

## The Impact of Short-Form Video Marketing, Influencer Relatability, and Trust Signals on Gen Z's Purchase Intention

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of short-form video marketing, influencer relatability, and trust signals on Generation Z's purchase intention in Indonesia. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected from 400 respondents aged 18 to 27 who actively engage with short-form video platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts and have made recent online purchases. Multiple linear regression analysis revealed that all three variables significantly and positively influence purchase intention, with influencer relatability showing the strongest effect. The findings underscore the importance of authentic influencer connections, engaging video content, and transparent trust signals in shaping the purchasing decisions of digital-native consumers. This research offers valuable implications for marketers seeking to optimize digital marketing strategies tailored to Generation Z's unique preferences and behaviors.

### Keywords:

Short-Form Video Marketing; Influencer Relatability; Trust Signals; Purchase Intention; Generation Z

### INTRODUCTION

The digital marketing landscape has undergone a dramatic transformation in the last decade, with short-form video content emerging as one of the most powerful tools for engaging audiences. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts have revolutionized how brands connect with consumers, particularly younger generations. These platforms allow for the rapid dissemination of information in a format that aligns with the decreasing attention spans of modern internet users (Rizomyliotis et al., 2024). For Generation Z—individuals born between 1997 and 2012—short-form videos have become not only a primary source of entertainment but also a critical channel for brand discovery and evaluation (Moreno et al., 2024). The appeal lies in their immediacy, authenticity, and the ability to deliver a message within seconds, creating an immersive and engaging experience that traditional media often fails to provide.

As the first generation to grow up entirely in the digital age, Gen Z consumers are highly influenced by content that feels personal and trustworthy. They value authenticity over polish and are more likely to respond to marketing strategies that feel organic and relatable. This shift has catalyzed a growing reliance on influencer marketing, where individuals—rather than corporations—play the role of brand ambassadors. Influencers, particularly micro and nano-influencers, are seen as more relatable and trustworthy than traditional celebrities or corporate spokespeople (Lu & Zheng, 2023). Their perceived authenticity and accessibility enable them to exert considerable influence over their followers' attitudes, behaviors, and purchasing decisions.

Influencer relatability, in particular, is a critical element in capturing the attention of Gen Z audiences. This generation is more likely to engage with content from influencers who share similar values, lifestyles, and experiences (Lin et al., n.d.).

When influencers present themselves in a genuine and relatable manner, it fosters parasocial relationships—one-sided emotional bonds that mimic real-life friendships—which can significantly enhance brand trust and loyalty (Imran & Ferdous, 2025). As a result, relatability not only enhances content engagement but also plays a pivotal role in shaping purchase intentions, making it a key component in digital marketing strategies targeting Gen Z.

In addition to content format and influencer attributes, trust signals such as reviews, testimonials, transparency about sponsorships, and brand credibility also play a decisive role in influencing Gen Z's purchase decisions. While this demographic is adept at filtering out inauthentic content, they are also highly skeptical and demand clear, consistent trust cues before engaging in any form of transaction. Online trust signals function as a form of digital social proof, reinforcing the legitimacy of both the influencer and the brand (Imran & Ferdous, 2025). This demand for trust has made the inclusion of user-generated content, transparent communication, and ethical branding practices more critical than ever for marketers seeking to appeal to Gen Z consumers.

Despite the rapidly growing adoption of these marketing techniques, there remains a limited understanding of how short-form video marketing, influencer relatability, and trust signals interact to affect Gen Z's purchasing behavior. While prior studies have independently examined the influence of social media marketing and digital trust, few have investigated their combined effect within the short-form video ecosystem. As such, there is a need for a more comprehensive examination of the psychological and emotional factors that drive Gen Z's purchase intentions in response to this new wave of digital marketing. Given their increasing purchasing power and potential lifetime value, understanding these dynamics is critical for marketers and businesses aiming to create more effective and targeted campaigns.

