



The Effect of Link Income and Sharing Frequency on Brand Attitude in Influencer Marketing: An Exploratory Research on the Differences of Generations X, Y and Z

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ABSTRACT

Customers are now using online channels because of the COVID-19 epidemic and the rise in mobile device use throughout the current era, which has altered their shopping habits. By evolving and employing link income and influencer marketing tactics, businesses have now changed how customers see them. The aim of this research is to examine the effects of link income practices provided by brands to influencers, which affect the perception of the target audience, and the frequency of sponsored content sharing on brand attitudes from the perspective of different generations. Semi-structured focus group interviews, which are exploratory research methods, were preferred due to the research methodology, participants' thoughts, and compatibility with the research process. Within the scope of the research, interviews were conducted with a total of 24 people from Generations X, Y and Z who use social media channels and follow Influencers. As a result of the research, it was determined that excessive sharing frequency has negative consequences. In addition, the influencer categories, content types and features preferred by Generations X, Y and Z cause differences. In this respect, it is thought that the study will provide insight to academics and business owners who will conduct research on this subject.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Brand Attitude, Generation, Sponsored Content Frequency, Focus Group

JEL Classifications: M31, M37, D12

1. INTRODUCTION

The quarantine measures implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic have led to radical changes in consumer behaviour and accelerated digital transformation. During this period, a dramatic increase in e-commerce activities was observed by increasing the use of e-commerce platforms, and global e-commerce revenues grew by an additional 19% in 2020. In the United States, e-commerce sales increased from \$571.2 billion in 2019 to \$815.4 billion in 2020, showing a remarkable increase of 43% (Brewster, 2022).

During this period, consumers' orientation towards digital platforms and the increase in mobile device use have paved

the way for new generation marketing strategies to gain importance. With the acceleration of digital transformation, social media influencers (SMI) have emerged as a reliable source in consumers' information-seeking behaviour. Unlike traditional marketing methods, businesses are turning to this area due to the measurable results and high interaction rates offered by influencer marketing. In fact, the global influencer marketing industry has grown significantly from a market size of \$1.7 billion in 2016 to \$21.1 billion in 2023 (Statista, 2024a). In February 2024, 22.4% of global advertising agencies and brands participating in the research shared by Statista stated that they allocated 10-20% of their marketing budgets to influencer marketing; 26% of

participants stated that they allocated more than 40% to digital marketing activities (Statista, 2024b). It is predicted that this growth will continue, and it is expected to exceed \$24 billion in 2024 and reach \$33 billion in 2025 (Statista, 2025).

Today, businesses use influencer marketing as a strategic tool not only in the promotion of products and services, but also in the processes of strengthening and repositioning the brand image. Studies show that businesses earn an average of \$5.20 in return for every \$1 they invest in influencer marketing, and even this rate can reach \$20 in the most successful 13% (Elijah, 2024). These high return rates increase brands' interest in influencer marketing. However, the effect of sponsored content frequency on brand perception has become an important research topic in academic literature. Studies show that the frequency of sponsored content can have both positive and negative consequences (Matthes and Naderer, 2016). In particular, it is stated that high frequency sponsored content sharing can lead to consumer fatigue or skepticism, and as a result, brand perception can be negatively affected (Van Reijmersdal et al., 2017).

This study aims to examine the effect of the sharing frequency of influencers' sponsored brand posts as a new generation marketing dynamic on brand attitude. The research aims to analyse how the target audience evaluates the sponsored content shares provided by brands to influencers and how the frequency of these shares affects brand perception and attitude. In this context, the results of the study are expected to contribute to both academic literature and help businesses optimize their influencer marketing strategies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Influencer Concept and Definitional Framework

Evans et al. (2017) define Influencer Marketing as “a popular form of social media advertising that involves identifying and collaborating with opinion leaders who have an impact on a potential target audience on social media networks.” Influencers are considered opinion leaders on social media and have a significant impact on large follower bases (Joshi et al., 2023). Social Media Influencers (SMI) are conceptualized as “independent third-party endorsers who shape and direct the attitudinal and behavioural frameworks of followers on Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, X, and other digital platforms” (Pan et al., 2025).

The concept of follower refers to social media users who willingly engage with and consume an influencer's content (John, 2023). During the pandemic period, influencer marketing strategies have become the focus of businesses, along with the developments mentioned in the previous section. Businesses collaborate with influencers to promote products within the scope of these strategies and carry out sponsored posts. The aim here is to ensure that consumers see intrinsic motivation factors (entertainment, need for social connection, desire to find motivation, sense of trust, search for eye-catching and original content, etc.) in influencers and their content and interact with them. Influencers attract the attention of followers by making product recommendations in a routine flow

in their social media posts (stories, reels, posts, etc.) and ensure that they interact with the brand. Influencers, who effectively activate these motivations; play an important role in reaching and interacting with the target audiences of brands/businesses in the context of their follower numbers, influencer types classified according to their interaction rates, and digital marketing and social media strategies.

