

# "Mapping the Intellectual Structure of Social Media Influence on Generation Z Buying Behaviour: A PRISMA-Guided Bibliometric Analysis"



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## Abstract

The rapid proliferation of social media has fundamentally transformed Generation Z's purchasing dynamics, leading to a surge in empirical research that remains highly fragmented across consumer behavior disciplines. This study aims to systematically synthesize and map the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and future research directions of this domain using bibliometric techniques. Following the PRISMA framework, a comprehensive dataset of 209 peer-reviewed articles and conference papers published between 2010 and 2026 was retrieved exclusively from the Scopus database. The data was subsequently analyzed utilizing Microsoft Excel for descriptive performance analysis and VOSviewer for spatial science mapping. The findings reveal an exponential growth in scholarly output from 2023 onwards, with global academic discourse overwhelmingly driven by hyper-digitalized emerging markets in Asia. Furthermore, keyword co-occurrence analysis identified four dominant thematic clusters shaping the current literature: the core digital ecosystem and behavioral intentions, relational persuasion via influencer marketing, psychological drivers of impulsive consumption, and emerging frontiers such as artificial intelligence and sustainable consumption. Ultimately, this study consolidates the disjointed knowledge base, theoretically highlighting Generation Z's cognitive dissonance between algorithm-driven impulse buying and value-driven ethical consumption, while proposing a robust agenda for future cross-cultural and AI-focused empirical research.

**Keywords:** Social Media; Generation Z; Buying behaviour; Bibliometric Analysis; PRISMA

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Generation Z, broadly characterized as the first cohort of true digital natives, has been immersed in internet connectivity, mobile systems, and social networking since their formative years (K S & Massand, 2025). Unlike preceding generations, this demographic exhibits a profound, almost symbiotic relationship with digital platforms, fundamentally altering traditional paradigms of communication and consumption (Munsch, 2021). As these young consumers transition into early adulthood, their aggregate purchasing power is expanding exponentially, rendering them a highly lucrative and critical target segment for contemporary marketers (Župan et al., 2025). Consequently, understanding the nuanced ways in which social media shapes the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of Generation Z's buying behavior has emerged as a paramount imperative in consumer research (Hima et al., 2025).

The digital landscape has rapidly transitioned from static promotional material to highly dynamic, interactive, and algorithmic environments, perfectly aligning with Generation Z's preference for rapid and engaging content. Platforms such as TikTok and Instagram have revolutionized digital marketing by fostering elevated levels of consumer engagement through short-form video clips and personalized

algorithmic feeds (Flecha-Ortiz et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2025). Furthermore, these digital spaces have evolved from simple communication tools into intricate commercial spaces that drive trend adoption and impulsive buying, particularly in sectors like apparel (Kamble & Maheshwari, 2026). In this context, social media marketing activities (SMMA) have become instrumental in cultivating brand awareness and driving the behavioral intentions of young consumers across diverse sectors, ranging from retail and fashion to hospitality (Abdou, 2025; Rajalakshmi & Anthony Rahul Golden, 2025).

A defining characteristic of Generation Z's consumer behavior is their heavy reliance on social media influencers and user-generated content to navigate complex digital marketplaces. Influencer marketing has evolved from a peripheral promotional tactic into a core strategic mechanism, as young consumers frequently utilize influencer recommendations to discover trends and validate their purchase decisions (Vinish et al., 2025). The perceived credibility, authenticity, and relational dynamics such as parasocial interactions established by these digital opinion leaders significantly dictate brand loyalty and subsequent purchasing actions (Vinish et al., 2025; Župan et al., 2025). This dynamic is especially prominent with micro-influencers and user-generated content

(UGC), which Generation Z heavily relies upon to validate their purchasing choices and build a sense of community belonging (Kamble & Maheshwari, 2026).

Furthermore, the psychological drivers underlying Generation Z's online consumption are distinctly multifaceted. While social media facilitates heightened connectivity, it also accelerates materialistic values and compulsive usage patterns, occasionally triggering impulsive buying behaviors mediated by the fear of missing out (FOMO) and the need for peer validation (Christin et al., 2025). Concurrently, this generation demonstrates a paradoxical inclination toward sustainable and ethical consumption, utilizing social networks to research eco-friendly alternatives and hold brands accountable for their corporate social responsibility (Ahmed et al., 2025).

The marketing ecosystem is being further disrupted by the advent of artificial intelligence and the proliferation of virtual influencers, which introduce novel variables into the consumer persuasion process. AI-driven personalization and the meticulously curated characteristics of non-human virtual endorsers are already demonstrating potent effects on the impulsive and deliberative buying intentions of Generation Z (Amin, 2025; Dai et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2025). Given the rapid proliferation of empirical studies addressing these highly fragmented phenomena, there is a compelling need to systematically map the intellectual structure of this evolving domain to establish a cohesive foundation for future theoretical and practical advancements.

### 1.2 Problem Statement

While the broader domain of social media marketing and its impact on consumer behavior has been extensively researched for over a decade (Duffett, 2015), the specific intellectual structure mapping its influence on Generation Z remains highly fragmented. The rapid evolution of the digital ecosystem has prompted a surge in empirical investigations seeking to decode the purchasing dynamics of this demographic; however, this proliferation has paradoxically led to a disjointed body of knowledge. As novel digital phenomena continuously emerge ranging from the ephemeral nature of pop-up retail marketing (Liu & Lee, 2026) to the persuasive efficacy of short-form video formats (Flecha-Ortiz et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2025) scholarly efforts have largely remained confined to isolated theoretical silos.

