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The Impact of Influencer Marketing on the Buying Behavior of Young Consumers: A Case Study based on the Generation Z of Bangladesh

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Abstract
With the growth of social media, influencer marketing has become a major digital marketing tactic to hook young audiences. Although the practice of influencer marketing is popular, there is still a lack of empirical evidence that proves its effectiveness in influencing the purchasing decisions of Z generation customers in emerging economies. This study aims at analyzing the influence of exposure to influencer marketing on brand awareness and brand perception on the buying behaviour of the Generation Z consumers in Bangladesh. Drawing on the Source Credibility Theory, a conceptual framework was developed to explain the relationships among the study variables. A mixed method research design approach was taken, where primary quantitative data was gathered using a structured questionnaire from 110 respondents of the Generation Z targeted from the colleges and universities of Dhaka by convenience sampling technique. Descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analysis were used to analyze the data. The results suggest that the exposure to influencer marketing and brand awareness both positively affect the buying behavior of Generation Z consumers, with influencer marketing exposure having the greatest effect. The latter, however, the brand perception does not significantly affect the purchasing behavior when compared to the other explanatory variables, whereas the brand perception is positive. The results highlight the increasing role of influencers in the world of social media for improving brand visibility and influencing consumer buying decisions. The study makes a significant and meaningful contribution to the existing literature of influencer marketing as it offers empirical evidence from Bangladesh where the study of the behaviour of the Generation Z consumer is still limited. The results provide valuable insights for marketers and organizations, emphasizing the need for strategic partnerships with trusted influencers and the creation of genuine social media marketing strategies to enhance brand visibility and consumer interactions in today's digital era.

Keywords: *Influencer marketing, Generation Z, Buying behaviour, Brand awareness, Brand perception, Social media marketing, Bangladesh.*

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I. Introduction

Today's modern marketing tries to find out the opportunities for the consumers so that they can meet their needs and wants in the best possible manner (Ferrell, 2021). To meet the exceptional expectations of the young consumers, a number of marketing tactics are used such as, holistic marketing, guerilla marketing, digital marketing, green marketing, social media marketing and so on (Wind and Mahajan, 2001). Over the years digital and social media marketing has achieved the popularity among the young generation because of the advancement and availability of technologies (Sawicki, 2016).

Generation Z is considered as the young adults whose birth year is from 1995 to 2012 (Jha, 2020). The general features of this generation are education level is high, innovative and creative in nature, and technology savvy and that is why they are known as the children of the Digital Age. As they are technologically updated, they try to solve their problems and fulfill their needs with the support of digital advancements (Jha, 2020). In Bangladesh, 9.3% of the people falls in the range of the age group of 13-17 whereas 13.5% of the people falls in the range of the age group of 18-24 and about 17% of the people falls in the range of the age group of 25-34.

That means more that 30% of the population belongs to the Generation Z in Bangladesh (Datareportal.com, 2023).

At the beginning of 2023 the total users of internet were about 66.94 million in Bangladesh, while internet diffusion rinsed at 38.9 percent. In January 2023, Bangladesh had about 44.70 million social media consumers, which is equivalent to about 26.0 percent of the total people. The amount of active cellular mobile connections was about 179.9 million in Bangladesh at the starting of 2023, which was corresponding to 104.6 percent of the total people in Bangladesh (Datareportal.com, 2023).

Most recently the marketing strategy which is leading the digital platform is known as 'Influencer Marketing' defined by (Campbell & Farrell, 2020) as influencer marketing is a form of social media marketing in which brands partner with social media influencers to communicate persuasive messages and influence consumer behavior. It focuses on influencing consumers purchasing decision and it has power over prospective consumers and standing marketing undertakings around these consumers to create a brand awareness to the bigger marketplace (De Jans, Van de Sompel, De Veirman and Hudders, 2020). Because of having a great possibility to reach the young consumers, influencers provoke the organizations to collaborate with them and use them as an effective promotional tool (Abidin, 2015). A number of study has already been performed to understand the idea of influencer marketing, how do consumers consider the influencers and the impact of influencer marketing to the company performance (Backaler and Shankman, 2018; Coll, 2019; Genú, 2019; Levin, 2019). The findings of previous studies says that influencer marketing is much more cost efficient and this new idea of promoting a brand is accepted by the young adults whole heartedly rather than traditional advertising (Ye et al., 2021).

