



The Role of Influencer Endorsement towards Gen Z's Purchase Intention in the Apparel Industry of Iran

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to assess the impact of influencer endorsements on purchase intention with a mediating role of attitude towards brand in Iran's apparel industry among Gen Z. The independent variables are credibility of influencer, its brand congruence, and its congruence to targeted population. Convenience sampling is used to conduct this quantitative study by collecting data from 384 people through survey questionnaire. A significant relationship is observed between dependent variable purchase intention and independent variables; influencer's credibility, its congruence with target audience. Whereas a full mediation is noticed between influencer's congruence to brand and purchase intention taking attitude towards brand as a mediator. In the dynamic market of Iran, the goal of this study is to present practicable takeaways for the marketers and businesses related to apparel industry who aim to use influencer endorsements efficiently for the betterment of brand perception and manage Gen Z's purchase intention keeping brand attitude as a mediator.



Introduction

In today's marketing world, influencer endorsement is a popular tactics for industries to improve their market credibility, expand brand reach, and grow sales (Borges-Tiago et al., 2023). This tactic allow a company to pair up with a well-known public figure who may be an artist, sportsperson, or social media influencer and who can use their fame, reputation, and appeal to shape consumers buying decision. With the passage of time, endorsements have grown into a

complex practice, influenced by customer psychology, culture diversity, and market trends (Agusiady, 2024; Ma et al., 2022).

The clothing sector in Iran is dynamic and competitive, combining traditional styles with modern trends. The country's apparel business is projected to achieve 2.0 billion units by 2028 (Apparel-Iran, 2024). Moreover, in 2025 the market size is expected to grow by 2.0% (Apparel-Iran, 2024). In 2024, it's estimated that each person will purchase around 20.4 clothing items on average (Apparel-Iran, 2024).

With young and wealthy population, Iran gives an attractive opportunity for clothing brands who aim to target Generation Z shoppers. The individuals with date of birth between 1997 and 2012, represents a modern segment of consumers with distinct inclinations, principles, and buying behaviors (Salam et al., 2024).

Although marketing activities commonly used influencer endorsements, there's still ongoing discussion about how much they actually create impact on consumer perceptions, attitudes, and buying decisions especially among Generation Z. Even though many campaigns have been successful, still there is a lack of detailed studies on the deeper aspects of influencer endorsements, particularly in unique culture settings like Iran. There is limited academic research that examines the role and impact of influencer endorsements within Iran's garment sector, especially when it comes to Gen Z shoppers.

In Iran's continuously changing fashion scenario, influencer marketing can be an impactful way to engage Iran's Generation Z. This generation is exceedingly influenced by social media and digital content. They value originality and want to connect with brands that feel relatable. Due to the interactive nature of digital platforms businesses are able to build strong communication with young consumers. Partnerships can be done with influencers who stand for values like self-expression and sustainability. This will help brands to increase their brand loyalty and influence consumers' buying decisions.

This study presents useful information on strategies for cross-cultural marketing, how to effectively enter in a market and what are the influencer collaboration opportunities for global companies that aim to enter or grow in Iran's market. By developing understanding about how social media advertising makes or breaks brand image, impacts buying habits among Iranian consumers and builds customer relationships, businesses can efficiently manage brand interpretation and get a competitive advantage in Iran's dynamic fashion industry. For long-standing accomplishment, international firms can use these results to adapt their strategies to fit in Iran's distinct cultural and economic environment.

The objective of this research is to understand how influencer endorsements create impact on the buying decisions of Generation Z with in Iran's clothing industry. It mainly focuses on the role of brand attitude as a mediator, influencing how Gen Z reacts to endorsements and makes buying choices. With a main focus on fashion, the research looks into how this highly digital and social media-driven generation responds to influencer marketing. Understanding about these dynamics will help marketers and strategy makers to design more effective campaigns that use influencer endorsements to develop strong brand image and motivate Gen Z consumers.

Theoretical and Literature Review

In today's competitive world, companies are continuously trying new ways to improve their brand image and encourage consumers to make purchases. Influencer endorsement is one of the strategies that have gained significant popularity. Influencers are considered as individuals who can form consumers' positive opinions and behaviors towards a brand (Feng et al., 2023).

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is defined as a consumer's likeliness to buy any good or service. Different aspects help in simplifying the process of purchase. Using reliable influencer marketing can significantly raise a consumer's intention to purchase (Chen & Yang, 2023; Sibte Ali et al., 2024). When influencers are viewed as trustworthy, knowledgeable, and well-known, their recommendations carry strong influence. By sharing honest and personal experiences with products or services, reliable influencers can greatly shape their audience's opinions and buying habits (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Their sincerity and genuine enthusiasm build trust and confidence, making audiences more likely to express purchase interest and consider the promoted product.

Utilization of Influencer Endorsement

The role of influential individuals in marketing and consumer behavior has been widely explored. Celebrity endorsement involves using familiar personalities—such as athletes, actors, or media figures—to boost products or services (Erdogan, 2019). The idea is that the positive qualities of these influencers are transferred to the brand, which in turn affects how consumers view and respond to it (Kim & Park, 2023).

There are different types of endorsers. Virtual influencers, for example, are digital creations like AI-generated people or objects that represent a brand. This is a modern trend in endorsements. However, research by Franke et al. (2023) shows that customers still prioritize real human endorsers and may have trouble identifying virtual ones. Social media influencers—who use platforms like YouTube, Snapchat, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter—gain large followings and then use their platform to share recommendations and promote brands.