Currently, the literature is characterized by disparate streams of inquiry that rarely intersect on a macro-conceptual level. For instance, substantial research has been independently dedicated to the psychological mechanisms of compulsive and impulsive buying, often highlighting mediators such as the fear of missing out (FOMO) and materialism

(Christin et al., 2025). Concurrently, separate clusters of research have focused on the relational dynamics of influencer marketing, dissecting the credibility traits of both human endorsers (Vinish et al., 2025; Župan et al., 2025) and, more recently, artificial intelligence-driven virtual influencers (Amin, 2025; Dai et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2025). Other distinct branches investigate the intersection of social media with ethical consumption and sustainability (Ahmed et al., 2025) or sector-specific brand preference (Abdou, 2025; Rajalakshmi & Anthony Rahul Golden, 2025).

Despite the intrinsic value of these micro-level investigations, there is a critical absence of a unified intellectual framework that synthesizes these diverse trajectories. The existing literature lacks a cohesive mapping that illustrates how these fragmented themes technological advancements, psychological drivers, influencer dynamics, and platform-specific characteristics collectively construct the theoretical foundation of Generation Z's buying behavior (Hima et al., 2025; K S & Massand, 2025). Without a comprehensive delineation of the discipline's intellectual structure, scholars and practitioners are left without a holistic understanding of the domain's thematic evolution, its interdisciplinary intersections, and its underlying theoretical gaps. Consequently, there is an urgent need to systematically map this scattered research landscape to establish a consolidated baseline that can reliably guide future theoretical development and strategic marketing practices.

### 1.3 Research Objective

To address the aforementioned gaps and systematically consolidate the fragmented literature concerning Generation Z's buying behavior in the digital era, this bibliometric analysis is driven by four primary research objectives (ROs). First, tracking the evolutionary trajectory of scholarly output is essential to understanding how recent technological shifts such as the rise of short-form video platforms and social commerce have stimulated academic interest over time (Hernández-Vergara et al., 2025). Second, identifying the core contributors to this discipline helps establish the foundational pillars of the current academic discourse. Recognizing the leading voices, primary publication outlets, and geographical hotspots provides vital insight into cultural variations in consumer research, such as the distinct digital consumption dynamics currently being observed in emerging Asian markets (Chen & Lo, 2025; Wang et al., 2025). Third, a macroscopic visualization of the interconnected themes is necessary to bridge isolated theoretical silos, such as those separating influencer credibility constructs (Rizomyliotis et al., 2024) from studies on eco-friendly and sustainable consumption (Ahmed et al., 2025). Finally, by systematically evaluating these thematic clusters

and the existing boundaries of knowledge, this study aims to guide subsequent scholarly endeavors toward underexplored territories, such as the long-term impacts of algorithmic personalization and artificial intelligence on youth consumer behavior (Amin, 2025). Hence, the fourth objective is:

- **RO1:** To analyze the publication growth and trends in this domain.
- **RO2:** To identify the most influential journals and countries.
- **RO3:** To map the intellectual structure
- **RO4:** To propose future research directions based on current gaps.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Generation Z as Consumers

Generation Z, representing the first true cohort of digital natives, exhibits distinct consumer characteristics that diverge significantly from preceding generations (Munsch, 2021). Characterized by their inherent fluency in digital communication and continuous online presence, these young consumers demand a high degree of authenticity, ethical accountability, and transparency from brands (K S & Massand, 2025). Furthermore, their constant exposure to high-velocity digital environments has cultivated relatively short attention spans, necessitating marketing strategies that deliver immediate, engaging, and visually stimulating content. This shift is evidenced by the meteoric rise and persuasive efficacy of short-form video formats on platforms like TikTok and Instagram (Flecha-Ortiz et al., 2023; Kamble & Maheshwari, 2026; Nguyen et al., 2025). Consequently, traditional, overt advertising paradigms are increasingly perceived as ineffective or insincere; instead, Generation Z demonstrates a profound reliance on digital opinion leaders and peer-to-peer recommendations to navigate the complex digital marketplace and validate their consumption choices (Župan et al., 2025).

### 2.2 Social Media's Role in Purchase Decisions

The architecture of social media platforms inherently amplifies these behavioral tendencies, fundamentally restructuring the purchase decision-making process. Social media serves as an omnipresent mechanism for social proof, wherein metrics such as likes, shares, and user-generated content act as modern heuristics for product quality and brand credibility (Abdou, 2025). Influencer marketing heavily leverages this dynamic by establishing parasocial relationships that sway Gen Z's brand preferences and purchase intentions. This persuasion is particularly potent when human or artificial intelligence-driven virtual influencers exhibit high perceived credibility, expertise, and relational authenticity (Vinish et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the pervasive, always-connected nature of social networks frequently induces a Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). FOMO acts as a critical psychological driver that, when coupled with platform-facilitated materialism, significantly accelerates compulsive usage patterns and impulsive buying behaviors among young consumers, often overriding deliberative decision-making processes (Christin et al., 2025; Amin, 2025).

### 2.3 The Need for Bibliometric Analysis

Given the rapid proliferation, continuous technological shifts, and multi-disciplinary nature of research investigating these digital phenomena, a robust and scalable methodological approach is required to synthesize the expanding knowledge base. While traditional systematic literature reviews are invaluable for the qualitative, in-depth synthesis of narrowly defined research questions, they are inherently limited by their scope and face practical constraints when attempting to evaluate massive, rapidly growing volumes of literature. In contrast, bibliometric analysis offers a quantitative, macroscopic lens capable of evaluating the vast and highly fragmented intellectual structure of the social media marketing domain (Hima et al., 2025). By utilizing mathematical and statistical techniques to analyze publication metadata such as citation networks, keyword co-occurrences, and bibliographic coupling bibliometrics transcends the subjective limitations of manual reviews. This methodology objectively uncovers hidden thematic clusters, identifies seminal works, and maps the evolutionary trajectory of the field (Liu & Lee, 2026). Consequently, a bibliometric approach is uniquely positioned to consolidate the disparate theoretical streams surrounding Generation Z's digital consumption, providing a rigorous, data-driven macro-perspective that a traditional systematic review cannot achieve.

