



**INFLUENCER MARKETING, CONSUMER BRAND  
ENGAGEMENT, AND SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOUR AMONG  
GENERATION Z: A STRATEGIC AND BEHAVIOURAL  
ANALYSIS**

<sup>1</sup>R Rohith, <sup>2</sup>Dirisala G Sankar Chittayya Babu, <sup>3</sup>Dirisala Sundareesh

<sup>1</sup>MBA Marketing students, Department of Marketing, Woxsen University, Kamkole, Sadasivpet, Hyderabad, Telangana, India 502345, Email Id: reshamrohith@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>MBA Marketing students, Department of Marketing, Woxsen University, Kamkole, Sadasivpet, Hyderabad, Telangana, India 502345, Email Id: gowrishankardirisala@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup>MBA Marketing students, Department of Marketing, Woxsen University, Kamkole, Sadasivpet, Hyderabad, Telangana, India 502345, Email Id: sundareeshdirisala@gmail.com

**\*Corresponding author:** R Rohith (reshamrohith@gmail.com)

---

**Article History:**

**Received :** 2026-03-04

**Revised :** 2026-04-13

**Accepted :** 2026-04-20

**Published :** 2026-04-28

---

**Abstract:**

*In the digital era, influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful strategy for engaging Generation Z consumers; however, limited research explains how it simultaneously influences consumer brand engagement and sustainable marketing outcomes. This study adopts the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework to examine how influencer marketing (stimulus) shapes consumer perceptions and leads to behavioural responses among Gen Z. A quantitative research design was employed using a structured questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale, with data collected from 150 respondents through convenience sampling. Descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and ANOVA were used to test the proposed relationships. The findings reveal that influencer marketing has a strong positive effect on consumer brand engagement ( $R^2 = 0.576$ ) and a moderate to strong impact on sustainable marketing ( $R^2 = 0.459$ ). These results indicate that influencer-driven communication significantly enhances both consumer interaction and sustainability-oriented behaviour. Additionally, factors such as credibility, authenticity, and transparency were identified as key determinants of influencer effectiveness. This study contributes by integrating brand engagement and sustainable marketing within a single analytical framework, thereby extending the application of the S-O-R model in digital marketing contexts. The findings offer practical insights for marketers to develop influencer strategies that foster engagement while promoting responsible and sustainable consumption among Gen Z consumers. The findings provide strategic insights for firms to optimise influencer-driven marketing decisions and align engagement strategies with sustainability objectives.*

**Keywords:** Influencer Marketing, Consumer Brand Engagement, Sustainable Marketing, Generation Z, Social Media

## **1. Introduction**

Marketing communication in the new digital era has been changing radically with the fast development of social media platforms and influencer content. The phenomenon of influencer marketing has become one of the prevailing approaches that allow brands to reach out to consumers with the help of credible and relatable communication. This change is especially pertinent to Generation Z, a generation that has high levels of digital interaction, social awareness, and prefers customised experiences. In contrast to traditional advertising, influencer marketing uses people with high online presence to develop engaging content that builds trust and emotional attachment with the audience (Campbell and Farrell, 2020; Leung et al., 2022). In business terms, influencer marketing is now considered a business tool that can be used to improve customer interaction, brand positioning, and competitive advantage in the digital world in the long term.

The behavioural patterns of Gen Z consumers are quite different and lead to a considerable impact on brand communication. They appreciate genuineness, openness, and inclusivity, which makes them more receptive to content created by influencers than to the more traditional promotional strategies. The credibility and relatability of influencers are significant in influencing brand perception, purchase intentions, and consumer engagement (Xu, 2023; Vrontis et al., 2021). Moreover, the growing popularity of social media channels has enhanced the importance of influencer marketing in building a two-way brand experience and boosting consumer engagement.

Meanwhile, sustainability has transformed into a pressing issue that has affected consumer behaviour, especially among Gen Z consumers. This generation has a powerful tendency towards environmentally and socially responsible consumption. As a promotional instrument, influencer marketing has been found to contribute to a sustainable lifestyle, making consumers change their attitude and adopt ethical consumer behaviour (El-Shihy and Awaad, 2025; Vemuri et al., 2024). Through their content, influencers can create awareness on sustainable practices and impact consumer attitudes towards environmentally-friendly products and conscientious consumption.

Although influencer marketing is increasingly becoming significant in engagement and sustainability, the connections between the two aspects are not clearly understood. The literature tends to look at the concept of consumer engagement and sustainable behaviour independently, without providing a sufficient explanation of how the concepts of influencer marketing can be used to impact both at the same time. Furthermore, even though influencer marketing will enhance interaction and awareness, it remains unclear whether this will convert to meaningful and long-term sustainable behaviour among Gen Z consumers (Kilumile & John, 2025). This leaves a gaping hole in the knowledge of the synergistic impact of influencer marketing on brand engagement among consumers and sustainability marketing.

Thus, this research seeks to fill this gap by exploring the two-fold effects of influencer marketing on consumer brand experience and sustainable marketing among Gen Z consumers. With a combination of these two dimensions into one analytical framework, the study offers a more detailed perspective of digital consumer behaviour.