2.1.1. Classification by number of followers

Basically, various types of influencer classification systems are mentioned in the literature. In academic literature, influencers are examined in four main categories according to their follower count:

2.1.1.1. Mega influencer

One of the important categories emphasized in academic studies is “mega influencers.” This term refers to people such as Instagram phenomena, celebrities, TV stars with more than 1 million followers. When the advantages of collaborations with these influencers are examined, having a high number of followers allows brands to reach large audiences. For this reason, they are preferred by businesses aiming for global brand awareness or businesses planning a large-scale product launch. In addition, such influencers are perceived as reliable, and their influence levels are more effective in product recommendations compared to influencers with low followers. When the disadvantages are examined, it is quite costly for businesses to develop collaborations with this type of influencer due to their popularity and ability to create significant brand visibility (Campbell and Farrell 2020; Khamis et al., 2017; Janssen et al., 2022, pp. 108-109). Therefore, these costs are prohibitive for small businesses working with these influencers with limited budgets.

2.1.1.2. Macro influencer

They have between 100K and 1M followers and are generally high interaction rates in niche areas such as health, fitness, beauty, etc. Micro Influencers: These influencers are predominantly interested in certain topics such as fashion, healthy living, fitness, or food, and have between 10,000 and 100,000 followers. As De Almeida (2018, p. 8) states, they are considered reliable sources that exhibit unusual qualities in their professions, have certain niches and are consulted by their followers for their thoughts.

2.1.1.3. Micro influencers

They whose follower numbers are relatively lower than mega and macro influencers, can establish closer relationships with their followers. This closeness and honesty often leads to their posts being perceived as spontaneous, reliable, and authentic, and being liked more. (De Almeida, 2018, p. 8). In short, such influencers are generally specialized in much smaller niches and have a loyal follower base, thus offering high interaction rates and providing businesses with access at lower costs. For this reason, they are preferred by businesses that want to provide direct access to a more specific audience and increase interaction.

2.1.1.4. Nano influencer

These types of influencers have a small and loyal follower base with a strong bond and are more reliable and sincere in terms of personal interaction, with a follower count of 1000-10,000. They

are preferred by businesses that aim to build brand awareness in a local or small community. Influencers, who have a smaller follower base compared to other types of influencers, usually have a close bond with their followers, so advertising a product that is not suitable for their field can be perceived as selling by their followers (Campbell and Farrell 2020; Khamis et al., 2017; Janssen et al., 2022, pp. 108-109).

2.1.2. Classification according to content typology

The classification system developed by Gross and Wangenheim (2018, pp. 32-34) classifies influencers into four categories according to their content production approaches:

2.1.2.1. Explorers

This type of influencer includes people who enjoy producing content and are motivated by sharing their writings with audiences that share the same thoughts/hobbies. For example, an influencer interested in technology discovers and tests cameras, the latest phone models or computers and shares this enjoyable idiom/information with their followers. The basic ideas are writing something on their own, talking about experiences, finding, and extracting interesting things about technology and life, etc.

2.1.2.2. Informers

This type of influencers aims to fill important information gaps on social media by providing informative, educational, or supportive content about their high level of talent, expertise, and specific areas.

2.1.2.3. Entertainers

It includes Influencer types that aim to provide entertainment, enjoyment, relaxation, and a good time to their audience by creating entertaining content. Entertaining content includes music, drama, acting, horror, or comedy.

2.1.2.4. Infotainers

It includes Influencer types that are known as highly knowledgeable and highly respected experts in their fields. However, issues related to the main topics are secondary in the sense that the content contains more entertaining elements. Entertaining topics include personalized and emotional elements such as video blogs (e.g., vlogs). They always stick to their main field/topic. Influencers in the category of those who inform while entertaining create completely informative content, only interesting content or content that contains both elements.

2.1.3. Promotion-based classification

The model proposed by Sudha and Sheena (2017, p. 16) examines influencers in two categories according to their promotional approaches:

2.1.3.1. Earned influencer marketing

Influencers benefit from third-party content through free or pre-existing relationships or to support the influencer's own personal social development. It includes product recommendations because of organic existing relationships or product trials. This type of influencer marketing creates a high perception of credibility and a positive image.

2.1.3.2. Paid influencer marketing

Campaigns can be in the form of sponsorship, pre-roll advertising (advertising content shown immediately before the video to be watched), or testimonial messages and can be included at any point in the content. The budget is usually based on audience reach. In influencer marketing, since consumers trust the influencers, they follow or encounter content, this sponsored content can be perceived as word-of-mouth (WOM) by businesses rather than paid advertising (De Veirman et al., 2017).