## 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1 Database Selection

The foundation of any robust bibliometric analysis relies heavily on the quality and scope of the selected database. For this study, Scopus was chosen as the primary database for data retrieval. Scopus is widely recognized as one of the largest and most comprehensive curated abstract and citation databases of peer-reviewed literature. Compared to other academic databases, Scopus provides a broader coverage of journals in the fields of social sciences, business, management, and marketing, making it highly suitable for an interdisciplinary topic like digital consumer behavior. Furthermore, Scopus offers superior metadata export capabilities including detailed author affiliations, comprehensive reference lists, and standardized keyword indexing which are essential prerequisites for conducting accurate

computational science mapping and network analyses.

### 3.2 Search Strategy

To ensure a highly relevant and exhaustive retrieval of literature concerning the target domain, a carefully constructed Boolean search string was deployed. The search was executed using the "Article Title, Abstract, Keywords" (TITLE-ABS-KEY) field code to capture the core thematic elements of the research objectives. The strategy combined three primary conceptual blocks: the target demographic, the digital medium, and the behavioral outcome. The exact search string utilized was:

```
TITLE-ABS-KEY ( "Generation Z" OR "Gen Z" ) AND  
("Social Media" OR "Influencer" OR "Social  
Networking") AND ("Buying Behaviour" OR  
"Purchase Intention" OR "Consumer Behaviour" )
```

This structured approach ensured that variations in terminology across different geographical regions and academic sub-disciplines were adequately captured.

### 3.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

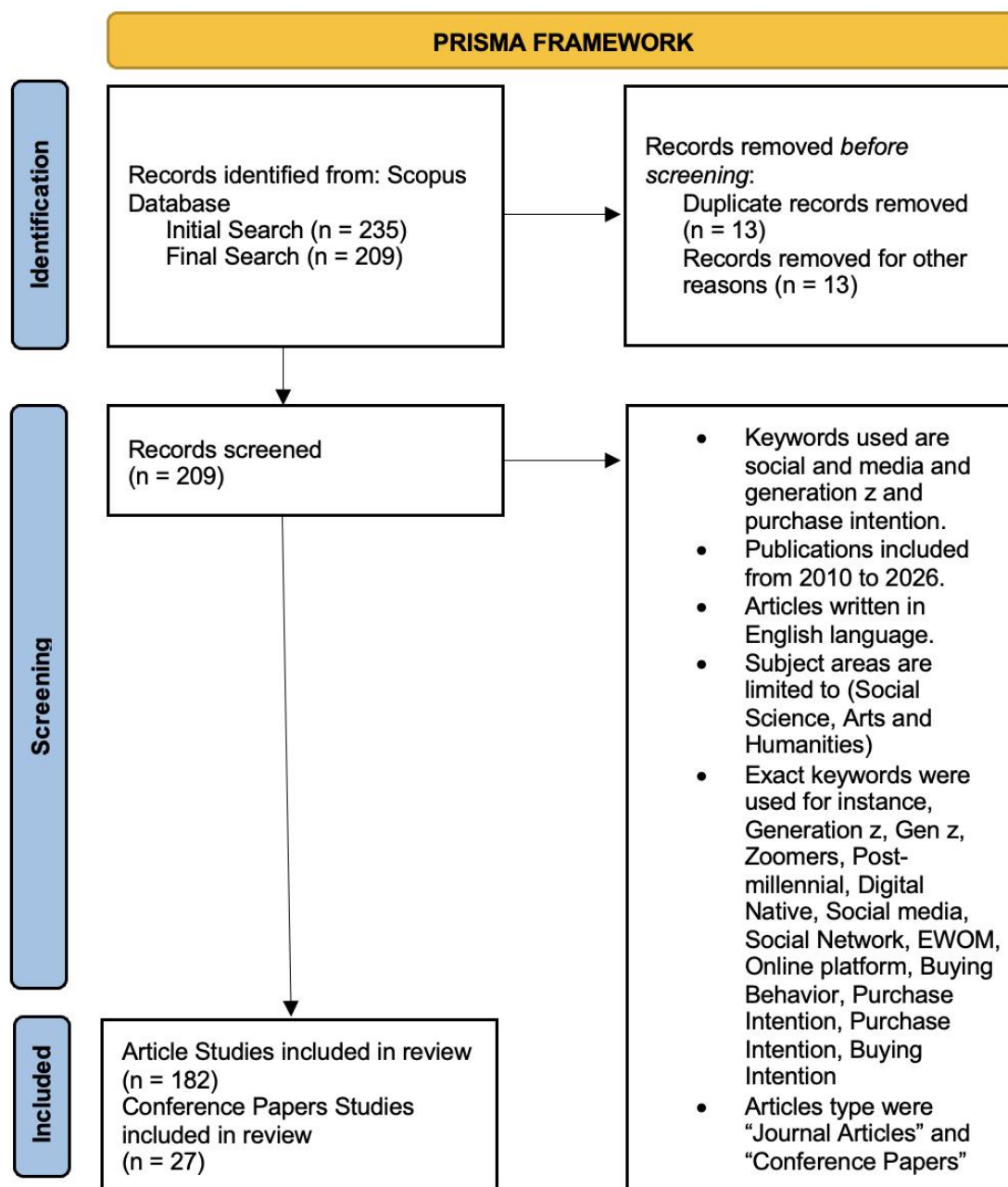
To maintain the scholarly rigor and linguistic consistency of the analyzed dataset, stringent inclusion and exclusion criteria were established. First, the temporal scope was restricted to documents published between the years 2010 and 2026. The year 2010 was selected as the starting point, coinciding with the launch of highly visual, mobile-first social media platforms like Instagram, which fundamentally shifted Generation Z's digital consumption landscape. Second, regarding document types, only peer-reviewed research articles and conference papers were included, as these represent original empirical research and

novel theoretical advancements. Conversely, review papers, book chapters, editorials, and short surveys were excluded to prevent the duplication of primary data. Finally, to ensure the feasibility of semantic analysis and qualitative screening, the dataset was strictly limited to publications written in the English language.