The research has a theoretical contribution because it connects influencer marketing to both engagement and sustainability outcomes, thus expanding on the current studies that normally consider these variables as independent variables. In practice, the results can be used by marketers and brands to create more beneficial influencer strategies, which can not only improve engagement but also lead to sustainable consumption. The originality of the research is in its combined method since it looks at the manner in which influencer marketing can be used concurrently to affect brand engagement and sustainability-focused action in Gen Z consumers.

### **Research Objectives**

- To explore how influencer marketing affects the brand engagement of Gen Z customers

- To examine the impact of influencer marketing on sustainable marketing among Gen Z consumers
- Practical implication: To determine the connection between consumer brand engagement and sustainable marketing among Gen Z customers
- To determine the impact of influencer-led content on consumer perception, e.g. trust and engagement

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Influencer Marketing and Consumer Behaviour**

Influencer marketing has become a great force of consumer behaviour on the web, especially within the socially connected groups. Research has shown that influencer characteristics like credibility, attractiveness and relatability have potent effects on consumer perceptions and decision making. To illustrate, De Veirman et al. (2017) show that the number of followers and product alignment have a substantial impact on the attitudes towards the brand. Equally, Lou and Yuan (2019) underline that the value and credibility of the message is vital in developing consumer trust in branded content. Ki and Kim (2019) also elaborate that there is a psychological motivation of consumers to imitate influencers, which boosts purchase intentions. Although previous literature focuses more on credibility as a prevailing influence, there is also opposing evidence in terms of which emotional involvement and relational proximity can be more important in shaping the behavioural consequences.

Nevertheless, the literature shows discrepancies in developing an explanation of how these factors are translated into real behaviour. Whereas Sokolova and Kefi (2020) add parasocial interaction as a major factor that determines purchase intention, Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) posit that perceived credibility is not necessarily a sure thing when it comes to consumer action. It implies that influencer marketing can be more effective depending on the situation and additional involvement of the human psyche. In addition, Schouten et al. (2021) report that identification and perceived authenticity have a stronger impact on effectiveness compared to that of celebrity status, which refutes the belief that popularity itself is a determinant of effectiveness.

Therefore, the current literature indicates that influencer marketing affects consumer behaviour via a set of cognitive (credibility), emotional (identification), and social (mimicry) processes, but no single framework can explain how all these contribute to consumer behaviour. In terms of business intelligence, influencer marketing can create valuable consumer data that can be used to support the decision support systems and strategic marketing analytics. Such insights can help companies understand consumers better, optimise their marketing efforts, and facilitate the process of making decisions based on data in the digital business.

### **2.2 Brand Engagement in Digital Context**

The engagement of brands has emerged as an essential result of influencer marketing in online platforms, as the emotional, cognitive, and behavioural attachment of consumers to brands. Breves et al. (2019) discovered that influencer brand fit is a significant factor in the persuasive impact, whereas Casaló et al. (2020) noted that opinion leadership is one of the factors that determine engagement levels. Hudders et al. (2021) also offer a theoretical insight into the influence of the commercialisation of influencers on the reaction and the levels of engagement of the audience.

Recent investigations further this view by laying stress on relational patterns between the influencers and the followers. Taillon et al. (2020) propose perceived proximity as a factor that reinforces engagement, and Janssen et al. (2022) note that product-influencer congruence

has a positive effect on advertising performance based on credibility and identification. Reinikainen et al. (2020) further claim that the parasocial relationships do add to the emotional engagement, which means that engagement is not transactional, but rather relational and experiential.

Regardless of these observations, the prevailing factors of engagement are not unanimously agreed upon. Whereas structural factors, e.g. credibility, and fit are paramount in some studies, emotional and relational factors are the focus in others. This divergence implies that brand engagement is a multidimensional concept, which is affected by functional and psychological aspects, and has to be analysed comprehensively.

### **2.3 Sustainable Marketing and Generation Z**

The notion of sustainable marketing has been on the rise as Gen Z consumers are becoming more concerned with ethical and environmentally friendly consumption. The use of influencer marketing is critical in developing sustainability-related attitudes and behaviours through the use of trust and relatability. According to Xiao et al. (2018), credibility frameworks affect the influence of influencer content on the decision-making process among consumers, and Jiménez and Sánchez (2019) reveal that influencer recommendations have a great effect on engagement and purchase intentions.

Moreover, Lou et al. (2019) show that consumer engagement is lower with influencer-driven content as compared to brand-driven content, which implies that influencers are better at conveying sustainability messages. Nevertheless, there is conflicting evidence on behavioural outcomes in the literature. Although a certain number of research indicate that influencer communication positively influences pro-environmental attitudes, there are studies that indicate that perceived commercialisation and scepticism can undermine the influence of influencer communication on actual sustainable consumption.

This shows that there is a severe disparity between awareness and behaviour, and influencer marketing can raise the sustainability awareness, but it does not always lead to a change in behaviour in the long term among Gen Z consumers.

### **2.4 Research Gap**

The review of the literature is comprehensive and indicates a number of gaps. To start with, a majority of the work focuses on influencer marketing either as a consumer behaviour or brand engagement, which does not combine the two perspectives into a single framework. Second, the research on sustainability-related issues is mainly concentrated on attitudes and intentions and does not refer to the role of engagement as an intermediate or complementary variable. Third, little empirical evidence exists to explain how influencer marketing can be used to push both brand engagement and sustainable consumption among Generation Z concurrently. Thus, this research study will fill these gaps by incorporating influencer marketing, consumer brand engagement, and sustainable marketing into one analysis lens, providing a more in-depth perspective of digital consumer behaviour in terms of sustainability. In addition, available research is not integrated into a decision-focused business model, hence restricting its application in developing managerial strategies.