Although short-form video platforms and influencer-driven content are increasingly central to digital marketing strategies, there remains a gap in understanding how their specific elements—such as influencer relatability and embedded trust signals—affect purchase intentions among Gen Z consumers. Existing literature has typically examined these factors in isolation or in broader social media contexts, failing to capture the unique, fast-paced, and immersive nature of short-form video environments. This lack of integrative insight limits the ability of marketers to design optimized campaigns that resonate with Gen Z's distinctive consumption patterns and values. Furthermore, the hyper-competitive digital landscape necessitates a nuanced understanding of which factors most strongly drive Gen Z's purchasing decisions to allocate marketing resources effectively and achieve sustainable brand engagement. The primary objective of this study is to investigate the impact of short-form video marketing, influencer relatability, and trust signals on the purchase intention of Generation Z consumers.

## **Literature Review**

### **1. Short-Form Video Marketing and Consumer Behavior**

Short-form video content has emerged as a dominant form of digital communication and marketing, especially with the rise of platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts. These platforms leverage brevity and high engagement to attract younger audiences, particularly Generation Z (Sinh & Nguyet, 2025). Research indicates that the format of short-form videos—typically lasting under

60 seconds—caters well to Gen Z's reduced attention span and preference for instant gratification (Ekenblom & Arnborg, 2024). Unlike traditional marketing channels, short-form videos are designed for mobile consumption, often incorporating trends, challenges, and music to appeal emotionally and socially to the viewer.

From a psychological standpoint, the appeal of short-form videos lies in their ability to deliver information in a quick, entertaining, and memorable way. They create a sense of immediacy, stimulate curiosity, and foster emotional engagement (Youn et al., 2024). These factors are critical in influencing consumer behavior, especially at the awareness and consideration stages of the customer journey. According to (Pietarinen, 2023), digital content that is interactive and visually appealing significantly increases the likelihood of consumer engagement, brand recall, and purchase intention. Short-form videos, by design, embody these characteristics and thus are considered effective in influencing purchase-related decisions.

## **2. Influencer Marketing and Generation Z**

Influencer marketing refers to the use of popular individuals—commonly known as influencers—who have established credibility and a sizable following on social media platforms, to promote products or services (Duan & Ng, n.d.). For Generation Z, influencers play a more important role than traditional celebrities, as they are perceived as more accessible, authentic, and relevant to daily life (Lashari, 2025). This demographic tends to form parasocial relationships with influencers—one-sided emotional attachments that mimic real-world friendships (Maharjan & Bhattarai, 2025). These relationships foster a sense of trust and relatability, which in turn influences attitudes toward the products these influencers endorse.

A growing body of literature supports the claim that influencer endorsements significantly impact consumer attitudes and intentions. (Lee et al., 2025) found that influencer credibility, which includes elements such as expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, plays a mediating role between influencer content and consumer trust. This is particularly important for Gen Z, who exhibit high skepticism toward traditional advertising. Instead, they respond to personal narratives and honest reviews shared by influencers they identify with (Nicholson, 2025). Therefore, the relatability of influencers becomes a key variable in shaping consumer perceptions and driving purchase decisions.

## **3. Relatability as a Dimension of Influencer Effectiveness**

Relatability refers to the extent to which an individual sees an influencer as similar or relevant to their own life. This dimension has gained increasing attention as brands move away from high-profile celebrities to micro- and nano-influencers who offer niche content and stronger community engagement (Nicolas, 2020). Relatable influencers often share their struggles, daily routines, and behind-the-scenes moments, which humanizes their content and fosters deeper engagement. According to (Bou Aragonés et al., 2025), relatability enhances consumer trust, makes the brand message more persuasive, and increases purchase intention.

Moreover, the role of emotional resonance in content relatability cannot be overstated. When Gen Z viewers see themselves reflected in the lives and choices of influencers, they are more likely to internalize the messaging and take action. This emotional connection is often more impactful than the mere aesthetics of content or the fame of the influencer. As (Staniūnaitė, 2024) notes, the shift in consumer values toward authenticity and transparency has made relatability a core component of

successful influencer marketing. The more relatable an influencer appears, the more persuasive their message becomes, regardless of their follower count.