### 3.4 Data Extraction and PRISMA Framework

The data collection and refinement process strictly adhered to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework to guarantee transparency and reproducibility.

The PRISMA protocol was executed in four sequential phases: Identification, Screening, Eligibility, and Inclusion. During the Identification phase, the initial search string was inputted into Scopus, yielding a preliminary pool of documents. In the Screening phase, automated database filters were applied to enforce the inclusion criteria regarding publication year (2010–2026), document type (articles and conference papers), and language (English), which systematically removed ineligible records. The Eligibility phase involved a manual, qualitative appraisal of the remaining documents. Two independent researchers reviewed the titles and abstracts of these records to verify their direct contextual relevance to Generation Z's buying behavior in the context of social media marketing. Articles focusing on unrelated technological aspects, purely psychological disorders without consumer implications, or different generational cohorts were excluded. The final outcome of this rigorous filtering process was the definitive dataset of core papers, which were subsequently exported in a comma-separated values (CSV) format containing all necessary bibliographic metadata.



### 3.5 Data Analysis Tools

The quantitative evaluation and visualization of the extracted metadata were conducted using a dual-software approach. Microsoft Excel was employed for the descriptive data analysis and data management. Excel facilitated the chronological tracking of publication trends, the generation of descriptive statistical charts, and the systematic ranking of the most prolific authors, leading academic journals, and dominant contributing countries. For the science mapping and intellectual structure analysis, VOSviewer was utilized. VOSviewer is a powerful software tool specifically designed for constructing and visualizing complex bibliometric networks. It was utilized to perform keyword co-occurrence analysis and thematic

clustering, generating two-dimensional spatial maps that visually represent the cognitive architecture, emerging sub-themes, and relational proximities of the research domain.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Publication Growth and Trends

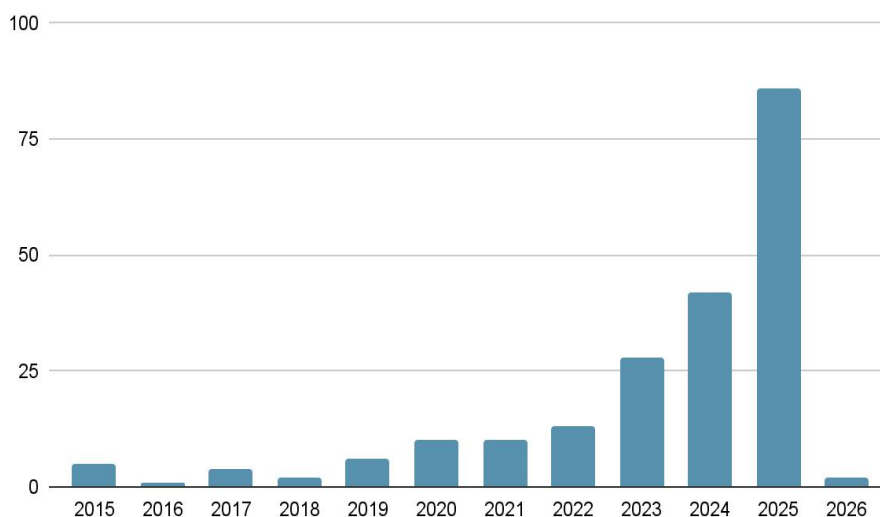
The evolutionary trajectory of research concerning social media's influence on Generation Z's buying behavior reveals a compelling narrative of exponential academic interest. An analysis of the 209 documents retrieved from the selected database demonstrates a distinct, phased growth pattern in scholarly output. During the nascent phase of this domain, spanning from 2015 to 2019, publication frequency remained relatively modest

and fragmented, with annual contributions hovering in the single digits ranging from a single publication in 2016 to a peak of six articles in 2019. This gradual initial traction aligns with the period during which Generation Z was still coming of age, and their aggregate purchasing power had not yet been fully realized in the global market.

A steady consolidation phase occurred between 2020 and 2022, characterized by a consistent output of 10 to 13 publications annually. This period coincides with the accelerated digital adoption and shifts in consumer habits driven by global socio-economic changes during the pandemic. However, the most striking trend is the exponential surge in research observed from 2023 onwards.

Publication volume more than doubled to 28 documents in 2023, escalated to 42 in 2024, and reached an unprecedented peak of 86 publications in 2025. This dramatic spike underscores the domain's current status as a highly vibrant and trending area of academic inquiry. It reflects the urgent imperative for marketers and consumer researchers to decode the complex, algorithm-driven purchasing dynamics of a demographic that now commands significant, disruptive economic influence. The data recorded for 2026 (two publications) represents a partial, emerging year but indicates the continuation of this robust scholarly momentum.

Publications by Year



#### 4.2 Citation Trends and Top Cited Articles

Citation analysis provides critical insights into the foundational pillars and most impactful theoretical contributions that shape this intellectual structure. An examination of the citation metadata reveals a strong scholarly gravitation towards the intersection of digital influence, psychological drivers, and values-driven consumption. For instance, the seminal study by Djafarova and Foots (2022), which explores the ethical consumption of Generation Z through the lens of the theory of planned behavior, has emerged as a profoundly influential work within the dataset, amassing over 215 citations. This exceptionally high citation frequency highlights a dominant thematic cluster in the current literature: the academic fascination with the paradox of Gen Z utilizing social media simultaneously as a catalyst for impulsive consumerism and as a tool for enforcing sustainable, ethical brand accountability.