## **3. Theoretical Framework**

The current research is founded on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model that presents the impact of external stimuli on inner psychological conditions and behavioural consequences. In this regard, influencer marketing is the kind of stimulus that drives consumer perceptions, which eventually affects their attitudes towards the brands and sustainable actions. In this context, influencer marketing can be viewed as the stimulus which includes factors like credibility, authenticity, and quality of the content provided on social media platforms. The organism captures the perceptions of consumers, such as trust, emotional attachment, and perceived involvement, which can result in interaction with the

content of influencers. Response reflects behavioural results, namely, consumer brand engagement and sustainable consumption behaviour. This paper builds upon the S-O-R model by using two behavioural outcomes (brand engagement and sustainable behaviour) as part of a response framework. The conceptual relationship is as follows:

Influencer Marketing → Consumer Perceptions → Brand Engagement + Sustainable Behaviour

Influencer marketing affects consumer perception through trust and emotional attachment. Such internal reactions motivate consumers to be more active in relation to brands and adopt sustainability-related practices. In such a way, consumer perceptions can be viewed as a mediating variable between influencer marketing and engagement outcomes, as well as sustainability outcomes. The S-O-R model is suitable in this study because it incorporates the marketing stimuli, psychological processes and behavioural responses into a single model. This model is a decision-based viewpoint that managers can use to gain knowledge on how marketing stimuli can be converted into quantifiable behavioural results. It offers a systematic means to examine the way influencer marketing leads to both brand engagement and sustainable behaviour and could offer an overall picture of the Gen Z consumer behaviour in the digital space.

#### 4. Hypothesis Development

##### **H1: Influencer marketing has a huge influence on the consumer brand engagement of Gen Z customers.**

Influencer marketing can increase consumer engagement with the brands through credibility, reliability, and trust. The influencers also impact consumer perception by using genuine content, which enhances the level of engagement, such as liking, sharing and brand interaction. The existing literature indicates that the nature of influencers has a great impact on the brand perception and engagement results (De Veirman et al., 2017; Lou and Yuan, 2019). This association is essential to companies that seek to engage customers more through influencer-based efforts.

##### **H2: The impact of influencer marketing on sustainable marketing is great among customers of Gen Z.**

Influencers are opinion leaders who propagate values and responsible consumption about sustainability. Consumer attitudes to ethical and environmentally friendly practices are more relatable and convincing with their content, as sustainability messages become more relatable. Studies show that influencer communication is an important factor influencing consumer behaviour and interaction with value-based content (Xiao et al., 2018; Jiménez and Sánchez, 2019; Lou et al., 2019). This connection is significant to companies that want to incorporate sustainability in marketing and promote responsible consumption.

##### **H3: Gen Z customers have a strong influence on consumer brand engagement in sustainable marketing.**

Increased brand engagement results in an increase in emotional and psychological attachment of consumers and brands. Informed consumers will have a greater likelihood of believing in brand communications and inspiring its values, such as sustainability. Research indicates the improvement of consumer reactions and the probability of the adoption of brand-driven behaviours through relational proximity and emotional bonds (Taillon et al., 2020; Reinikainen et al., 2020). The kind of relationship offers insight to firms to exploit engagement as a strategic instrument to encourage sustainability-based consumption.

#### 5. Research Methodology

The section will outline the methodological procedures of the research to investigate the contribution of influencer marketing in determining consumer brand engagement and sustainable marketing among the Gen Z customers. It presents the research design, population, sampling method, data collection methods and statistical tools that will be used in the analysis of the data.

### **5.1 Research Design**

The research design is a descriptive and analytical research design. The descriptive approach helps to comprehend the character and behaviour of the Gen Z consumers, and the analytical design is used to examine the relationships between influencer marketing and the dependent variables- consumer brand engagement and sustainable marketing. The research is a quantitative study because it allows objective measurement, statistical validation and generalisation of the results to a large population. A quantitative design will be suitable when we want to test our relationships between the variables and prove the proposed hypotheses with the help of statistical methods. The chosen methodology is suitable to explore behavioural analysis and offer viable information to managerial decision-making in the presence of sample shortcomings.

### **5.2 Population and Sample**

The target population of the study is Gen Z consumers, in particular, the consumers who actively use social media and are exposed to influencer marketing. The study is chosen to have a sample of 150 respondents. The sample will be a group of people belonging to the Gen Z age group, which will guarantee the relevance of the research to the objectives.

### **5.3 Sampling Technique**

In the study, a non-probability convenience sampling technique is used, whereby the respondents will be selected on the basis of their availability and willingness to take part. This method would be appropriate because of time limits and the fact that social media users are easily accessible. It is assumed that convenience sampling will be suitable in the case of exploratory and behavioural research on Gen Z since this population is readily accessible via digital means. Nonetheless, the approach can be restrictive to the generalizability of the results because of a possible sampling bias, and the study results can be taken with a grain of salt.

