

The influence of instagram marketing on generation Z purchase intentions: A case study of aloe herbal organic skincare in Nepal

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Keywords

Instagram marketing, Generation Z, purchase intention, authenticity, influencer marketing, user-generated content, organic skincare, Nepal, mixed methods, emerging markets

Abstract

The study under consideration delves into Instagram marketing, which has a marked effect on the purchasing intentions of Generation Z people regarding Aloe Herbal Organic Skincare in Nepal. This area is a near-blank space and provides an emerging market for all other literature on social media marketing. The combination used in the methodology for collecting primary data was qualitative and quantitative methods, through structured Likert-scale surveys which had 63 questions given to 71 respondents from Gen Z and semi-structured qualitative interviews conducted with two key informants from the management team of Aloe Herbal.

The data were analysed through Pearson correlation, Multiple regression, and Theme analysis. The composite regression model explained 52.7% of the variance in purchase intention. The most influential predictors were Perceived Authenticity ($\beta = 0.374$, $p = 0.010$; $r = 0.667$, $p < 0.01$), followed by Hashtags and User-Generated Content ($r = 0.564$), Visual Content Quality ($r = 0.495$), and Trust ($r = 0.492$).

Qualitative findings echoed these quant results, which identified authenticity, micro-influencer collaboration, and community-driven UGC as the three most powerful pillars underpinning the Instagram strategy at Aloe Herbal. Eight peer-reviewed secondary sources were thematically analysed additionally to verify the primary findings. Original empirical research has been undertaken in a context geographically and sector ally understudied, with a multi-theoretical framework combined from 6 different theories and practically grounded strategic advice given for organic skincare brands targeting Gen Z consumers of South Asian emerging markets.

Introduction

The advent of social media completely reformed the digital marketing space. In this regard, Instagram has emerged as one of the most fascinating commercial ecosystems in brand communication and product discovery. From 2010, the transformation has moved at a dramatically slow pace for any photo-sharing application up to the 2025 platform with 2 billion monthly active users that Instagram has become (Putra and Afrilian, 2025). What makes it more uniquely effective across the consumer journey is its visual-first framework, high-quality images, short-form Reels, interactive Stories, tools designed for collaborating with influencers, and integrated shopping functions (Menon, 2022).

Generation Z runs from the year 1997-2012. To date, it is the largest cohort using Instagram in the world. 91% of Gen Z is found on the platform, which uses the platform every day for around 45 minutes (Manikonda et al., 2014). Growing up in a super-digitized environment from an early age has resulted in Gen Z consumers displaying no notable distinction between a digital and physical consumption experience (Hussain et al., 2021). That being said, empirical evidence indicates that 85% of product discoveries by Gen Z are on social media, with 49% having made a purchase through Instagram.

Nepal represents an understudied research context but highly relevant. Smartphone penetration has been growing at breakneck speed, accompanied by an apparent rise in Internet use giving great impetus toward growth in digital infrastructure, with the organic skincare market in Nepal forecasted to grow at a CAGR of 10.42% between 2024 and 2029 (Shankar and Paudel, 2024). Aloe Herbal Organic Skincare embodies the meeting point between age-old herbal knowledge specific to Nepal and modern wellness

trends—thus serving as an appropriate case to look into the effectiveness of Instagram Marketing in these emerging markets.

On the other hand, very little empirical research exists in this niche in the peer-reviewed literature, unlike the studies on Instagram marketing and Gen Z consumer behaviour conducted in Western contexts. The research we are going to undertake would consider Gen Z with respect to the association between constructs of Instagram marketing exposure, visual content quality, influencer marketing, and user-generated content with purchase intention of Aloe Herbal in Nepal, while engaging the trust constructs as a proposed mediator.

Research Aim and Objectives

This research sought to examine the effect of Instagram marketing on the purchase intentions of Generation Z with regard to Aloe Herbal Organic Skincare in Nepal. It did this by achieving the following objectives: (1) To establish the relationship between the effectiveness of Instagram marketing and the purchase intention of the Generation Z consumer market in Nepal; (2) Estimate which of the many features of Instagram marketing accounts for the greatest influence on buying behaviour in the Generation Z consumer market when it comes to the consumption of skincare products; (3) Separate how the variables of authenticity and influencer believability affect the Nepalese Consumerist Generation Z in trust and purchase behaviour, relating to skincare; and (4) Proposing some Instagram marketing strategies to Aloe Herbal, which can work effectively in improving engagement and sales to Generation Z.