In addition, various studies and research have comprehensively revealed the effect of content sharing frequency on brand perception and consumer behaviour. These studies reveal important findings about how consumers perceive the brand because of content sharing frequency and how these perceptions shape consumer behaviour. For example, the study conducted by Salazar (2017) revealed that the optimal sharing frequency is 6-7 times a week and that sharing above this rate reduces interaction. The study conducted by Balaban et al. (2024) shows that sponsored content sharing frequency has significant effects on brand attitude and purchase intention. In addition, Hapsari et al. (2024) comparatively examined the effects of social media influencers of generations Y and Z on the behaviour of consumers in generations Y and Z. When the study results are examined, while entertaining and authentic content attracts the attention of Generation Z consumers, they are more interested in the micro influencer group; while information-oriented and reliable campaigns are more effective on Generation Y, they tend to turn to more well-known and reliable influencers. In studies examining the attitudes of Generation X and Generation Y towards influencers, Generation X adopted a more critical and questioning attitude (Cabeza-Ramírez et al., 2022). For this reason, it is mentioned that campaigns that provide more evidentiary assurance can be successful in Generation X.

2.2. Brand Attitude

Brand attitude is defined as “a specific measurement of brand preference, consisting of continuous, positive or negative general evaluations and effective behaviours related to a brand” (Saydan and Dölek, 2019, p. 473). In order to shape consumers' attitudes towards the brand and to facilitate understanding of the motivations underlying these attitudes, a three-frame brand attitude model is presented as cognitive, emotional, and behavioural. Cognitive attitude covers the thoughts and information about the brand that consumers obtain from direct experiences, advertisements and campaigns, or other consumers (Mothersbaugh and Hawkins, 2016, p. 384; Schiffman and Wisenblit, 2015). Solomon (2017, p. 286) states that the cognitive component includes consumers' concrete information and logical evaluations about the attitude object. Affective attitude is defined as an element that reflects “Consumers' emotional attachments and feelings toward a particular brand” (Peter and Olson, 2009, p. 39).

Mothersbaugh and Hawkins (2016, p. 387) stated that the emotional component forms the basis of concepts such as brand loyalty and love. Behavioural attitude is defined as “Consumers' tendencies and behavioral intentions to respond in a certain way to the attitude object” (Mothersbaugh and Hawkins, 2016, pp. 388-390). Solomon (2017, p. 286) states that this component reflects

the potential of attitudes to turn into behaviour. The behavioural component includes consumers' purchase intentions and brand recommendation behaviours.

Various academic studies have shown that generations X, Y and Z exhibit different approaches and behaviours towards influencer content types and brand perceptions depending on their relationships with digital media and channels, value judgments and consumption habits (Cabeza-Ramírez, et al. 2022; Gurunathan and Lakshmi, 2023; Hapsari, et al. 2024). In order for businesses to achieve effective results, they also need to address generational differences.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Purpose and Question of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of the link revenue applications provided by brands to influencers and the frequency of sponsored content sharing, which affect the perception of the target audience, on brand attitude in terms of different generations. Research question: "How do the link revenue partnerships and sponsored content publishing frequencies offered by brands to influencers affect the brand perception and attitude of the target audience?"

3.2. Population and Sample of Study

In the study, unstructured focus group interviews were preferred in order to allow participants to express their thoughts comfortably and to provide flexibility according to the flow of the interview (Krueger and Casey, 2014). Focus group questions are included in Appendix-1. This method was used to address the advantages and disadvantages of influencers' sharing frequencies in terms of generations X, Y, and Z. Convenience sampling was preferred as the sampling method in the study. This method ensures that only reachable individuals are included in the sample due to time and budget constraints (Gegez, 2021). The study was conducted with a total of 24 people from generations X, Y, and Z who live in Istanbul, use social media, and follow influencers.

3.3. Analysis Method

Focus group interviews are defined as a qualitative data collection method that is conducted to reveal the feelings, thoughts, and attitudes of the participants in more detail about a particular field or subject (Morgan, 1977). Through these interviews, it is possible to collect more detailed and richer data by increasing the interaction between the participants. Focus group discussions provide comprehensive information as they allow participants to express their thoughts through social interaction (Çokluk et al., 2011). Focus group interviews are usually conducted with participants in similar groups of 6-10 people and these interviews are guided by a moderator. The moderator supports the participants in the group to take part in the interview effectively and ensures a productive interview without deviating from the topic (Onwuegbuzie, 2009).