Furthermore, the intellectual roots of this domain are anchored by early, highly cited foundational research that explored the initial impacts of digital networking on youth cohorts. Works such as Duffett's (2015) investigation into the efficacy of social media marketing communications and their influence on cognitive attitudes while initially bridging the gap between older digital adopters and emerging platforms like Facebook established the structural frameworks and hierarchical effect models that define the field. Subsequent researchers have continuously heavily cited and adapted these early paradigms to analyze the distinct, short-form video and influencer-reliant purchasing dynamics unique to Generation Z. Together, these cornerstone articles provide the theoretical bedrock supporting the recent exponential explosion of specialized empirical research in the discipline.

| Sr. No. | Authors  | Title   | Year | Source title   | Cited by |
|---------|--|---|------|--|----------|
| 1       | Djafarova, E.; Foots, S.   | Exploring ethical consumption of generation Z: theory of planned behaviour  | 2022 | Young Consumers  | 215      |
| 2       | Munsch, A.   | Millennial and generation Z digital marketing communication and advertising effectiveness: A qualitative exploration  | 2021 | Journal of Global Scholars of Marketing Science: Bridging Asia and the World | 182      |
| 3       | Yang, Y.; Ha, L.   | Why People Use TikTok (Douyin) and How Their Purchase Intentions Are Affected by Social Media Influencers in China: A Uses and Gratifications and Parasocial Relationship Perspective | 2021 | Journal of Interactive Advertising   | 101      |
| 4       | Duffett, R.  | The youtube marketing communication effect on cognitive, affective and behavioural attitudes among generation Z consumers   | 2020 | Sustainability (Switzerland)   | 85       |
| 5       | Wong, L.-W.; Tan, G.W.-H.; Hew, J.-J.; Ooi, K.-B.; Leong, L.-Y.              | Mobile social media marketing: a new marketing channel among digital natives in higher education?   | 2022 | Journal of Marketing for Higher Education                                    | 80       |
| 6       | Chiu, C.L.; Ho, H.-C.  | Impact of Celebrity, Micro-Celebrity, and Virtual Influencers on Chinese Gen Z's Purchase Intention Through Social Media  | 2023 | SAGE Open  | 69       |
| 7       | Daowd, A.; Hasan, R.; Eldabi, T.; Rafi-Ul-Shan, P.M.; Cao, D.; Kasemsarn, N. | Factors affecting eWOM credibility, information adoption and purchase intention on Generation Y: a case from Thailand   | 2020 | Journal of Enterprise Information Management                                 | 67       |
| 8       | Tran, K.; Nguyen, T.; Tran, Y.; Nguyen, A.; Luu, K.; Nguyen, Y.              | Eco-friendly fashion among generation Z: Mixed-methods study on price value image, customer fulfillment, and pro-environmental behavior   | 2022 | PLOS ONE   | 60       |
| 9       | Wu, Y.; Yang, S.; Liu, D.  | The effect of social media influencer marketing on sustainable food purchase: Perspectives from multi-group SEM and ANN analysis  | 2023 | Journal of Cleaner Production  | 59       |
| 10      | Duffett, R.G.  | The influence of Facebook advertising on cognitive attitudes amid Generation Y  | 2015 | Electronic Commerce Research   | 59       |
| 11      | Sardar, A.; Manzoor, A.; Shaikh, K.A.; Ali, L.                               | An Empirical Examination of the Impact of eWom Information on Young Consumers' Online Purchase Intention: Mediating Role of eWom Information Adoption                                 | 2021 | SAGE Open  | 58       |

4.3 Top Journals

An analysis of the publication outlets reveals that research on Generation Z's digital buying behavior is predominantly disseminated through specialized journals focusing on consumer psychology, youth marketing, and sustainability. The journal *Young Consumers* emerges as the premier outlet in this domain, contributing the highest volume of scholarly work with 8 publications. This concentration underscores the journal's foundational role in shaping academic discourse surrounding youth marketing and digital media consumption. Following closely is *Innovative Marketing* (5 publications), which serves as a

critical platform for research evaluating the intersection of novel digital strategies, such as influencer campaigns, and consumer response. Additionally, journals such as *Sustainability (Switzerland)* (4 publications), the *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management* (4 publications), and the *Review of Integrative Business and Economics Research* (4 publications) constitute significant pillars of the literature. The prominent inclusion of sustainability and fashion-oriented journals highlights two dominant thematic sub-sectors: Gen Z's highly visual, fast-fashion consumption driven by social media, and their paradoxical insistence on eco-friendly, ethically sourced products

| Journal   | Total Publications (2010 to 2026) | Total Citations (2010-2026) | Cite Score (2025)* | Top Cited Article   | Times Cited | Publisher   |
|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|---|-------------|---|
| Young Consumers                                       | 8                                 | 387                         | 5.7                | Exploring ethical consumption of generation Z: theory of planned behaviour  | 215         | Emerald Publishing                                    |
| Innovative Marketing                                  | 5                                 | 9                           | 1.7                | Influencer marketing's impact on credibility and purchase intention: A study on University of Bisha students in Saudi Arabia  | 3           | LLC CPC Business Perspectives                         |
| Review of Integrative Business and Economics Research | 4                                 | 30                          | 1.6                | The Influence of Key Opinion Consumers on Customers' Purchase Intention via TikTok - The Case of Generation Z in Vietnam  | 18          | GMP Press & Printing Co.                              |
| Sustainability (Switzerland)                          | 4                                 | 100                         | 7.7                | The youtube marketing communication effect on cognitive, affective and behavioural attitudes among generation Z consumers   | 85          | Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute (MDPI) |
| Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management           | 4                                 | 86                          | 8.3                | Celebrity fashion brand endorsement in Facebook viral marketing and social commerce: Interactive effects of social identification, materialism, fashion involvement, and opinion leadership | 57          | Emerald Publishing                                    |
| SAGE Open   | 3                                 | 127                         | 1.9                | Impact of Celebrity, Micro-Celebrity, and Virtual Influencers on Chinese Gen Z's Purchase Intention   | 69          | SAGE Publications Inc.                                |