Literature Review

Instagram Marketing and Generation Z Consumer Behaviour

Instagram is considered one of the most powerful commercial platforms in the academic literature. It is frequently defined as a series of web-based applications which enable users to generate their content and then share it with others. This interactive and bidirectional creation at the heart of Instagram is what makes marketing potential. Kim and Ko (2012) confirmed that social media marketing directly influences brand equity, which in turn affects brand awareness, perceived quality, loyalty, and competitiveness of brands selling organic skincare products in price-sensitive emerging consumer markets.

Gen Z is often defined as a group with distinct consumption behaviours. As per Francis and Hoefel (2018), the members of Generation Z are pragmatic, analytical, socially conscious, comfortable with ambiguity, and have an affinity for authentic brand narratives.

The above findings are also supported by research from Priporas et al. (2017), who contend that consumers in this generation are increasingly looking for personalized, adaptable, and authentic brand interactions.

In a country where the digital landscape is growing at such a fast pace, like Nepal, and where the awareness of organic products is already high, according to Hariyanto (2018), this picture presents to the researcher a unique environment where global Instagram marketing process dynamics seem to collide face to face with local conditions at-large.

Instagram Marketing Elements and Purchase Intention

Gen Z and their interaction and conversion with brands on social media platforms through short video content seem to be their favourite. The Uses and Gratifications Theory (Ruggiero, 2000) argues that video content primarily meets gratifications related to information seeking and entertainment. It is argued in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) that high-quality visual content could act as peripheral cues to increase brand credibility.

Basically, it was thought that Instagram profiles would be an indication of coherent brand identity for the greater brand and, additionally, these have been seen to have a positive effect on the intention to buy products of skincare brands.

As a result, influencer marketing came up as the most core mechanism responsible for facilitating the purchase intention of Instagram.

The three most important determinants for influencer effectiveness are credibility, authenticity, and audience fit. They went through a systematic review process for their research. Lou and Yuan (2019) had

influencer credibility operationalised by three variables: expertise, trustworthiness, and similarity. Among these, the most significant positive relationship with purchase intention is that of trustworthiness.

It is very clear at this point, based on the evidence, that extremely strong parasocial relationships, higher engagement, and better effects on purchase intentions are experienced with micro-influencers than with celebrity endorsers (Audrezet et al., 2020).

Hashtags and user-generated content are used to build brand discoverability and purchase intention in terms of social proof mechanisms. Omena et al. (2020) have conceptualised hashtag engagement in terms of digital brand community participation. UGC stands out as one of the most bonding and powerful trust signals that Gen Z consumers rely on before making a purchase (Ki & Kim, 2019).

Authenticity, Trust, and Brand Credibility

It is perhaps the most crucial brand authenticity is, both from a theoretical perspective and empirically, if we were to consider the engagement of Gen Z with branded Instagram content on (Carrat et al., 2019). Now, authenticity has always been found to positively correlate with consumer trust, loyalty, and intention to purchase, and this just gets magnified even more when looking at highly media-literate Gen Z consumers who are very alert to inauthentic communication.

Spence (2002); Connelly et al., 2011, in view of the Signalling Theory, argued that in information asymmetry cases like that of organic skincare, quality cannot be predicated prior to consumption; hence, credible signals of authenticity represent costly signals to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Trust is conceptualized as having three dimensions by Mayer et al. (2016) – ability, benevolence, and integrity – and is perceived to mediate the effect of Instagram marketing stimuli on purchase intention. If friends or peers have reviewed or praised something in social commerce platforms, responsive brand communication, and influencer recommendations directly facilitated trust, then this has an easy tie with purchase intent (Uchino et al., 1996).

Theoretical Framework

The current study integrates six theories which are complementary to each other and predict the influence of Instagram marketing on the purchase intentions of Gen Z consumers. Following the Theory of Planned Behaviour, it is postulated that Instagram's content quality will elicit an attitude. In addition to this, influencer recommendations and UGC have been used to operationalize subjective norms, while Instagram Shopping features enhance the perceived behavioural control. The second theory, the Technology Acceptance Model, offers informative content in perceived usefulness and seamless integration for shopping in perceived ease of use. The Elaboration Likelihood Model distinguished between central processing, elicited by authentic, information-rich content, and peripheral processing, evoked by visual aesthetics and influencer appeal. The first is explained by the Parasocial Interaction Theory: this is how micro-influencers manage quasi-intimate relationships to enhance persuasion. Signalling Theory provides how authentic pieces of information signal quality attributes about their unobservable content. The sixth underpinning structural template is the Stimulus-Organism-Response Framework for Instagram marketing constructs. Within this model, the six constructs of Instagram marketing are considered stimuli, while Trust is considered a cognitive-affective organism state, and Purchase Intention is a behavioural response.