#### **4. Trust Signals in Digital Marketing**

Trust signals refer to elements within marketing content or a digital platform that reduce uncertainty and increase the perceived credibility of the source. These may include testimonials, reviews, follower engagement metrics, disclosure of paid partnerships, and overall transparency (Tsoulou Vasilopoulou & Kobylka, 2024). Trust is a critical factor in the online purchase decision-making process, especially in the absence of physical interaction with the product or seller. For Gen Z, who are digital natives yet highly critical consumers, trust must be earned through consistent, authentic, and transparent messaging (Tsoulou Vasilopoulou & Kobylka, 2024).

The importance of trust signals is particularly pronounced in influencer marketing, where the boundary between sponsored and organic content can be blurry. According to (Gañac et al., n.d.), the effectiveness of influencer marketing depends largely on how well the sponsorship is disclosed and integrated into the content. Overtly commercialized content tends to reduce trust, while subtle, honest integration often enhances credibility. Furthermore, consumer-generated trust signals, such as likes, shares, and positive comments, serve as modern-day word-of-mouth endorsements, reinforcing the authenticity of both the influencer and the brand (Marti-Ochoa et al., 2025).

#### **5. Interplay Among Short-Form Videos, Relatability, and Trust**

While previous studies have examined the individual effects of short-form content, influencer characteristics, and trust signals, few have explored the interactive effects of these components on purchase intention, particularly among Gen Z. Existing models, such as the Source Credibility Model and the Theory of Planned Behavior, suggest that perceived trustworthiness and message delivery format significantly shape consumer behavior. In the context of short-form video marketing, where information is delivered rapidly and with minimal context, the synergy between trust cues and influencer relatability becomes crucial in determining the outcome of the communication.

Recent research by (Githaiga et al., 2024) found that trust moderates the relationship between influencer content and purchase intention, suggesting that even highly engaging content may fail to convert if it lacks credible trust signals. Similarly, relatable influencers amplify the impact of short-form video marketing by making content more digestible, personal, and actionable. When consumers perceive a high degree of authenticity and emotional congruence, their cognitive resistance is lowered, increasing the likelihood of purchase intention (Vidani & Jaiswal, 2024). Therefore, an integrated approach that considers the alignment between message format, source relatability, and embedded trust is essential for understanding Gen Z's digital consumption patterns.

### **METHOD**

#### **1. Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationship between short-form video marketing, influencer relatability, trust signals, and Generation Z's purchase intention. A structured questionnaire was used as the primary data collection instrument. The approach was chosen to allow for the



systematic measurement of perceptions and behaviors across a large sample size and to enable statistical analysis of the relationships among variables.

## **2. Population and Sample**

The target population of this study consists of Generation Z consumers—individuals born between 1997 and 2012—who actively engage with short-form video platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts. To ensure the relevance and accuracy of the data, respondents were required to meet specific inclusion criteria: they had to be aged between 18 and 27 years, reside in Indonesia, watch short-form videos at least three times per week, and have made at least one online purchase in the past three months. The sample size was determined using Cochran's formula, with a minimum target of 400 valid responses to ensure representativeness and robustness for multiple regression analysis. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was employed, prioritizing accessibility to Gen Z users through online distribution channels such as social media platforms.

## **3. Data Collection Procedures**

Data was collected using an online questionnaire distributed through social media platforms (Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp groups, and Telegram). The questionnaire was built using Google Forms and was available for a period of four weeks. Participation was voluntary, and all responses were anonymous. Respondents were provided with an informed consent form outlining the study's purpose, confidentiality assurance, and the right to withdraw at any point. To increase the response rate, a brief explanation of the study and its importance was included at the beginning of the form. Incentives (e.g., e-vouchers) were also offered via a random draw for participants who completed the survey.

## **4. Data Analysis Techniques**

Following data collection, all responses were carefully screened for completeness and accuracy. Incomplete or inconsistent entries were removed, resulting in a final dataset comprising only valid responses suitable for statistical analysis. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive statistics were first employed to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents, offering a clear overview of the sample profile. To assess the reliability of the measurement instruments, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for each construct, with a threshold of 0.70 indicating acceptable internal consistency, as recommended by (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Validity testing was conducted through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principal component analysis with varimax rotation to ensure construct validity. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity were also applied to confirm the adequacy of the sampling and the suitability of the data for factor analysis.