|  |   |    |     | Through Social Media   |   |   |
|--|---|----|-----|--|---|---|
| <b>Springer Proceedings in Business and Economics</b>        | 3 | 2  | 3.2 | The Role of Social Networks in Shaping up the Consumer Behavior of Young People  | 2 | Springer Nature                         |
| <b>Social Behavior and Personality</b>                       | 3 | 1  | 2.5 | Does social media marketing affect online repurchase intention? The mediating role of guanxi   | 1 | Scientific Journal Publishers           |
| <b>Acta Psychologica</b>                                     | 3 | 0  | 2.9 | COVID-19 and the digital shift of sustainable fashion consumption  | 0 | Elsevier B.V.                           |
| <b>Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication</b> | 3 | 11 | 1.6 | Communication in the 21st Century: The Effect of Internet Celebrity as the Communication Source in Influencing Generation Z Purchase Intention | 8 | Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia |
| <b>Journal of Internet Commerce</b>                          | 3 | 14 | 6.7 | How Does Conformity Shape Influencer Marketing in the Food and Beverage Industry? A Case Study in Vietnam                                      | 7 | Routledge                               |

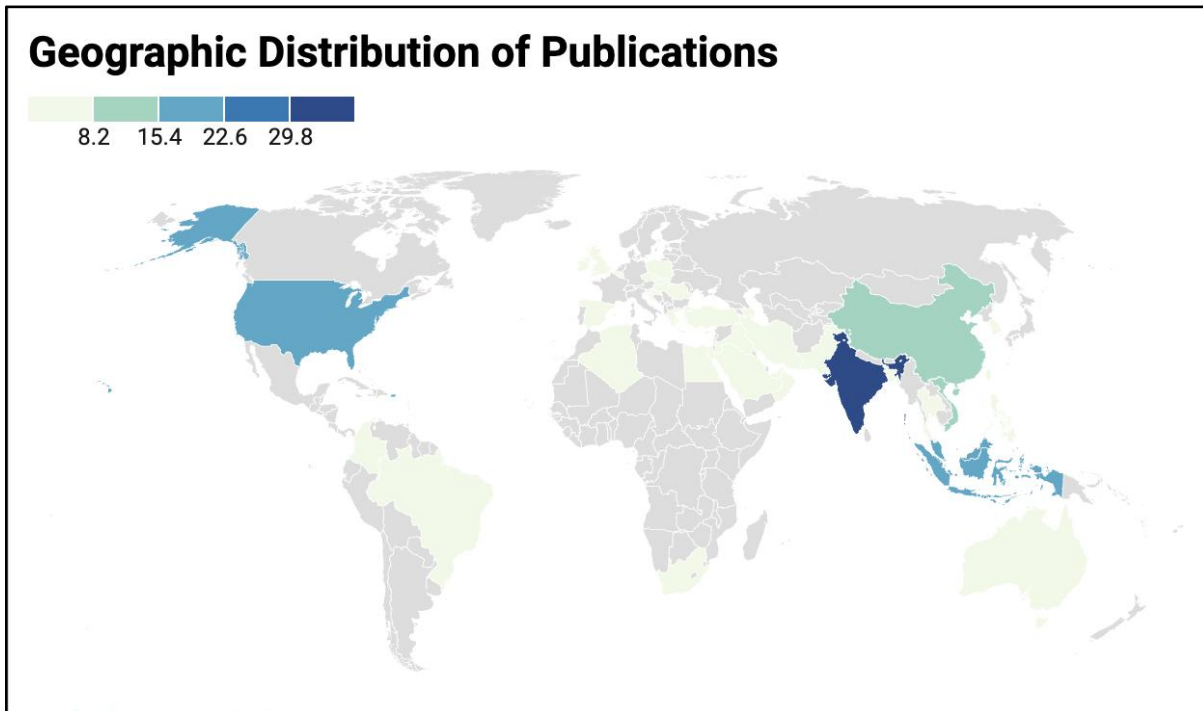
#### 4.4 Geographical Distribution

An analysis of the geographical distribution of the literature highlights a pronounced regional skew, revealing that the global academic discourse on this topic is overwhelmingly driven by the Eastern hemisphere. Of the 209 publications retrieved, an overwhelming majority 154 documents (approximately 73.6%) originate from the Asian continent. This intense concentration of scholarly output is highly indicative of the region's macroeconomic and demographic realities. Emerging Asian markets and the Middle East boast massive, mobile-first Generation Z populations, paired with rapidly expanding e-commerce infrastructures and soaring rates of social media penetration. Consequently, academic institutions within these regions are spearheading empirical investigations to decode localized, high-velocity digital phenomena, such as the explosive growth of social commerce and culturally specific influencer dynamics.