The basic media of influencer marketing is social media (Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, Twitter) and through this media influencers can gather a huge number of followers and subscribers (De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders, 2017; Harrigan, Daly, Coussement, Lee, Soutar and Evers, 2021). As mentioned earlier, in January 2023, Bangladesh had about 44.70 million social media consumers and the amount of social media user seemed very different from the previous years. But it is noteworthy that from the sources the number is calculated needs to be revised as it is changing over the time (Datareportal.com, 2023). Consumers of young generation become fascinated by all the contents influencers share on their social platform. Influencers creates an impression about their personality and lifestyles and thus their followers starts to admire and trust them (De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders, 2017; Harrigan, Daly, Coussement, Lee, Soutar and Evers, 2021). This attachment fosters the process of promoting and convincing the audience of the influencers and gets the desired brand responsiveness and build a strong brand perception. Ultimately the influencers are leading the young consumers towards changing their buying behavior (Dwivedi, Ismagilova, Hughes, Carlson, Filieri, Jacobson, Jain, Karjaluoto, Kefi, Krishen, Kumar, Rahman, Raman, Rauschnabel, Rowley, Salo, Tran, and Wang, 2020). The major factors those are driving the young consumers to be influenced by the influencers are the connection they make with the consumers, the level of trust they create and the expert opinion they are providing through sharing their experiences (Sudha & Sheena, 2017) and that is why the social media influencer marketing has emerged as the effective communication tool for the brands to get positive impact on the buying decision making of the young consumers (Singh, 2021).

Influencer Marketing

By utilizing the credibility and engaged online fan base of a chosen few individuals, this one of a kind digital marketing technique has become the world's number one of the most reliable to influence customer buying behaviors. Research has already determined a good deal about influencer marketing, even as far back as Freberg, et al., (2011) have defined social media influencers as a type of independent, third-party endorser that alters audience perception through digital social networks. In addition to Freberg et al.'s work, it has since been shown that the type of influencer used has an impact on how people feel and purchase regarding a brand, for De Veirman et al. (2017) showed that a large number of followers (size) and perception of fame among followers influenced perception and buying behavior, as long as the follower believed that the person wasn't posing for commercial gain.

It's been demonstrated that followers look for both information and entertainment from influencer generated content (Lou and Yuan, 2019) and feel they know and are similar to the influencers that they interact with and support.

More recently, evidence supports the premise that consumers react more favorably to brands endorsed by people that they perceive as trustworthy (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017), to people they feel are real and authentic rather than paid celebrities, (Schouten et al., 2020) and that there is an increase in the perceived importance of credibility and genuineness in influencing behavior, (Ki et al., 2020). Indeed, a large segment of younger consumers including both Gen Z and Millennials are more influenced by these social media celebrities due to their perceived authenticity (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017), and many people even feel a connection with the influencer that goes deeper than marketing efforts with traditional spokespeople (Sokolova & Kefi,

2020), suggesting that while consumers will trust real opinions of individuals that are trusted with their perceptions, they will follow them even more closely as a friend in spirit.

Generation Z Buying Behaviour

Generation Z buying behaviour means those behaviours of people aged 1997 to 2012 of deciding when, if, how and where to buy goods or services and when they are using their purchasing rights. Like previous generation Z's purchasing behavior has significantly affected by the advent of new technology, social interaction, influencers' opinion, integrity, and personal online experience (Li & Hassan, 2023). Generation Z consumers purchasing behaviour is highly digitalized and the frequent usage of social media platforms and interaction among the digital platforms has become the determinant of their purchasing behavior.

This is generation Z is technologically literate and seeks for purchasing information digitally and pays considerable attention to ethical brands, transparent companies and socially sustainable companies (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

Unlike the purchasing behavior of prior generations, members of this cohort depend largely on the opinions of their influencers, consumer reviews, and word-of-mouth to display their willingness to purchase and reduce the decision risks associated with buying products (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). Previous studies demonstrate that generation Z prefer interactional and digitally-savvy experiences for purchasing and also are more susceptible to the social engagement and personalization strategies that enhance their purchase (Priporas et al., 2017). Several researchers also found that social media usage played a crucial part in the purchasing decision making for generation Z due to which the interaction of social media and the decision of generation Z are greatly impacted (Dabija et al., 2018). Furthermore, emotionally appealing and visually impressive digital contents make the members of this generation to positively interact with the brand and have a greater tendency to purchase (Szymkowiak et al., 2021).

According to a recent systematic review by Lim et al. (2024), influencers, social media use, online purchasing, sustainability, authentic engagement, and consumer to consumer interaction have a substantial influence on the purchase behaviors of Gen Z consumers.

