which Gen Z'ers are looking.

De-influencing can also shape consumers' buying decisions by prompting them to step back and think about their food consumption habits, and consider whether items are definitely useful. A new consuming trend is anti-consumption, defined by moral responsibility for taking second looks or more informed actions towards consuming less (Michaelidou, Kostopoulos & Lowe 2025). Indeed, this is particularly true of Generation Z, who are constantly being given access to new and changing products, trends and ideals of consumption via social media. This is not just "messaging the product," but reverse messaging, or de-influencing, and can have an impact on the attitude of the consumers when they are creating products. De-influencing is thus not the negative product communication but more "reverse persuasion", and can impact the attitude of consumers when making products.

In more recent times, however, there is some evidence that it is the framing of these messages, and the apparent authenticity of ones to the audiences that are likely to influence whether any impact is seen. Speaking about their reaction to the non-sponsored de-influencing messages, Ong's (2026) research found that it was able to foster their perceptions of sincerity and authenticity. This implies a de-influence can be persuasive exasperatingly because it rubs face again the traditional promotional communication. If any information about the constraints of products or 'snob appeal' or other avenues are openly conveyed, audiences may find it more transparent and they may pay close attention to their product consumption decision.

Recent studies have shown that the factors that shape the working of communication with generation Z are credibility, content quality, and perception of the target audience. De-influencing is, therefore, a significant change from the conventional influencer marketing strategy where the consumer is brought by the persuasive message than accepting it at the same point of time. This phenomenon is all too new and warrants a closer look not only as an online phenomenon but as a recurring form of communication that can impact the mind-set of the younger generation, who are more digital aware, and how they approach skepticism and trust.

Conclusion

De-influencing content is a new practice of consumers' digital communication, it is a direct strike to the current influencer marketing ideology, which encourages people to be more critical, authentic and consume responsibly. Promotional exposure over a period of time could increase receptivity towards product content claims, source intent, and perceived product value of recommended products to Gen Z. De-influencing's content can thus do otherwise than play an substitute mode of interaction, possibly altering client choices in regards to purchase. The phenomenon is a reflection of the evolution of digital consumerism culture, where transparency and credibility are increasingly more relevant as is 'conscious consumption' when it comes to consumers' relationship with on-line creators. De-influencing is a beneficial process with a potential to change consumers' relationship with social media from consumption-based opinions to more reflective and thoughtful consumer choice.

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