### **5.4 Data Collection Method and Measurement Scale**

The study is based on first-hand data gathered using a questionnaire. The questionnaire will be constructed based on a 5-point Likert scale to gauge the perception and attitudes of the respondents towards influencer marketing, consumer brand engagement, and sustainable marketing. The most critical constructs to be measured in this study are: influencer marketing (credibility, authenticity and content effectiveness), consumer brand engagement (interaction, emotional connection and involvement) and sustainable marketing (awareness, attitude and behavioural intention towards sustainability). Sources of secondary data are also used, such as journals, articles and online sources to help support the theoretical framework.

### **5.5 Reliability and Validity**

Cronbach's Alpha was used to make sure that the scale of measurements used was reliable. The coefficient of reliability of all the constructs was above the acceptable level of 0.70, which is a sign of internal consistency of the items used to measure the construct. To achieve content validity, the questionnaire was created in line with the existing literature and the constructs addressing influencer marketing, brand engagement, and sustainability that had been tested before and proven to be valid. A review of the questionnaire was done as well to make sure it is clear, relevant and in line with research objectives.

### **5.6 Data Analysis Techniques**

The data were analysed using appropriate statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise demographic data: frequency and percentage. The effects of influencer marketing on consumer brand engagement and sustainable marketing were tested with the help of regression analysis. ANOVA has been used to provide the overall significance of the regression models. Regression analysis is suitable because it aids in the analysis of the strength and direction of associations among independent and dependent variables, and ANOVA confirms that the model is statistically significant. The analyses of the data were done using SPSS and Microsoft Excel to ensure accuracy, reliability and proper interpretation of the results. Regression analysis enables firms to determine the extent of influence of influencer marketing on crucial performance-based behavioural results.

## 6. Results and Analysis

In this section, the analysis of the results with the respondents will be provided along with the interpretation of the obtained data to explore the impact of influencer marketing on brand engagement and sustainable marketing among Gen Z customers. To make useful conclusions, statistical programs such as regression and descriptive analysis are used to test the hypotheses. Table 1.1 shows the breakdown of ages of the respondents in the table, with a concentration of the sample in the middle Gen Z age brackets.

**Table 1.1: Age-wise distribution of participants**

Age		
	“Frequency”	“Percent”
16 – 18 years	15	10.0
19 – 21 years	42	28.0
22 – 24 years	31	20.7
25 – 27 years	33	22.0
28 years and above	29	19.3
Total	150	100.0

Most of the respondents fall under the age range of 19-21 years (28%), then 25-27 years (22%) and 22-24 years (20.7%), showing a good representation of young adults. There is a 28+ group (19.3%), and the least represented is 16-18 years (10%). In general, the sample is mostly composed of people aged 19-27 years, which is appropriate to examine the behaviour of Gen Z. The age distribution is also illustrated as shown in Graph 1.1, where the respondents between the ages of 19-27 years are the dominant ones.

**Graph 1.1: Graphical representation of age-wise distribution of participants**

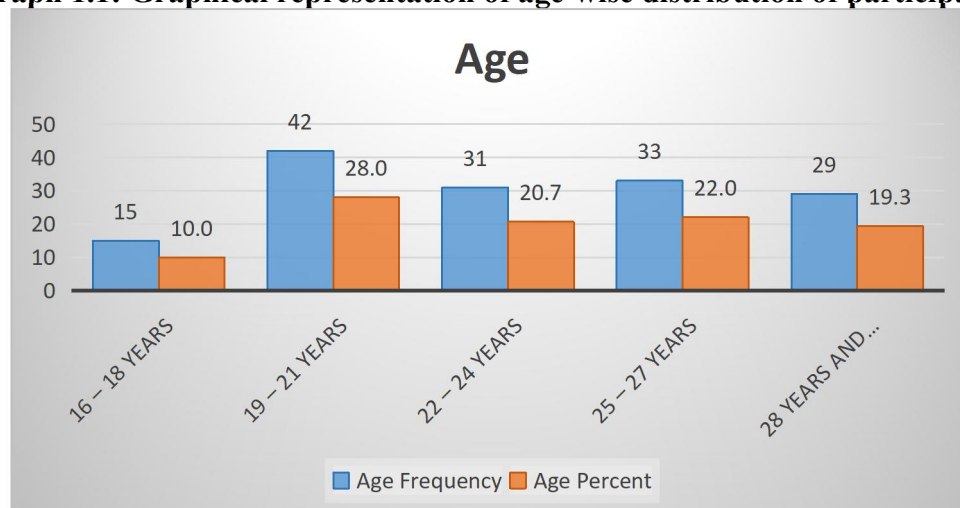


Table 1.2 presents a summary of the gender distribution of the respondents, with a higher number of men.

**Table 1.2: Gender wise distribution of participants**

Gender		
	“Frequency”	“Percent”
Male	97	64.7
Female	53	35.3
Total	150	100.0

The table above talks about gender wise distribution. The number of males and females involved in this study is 97 and 53, respectively, with their percentages being 64.7 and 35.3, respectively. The variation between male and female respondents can be seen better as the gender distribution is visually compared in Graph 1.2.