Besides these, Li & Hassan (2023) also said that three most influential factor that predict the behavior of Generation Z consumers are the effectiveness of influencers, trust through the internet and the experience of the online purchase. The literature available is unanimous in identifying the effect of technology on consumer purchase decision (Kotler & Keller, 2022; Solomon, 2023). According to Fromm & Read (2018), Generation Z consumers are inclined to prefer brands that present with innovative means to achieve customer engagement, authentic interaction and sustainable ways.

Thus the above studies highlight the crucial role of social media and online engagement on the buying behavior of the Gen Z. But more empirical study are needed in regard to the purchasing behavior of Gen Z, specifically in a developing countries, for example in Bangladesh context.

Influencer marketing exposure and buying behaviour:

Influencer marketing exposure has recently played an important role in the purchasing decisions of Gen Z consumers (Lou & Yuan, 2019). According to several earlier studies, when the consumers are exposed to influencer content several times, it leads to an increased purchase inclination by building up credibility and increasing trust toward the information disseminated through the online platforms (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Influencer marketing impacts on attitude toward the brand and purchase intention when consumer perceived the message sender as trustworthy and famous when engaged with the content.

The personal characteristics of the influencer are very crucial for the success of influencer marketing as when the consumers consider an influencer as trustworthy, it is likely that they would buy whatever is suggested by the influencer (De Veirman et al., 2017).

The Generation Z perceived influencer content as a reliable and authentic medium and consequently their buying intentions and inclination for impulse buying tend to grow (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). Moreover, other studies argue that influencer marketing engagement fosters positive relationship between customers and brands, thus creating the impact on purchase behavior (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). For example, Ki et al. (2020) said that people who consider the message provider as authentic and famous are more prone to buy their product. It is evident from the literature that influencer marketing exposure increase purchase intention by building up trust and engaging experience of the buyer as well as increasing the reliability of brand for this generation.

Yet, most of these previous studies have concentrated on the impact of influencer marketing exposure and its subsequent effect on the purchase intention of generation Z in the developed country context.

Hence, there is still much to investigate and discover about this relationship in emerging markets like Bangladesh where research in this area are sparse and under-researched.

Buyer Behavior and Brand Awareness

Brand awareness has been identified as one of the major factors that can affect purchasing behaviour because it enables people to recognise and recall a brand when deciding to buy something (Keller, 1993). High brand awareness makes the choice process easier to make which leads to a higher purchase intention and the choice of that brand (Aaker, 1996). In marketing, one of the ways to build a brand is by using social media to interact with the brand and its customers, thereby increasing the brand's visibility. Hutter et al. (2013) explain that when customers are actively engaged with the brand on social media, it raises their brand awareness which further boosts their purchase intention and loyalty. Likewise, social media marketing operations have been proven to drive brand awareness and visibility, thus reducing the gap between a business and its consumers, and affecting the purchasing behavior of consumers (Bilgin, 2018). Seo and Park (2018), on the other hand, found that the relationship between brand awareness and buying behavior is positive, and brand image is a mediator between brand awareness and purchase intention, which is consistent with the above-mentioned study. Foroudi (2019) noted that the level of brand consciousness affects customers' decisions to buy the brand, and creates a sense of brand value, and thus increases the Trust of the customers. Overall, the majority of researchers have concluded that brand awareness is significant in influencing the purchase intention and brand loyalty through increasing level of awareness and trust. Although there is a well-established body of research on the influence of brand awareness in the developed nations, there is not enough research in the emerging markets, especially among young consumers. The above discussion has justified the study of effect of brand awareness on purchasing behavior of the young people of Bangladesh.

Brand Perception and Buyer Behaviour

One of the main concepts, which affects the purchasing behaviour of a consumer, is brand perception. It's the perception and assessment of the consumer towards the goods or services of the brand. It has been established that in case a consumer holds a positive attitude towards the brand they are more likely to opt for it while making their purchase decisions (Keller, 1993). Likewise, positive brand perceptions can also create brand equity by increasing consumer trust, quality and preference which translate to their actual purchase behaviour (Aaker, 1996). There are considerable associations between brand perception and purchasing. Perceptions of positive things about the brand trigger attachment that then triggers increased purchase intentions (Faircloth et al., 2001). However, Chi et al. (2009) argue that people buy what they want and hence the positive perception of a brand will lead to increased purchase intention because of buyer liking of a particular brand image. The activities of social media influence the perception of consumers about the brand, which in turn affects the buying behavior (Bilgin, 2018). Foroudi (2019) found that consumers are more inclined to purchase from a company that they trust and value. Schivinski and Dąbrowski (2016) revealed that user-generated and firm-generated social media contents impact on the consumer's brand perception, which consequently influences his/her purchase intention. To sum up, the above studies found that the good brand perception is a predictor of purchase behavior via trust, value, brand preference and purchase intent. But little research is available on the effect of brand perception on the purchasing behavior of the GenZ in the emerging economy of Bangladesh. This study aims to contribute to this lack of knowledge