Literature Gap

Countless studies have been undertaken in the realm of Instagram marketing, with a few critical gaps in understanding Gen Z consumer behaviour; however, many such areas are largely under-explored. Most empirical research is conducted in countries of the West, hence hard to generalize for the emerging markets of South Asia, where cultural values, digital infrastructure, and income levels are different. On the peer-reviewed academic literature related to social media marketing, “Nepal has hardly been mentioned,” duly noted Bhind et al. (2023). Previous research has majorly looked at the constructs outlined in Instagram marketing in isolation. Using mixed methods and multivariate analysis

simultaneously on these six contributing correlates related to organic skincare for Nepal, throwing a completely new light with authenticity and trust as central constructs, has not yet been tried.

Research Methodology

Research Philosophy and Approach

The research has been based on a pragmatic philosophy along with mixed methods (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2011). The first pragmatic philosophical stand helps a researcher combine positivist quantitative measurement of relationships between various constructs of Instagram marketing and purchase intention with interpretivist exploration of managerial lived experiences and brand strategy. The second mixed methods design integrates deductive and inductive reasoning, which are part of the quantitative and qualitative strands. It is thereby set up to test a set of propositions derived from TPB, TAM, ELM, PIT, Signalling Theory, and S-O-R in the former and to let themes emerge in the latter without predetermined categories from the interview data.

Data Collection

Primary data were collected using two tools. One of them was a 63-item Likert scale questionnaire: 8 demographic screening items and 55 attitude statements covering the seven constructs. It was administered digitally over Google Forms in March 2026, with 71 Gen Z respondents in Nepal who were active on Instagram and well aware of Aloe Herbal. The measured construct variables measured the level of Instagram Marketing Exposure (IM, 6 items), Visual Content Quality (VC, 5), Influencer Marketing (INF, 5), Hashtags and UGC (HU, 5), Engagement Features (EF, 5), Authenticity (AU, 7), Trust (TR, 6), and Purchase Intention (PI, 8).

Two key informants; Nikita Giri, Content Creator, and PR Manager and Rogina Pokhrel, Aloe Herbal Organic Skincare, Founder, and Accountant, were arranged for semi-structured qualitative interviews. The interviews were conducted in the Nepali language, had a duration of 30–35 minutes, further translated into English by the researcher, with careful attention to the conceptual equivalence. In the secondary data, there were eight peer-reviewed articles that supported themes defined for triangulation with primary results.

Sampling

Purposive convenience sampling was applied on both the strands. The survey respondents were individuals from Gen Z, born between 1997 and 2012, living in Nepal, active in Instagram, and aware of Aloe Herbal. In total, 71 valid survey responses were obtained, which met the criterion for a minimum of 10 observations per predictor variable—yielding a minimum of 70 observations required for the seven-predictor regression model. The selection criteria for the two qualitative interviewees were their direct, substantive involvement in Aloe Herbal's Instagram marketing strategy and operations.

Data Analysis

The quantitative analysis consisted of five stages: descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations; bivariate correlation using Pearson's correlation between all the construct variables; multiple regression with Purchase Intention as a dependent variable and six Instagram marketing constructs and Trust as simultaneous predictors; analysis via the Variance Inflation Factor in diagnosing multicollinearity; and mediation analysis, using the procedures of Baron and Kenny (1986), to test Trust as a mediator. The entire analysis was based on computations similar to those of IBM SPSS (Pallant, 2020).

The data was then analysed based on a six-stage thematic analysis method proposed by Braun and Clarke in 2017. The entire research endeavour was ethically conducted, and measures such as informed consent, voluntary participation, assurance in anonymity, and protection of data were maintained.

Findings and Discussion

Qualitative Interview Findings

One of the most popular sentiments from the interviews that pointed to authenticity as the essence of Aloe Herbal's Instagram marketing philosophy, was consistency. The words of Nikita Giri further described that the brand had been very intentional in its approach to identifying with authentic, unfiltered

content that had been behind-the-scenes for so long, including things like sourcing ingredients, real customer transformation stories, and transparent influencer disclosure, rather than the polished, promotional aesthetic.

Rogina Pokhrel also shared this strategic orientation, underscoring an authentic voice that, according to him, was undecivable, part and parcel in showing them to be truly organically oriented and chemical-free oriented products.

Both the respondents held the opinion that Instagram Reels best fulfilled the commercially ideal format while engaging Gen Z consumers and creating sales-directed traffic. This was a second mechanism of engagement that built trust over time with organic ingredients by storytelling and developing educational content.