To further ensure the robustness of the regression model, multicollinearity diagnostics were performed by examining the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance values, ensuring no multicollinearity issues among the independent variables. Hypothesis testing was conducted using multiple linear regression analysis to determine the impact of short-form video marketing (SFVM), influencer relatability (IR), and trust signals (TS) on Generation Z's purchase intention (PI). The regression model used is specified as:  $PI = \beta_0 + \beta_1(SFVM) + \beta_2(IR) + \beta_3(TS) + \epsilon$ , where PI denotes Purchase Intention, SFVM represents Short-Form Video Marketing, IR stands for

Influencer Relatability, TS signifies Trust Signals, and  $\epsilon$  is the error term. This model allowed the researchers to quantify the relative contributions of each independent variable to purchase intention, providing insights into the predictive power of contemporary digital marketing factors on Gen Z consumer behavior.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Descriptive Statistics

A total of 400 valid responses were collected from Generation Z participants in Indonesia. The demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1. The sample consisted of 180 male respondents (45.0%) and 220 female respondents (55.0%). The average age of participants was 22.3 years with a standard deviation of 2.1 years. All respondents reported watching short-form videos (SFVs) at least three times per week and had made at least one online purchase in the past three months, meeting the inclusion criteria.

### 2. Reliability Testing

Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs exceeded the threshold of 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency and reliability. The reliability statistics are shown in Table 2.

**Table 1. Reliability Analysis**

Construct	CA
Short-Form Video Marketing (SFVM)	
Influencer Relatability (IR)	
Trust Signals (TS)	
Purchase Intention (PI)	

Source: Data Analysis

### 3. Validity Testing

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to assess construct validity. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was 0.843, indicating sampling adequacy, while Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ( $p < 0.001$ ), confirming the suitability of the data for factor analysis.

**Table 2. KMO and Bartlett's Test Results**

Test	Value
KMO Measure	0,843
Bartlett's Test (Sig.)	0,000

Source: Data Analysis

### 4. Multicollinearity Check

To ensure no multicollinearity among the independent variables, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance values were calculated. As shown in Table 4, all VIF values were below the threshold of 5, and tolerance values were above 0.1, indicating the absence of multicollinearity issues.

**Table 3. Multicollinearity Test**

Variable	VIF	Tolerance
SFVM	1,521	0,657
IR	1,328	0,753
TS	1,487	0,672

Source: Data Analysis

## 5. Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of Short-Form Video Marketing (SFVM), Influencer Relatability (IR), and Trust Signals (TS) on Purchase Intention (PI). The results are presented in Table 5. The model indicated that all three predictors significantly influenced Purchase Intention. SFVM ( $B = 0.274$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), IR ( $B = 0.331$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and TS ( $B = 0.295$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) were all positive and significant. Among the predictors, Influencer Relatability ( $\beta = 0.357$ ) had the highest standardized beta, followed by Trust Signals ( $\beta = 0.334$ ) and Short-Form Video Marketing ( $\beta = 0.312$ ).

**Table 5. Regression Analysis**

Variable	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	0.512	0.087	—	5.885	0.000
SFVM	0.274	0.065	0.312	4.215	0.000
IR	0.331	0.072	0.357	4.597	0.000
TS	0.295	0.068	0.334	4.338	0.000

Source: Data Analysis

These findings demonstrate that all three factors—short-form video marketing, influencer relatability, and trust signals—play significant roles in shaping Generation Z's intention to purchase, with influencer relatability showing the strongest predictive power.