Source Credibility Theory

The theory of source credibility (SCT) is adopted to describe and explain the impact of influencer marketing on customer buying behaviors. SCT was first proposed by Hovland et al., (1953), that the reception's acceptance of the message is influenced by the credibility of the source. Simply put, information from someone with a good reputation, a reliable source and is trusted is going to be more successful in persuading. Ohanian (1990) in his study determined three credibility factors affecting consumers' attitude and purchase intention: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Likewise, Erdogan (1999) has reported that credibility of an endorser enhances the effectiveness of a marketing communication since it establishes a positive image of the advertised brand among the consumers. In social media, this theory is adopted by the social media influencers who wish to boost the chances of their influence in the buying behavior of their followers. For example, Lou and Yuan (2019) reported that the credibility of influencers is important in shaping customers' willingness to purchase products being promoted by the influencers. The researchers finally found that credibility helps foster positive consumer responses to brands, leading to greater trust, attitudes and purchase intent. Sokolova and Kefi (2020) provide similar findings, which indicate that influencer marketing builds parasocial relationships, thus impacting buyers' trust and purchase intentions. The results obtained by Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) confirm the previously made conclusions of Lou and Yuan (2019) and Sokolova and Kefi (2020). Their research demonstrates that Generation Z perceives social media influencers as more authentic and trustworthy than conventional celebrities and hence purchase the promoted products by the influencers. In general, these studies have been able to prove that SCT is a good theoretical framework in explaining the effect of influencer

marketing on consumers' buying behavior. Hence, this paper will take the help of this theory to review the impact of influencer marketing on the purchasing behavior Gen Z in Bangladesh.

With the emergence of the concept of influencer marketing in the past few years, there has been a lot of discussions and some empirical evidence is available mostly from developed countries and a few in emerging countries like Bangladesh. In addition, prior research has examined purchase intention and consumer attitude, but few researchers have examined the influence of influencer marketing exposure, brand awareness and consumer perception of the brand on consumer buying behaviour simultaneously among generation Z consumers. However, despite this boom of social media applications among Gen-Z in Bangladesh, not much has been done on the influence of these factors on consumers' buying behavior. This study proposes to explore how exposure to the influencer marketing, awareness about the brand, and perception of the brand can affect consumers' purchasing behavior.

When you read the four sub-section literature reviews together instead of separately, four gaps will stand out. First, there is a geographic bias and a market development bias as the empirical foundations for influencer marketing, brand awareness and brand perception research are limited to advanced economies, while in Bangladesh, a country ranked among the fastest-growing social media markets in South Asia, there is only a few studies (which is noted separately in the Influencer Marketing Exposure, Brand Awareness, and Brand Perception sub-sections, and restated at the end of the paper). Secondly, a gap specific to the population, as empirical evidence on the behavior of Generation Z in Bangladesh compared to other developed countries' Generation Z remains limited, as explicitly stated in the end of the Generation Z Buying Behavior sub-section. Third, an integrative or model-level gap: reviewed studies are mostly devoted to the analysis of the influence of influencer marketing exposure, brand awareness and brand perception as separate predictors of purchase behavior, and none of the studies test all three constructs in a single model to measure how much each construct is related to the other and how much they influence the same outcome variable; it is this gap that the closing paragraph of the original Introduction calls for. Fourth, a theoretical-application gap: Although there are several solid empirical studies on the validity of Source Credibility Theory, it has rarely been used to explain the effects of exposure, brand awareness, and brand perception simultaneously in a single emerging market context, such as the context of Generation Z. All these four gaps that have been described above warrant an integrated study, based on Source Credibility Theory, to test the interaction and relative influence of influencer marketing exposure, brand awareness and brand perception on the buying behavior of Generation Z consumers in Bangladesh which this study aims to fill in.