**Graph 1.2: Graphical representation of gender wise distribution of participants**

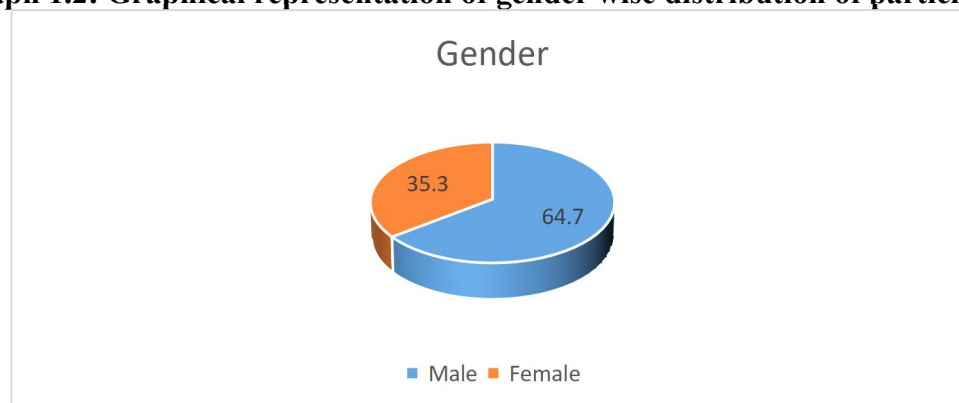


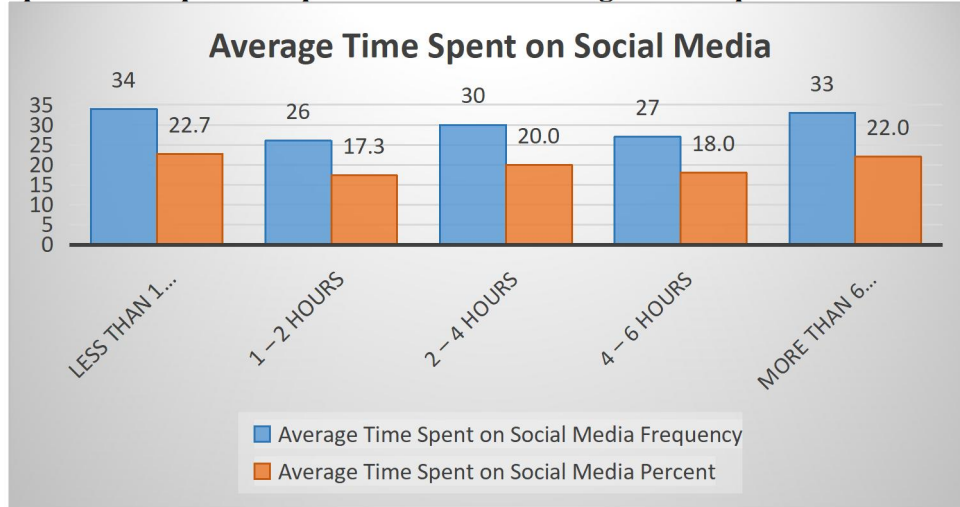
Table 1.3 shows the frequency table of the time spent on social media of the respondents.

**Table 1.3: Average Time Spent on social media**

Average Time Spent on social media		
	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 hour	34	22.7
1 – 2 hours	26	17.3
2 – 4 hours	30	20.0
4 – 6 hours	27	18.0
More than 6 hours	33	22.0
Total	150	100.0

The results show that the use of social media among the respondents is relatively high and evenly spread. The lowest percentages are observed in less than 1 hour (22.7) and over 6 hours (22.0), indicating a difference between low and heavy users. Approximately 20.0% of them use between 2-4 hours, and 18.0% use between 4-6 hours, which means that they use it moderately. The lowest group is 1–2 hours (17.3%). Graph 1.3 is a graphical representation of the difference in social media use, which shows how there are those who are low and high users of social media.

**Graph 1.3: Graphical representation of Average Time Spent on social media**



### 6.1 Reliability Results

Table 1.4 displays the Cronbach's alpha of each construct that proves the internal consistency of the measurement scale.

**Table 1.4: Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)**

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Influencer Marketing	0.82
Consumer Brand Engagement	0.85
Sustainable Marketing	0.80

The alpha values of all the constructs are greater than the acceptable level of 0.70, which means good internal consistency and reliability of the scale of measurement. This ensures that the measuring items employed to measure every construct are consistent and can be further analysed.

### 6.2 Correlation Matrix

The correlation coefficients of the variables in the study, as shown in Table 1.5, reveal that all the variables are positively related.

**Table 1.5: Correlation Matrix**

Variables	Influencer Marketing	Brand Engagement	Sustainable Marketing
Influencer Marketing	1	0.759	0.677
Brand Engagement	0.759	1	0.642
Sustainable Marketing	0.677	0.642	1

The results of the correlation show that the relationship between influencer marketing and brand engagement ( $r = 0.759$ ) and between sustainable marketing and influencer marketing ( $r = 0.677$ ) is strong and moderate, respectively. Moreover, sustainable marketing is positively related to brand engagement ( $r = 0.642$ ), and therefore, an increase in brand engagement could result in a greater sustainability-based behaviour. Such relations are reasons why the regression analysis should be used to test the hypotheses.

### 6.3 Regression Diagnostics

The VIF values are reported in Table 1.6, which indicates that there is no multicollinearity in the model.

**Table 1.6: Multicollinearity (VIF Values)**

Variable	VIF
Influencer Marketing	1.00

VIF value is lower than the threshold of 5, which means that there are no problems of multicollinearity in the model. This proves the fact that there is no redundancy in the independent variable and the regression findings are valid.