4. DATA ANALYSIS

The data from the focus group interview were analyzed using the reflective thematic analysis methodology specified in Braun and

Clarke's (2019; 2021; 2021a) studies. Within the scope of the research, questions for focus group participants were prepared in advance and their suitability was checked by two experts (Appendix 1). The data were first defined and summarized, themes were determined according to the coding, and in the next step, explanations and subthemes were included in each theme. The analysis results were then reported.

4.1. Themes Emerging from Coding and Their Definitions

Considering the summarized information of participants from Generation X, Y and Z, the analysis is shaped around 6 themes and supported by original comments. The themes and their explanations are determined as follows:

- 1) Areas followed and content preferences: This theme shows the topics participants want to learn about and the influence of influencers who are experts in these topics. It reveals the effects of influencers on digital marketing and SEO, their originality in content production and how their personal images are shaped
- 2) Content quality and impact of liked and constantly followed influencers: This theme reveals the impact of influencers' content quality and diversity on their followers
- 3) Attitudes to link sharing: This theme reflects the reliability of information sharing on social media and the participants' concerns about this issue. This theme reflects the role of the impact and frequency of link sharing on access to information
- 4) Attitudes towards brands and influencer collaborations: This theme examines the relationships of influencers with brands and the dynamics of these relationships. This theme emphasizes the questioning of their relationships with brands in terms of reliability and the negative effects of negative promotions on the brand image
- 5) Earning income from links and purchasing behaviour: This theme investigates the income that influencers earn from links and the effects of this income on purchasing behaviour. In addition, this theme examines the reliability and social impact of purchases made through links
- 6) Attitudes towards influencers' lifestyles: This theme examines the lifestyles of influencers, how these lifestyles affect the way followers do business, and the forms of interaction.

The demographic characteristics of the 24 participants who participated in 3 separate focus group interviews are presented in Table 1.

The data were coded by summarizing the data and selecting keywords in basic categories such as the influencers and areas they follow, their opinions on link sharing, their collaborations with brands, their purchasing behaviors and their attitudes towards lifestyles of 24 participants who participated in 3 separate focus group interviews.

5. FINDINGS

The themes of each generation, sub-themes and findings of the obtained data are presented in Tables 2-4.

When the data in Table 2 is evaluated, Generation X's focus on information and functionality comes to the fore. Therefore, platforms such as LinkedIn and YouTube should be preferred more. Ethical boundaries are striking in Generation X regarding brand collaborations. Brands can more easily provide technical and up-to-date information about brand products/services by using

podcast content with academic or expert influencers. Generation X maintains self-control when it comes to shopping from links and does not make a purchase without researching products and examining alternatives. The reason for following Influencers who share humorous content is based on psychological reasons such as liveliness and morale. The focus should be on content quality rather than advertising, and authoritative influencer collaborations should be preferred more. Product recommendations should be focused on being presented organically by influencers. At this point, brands should focus on influencers sharing their development processes, such as their efforts in the promotion process or success stories, more openly and transparently while making collaborations. Generation X participants exhibit questioning and measured approaches to Influencer lifestyles. Creating content focused on knowledge and experience in a logical and ethical way, emphasizing effort, will lead to more positive results (Appendix 2a).

When the data in Table 3 is evaluated, Generation Y follows content in more niche and functional areas. It has been concluded that excessive advertising and link sharing negatively affects the target audience's loyalty and brand attitude. When evaluated in terms of content, since this audience prefers influencers with entertaining and informative content, if Generation Y is targeted in digital marketing strategies, product promotions should be made with such influencers. Applications such as YouTube and Instagram can be preferred at this point. It is thought that sharing too many links reduces the quality of content and is considered insincere. Content presented in a natural context is considered normal. Participants generally do not trust brand collaborations. Products should be tested by the Influencers who promote them, and the results should be shared transparently with the target audience. Different user comments should also be used as support

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the participants in the study

Participants	Participants no.	Year of birth	Gender	Profession
Generation X	X1	1969	Male	Retired
	X2	1972	Male	Teacher
	X3	1975	Male	Academic
	X4	1975	Male	Bank Manager
	X5	1977	Female	Aesthetician
	X6	1965	Female	Retired
	X7	1978	Female	Academic
	X8	1979	Female	Academic
Generation Y	Y1	1982	Female	Company Manager
	Y2	1995	Male	Digital Marketing Manager
	Y3	1992	Male	Civil Servant
	Y4	1985	Male	Engineer
	Y5	1985	Male	Civil Engineer
	Y6	1982	Male	Civil Servant
	Y7	1993	Male	Academic
	Y8	1991	Male	Teacher
Generation Z	Z1	2002	Male	Student
	Z2	2001	Male	Student
	Z3	2002	Male	Student
	Z4	2003	Male	Student
	Z5	2005	Male	Student
	Z6	2002	Male	Student
	Z7	2005	Male	Student
	Z8	2003	Male	Student

