Decoding Digital Influence: A Systematic Review of How Social Media Shapes Generation Z's Apparel Purchase Decisions

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Abstract: This systematic literature review explores the complex influences of social media platforms on Generation Z's apparel purchasing behaviors. Recognized as digital natives, Gen Z consumers are shaped significantly by their immersive platform use, such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. These digital spaces have evolved from their original uses in communication to intricate commercial spaces, which foster impulsive buying, trend adoption, and the construction of identities through visual and interactive media. Based on over 50 scholarly works, using the PRISMA method for data extraction, this study synthesizes findings on key themes, including influencer marketing, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), user-generated content (UGC), and social commerce. The results reveal that short-form videos and live-stream shopping substantially increase purchase intent, especially via TikTok. Instagram remains influential due to its visual appeal and the credibility of micro-influencers among Gen Z, while YouTube offers educational support to reduce post-purchase dissonance and foster sustainable fashion buying. Importantly, Gen Z demonstrates a marked desire for authenticity, sustainability, and community belonging; however, these ideals are often moderated by economic realities. Cultural differences further influence platform use and the salience of values, which highlight the need for culturally sensitive marketing campaigns. This review contributes to the theoretical debate by updating well-known consumer behavior models, including the Theory of Planned Behavior and Parasocial Interaction Theory, in light of Gen Z's digital consumption patterns. It also identifies gaps in the existing literature, including the need for longitudinal research, standardization of authenticity measures, and coverage of underrepresented geographical regions. Overall, this study provides actionable insights for marketers who seek to align with the values and engagement mechanisms of Gen Z within an increasingly algorithm-driven fashion consumption environment.

Keywords: Generation Z, Social Media Marketing, Apparel Purchasing Behavior, Influencer Marketing, User-Generated Content (UGC), Social Commerce, TikTok, Instagram