II. Conceptual Framework

This study adopts a conceptual framework based on the literature related to influencer marketing and consumer behaviour to explain the purchase behaviour of the Generation Z in Bangladesh. It has been suggested from previous studies that when the consumer is exposed to influencer marketing, it is likely to have an impact on the consumer's purchasing decision, thereby boosting brand awareness and improving the perception of the brand (De Veirman et al., 2017; Singh, 2021). Consumers exposed to a lot of influencer content are more likely to identify the brand, have positive brand attitudes, and have greater purchase intent and purchase behavior.

Based on the Source Credibility Theory, the researchers put the hypothesis that the recommender of marketing communication is the credible source and their recommendations affect the attitude and purchase behavior of consumers. As a result, exposure to influencer marketing, awareness and perception of the brand are deemed as key factors that influence the buying behavior of Generation Z consumers. The following conceptual framework is proposed, based on these theoretical arguments and empirical evidence.

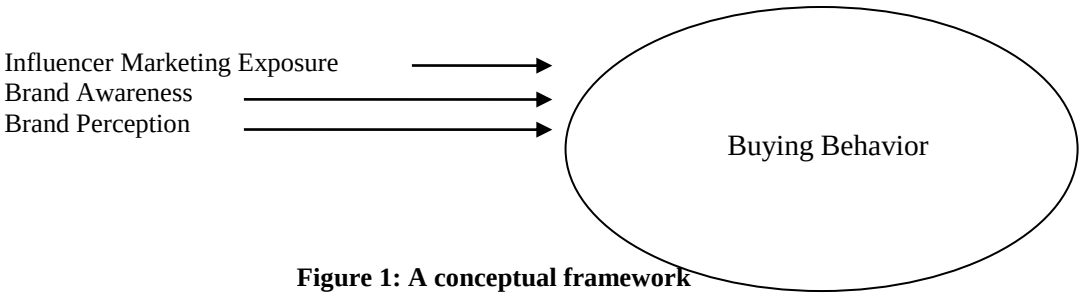


Figure 1: A conceptual framework

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework developed for this study. The framework proposes that influencer marketing exposure, brand awareness, and brand perception independently influence the buying behavior of Generation Z consumers in Bangladesh. Influencer marketing exposure represents consumers' interaction with influencer-generated content on social media, whereas brand awareness and brand perception reflect consumers'

cognitive evaluation of brands. Buying behavior is considered the dependent variable. The proposed relationships are empirically examined through the hypotheses presented in the following section.

III. Research Questions

RQ 1 Is there any significant relationship between Influencer marketing exposure and buying behavior of generation Z of Bangladesh?
RQ 2 Is there any significant relationship between brand awareness and buying behavior of generation Z of Bangladesh?
RQ 3 Is there any significant relationship between brand perception and buying behavior of generation Z of Bangladesh?

IV. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to explore the impact of exposure to influencer marketing, brand awareness and brand perception on the buying behavior of the generation Z consumers in Bangladesh.
Specific Objectives:

- To study the relationship between the buying behavior of Generation Z consumers and the exposure to influencer marketing.
- To find the impact of brand awareness and brand perception on the purchasing behaviour of generation Z consumers.
- To determine which of the three constructs, influencer marketing exposure, brand awareness, and brand perception is the most influential toward Generation Z consumers' purchase behavior.

V. Hypotheses Development

H1. There is a significant relationship between Influencer marketing exposure and buying behavior of generation Z of Bangladesh.
H2. There is a significant relationship between brand awareness and buying behavior of generation Z of Bangladesh.
H3. There is a significant relationship between brand perception and buying behavior of generation Z of Bangladesh.

VI. Methodology

Research Design

The present study was a quantitative, cross sectional study to investigate the impact of exposure to influencer marketing on buying behavior and brand perception of the generation Z customers in the context of Bangladesh. The study was based on a quantitative approach, because the study was to test hypothesized relationships between predetermined constructs through statistical analysis. The data were obtained using a structured questionnaire, which was administered at one time and could be used to examine the relationships among the study variables in their natural state.

Population and Sampling

The target demographic for this research has been determined to be Generation Z individuals in college and university students in Dhaka, Bangladesh. As per existing literature, the respondents of this study can also be defined as members of Generation Z, who are categorized as individuals born in the years from 1997 to 2012. Due to the absence of any sampling frame to identify Generation Z consumers involved in influencer marketing, convenience sampling was used to select respondents. College and university students have been selected as they belong to a group that is highly digitally active and uses social media platforms where influencer marketing is popular. The convenience sampling method used allowed for recruiting respondents who fit the criteria for research and are active social media users having been exposed to influencer content.