Moreover, some basic regression assumptions (linearity, independence, and homoscedasticity) were taken into account. The information did not show any serious violations, which means that the regression model is suitable to be analysed.

#### Hypothesis testing

The regression findings of Hypothesis 1 are concluded in the Model Summary, ANOVA and Coefficients tables, which reveals the strength and significance of the model.

“Model Summary”				
“Model”	“R”	“R Square”	“Adjusted R Square”	“Std. Error of the Estimate”
1	.759a	.576	.574	4.33612
a. Predictors: (Constant), Influencer Marketing				

“ANOVAa”						
“Model”	“Sum of Squares”	df	“Mean Square”	F	“Sig.”	
1	“Regression”	3786.482	1	3786.482	201.388	.000b
	“Residual”	2782.692	148	18.802		
	“Total”	6569.173	149			
a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Brand Engagement						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Influencer Marketing						

Coefficientsa						
Model		“Unstandardized Coefficients”		“Standardized Coefficients”	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	16.140	1.543		10.459	.000

	Influencer Marketing	.607	.043	.759	14.191	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Brand Engagement						

The regression analysis illustrates that influencer marketing is a significant and powerful influence on consumer brand engagement. R value (0.759) shows that the relationship is strong and the value of ( $R^2=0.576$ ) indicates that over half the variation in brand engagement is attributed to influencer marketing. This underscores the feasibility of influencer marketing as a major driver of consumer engagement. This implies that influencer marketing may pass as a strategic lever with high impact on firms to improve customer engagement effectiveness. In addition to being statistically significant, this result suggests that by engaging influencer marketing strategies, brands may impact the level of customer engagement on a large scale. This is achieved through influencer-driven communication that fosters trust and emotional connection with the brand, and consequently, more engagement with the brand among Gen Z consumers.

The results of hypothesis 2 in statistical form are provided in the Model summary, ANOVA, and Coefficients tables, which support the significant association between influencer marketing and sustainable marketing.

<b>“Model Summary”</b>					
“Model”	“R”	“R Square”	“Adjusted R Square”	“Std. Error of the Estimate”	
1	.677a	.459	.455	5.70290	
a. Predictors: (Constant), Influencer Marketing					

<b>“ANOVAa”</b>						
“Model”		“Sum of Squares”	df	“Mean Square”	F	“Sig.”
1	“Regression”	4082.593	1	4082.593	125.529	.000b
	“Residual”	4813.407	148	32.523		
	“Total”	8896.000	149			
a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Marketing						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Influencer Marketing						

<b>Coefficientsa</b>						
Model		“Unstandardized Coefficients”		“Standardized Coefficients”	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	13.668	2.029		6.735	.000
	Influencer Marketing	.630	.056	.677	11.204	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Marketing						

The regression findings show that influencer marketing is moderately to strongly affecting sustainable marketing. The  $R^2$  (0.459) and R value (0.677) indicates that influencer marketing can be used to describe a significant percentage of sustainable behaviour among Gen Z consumers.

In practice, this implies that influencer marketing is not only the most effective in terms of engagement but also plays a significant role in promoting sustainability awareness and behaviour. The influencers can be change agents in promoting environmentally friendly consumption, which can in turn sustain the long-term sustainability objectives of brands. The results shed light on influencer marketing as a means of sustaining branding initiatives that are driven by sustainability.

## **7. Discussion**

The results of the current research indicate a good and substantial influence of influencer marketing on consumer brand engagement and a moderate to strong influence on sustainable marketing among consumers belonging to Gen Z. These findings align with other studies that have highlighted the importance of influencer credibility, authenticity and relatability in influencing consumer behaviour. Previous research has shown that communication by influencers can increase brand perceptions and engagement by building trust and emotional attachment between consumers and brands. The existing evidence confirms this point of view because it demonstrates that influencer marketing is a powerful tool that can be used to reinforce consumer-brand relationships (Belanche et al., 2021).

Considering sustainable marketing, the findings are consistent with the literature that indicates that influencer marketing can have a positive impact on consumption in a responsible manner toward the environment. Influencers are opinion leaders who convey sustainability messages in a relatable and compelling way, thus promoting pro-environmental attitudes. The studies have demonstrated that sustainable marketing efforts facilitate customer interactions and affect buying intentions, especially when backed by reputable communication channels (Gong et al., 2023). In a similar fashion, the dimensions of branding like trust, loyalty, and engagement have been pointed out to play a key role in shaping sustainable consumption behaviour among Gen Z (Theocharis & Tsekouropoulos, 2025). The current paper validates that influencer marketing leads to such effects through creating awareness and influencing consumer attitudes towards sustainability.

Nevertheless, the results also help to emphasise the fact that engagement is a crucial factor that determines the impact of influencer exposure on meaningful behavioural changes. This is reinforced by research that shows that influencer-based engagement enhances brand loyalty and has an impact on sustainable consumption choices (Zahran and Aljuhmani, 2025). Therefore, engagement is not only a consequence but also a channel of influence on consumer behaviour by the marketing efforts. Meanwhile, other studies indicate that over-commercialisation or the absence of disclosure of influencer content can result in distrust, which decreases the impact of such tactics. It means that the effects of influencer marketing depend on the perceived authenticity and trust. Although the available literature portrays scepticism about influencer material, the current results indicate that credibility and authenticity can help alleviate these fears.