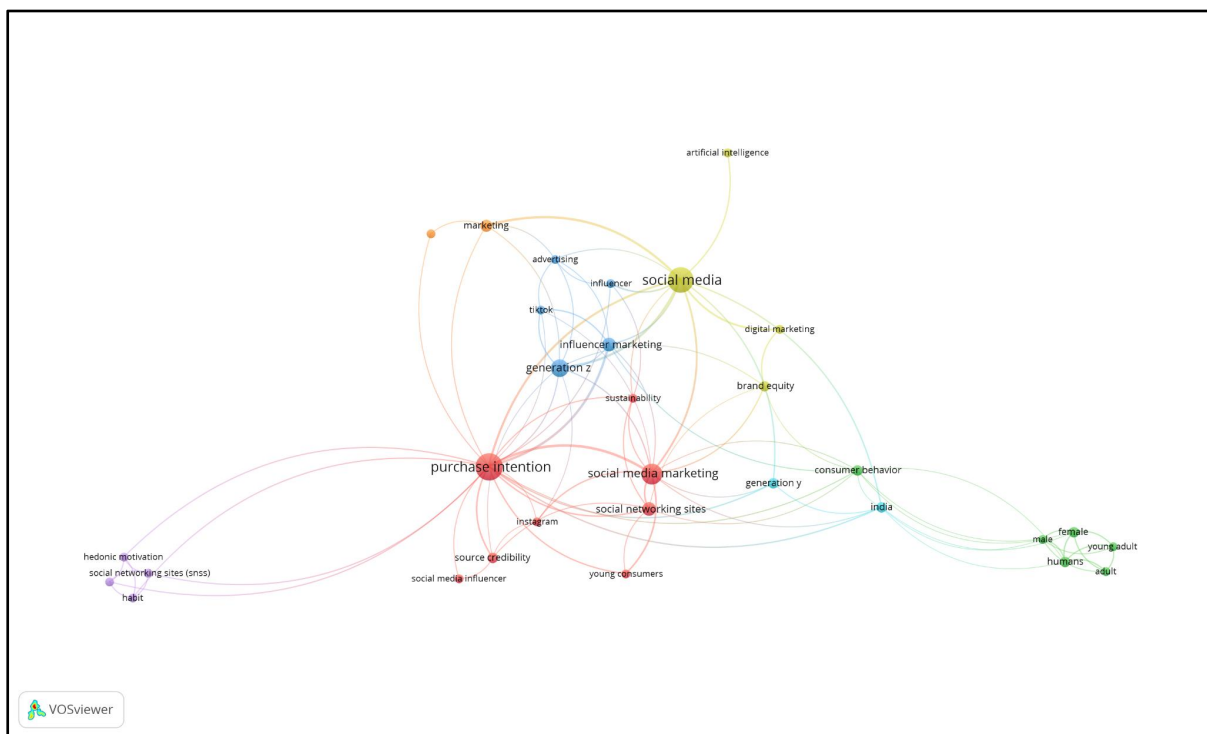
In contrast, while Western institutions have historically provided the foundational theories of digital marketing, they currently represent a significantly smaller fraction of the recent empirical

output in this specific intersection of literature. Europe stands as the second most productive continent with 25 publications, followed closely by North America, which contributed 19 documents. Research emerging from these regions frequently emphasizes the regulatory aspects of digital marketing, algorithmic transparency, and the psychological impacts of mature digital ecosystems on young consumers.

The remaining contributions are sparsely distributed across the global south and Oceania, with Africa contributing 7 publications, South America adding 4, and Oceania producing a single document. Although these regions currently occupy the periphery of the intellectual structure, their gradual inclusion signals an emerging recognition of the topic's global relevance. Ultimately, the geographical mapping underscores a critical paradigm shift: the vanguard of empirical research regarding Generation Z's social media-driven consumer behavior is currently firmly rooted in the hyper-digitalized economies of Asia, shifting the academic center of gravity away from traditional Western markets.



4.5 Intellectual Structure: Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis



To map the conceptual architecture and identify the dominant thematic paradigms within the literature, a keyword co-occurrence analysis was conducted using VOSviewer. This science mapping technique operates on the premise that keywords co-occurring frequently within the same documents signify a close semantic relationship, thereby representing the core intellectual focus of the research domain. The resulting network visualization (see Figure X) illustrates the central concepts as nodes, where the size of each node corresponds to the frequency of

the keyword's occurrence. The proximity and thickness of the links between nodes indicate the strength of their thematic association. Based on the spatial distribution and topological properties of the network, the literature inherently organizes into distinct, interconnected clusters, each representing a primary stream of inquiry regarding Generation Z's digital buying behavior.

**Cluster 1: The Core Digital Ecosystem and Behavioral Intentions** The central and most

prominent cluster serves as the foundational anchor of the network. It is dominated by high-frequency keywords such as *Generation Z*, *social media marketing*, *consumer behavior*, and *purchase intention*. This cluster encapsulates the macro-level investigations into how overarching social media marketing activities (SMMAs) directly correlate with the cognitive and affective dimensions of youth consumption. The dense linkages within this cluster confirm that evaluating the final behavioral outcome specifically, the intent to purchase remains the primary objective of most empirical studies in this domain.

**Cluster 2: Influencer Dynamics and Relational Persuasion** A distinct, highly integrated secondary cluster focuses on the mechanisms of digital persuasion, highlighted by nodes such as *influencer marketing*, *brand awareness*, *credibility*, and *user-generated content*. This grouping reflects a massive transition in the literature from traditional advertising models to peer-driven and parasocial marketing frameworks. Research within this cluster primarily investigates how the perceived authenticity, expertise, and relational proximity of digital opinion leaders operate as critical mediators in shaping Generation Z's brand loyalty and subsequent buying choices.

**Cluster 3: Psychological Drivers and Impulsive Consumption** Another critical thematic grouping bridges the technological environment with psychological outcomes. Characterized by keywords including *impulse buying*, *FOMO (Fear of Missing Out)*, *materialism*, and *compulsive use*, this cluster maps the darker, highly reactive side of digital consumption. It highlights scholarly efforts to decode how the high-velocity, highly curated nature of social platforms accelerates immediate, emotionally driven purchasing behaviors, often bypassing rational decision-making processes.