There were 130 questionnaires distributed, of which 118 were received back. After screening the responses for their completeness and consistency, 110 valid responses were retained for analysis leading to an overall response rate of 93.2%. While the use of convenience sampling can limit the overall applicability of the results, this method is still suitable for exploratory studies involving certain consumer groups, and this limitation is noted in interpreting the results.

Measurement Scale

All construct items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree"). The five-point scale was selected because it is widely used in consumer behavior research and facilitates reliable measurement of respondents' attitudes and perceptions.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection took place from January through March of the year 2026, based on interviews with respondents who filled out structured questionnaires in various colleges and universities located in Dhaka. Respondents were briefed about accurate information regarding the study and the process of voluntary participation was put into place.

Data Analysis

Pearson's Correlation analysis is to find out whether any relationship exists between the independent and dependent variables. Correlation analysis is to describe the degree to which one variable is linearly related to one another (William and Anuchit, 2002). After collecting the data, Pearson's co-relational matrix for the variables are prepared and the researchers look for significant correlations. The researchers used descriptive, correlation, and regression to test the strength of association between the studied variables. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22 software is employed to analyze the data collected from the actual survey.

VII. Results

Reliability and Descriptive statistics of the Instruments

The most highly recommended measure of internal consistency is provided by coefficient alpha (α) or Cronbach's alpha (1951) as it provides a good reliability estimate in most situations. The nearer the value of alpha (α) to 1, the better the reliability. If the value is low, either there are too few items or there is very little commonality among the items (Churchill, 1979).

Table:1 Descriptive statistics, and Reliability Coefficient of Influencer Marketing exposure, Brand awareness, Brand perception and Buying behavior.

	No.of item	Alpha	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
IME	5	0.902	15	34	29.53	4.943
BA	4	0.886	10	28	23.21	4.016
BP	4	0.879	12	28	23.36	3.930
BB	5	0.914	15	35	29.34	4.901
Valid N (listwise)						

N=110

Internal reliability of the variables was checked by using Cronbach's alpha. Here the reliability for Influencer marketing exposure is 0.902; for brand awareness is 0.886, for brand perception is 0.879 .On the other hand reliability for Buying Behavior is reliability is 0.914. We know the standard value of reliability is 0.5 and all the results indicate the values are greater than 0.5 implying data is reliable. Based on the 110 respondents, Influencer marketing exposure ranges from 15 to 34 with the mean of 29.53 and the Standard Deviation of 4.943. Mean and standard deviation of brand awareness ranges is 23.21 with the minimum and maximum value ranges from 10 to 28. Brand perception Ranges from 12 to 28 and the mean is 23.36 and the standard deviation is 3.930. The minimum and maximum value for Buying Behavior is15 to 35 and the mean and standard deviation is 29.34 and 4.901 respectively.

Table 3: Correlations

		IME	BA	BP	BB
IME	Pearson Correlation	1	.914**	.797**	.803**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	110	110	110	110
BA	Pearson Correlation	.914**	1	.769**	.805**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	110	110	110	110
BP	Pearson Correlation	.797**	.769**	1	.909**

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	110	110	110	110
BB	Pearson Correlation	.803**	.805**	.909**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	110	110	110	110
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

The above table shows the correlation matrix among variables. Influencer marketing exposure has strong and significant relationships with brand awareness, brand perception and buying behavior. Brand awareness has strong and significant relationships with Influencer marketing exposure, brand perception and buying behavior.

Table 4: Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.924[a]	.854	.850	1.900

a. Predictors: (Constant), IME, BP, BA

Table 5: ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2235.964	3	745.321	206.497	.000[b]
	Residual	382.591	106	3.609		
	Total	2618.555	109			

a. Dependent Variable: BB

b. Predictors: (Constant), IME, BP, BA

Table 6: Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.315	1.161		1.132	.260
	IME	.884	.078	.709	11.370	.000
	BA	.318	.113	.260	2.814	.006
	BP	-.001	.104	.001	-.007	.994

a. Dependent Variable: BB

The above table illustrates the impact of influencer marketing exposure on buying behavior of generation Z of Bangladesh, with a focus on its effectiveness on escalating brand awareness and brand perception. We can see if influencer marketing exposure score raise by 1 buying behavior will increase by 0.884. The impact is significant at 5% significance level. Moreover, brand awareness score increases by 1 then buying behavior score will increase by 0.318 and the impact is again significant at 5% significance level. Brand perception has a negative impact on buying behavior but the impact is insignificant. Here, influencer marketing exposure, brand awareness and brand perception can explain buying behavior by 92.4%. So at 5% significance level, we can accept all hypothesis except hypothesis 3.