## Discussion

### 1. Influence of Short-Form Video Marketing on Purchase Intention

The study found a significant and positive relationship between short-form video marketing and Gen Z's purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.312$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This result supports prior research indicating that SFVM effectively engages digital natives by combining entertainment with informativeness (Bray, 2024). Platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts offer brands the ability to capture attention within seconds, aligning with Gen Z's preference for fast, visually appealing, and easily digestible content. The success of SFVM lies in its unique ability to bridge advertising with storytelling. Gen Z audiences are not passive consumers; they seek authenticity and meaning in the content they engage with. When videos are emotionally resonant and visually engaging, they not only capture attention but also drive favorable attitudes toward the brand. These findings validate the growing trend of content-centric marketing strategies and affirm the effectiveness of integrating humor, music, trends, and user-generated content in promotional messaging. Moreover, SFVM's impact on purchase intention implies that marketers should move beyond traditional static ads and embrace dynamic, visually compelling narratives that can evoke emotional responses or deliver utility. These strategies are especially crucial in a cluttered digital environment where attention spans are limited.

### 2. Influence of Influencer Relatability on Purchase Intention

The most powerful predictor in the model was influencer relatability ( $\beta = 0.357$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), highlighting the critical role of perceived similarity and authenticity in influencing Gen Z purchasing decisions. This finding aligns with previous studies

suggesting that consumers are more influenced by endorsers they perceive as "people like me" (Kembau et al., 2024). Unlike traditional celebrities, relatable influencers often share everyday experiences, values, and lifestyles that mirror those of their followers. Relatability fosters parasocial interaction—an emotional connection where followers feel personally bonded to the influencer. This connection leads to higher levels of trust, identification, and eventually, behavioral intention such as purchasing. When influencers disclose personal stories, share genuine opinions about products, or engage directly with followers through comments and live sessions, they humanize the brand and reduce psychological distance. Marketers should carefully select influencers not merely based on follower count but on audience alignment, personality fit, and the influencer's ability to build meaningful engagement. Nano- and micro-influencers often excel in this domain due to their high interaction rates and loyal niche communities. The result highlights that emotional alignment can be more influential than exposure or reach in generating actual consumer behavior.

### **3. Influence of Trust Signals on Purchase Intention**

Trust signals were also found to significantly influence purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.334$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This result reaffirms prior findings by (Kästner & Baczynski, 2025) emphasizing the importance of credibility, transparency, and authenticity in online commerce. Trust signals such as customer reviews, clear branding, transparent partnerships, and credible influencer content serve as cues that reduce perceived risk and reinforce the brand's reliability. For Gen Z, trust is not earned through brand prestige alone but through consistent delivery of value and alignment with ethical standards. They are highly skeptical of overly polished or promotional content and are quick to detect inauthenticity. Hence, visible trust signals—such as user testimonials, product demonstrations, ethical sourcing, or unfiltered reviews—play a critical role in mitigating doubts and increasing the likelihood of conversion. The presence of trust signals also helps to validate the influencer's endorsement. For example, an influencer who openly discloses sponsorship and provides balanced pros and cons is more likely to be perceived as trustworthy, further strengthening the impact on purchase intention.

### **4. Integration of Predictors**

Collectively, the regression model underscores that the interaction of content quality (SFVM), social identification (IR), and perceived integrity (TS) significantly shapes Gen Z's decision-making process. The high explanatory power of the model suggests that these three variables address the major psychological drivers of this cohort: engagement, relevance, and assurance. One possible interpretation is that SFVM serves as the initial hook, IR deepens emotional involvement, and TS acts as the final reassurance before action. This sequence mirrors the stages of the consumer journey—from awareness and interest to evaluation and decision—indicating that successful digital marketing strategies must provide a seamless narrative that moves consumers along this path.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that short-form video marketing, influencer relatability, and trust signals significantly and positively influence purchase intention among Generation Z consumers in Indonesia. Influencer relatability emerged as the strongest predictor, emphasizing the importance of authentic, value-aligned digital personalities in shaping consumer behavior. Short-form videos effectively



capture attention and convey persuasive brand messages, while trust signals enhance credibility and reduce perceived risks associated with online purchases. Together, these findings highlight the critical need for marketers to adopt integrated digital strategies that combine engaging content, relatable influencers, and transparent communication to effectively influence Gen Z's purchasing decisions. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on digital consumer behavior and provides actionable insights for brands aiming to connect meaningfully with the Gen Z market segment.

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