Table 2: Themes and sub-themes of generation X

Themes	Sub-themes and participant thoughts
Areas followed and content preferences	Field expertise: Participants stated that they follow influencers who are experts in fields such as finance, technology, and education. Education and information sharing: It was emphasized that influencers share content with the aim of providing useful information to their followers.
Attitudes towards influencers' content quality and impact	Up-to-date information sharing: It was stated that influencers provide up-to-date and useful information to their followers.
Attitudes towards link sharing habits	Information pollution: Participants stated that links shared on social media can sometimes be misleading.
Attitudes towards brands and influencer collaborations	Sharing frequency: It was stated that links are shared frequently, but in some cases this situation can be disturbing. Social media and advertising: Participants stated that social media platforms play an important role in the promotion of brands. With developing technology, the influence of influencers increases, and this affects the advertising strategies of brands. Product promotion and consumer Behavior: Participants stated that influencers are effective in product promotion, but these promotions are not always reliable. It is emphasized that consumers should be careful about the recommendations of influencers. Negative thoughts: Participants have criticisms about the poor quality of today's advertising efforts of influencers. These criticisms reflect that brands are not promoting effectively and how influencers feel about this situation.
Revenue generation from links and purchasing behaviour	Impact of advertisements: Participants state that the income obtained from links is directly related to the impact of advertisements. It is stated that advertisements can affect consumers' purchasing decisions. Consumer preferences: Participants state that consumers have different thoughts about preferring products obtained from links, and some are indifferent to such advertisements.
Attitudes towards influencers' lifestyles	Economic situation and consumption: Participants state that their economic situation affects their purchasing behavior. The concern of making money directly affects consumption habits. Content and quality: Participants state that the quality and presentation of content affects consumers' purchasing decisions. It is emphasized that brands that create quality content attract more attention.

Source: Authors

Table 3: Themes and sub-themes of generation Y

Themes	Sub-themes and participant thoughts
Areas followed and content preferences	Digital marketing skills: Participants emphasize the impact of influencers' self-promotion on digital marketing strategies.
Influencers' content quality and impact	Content production: Participants appreciate influencers' creative content production skills.
Content quality and impact of influencers	Sharing frequency: There are views that sharing too many links makes it difficult for users to access information. Participants emphasize how links affect the flow of information and that too much sharing can lead to disinformation.
Attitudes towards link sharing habits	Speed and accessibility: Participants state that effective links make it easier to access information. Brand image: Participants state that negative promotions by influencers can negatively affect the image of brands.
Attitudes towards brand and influencer collaborations	Product promotion: Participants express concerns about the reliability of influencers in product promotion. Reliability: Participants emphasize how reliable links affect shopping experiences. Participants state that they look for reliability when shopping from links.
Attitudes towards influencers' lifestyles	Social impact: Participants discuss how influencers' posts affect their followers. Style reflections: Participants state that influencers' lifestyles can have positive or negative effects on their followers. Relationships and interaction: Respondents believe that influencers' self-development strengthens their interactions with followers

Source: Authors

Table 4: Themes and sub-themes of generation Z

Themes	Sub-themes and participant thoughts
Tracked domains and content preferences	Field expertise: Participants mainly follow influencers who share content in the areas of lifestyle, beauty, technology, entertainment, and fashion.
Content quality and impact of influencers	Sharing features: The balance between education and entertainment plays a critical role in content preferences. In addition, experience-oriented shares attract more and special attention. Sincerity and trust: The relationship between content quality and impact is maximized with the optimal combination of trust and presentation techniques/formats. Sincere, explanatory content, accurate and complete information sharing increase user loyalty and strengthen the perception of reliability. Visual quality: The quality of visual elements, visual narration and impressive presentation increase the impact of the content.
Attitudes towards link sharing habits	Behavioural patterns: Having a high level of sharing frequency results in behaviours such as followers unfollowing or skipping stories, thus decreasing the level of influencer interaction. Being helpful: Some participants think that influencers share links to provide information and help.
Attitudes towards brand and influencer collaborations	Sustainable collaborations: It is considered normal because it is perceived as a new generation advertising approach. Commercialization: This situation causes negative reactions because some participants think that the products are being introduced for commercial purposes without being experienced.
Earning income from links and purchasing behaviour	Behavioural analysis: Products shared through direct links have a high purchase rate. Discovery perception: It is emphasized that innovative products are discovered through influencers.
Generating income from links and purchasing behaviour	Source of motivation: Successful influencers are evaluated according to their lifestyles and are seen as a source of motivation. Their lifestyles are seen as a reflection of their labour and effort and are appreciated. Critical approach: Some participants have a critical approach to the exaggerated lifestyles of influencers.