The study identify that influencer marketing exposure has a considerable positive impact on brand awareness, brand perception, and purchase behavior of generation Z of Bangladesh. The outcome of the study identify that influencer marketing can be used by brands as is an valuable means to increase their brand awareness, improve their brand perception. After the analysis the researcher also identify the importance of influencer marketing exposure that can guide to boost brand values and advance consumer buying behavior. As influencer marketing has strong positive relationship with all of the variables the researcher suggests that:

- While choosing their influencer, It is significant for the brands to focus on some criteria like: based on some factors like: integrity, likeability, reliability etc.
- Brands need to align influencer marketing strategy with their brand development strategy to get the most valuable result.
- It is suggested that the brands should consider each type of influencer; micro and macro to reach every segments of markets mass to niche market.

VIII. Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to explore how influencer marketing affects Generation Z customers' buying behavior in Bangladesh through three main aspects: exposure to influencer marketing, brand awareness and brand perception. The findings of this study show that there is a significant positive effect between exposure to influencer marketing and the buying behavior of Generation Z consumers. This result aligns with H1 and implies that higher exposure to influencers' content in social media leads to higher consumers' purchasing probability for promoted products. Generation Z consumers are active in digital environments, engage with influencers and the content they produce, making it an effective communication strategy for influencing their purchasing decisions. The results are aligned with previous research, which has shown that influencer marketing is a viable marketing approach to increase consumer engagement and boost purchasing intents (De Veirman et al., 2017; Singh, 2021; Dwivedi et al., 2020).

The study also finds that brand awareness has a positive significant relationship with purchase behaviour of the Gen Z consumers supporting H2. This finding suggests that the greater the consumer's familiarity and ability to recognize a brand, the more likely they will be to exhibit positive purchasing behavior. Content created by influencers boosts brand visibility by placing the products and services in front of the consumers multiple times in a social media platform through authentic and engaging interactions. Thus, increased brand awareness boosts consumers' confidence in the buying decision-making process. The results are consistent with previous studies indicating that influencer marketing can be beneficial to brand awareness and improve consumer responses to brands (Ye et al., 2021; Harrigan et al., 2021).

However, in contrast to the hypothesis, the results indicated that brand perception had no significant impact on buying behavior, which resulted in the rejection of H3. The correlation analysis showed that brand perception correlates well with product purchase; however, the regression analysis revealed that brand perception did not have a statistically significant unique influence after the influence of influencer marketing exposure and brand awareness were controlled for. This finding could be attributed to the high correlation between the independent variables because the exposure to influencer marketing and brand awareness account for a large portion of the variance in buyers' behavior. In addition, it could be that when it comes to buying in the digital world, Generation Z consumers rely more on influencers for their recommendations and brand recognition than on their general impression of a brand. This discovery indicates that the influence of a celebrity might overturn consumer brand evaluations when they are making a purchasing decision, beyond the larger evaluation of the brand's image.

The overall regression model shows a high level of explained variance in consumer buying behaviour, as about 85.4% of the variance in consumer buying behaviour is explained by the model (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.850$). This means that the total effect of the three variables (influencer marketing exposure, brand awareness and brand perception) collectively explains a significant proportion of consumer buying behaviour, within the context of this Bangladeshi study. Influencer marketing exposure was the most powerful predictor, underlining the increasing influence of social media influencers on consumer buying behavior, whilst the other two were not as significant. The results support the growing importance of influencer marketing as a strategic digital marketing tool designed to reach emerging market youth.

The results of this study also add to the existing body of literature on influencer marketing, as research on influencer marketing and the behaviour of generation Z consumers in Bangladesh is still rather scarce. Most previous studies have been conducted in developed economies, but this research shows that influencer marketing is effective in an emerging economy with the surge of Internet and social media growth. Therefore, the study contributes to the existing literature by establishing the significant influence of influencer marketing exposure and brand awareness on the buying behavior of Generation Z consumers in Bangladesh context of socio-economic and cultural aspects. The results are important for both academics and practitioners interested in the changing patterns of consumer behavior in emerging markets when the consumer is using digital tools.