The influencer strategy was offered yet another reason as to why celebrities were not associated with in collaboration, while micro-influencers had been taken into comparatively larger schemes. More audience overlap, more authenticity, and credible parasocial relationships with Gen Z followers were the three reasons both respondents preferred micro-influencer collaborations over celebrity endorsements. This made User-Generated Content as the most potent mechanism for enhancing trust in a cultural context that was highly collectivistic such as Nepal, where society sees community social validation as the main signal for brand credibility.

Quantitative Survey Findings

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the survey composite variable scores ($n = 71$). The means of all constructs have been greater than 4.74 on a five-point Likert scale, indicating remarkably high uniform agreement among the brand-engaged and Instagram-active purposive sample participants. An overall high Composite mean was also found concerning Authenticity, closely followed by Influencer Marketing and Engagement Features.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Survey Composite Variable Scores ($n = 71$)

Construct	Variable Code	Composite Mean (SD)
Instagram Marketing Exposure	IM	4.80 (0.41)
Visual Content Quality	VC	4.85 (0.38)
Influencer Marketing	INF	4.88 (0.35)
Hashtags and UGC	HU	4.84 (0.39)
Engagement Features	EF	4.89 (0.34)
Authenticity	AU	4.90 (0.33)
Trust	TR	4.88 (0.36)
Purchase Intention	PI	4.86 (0.37)

Source: Primary research (2026)

*Table 2: Pearson Correlations with Purchase Intention (** $p < 0.01$)*

Construct	Pearson r	Sig. (2-tailed)
Authenticity (AU)	0.667**	< 0.01
Hashtags & UGC (HU)	0.564**	< 0.01
Visual Content Quality (VC)	0.495**	< 0.01
Trust (TR)	0.492**	< 0.01
Engagement Features (EF)	0.456**	< 0.01
Instagram Marketing Exposure (IM)	0.401**	< 0.01
Influencer Marketing (INF)	0.316**	< 0.01

Source: Primary research (2026)

Table 3: Multiple Regression Results – Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention ($R^2 = 0.527$; $F = 10.042$, $p < 0.001$)

Predictor	β	t	Sig.
Authenticity (AU)	0.374	2.68	0.010**
Hashtags & UGC (HU)	0.198	1.44	0.155
Visual Content Quality (VC)	0.142	1.05	0.299
Trust (TR)	0.130	0.97	0.336
Engagement Features (EF)	0.118	0.87	0.388
Instagram Marketing Exposure (IM)	0.105	0.81	0.421
Influencer Marketing (INF)	0.089	0.68	0.499

** $p < 0.01$. Source: Primary research (2026)

Discussion of Core Findings

Three autonomous strings of evidence combined to suggest the same thing: that authenticity comes first in Instagram marketing for Aloe Herbal. The first was that both interviewees said outright that authenticity was the central brand communication principle. The second was that the correlation between Purchase Intention and Authenticity was bivariate ($r = 0.667$, $p < 0.01$), among the strongest of all constructs tested. Third, in the full model, Authenticity emerged as the single statistically significant predictor of Purchase Intention in this study ($\beta = 0.374$, $p = 0.010$), explaining the largest unique variance.

This was the commonality of the findings from methodologically diverse sources clearly – qualitative data from interviews, bivariate correlation, and multivariate regression – which signals stronger empirical evidence for the primacy of authenticity within the spatiotemporal frame of this study regarding a specific brand within a certain market.

This accords with the theory suggested by Connelly et al. (2011), positing that in organic skincare markets, characterised by information asymmetry, truly authentic content that derives from behind-the-scenes ingredient sourcing, actual customer testimonials, and transparent influencer disclosures acts as a credible signal in terms of quality that competitors are not able to easily imitate.

Information-rich content and the central route processing argument of ELM (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986) will lead to more enduring attitudinal changes and finally to enduring purchase intentions rather than to fleeting persuasive effects.

Following closely in second place was the second most predictable bivariate construct on the dependent: Hashtags and UGC ($r = 0.564$). Community-based social proof in a collectivist cultural context, such as that of Nepal, is the most important in building trust.

UGC is about going beyond basic satisfaction and evoking excitement that really sets Aloe Herbal apart, whose Instagram community focus convincingly overpowers the rest of the more deny competitive transactional promotional actions.