Source: Authors

at this point. Influencers with whom collaborations are made should reflect a natural image and lifestyle. Generation Y does not find influencer lifestyles realistic but appreciates influencers who improve themselves. Posts by influencers who focus solely on luxury and ostentation cause a loss of followers (Appendix 2b).

When the data in Table 4 is evaluated, when Generation Z is evaluated as content, since this generation is inclined towards entertaining content, the use of short-term video formats such as reels in applications such as Instagram and TikTok will lead businesses to success. Brands should focus on collaborations that are suitable for influencers' personal interests. In the content, the experiences they experience because of using the products should be presented in an entertaining way and directed towards sales. The aesthetic perception of this generation should be supported. For this, visual content should be of high quality and high resolution.

Shared posts or product promotions should not be commercial but give a sincere impression, increasing the degree of interaction. Link sharing should be rare, and the reason should be clearly stated to create the impression of a friend. At this point, special and real discount information or personally experienced products can be explained and directed towards shopping. The concept of 'Employment' emerges in this generation's interviews and is seen as a source of motivation. Content that reveals and emphasizes the attraction stages of influencers can be produced (Appendix 2c).

6. CONCLUSION

In this study, the attitudes of participants from generations X, Y and Z towards influencer marketing activities were examined and the effectiveness of brand attitudes towards content was evaluated. When the research results were examined, it was found that each

generation's interactions using different content types and channels differed. It was revealed that each generation has different desires and expectations. While Generation X is information-oriented; Generation Y comes across with concepts such as originality and aesthetics. Generation Z consumes entertainment-oriented content. When the common characteristics of the generations are considered, they are disturbed by excessive link sharing. As a result, businesses that can catch up with digital changes survive. At this point, businesses need to determine effective digital marketing strategies by analysing the influencer preferences and interests of their target market in detail.

This study makes important contributions to the theoretical literature on influencer marketing. A limited number of studies in the literature have addressed the impact of influencer content sharing frequency on brand attitude across generations. In this respect, the study proposes new research questions by explaining the differences in the use of digital media tools, attitude perception and interaction expectations of Generations X, Y and Z. In practical terms, this study provides guidance for brands to develop generational marketing strategies. Considering factors such as the type of content, frequency of sharing and trust factors that are appropriate for generations in influencer selection will strengthen brand attitude and increase consumer interaction. In addition, a better understanding of how link revenue activities are perceived by consumers will allow for more ethical and sustainable marketing strategies in influencer collaborations.

In the results obtained from the focus groups, it was seen that Influencer promotions, which attracted attention when social media was not used intensively, caused concerns such as the inclusion of very frequent advertising content, advertisements of unreliable products only to generate income, and deception of consumers, etc. In this context, the suggestions that can be made to improve the digital marketing strategies of businesses will be discussed by considering the research results.

The data in this study has geographical limitations as it was collected only from participants in Istanbul. In order to increase generalizability, it is recommended that future studies be conducted to examine sectoral differences. In addition, sector-specific (e.g. cosmetics, fashion, technology) analyses can be conducted to investigate the differences in the effects of influencer marketing across sectors. The reliability and validity of the findings can be increased by conducting studies with more participants using quantitative research methods. In addition, more comprehensive results can be obtained when the causal relationships of variables such as consumer trust, advertising awareness and purchase intentions are examined using structural equation models.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questions directed to users in focus group interviews

- 1) Can you tell us about the areas in which the influencers you follow regularly share content?
- 2) What is the purpose of following these influencers constantly? Briefly mention the features that attract you.
- 3) What do you think about influencers' link sharing and frequency? Can you tell us your positive or negative thoughts?
- 4) What do you think about brands that work with influencers?
- 5) What do you think about influencers earning income from links? Do you shop from links?
- 6) Can you share your thoughts on the lifestyles of influencers ?

Appendix 2a: Summary results of focus group discussions with generation X participants