IX. Conclusion

Social media has evolved into a game-changer in the brand-consumer communication landscape, and influencer marketing is quickly becoming a key element of today's digital marketing mix. In this context, the current study explored the relationship between the three constructs Influencer Marketing Exposure – Brand Awareness – Brand Perception with Generation Z consumers' purchase behavior in Bangladesh through the study of the influence of influencer marketing. In this background, this study investigated the influence of Influencer Marketing Exposure – Brand Awareness – Brand Perception on the purchasing behavior of Generation Z consumers in Bangladesh.

The results show that both exposure to influencer marketing and brand awareness have a significant impact on the purchase behavior of Generation Z consumers, indicating that social media influencers are successful channels for consumers' purchase behavior in the digital marketplace. Influencer marketing exposure

was the most significant variable for purchasing, highlighting the significance of content produced by influencers for young consumers to purchase products. When compared with the other explanatory variables, the results indicated that brand perception showed a positive association with buying behaviour but was not statistically significant, indicating that the effect of brand perception on buying behaviour is lesser in the context of this study when compared with the other explanatory variables.

The study also adds to the existing research on influencer marketing, since Bangladesh is an emerging market where research on the behavior of Generation Z consumers is still limited. The results help to deepen the understanding of digital consumer behaviour and illustrate how influencer marketing can be considered a valuable strategic instrument to boost brand awareness and promote consumer purchasing behaviour among digitally connected young consumers.

On a practical level, the findings can offer useful insights for marketers and business organizations looking to enhance their digital marketing efforts. Partnerships with trusted and genuine influencers who share similar values and resonate with their target audience should be a top consideration for organizations. In an increasingly competitive digital landscape, well-crafted influencer marketing campaigns that boost brand awareness and ensure sincere consumer interaction are likely to benefit marketing effectiveness and contribute to a company's long-term growth.

In conclusion, the study reinforces the increasing importance and relevance of influencer marketing for the purchase behavior of the generation Z consumer and makes clear the strategic relevance it has for the organizations that work in the digital business world. With the growth of social media and consumers' interaction with these platforms, this area of integrated marketing communication is likely to continue to be a key part of the marketing communication landscape, presenting both researchers and practitioners with avenues for further exploration and innovation.

X. Implications

This study is a significant piece of literature on influencer marketing as it offers empirical evidence regarding the effect of influencer marketing on the buying behavior of the Generation Z consumers in Bangladesh. The results confirm that exposure to influencer and brand awareness have a significant impact on consumers' buying behavior, which shows the potential of social media influencers as a marketing communication channel. While this study did not result in brand perception having a significant impact on purchase, the findings provide rich clues to the relative significance of various marketing factors in influencing consumer purchase.

On the management side, the research indicates that businesses will need to carefully integrate the use of influencers into their digital marketing campaigns to improve brand recognition and drive consumer purchases. Choosing influencers is a critical decision for marketers, as they require credibility, authenticity, relevance, and values of the brand and target audience. Given that exposure to influencer marketing is the most significant driver of purchasing, it's important to create highly relatable and engaging campaigns with influencers to create a genuine impression with the Gen Z audience. In addition, the strategic use of influencers can enhance the visibility and reach of a brand, potentially driving higher engagement rates and ultimately contributing to long-term brand success in the digital market.

XI. Limitations and Future Research

Although the study helps to understand the impact of social media influencer marketing on the purchasing behaviour of Generation Z consumers in the country, there are some limitations in the study. The study has a small sample size, 110 respondents, from convenience sampling of the college and university students in Dhaka which may hinder the extent to which results can be generalized to the larger population of Generation Z consumers in Bangladesh. Second, the study was conducted by means of self reported survey responses, which could have involved social desirability and common method biases. Third, this is a cross-sectional study, which limits the ability to make causal connections between variables.

Larger and more representative samples collected through the use of probability sampling methods should be used in future studies for increased generalizability of the findings. Longitudinal research designs could be more useful in understanding the long-term impact of influencer marketing on consumers' purchasing decisions. Furthermore, future studies may explore the mediation and moderation of such intervening or moderating variables as influencer credibility, trust, authenticity, or consumer engagement. Comparative studies between various generations, geographic areas and social media would also give more information about how effective influencer marketing tactics are in different consumer settings.

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Conflict of Interest
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Ethical Approval
The research in this study was done in accordance with accepted ethical standards in research involving human participants. The participation was voluntary, the respondents were informed of the purpose of the research and anonymity and confidentiality of the data gathered was maintained throughout the research process.

Authors Contributions
Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal Analysis, Data Collection: First Author; Writing - Original Draft: First Author, Second Author; Writing - Review & Editing: All authors; Supervision: Corresponding Author. The manuscript has been read and approved by all the authors.

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