The bivariate relationship between influencer marketing and purchase intention stood at 0.316, which was the weakest of them all. This subtle finding, which was supported by several reference works, states that it is the quality of the influencer and not his quantity that elevates the intention of the Gen Z for making the purchase – specifically, the authenticity of the micro-influencer and the good match her or his audience has with Gen Z. In that way, authenticity and audience fit are expected to be the reasons for the greater increase of Gen Z in making the purchase, hence giving directly the basis for the strategic orientation of the management of Aloe Herbal to go for the marketing strategy of analysis done for competitor response, which is dependent on the evidence of source credibility like PIT and other forms of recommendations as witnessed by Giles (2002) and Audrezet et al. (2020), suggesting that the parasocial bonds with audiences from micro-influencers are stronger in comparison to celebrities.

Trust was conceptualized as an independent mediating variable but again failed to show statistical significance for the full model in multivariate analysis ($\beta = 0.130$, $p = 0.336$). This currently perceived

weak relationship may be a possible indication of a high level of multicollinearity between the variables: Authenticity and Trust, whereby in a sample that is heavily engaged with brands, trust is generally high. This is consistent with Mayer et al.'s (2016) understanding of trust as a multi-dimensional construct that, in conditions of high authenticity, may be integrated into overall brand attitude rather than operating as a discrete cognitive step. Theme 1 was consolidated for further converging support that drives Gen Z purchase intentions based on authentic and visually compelling information (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020; Portal et al., 2019). Theme 2 confirms the commercial importance of interpersonal credibility and pseudo-social relationship of micro-influencers on brands (Lou & Yuan, 2019; De Veirman et al., 2017).

Theme 3 has confirmed the way that hashtags and UGC can act on the basis for social proof is created through them, and the discoverability of the brand includes the process of activating purchase intentions (Ki & Kim, 2019).

Theme 4 is mostly about interactive engagement and educational content as primary brand loyalty drivers for Gen Z in the long term, which will drive an increase in sales (Phua et al., 2017; Casalo et al., 2020).

Conclusions

This study will provide its original empirical evidence on how marketing through Instagram is relatively very big and quite influential in theory on the buying intentions of Generation Z toward Aloe Herbal Organic Skincare in Nepal. The most reasonable combined regression model explained 52.7% of the variance in purchase intentions, with perceived authenticity as the dominant driver. This finding is consistent and robust across qualitative, bivariate, multivariate, and secondary analysis evidence streams, constituting the study's most important empirical contribution.

It is done based on three points: the first ever systematic mixed-methods empirical analysis on Instagram marketing and buying intentions of Generation Z on organic skincare products in Nepal; second, that integrated six theory frameworks combined from other theories can prove consumer behaviour on Instagram in emerging markets; and third, it develops practically grounded strategic recommendations for Gen Z organic skincare brands looking at using Instagram marketing as a tool for penetrating markets within South Asia.

Recommendations

This essay articulates four strategic suggestions for Aloe Herbal and other organic brands in the same category. The very first is systematizing authenticity around a unifying brand principle of governance in each facet of Instagram content architecture—behind the scenes during ingredient source, consumer transformational real stories, influencer disclosures, and engagements in the public. The second pitfall can be avoided by setting up a structured, long-run micro-influencer partnership program with Gen Z creators from Nepal organically tied to the brand values, based on the PIT evidence showing significantly stronger parasocial bonds and positive effects on purchase intentions among micro-influencer audiences. Third, it should allow for complete integration of Instagram Shopping, with all types of direct product tagging in Reels and posts, to reduce transactional friction and turn inspired purchase intentions into actual sales (Davis et al., 1989). Fourth, create a UGC Amplification Program: Monitor the branded hashtags, make monthly incentivized content creation campaigns, and distribute a series of spotlights for best customer conversion to build on social proof and community-driven brand credibility.

Limitations and Future Research

It is noteworthy that purposive convenience sampling has the following limitations. Other than that, the results obtained cannot be, by large, generalized to the population of the Nepalese Gen Z. The sample is well balanced in terms of its representation between two genders; however, it is limited in its inference toward male Gen Z consumers. This potentially covers up differential construct effects because response clustering is reduced within the agreement range. In fact, the evidence for the qualitative strand is limited in that only two interviewees emerged from one organization. The design is cross-sectional; therefore, it does not have any longitudinal element to follow up on the causality of Instagram marketing influence.

Indeed, future research should point to cross-brand comparative studies that unravel effects related to a brand from those at the platform level; apply the structural equation modelling technique once and for all in testing the theoretical mediation model; experimental designs on manipulation of levels of authenticity, types of influencers, and visual quality to establish causality; panel data research on the longitudinal track of the effect of Instagram marketing as the digital ecosystem in Nepal evolves; and templates for cross-cultural comparison that will establish the centrality of authenticity, this time in South Asian and emerging market contexts other than India.

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