Questions	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4
Can you tell us about the areas in which the influencers you follow share content?	Finance	Technology	Education	Finance
What is the purpose of following these influencers? Tell us briefly about the features that attract you.	Sharing useful and informative information through a dedicated channel on social media. I especially spend time on YouTube.	Current information, artificial intelligence, etc., and there is also good information on the Linked-in channel.	It has content that will raise awareness on neuroscience, psychology and human behaviour.	They have content on central bank policies, foreign exchange markets, etc., They have podcasts on these topics.
What do you think about link sharing and frequency of influencers? Can you tell us about your positive or negative thoughts?	I unfollow those who share links in every story, I get annoyed with those who share every day.	Bad, information pollution	I don't see it much, it's neutral	Feels suffocating
What do you think about brands that work with influencers?	With the developing technology and the abundance of social media, it makes sense for brands to give their advertisements to influencers. I am disturbed by those who abuse it too much and unfollow them.	I feel negative because they recommend products they don't use for money.	In fact, we can consider these people like today's mannequins. So, I am not very negative.	Advertising with people who have developed expertise does not bother me, but it is a bit sad that they work with ordinary people just because they have a high number of followers.
What do you think about influencers earning income from links? Do you shop from links?	No, but I did not buy any product from the links.	Yes, I didn't click even if I needed to because the wording in the advertisements for the products promoted is so contrived and annoying.	Usually the ads are tempting, but I'm not that influenced by them. I don't shop from links	I don't follow people who share links, like I said, it suffocates me
Can you share your thoughts on the lifestyles of influencers?	There are times when I think they are making money the easy way.	It feels bad because all they do is share links.	People who play in TV commercials can change their lifestyles. It's a reward for their labour.	Of course, creating poor quality content and changing their lives makes you think. Is it that easy? Is there any labour?
Questions	Participant 5	Participant 6	Participant 7	Participant 8
Can you tell us about the areas in which the influencers you follow share content?	Healthy living/nutrition	Cleaning	Sport healthy life	For animals
What is the purpose of following these influencers? Tell us briefly about the features that attract you.	She shares quality content on nutrition. I don't miss his videos on YouTube. Useful	Humour, funny and entertaining videos	It keeps me alive, keeps me moving.	They share beautiful and informative posts about animals.
What do you think about link sharing and frequency of influencers? Can you tell us about your positive or negative thoughts?	It's okay if it happens occasionally, but sometimes we can't find the ingredients in shared recipes. The shared ad saves us.	Link sharing is too frequent. Sometimes it gets tiring. I understand sharing his own brand.	Maybe it is normal to share liked products once a week, the advertising sector has shifted to digital, but there are those who add 10-20 links every day and I do not welcome this situation.	Link sharing is available, I like it when they share beautiful products for their pawed friends.
What do you think about brands that work with influencers?	Our day is moulded to this phase. But extremism drives me away	Brands would sell more if they offered discounts on products instead of working with influencers at such a cost.	It's good, but sometimes influencer ads don't create real emotion or convey emotion to the other person.	Working with people who constantly share links creates the perception of a cheap brand.
What do you think about influencers earning income from links? Do you shop from links?	I'll research and buy it myself.	Usually, if I like it, I go and search for it instead of buying it from links.	I don't want to waste time, I buy links. Sharing links is their job, I don't mind. Sometimes it can even take days to create content.	If the product shared is related to cats, I buy from the links as a donation.
Can you share your thoughts on the lifestyles of influencers?	I don't mind. After all, they work too.	Maybe, but some people exaggerate. Trying to stick it in people's eyes is not nice.	No problem, as long as they generate income and pay the same to the state.	Their work and progress can be life changing. But it has to change in a positive way.

Appendix 2b: Summary results of focus group discussions with generation Y participants

Questions	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4
Can you tell us about the areas in which the influencers you follow share content?	Technology	Technology	Informative, documentary	Technology, e-commerce
What is the purpose of following these influencers? Tell us briefly about the features that attract you.	Digital Marketing, SEO	It has content on social media and digital marketing.	Different interesting mystery videos are coming out.	Identify the differences between current knowledge and technological devices.
What do you think about link sharing and frequency of influencers? Can you tell us about your positive or negative thoughts?	Since my time is limited, I see it as a waste of time.	There is such a person in the family, I don't like it	Too intense link sharing now causes me to fast forward through stories.	Bad, there is information pollution
What do you think about brands that work with influencers?	I feel insecure because of the personal image of influencers	I think it damages the image of brands, especially when they make young individuals who have not yet fully matured do these things.	Sponsored or advertising articles do not give me confidence. I do not prefer too much because I think they promote the product without using it.	I feel negative because they recommend products they don't use for money. I don't feel like one of us anymore about influencers in general
What do you think about influencers earning income from links? Do you shop from links?	I don't shop at the link.	I don't shop from links; I buy what I need by searching the product on google.	I usually go and look at the link clicks because they hide the price of the product. If it is a very different product, I may prefer it.	Yes, I didn't click on it even if I needed it. because the wording in the advertisements for the promoted products is so contrived it's annoying
Can you share your thoughts on the lifestyles of influencers?	I don't see the logic of it.	There are people who deserve it, but sometimes I am sceptical.	I am not very interested in their lifestyle.	It feels bad because all they do is share links.
Questions	Participant 5	Participant 6	Participant 7	Participant 8
Can you tell us about the areas in which the influencers you follow share content?	Food recipes	Personal life sharing, Cleaning	Philosophy, Psychology	Fitness, healthy lifestyle
What is the purpose of following these influencers? Tell us briefly about the features that attract you.	She shares unique recipes, different interesting and aesthetic dishes.	He publishes content on topics such as personal development and motivation.	He produces instructional videos on philosophy and psychology.	Videos about healthy living
What do you think about link sharing and frequency of influencers? Can you tell us about your positive or negative thoughts?	I didn't see any link sharing her.	He does not share very intensely. It is nice and informative when he shares health vitamins.	I find it insincere.	It does not inspire confidence.
What do you think about brands that work with influencers?	I find it very disturbing.	Instead of working too intensively, it would be better to work with quality people in a small and concise way.	Of course, this is also a brand promotion element, but if an organic natural content emerges, I prefer brands.	I lose trust in the brand when they suddenly advertise to all influencers. I can't trust when everyone shares the same thing
What do you think about influencers earning income from links? Do you shop from links?	Yeah, I can go look for it and pick it up.	No, I can buy it if the product is of good quality and meets my needs.	There have been posts where I realize my needs, but I don't immediately click on the link and buy. I research and buy.	Yes, very rarely when I come across a different product, I feel the need to buy it.
Can you share your thoughts on the lifestyles of influencers?	It's ridiculous, who can suddenly earn so much money and live in luxury.	I like influencers who improve themselves and reflect on their lives, but I unfollow influencers who go to extremes.	I don't think it's fair to change their lives in this way by promoting the wrong product.	It may be a link-sharing business, but I find it interesting how suddenly life changes at a very high level. I am surprised.