In theoretical terms, the research builds on the use of StimulusOrganismResponse framework by incorporating influencer marketing, consumer engagement, and sustainable behaviour into one framework. The results indicate that influencer marketing, as an inducement, affects internal psychological conditions, including trust and emotional attachment, which consequently causes behavioural outcomes. The research offers a deeper insight into digital consumer behaviour by connecting brand engagement with the sustainability consequences. This composite view fills a research gap in the literature, in which engagement and sustainability are commonly studied independently of each other, as opposed to a process that is interdependent.

In practice, the findings can be of great value to marketers and brands. By partnering with influencers who share the brand values and convey authentic messages, the organisation can use influencer marketing to increase their engagement and facilitate sustainability. Strategically, influencer marketing can be utilised to help firms as a channel of promotion as well as a way of influencing consumer values in the long term. The emphasis of influencer partnerships should be on establishing trust and long-term relationships instead of immediate promotional benefits. Also, policy-makers can think over the creation of guidelines that will guarantee transparency and ethical conduct in the sphere of influencer marketing, especially when it comes to promoting products related to sustainability. These steps may help to improve consumer confidence and decrease distrust.

Gen Z consumers have a robust digital orientation and a value-based mindset, which explains their behaviour. This is an active generation on social media and is likely to use influencers as a source of information and suggestions. They are also more aware of environmental and social problems and hence responsive to the messages about sustainability. Nevertheless, they are also insensitive and strict to fake content. The studies indicate that the perceptions and behaviours of younger audiences can be influenced by exposure to the content created by influencers (Naderer et al., 2024). Thus, influencer marketing among Gen Z will be successful on the condition of providing worthwhile, open, and credible content based on their expectations.

## **8. Implications**

### **8.1 Managerial Implications**

Effective marketing strategies targeting Gen Z would emphasise the influencer choice, where the influencers have credibility, authenticity, and align themselves with brand values to increase consumer trust and engagement. Moreover, influencer content should also be enhanced with sustainability to promote brand image and responsible consumption. Gen Z behaviour can be greatly changed by its influencers, who advocate ethical and environmentally friendly practices. The findings aid the evidence-based approach to marketing strategy and emphasise the significance of making influencer selection and organisation alignment.

### **8.2 Policy Implications**

The development of influencer marketing requires more regulatory controls in order to promote morality. Transparency and consumer confidence in sponsored content require a clear disclosure of the sponsored content. Moreover, policymakers need to set standards to avoid misleading sustainability and encourage responsibility when it comes to influencer endorsement. These actions will be able to help with ethical marketing and create a more responsible digital market. Ethical marketing rules ought to be incorporated in regulatory frameworks within the digital business ecosystems.

## **9. Limitations and Future Research**

There are some limitations that are involved in this study, and which must be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings. To begin with, the 150 respondents sample is sufficient to perform the initial analysis, but it is not sufficient to generalise the findings to a larger population. Second, sampling bias can be created due to the sampling technique, which was a non-probability convenience sampling approach, since the respondents were not randomly chosen but instead were selected on the basis of their availability. This can have an impact on sample representativeness. Third, the study uses a cross-sectional design, which measures data at one time, which limits the analysis of consumer behaviour changes over time and the establishment of causal links.

These limitations can be overcome by future studies using bigger and more heterogeneous sample sizes to enhance generalizability. Research in other geographical areas and cultures

can lead to a more profound explanation of Gen Z behaviour. Also, longitudinal designs can be employed in future studies to study changes in behaviours over time. More sophisticated methods of analysis, including Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), may also be used to strengthen the strength of the results by investigating the multi-layered connections and mediating variables. Advanced analytical models like structural equation modeling can be used in future studies in order to achieve predictive accuracy and theoretical strength.

## **10. Conclusion**

The research affirms that influencer marketing is playing a huge role in both consumer brand engagement and sustainable marketing among Generation Z consumers. The results indicate that influencer marketing is not only more effective in increasing the interaction and emotional connection with the brands but also has a significant impact on the development of sustainability-oriented behaviour. The findings of the regression analysis also reveal the strong explanatory ability of influencer-driven communication in influencing engagement, as well as a significant role in influencing sustainable consumption. Contribution-wise, the study brings the brand engagement and sustainable marketing to the same analytical framework, which provides a more in-depth insight into Gen Z consumer behaviour. The connection of these dimensions will help the study go beyond the conventional studies that view these dimensions independently and will offer a comprehensive perspective on the functioning of influencer marketing in online spaces. Tactically, the results highlight the significance of authenticity, credibility, and transparency in influencer-brand partnerships. The brands that aim at the Gen Z have to orient themselves on collaboration with influencers, who are relevant to them and capable of providing some authentic and relatable content. These partnerships not only enhance consumer confidence and engagement but also promote responsible consumption habits, which can help in the long-term sustainability objectives. The paper highlights the strategic significance of influencer marketing as an informed decision-making tool that improves engagement and sustainability outcomes in modern business settings. On balance, influencer marketing, as one of the effective strategic instruments in developing meaningful relationships with consumers and influencing sustainable behaviour, is noted in the study. Companies that leverage the power of influencer partnerships will be able to increase brand engagement and promote ethical and responsible consumption in the digital marketplace that is rapidly changing.