**Cluster 4: Emerging Frontiers – Sustainability and Algorithmic Influence** Located toward the periphery but rapidly expanding, a final cluster captures the frontier of current academic interest. It features keywords like *sustainable consumption*, *artificial intelligence*, *virtual influencers*, and platform-specific terms like *TikTok*. This cluster illustrates the duality of the modern Generation Z consumer: their increasing reliance on algorithm-driven, short-form video environments, juxtaposed with a growing academic focus on how they utilize these same platforms to advocate for ethical, green, and socially responsible consumption. The emergence of AI within this cluster signals a critical pivot in the literature, pointing toward the future of automated, hyper-personalized marketing persuasion.

#### 4.6 Future Research Agenda

Based on the conceptual gaps and peripheral nodes identified within the intellectual structure of the current literature, a robust agenda for future empirical investigation can be formulated. While foundational constructs such as influencer credibility and impulse buying have reached relative theoretical saturation, several critical domains remain significantly underdeveloped. Foremost among these is the intersection of artificial intelligence and digital persuasion. The rapid deployment of AI-driven personalization algorithms and non-human virtual influencers presents a novel frontier in consumer psychology. Future researchers should explore how the perceived authenticity and parasocial dynamics of virtual influencers differ from their human counterparts in securing long-term brand loyalty among Gen Z consumers. A pertinent research question in this domain would be: *How do algorithmic transparency and the anthropomorphic traits of virtual influencers mediate Generation Z's trust and subsequent purchase intentions over extended periods?*

Furthermore, the bibliometric mapping highlights a profound cognitive dissonance within Generation Z's consumption patterns that warrants deeper investigation. There is a distinct theoretical conflict between the algorithmic pressure for fast-paced, impulsive consumption often driven by FOMO on platforms like TikTok and the generation's well-documented demand for corporate sustainability and ethical manufacturing. Future studies must transition from merely observing these isolated phenomena to investigating their intersection. Researchers should ask: *How do Generation Z consumers reconcile the cognitive dissonance between the high-velocity, trend-driven consumption promoted by short-form video algorithms and their intrinsic values regarding environmental sustainability and ethical consumption?* Finally, the geographical analysis revealed a heavy concentration of empirical research localized within Asian and Middle Eastern markets. To establish globally applicable theoretical frameworks, there is a pressing need for cross-cultural and longitudinal methodologies that contrast these hyper-digitalized emerging economies with mature Western markets. Future scholarly efforts should address: *In what ways do macro-cultural dimensions and varying levels of digital market maturity moderate the efficacy of social media marketing activities on Generation Z's behavioral outcomes?* By addressing these specific theoretical gaps, future research can move beyond cross-sectional observations of immediate purchase intent and develop holistic models that capture the enduring cognitive and behavioral evolution of the Generation Z consumer in an increasingly automated digital landscape.

#### 5. Conclusion

### 5.1 Summary

This study conducted a PRISMA-guided bibliometric analysis to systematically synthesize the fragmented literature concerning social media's influence on Generation Z's buying behavior. By extracting and analyzing 209 Scopus-indexed documents published between 2010 and 2026, the research successfully mapped the domain's intellectual structure and evolutionary trajectory. The performance analysis revealed an exponential surge in scholarly output from 2023 onwards, reflecting an urgent academic and commercial imperative to decode the complex purchasing dynamics of a demographic that now commands significant economic influence. Furthermore, the keyword co-occurrence analysis identified four dominant thematic clusters that define the current research landscape: the core digital ecosystem and behavioral intentions, relational persuasion via influencer dynamics, psychological drivers of impulsive consumption, and emerging frontiers such as artificial intelligence and sustainable consumption. Finally, geographical mapping highlighted that the global academic discourse is currently overwhelmingly driven by hyper-digitalized emerging markets in Asia.

### 5.2 Theoretical Implications

This research addresses a critical gap by providing a cohesive macro-perspective of a previously disjointed body of knowledge. The study systematically bridges isolated theoretical silos by mapping the intersections among technological advancements, psychological mechanisms, influencer dynamics, and platform-specific characteristics. By identifying seminal works and tracing citation linkages, it establishes a consolidated foundational framework that clarifies the thematic evolution of the discipline. Additionally, the mapping theoretically highlights a profound cognitive dissonance inherent in Generation Z's consumer patterns. It contrasts their algorithmically driven propensity for impulse buying, often mediated by the fear of missing out (FOMO), with their paradoxical, value-driven demand for ethical and sustainable consumption.

### 5.3 Practical Implications

The insights derived from this intellectual mapping offer strategic, data-driven value for brands and marketers targeting Generation Z. Practitioners must pivot away from traditional, overt advertising paradigms, as these young consumers heavily rely on digital opinion leaders, user-generated content, and peer validation to navigate digital marketplaces. To effectively drive purchase intentions, brands should leverage the relational authenticity and parasocial dynamics of both human and emerging AI-driven virtual influencers. Given the persuasive efficacy of short-form video formats, campaigns on platforms like TikTok and Instagram should be

optimized for high-velocity, algorithmic environments to capture this demographic's short attention spans. Ultimately, marketers must carefully balance FOMO-inducing promotional strategies with transparent corporate social responsibility, as Generation Z actively uses social networks to research eco-friendly alternatives and hold brands accountable.

### 5.4 Limitations

While this study provides a comprehensive structural overview of the field, it is subject to certain methodological constraints. The dataset was retrieved exclusively from a single database, Scopus, which may inadvertently exclude relevant literature indexed in other academic repositories. Furthermore, the inclusion criteria strictly limited the analysis to English-language publications, potentially omitting valuable localized insights published in other languages. The temporal scope and document type restrictions excluded review papers, book chapters, and industry reports to focus entirely on peer-reviewed articles and conference papers. Finally, the current literature exhibits a pronounced regional skew toward Eastern markets, indicating that prevailing theoretical frameworks may lack comprehensive global applicability until further cross-cultural and longitudinal methodologies are deployed.

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