Appendix 2c: Summary results of focus group discussions with generation Z participants

Questions	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4
Can you tell us about the areas in which the influencers you follow share content?	E-Commerce, entertainment	Fun and experiential videos	Entertainment	Technology, entertainment
What is the purpose of following these influencers? Tell us briefly about the features that attract you.	Reels are descriptive, they use fun visuals	Having instructive content	They are sympathetic, warm-blooded, fun people	Provide accurate and complete information
What do you think about link sharing and frequency of influencers?	I unfollow those who share links in every story, I get annoyed with those who share every day.	Neutral, I find it repulsive to share too much.	Their sharing frequency is normal but seeing links every day would drive me away from them.	They guide and help people who help people.
Can you tell us about your positive or negative thoughts?				
What do you think about brands that work with influencers?	With the developing technology and the abundance of social media, it makes sense for brands to give their advertisements to influencers. But I am disturbed by those who abuse this too much and unfollow them.	Neutral	After all, it is an advertising medium and I think there is no problem, I think positively.	If businesses earn from product promotion, they should also pay influencers. I have a positive attitude.
What do you think about influencers earning income from links? Do you shop from links?	No, but I did not buy any product from the links.	I have not purchased any product	Yes, there were people I did not buy and unfollowed when I was overwhelmed with absurd links.	I recognize products I never knew about thanks to influencers, so I buy them for their benefit.
Can you share your thoughts on the lifestyles of influencers?	There are times when I think they make money the easy way, it does not apply to all influencers, there are those who do it right.	It makes me feel jealous, but it also motivates me to act.	I see successful people in front of me and that inspires me.	They work hard, they try, and they get what they deserve. Being a phenomenon is not an easy job.
Questions	Participant 5	Participant 6	Participant 7	Participant 8
Can you tell us about the areas in which the influencers you follow share content?	Lifestyle	Beauty	Beauty	Luxury fashion, lifestyle
What is the purpose of following these influencers? Tell us briefly about the features that attract you.	They give details about their lifestyle.	Beauty tips etc.	At the forefront of beauty and makeup	She has a different aura. His luxurious lifestyle and natural behaviour attracts.
What do you think about link sharing and frequency of influencers?	Too high sharing bothers me	I feel uncomfortable	I don't feel a problem because there is not much sharing	That's their job, but I skip the stories of those who share at a very high level.
Can you tell us about your positive or negative thoughts?				
What do you think about brands that work with influencers?	Maybe, everyone is following influencers now. They can reach them in this way in an easy way.	It's a normal situation.	I welcome it. They should be rewarded for their work.	I think it is the best method for product promotion and for the brand to reach everyone.
What do you think about influencers earning income from links? Do you shop from links?	No, I'll buy it	No, I'll buy it	No, I'll buy it	No, I'll buy it
Can you share your thoughts on the lifestyles of influencers?	They may have different jobs in the background. We only see the part on the screen. That's why I take it normally.	It motivates me.	I know that making and editing a video is very tiring, so it's normal that their earnings from sharing are high and their lives change.	There is labour and I think this is normal.