## **References**

1. Belanche, D., Casaló, L. V., Flavián, M., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2021). Understanding influencer marketing: The role of congruence between influencers, products and consumers. *Journal of business research*, 132, 186-195.
2. Breves, P. L., Liebers, N., Abt, M., & Kunze, A. (2019). The perceived fit between instagram influencers and the endorsed brand: How influencer-brand fit affects source credibility and persuasive effectiveness. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 59(4), 440-454.
3. Campbell, C., & Farrell, J. R. (2020). More than meets the eye: The functional components underlying influencer marketing. *Business horizons*, 63(4), 469-479.
4. Casaló, L. V., Flavián, C., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2020). Influencers on Instagram: Antecedents and consequences of opinion leadership. *Journal of business research*, 117, 510-519.

5. De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: the impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. *International journal of advertising*, 36(5), 798-828.
6. Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, C. (2017). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. *Computers in human behavior*, 68, 1-7.
7. El-Shihy, D., & Awaad, S. (2025). Leveraging social media for sustainable fashion: how brand and user-generated content influence Gen Z's purchase intentions. *Future Business Journal*, 11(1), 113.
8. Ge, J. (2024). Influencers marketing and its impacts on sustainable fashion consumption among generation Z. *Journal of Soft Computing and Decision Analytics*, 2(1), 118-143.
9. Gong, Y., Xiao, J., Tang, X., & Li, J. (2023). How sustainable marketing influences the customer engagement and sustainable purchase intention? The moderating role of corporate social responsibility. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1128686.
10. Hudders, L., De Jans, S., & De Veirman, M. (2021). The commercialization of social media stars: a literature review and conceptual framework on the strategic use of social media influencers. *Social media influencers in strategic communication*, 24-67.
11. Janssen, L., Schouten, A. P., & Croes, E. A. (2022). Influencer advertising on Instagram: product-influencer fit and number of followers affect advertising outcomes and influencer evaluations via credibility and identification. *International journal of advertising*, 41(1), 101-127.
12. Jiménez-Castillo, D., & Sánchez-Fernández, R. (2019). The role of digital influencers in brand recommendation: Examining their impact on engagement, expected value and purchase intention. *International journal of information management*, 49, 366-376.
13. Ki, C. W. C., & Kim, Y. K. (2019). The mechanism by which social media influencers persuade consumers: The role of consumers' desire to mimic. *Psychology & marketing*, 36(10), 905-922.
14. Kilumile, J. W., & John, J. K. (2025). How influencer marketing affect sustainable consumer behaviour? Systematic review, integrative framework and future research agenda. *Journal of Electronic Business & Digital Economics*, 1-18.
15. Leung, F. F., Gu, F. F., & Palmatier, R. W. (2022). Online influencer marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 50(2), 226-251.
16. Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media. *Journal of interactive advertising*, 19(1), 58-73.

17. Lou, C., Tan, S. S., & Chen, X. (2019). Investigating consumer engagement with influencer-vs. brand-promoted ads: The roles of source and disclosure. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 19(3), 169-186.
18. Naderer, B., Wakolbinger, M., Haider, S., Tatlow-Golden, M., Muc, M., Boyland, E., & Winzer, E. (2024). Influencing children: food cues in YouTube content from child and youth influencers. *BMC public health*, 24(1), 3340.
19. Reinikainen, H., Munnukka, J., Maity, D., & Luoma-Aho, V. (2020). ‘You really are a great big sister’—parasocial relationships, credibility, and the moderating role of audience comments in influencer marketing. *Journal of marketing management*, 36(3-4), 279-298.
20. Schouten, A. P., Janssen, L., & Verspaget, M. (2021). Celebrity vs. Influencer endorsements in advertising: the role of identification, credibility, and Product-Endorser fit. In *Leveraged marketing communications* (pp. 208-231). Routledge.
21. Sokolova, K., & Kefi, H. (2020). Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions. *Journal of retailing and consumer services*, 53, 101742.
22. Taillon, B. J., Mueller, S. M., Kowalczyk, C. M., & Jones, D. N. (2020). Understanding the relationships between social media influencers and their followers: the moderating role of closeness. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 29(6), 767-782.
23. Theocharis, D., & Tsekouropoulos, G. (2025). Sustainable consumption and branding for Gen Z: How brand dimensions influence consumer behavior and adoption of newly launched technological products. *Sustainability*, 17(9), 4124.
24. Vemuri, S., Jahnvi, P., Manasa, L., & Pallavi, D. R. (2024). The effectiveness of influencer marketing in promoting sustainable lifestyles and consumer behaviours. *Exploring Sustainability Through*, 5, 206.
25. Vrontis, D., Makrides, A., Christofi, M., & Thrassou, A. (2021). Social media influencer marketing: A systematic review, integrative framework and future research agenda. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 45(4), 617-644.
26. Xiao, M., Wang, R., & Chan-Olmsted, S. (2018). Factors affecting YouTube influencer marketing credibility: a heuristic-systematic model. *Journal of media business studies*, 15(3), 188-213.
27. Xu, X. (2023). Influencer marketing with social platforms: Increasing brand awareness and user engagement. *Journal of education, humanities and social sciences*, 19(19), 228-234.
28. Zahran, I., & Aljuhmani, H. Y. (2025). Seduced by style: How instagram fashion influencers build brand loyalty through customer engagement in sustainable consumption. *Sustainability*, 17(17), 7888.