The Credibility of Influencers

An influencer's endorsement success greatly depends on how credible the influencer is perceived to be (Arif et al., 2025). Credibility is defined as the influencer's level of honesty, expertise, and reliability (Masuda 2022). Research by Al-Mamun et al. (2023) confirms that an influencer's authenticity strongly influences how consumers feel about the products they promote. When an influencer is seen as reputable, customers will probably trust and prefer the products they recommend, increasing the purchase probability (Arif et al., 2023).

Congruence between Influencer and Brand

Another key factor influencing consumer response is how well the influencer matches the brand they are promoting. Congruence is described as a degree of fit or balance between the Public image of the influencer and brand value. When this match is strong, consumers tend to consider endorsement as authentic and persuasive, which boosts positive feelings toward the brand and increases purchase likelihood (Choi and Rifon 2012).

Congruence between an Influencer and Target Audience

Influencer endorsements should have alignment to both the brand and intended viewers. Arif et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of choosing right influencers who can actually connect to brand’s aimed customers. If consumer feels a strong connection with the influencer, there are high chances that brand has positive image and people consider purchasing its product (Chen & Chua, 2024).

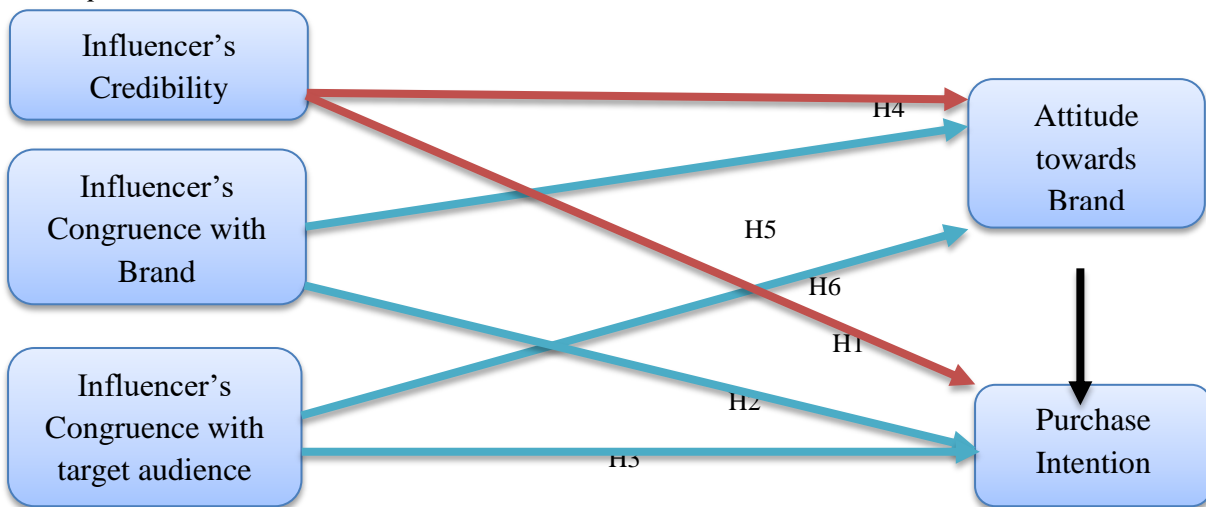
Attitude towards Brand

Al-Muani et al. (2023) noted that a consumer’s attitude towards a brand serve as a mediator between influencer endorsements and purchase intention. A consumer’s feeling or perception about a brand highly depends on influencer’s image (Lee et al., 2022). Positive views of the influencer are often translated into favorable impressions of the brand, which encourages buying behavior (Safeer & Liu, 2023).

Figure 1 illustrates the framework, showing how brand attitude serves as a bridge in connecting influencer endorsements to the intent to purchase.

Figure 1

Conceptual Model



Keeping this paradigm in mind, the study proposes the following assumptions to be tested. Table 1 presents the hypotheses along with the relevant theories extended within the setting of these relations.

Table 1

Hypothesis and Theories

Hypotheses	Statement	Theory
H1	Influencer credibility is positively associated with purchase intention among Iran's Generation Z.	Source Credibility Theory (Ohanion, 1990)
H2	Influencer congruence with the brand is positively	Matchup Hypotheses

	associated with purchase intention among Iran's Generation Z.	Model (Kahle & Homer, 1985)
H3	Influencer congruence with the target audience is positively related to purchase intention among Iran's Generation Z.	Matchup Hypotheses Model (Kahle & Homer, 1985)
H4	Attitude toward the brand act as a mediator between influencer credibility and purchase intention among Iran's Generation Z.	Source Credibility Theory (Ohanion, 1990)
H5	Attitude toward the brand is mediator between influencer congruence with the brand and purchase intention among Iran's Generation Z.	Matchup Hypotheses Model (Kahle & Homer, 1985)
H6	Attitude toward the brand plays the role of mediator between influencer congruence with the target audience and purchase intention among Iran's Generation Z.	Matchup Hypotheses Model (Kahle & Homer, 1985)

This study depends on Matchup Hypothesis Model and the Source Credibility Theory as its theoretical foundation to analyze how different influencer characteristics create impact on purchase intention among Iran's Generation Z.

According to the Source Credibility Theory (Ohanion, 1990), if the influencer is credible then persuasiveness is higher. Trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness are the attributes on which influencer's credibility depends on. Such attributes can positively impact brand attitudes and ultimately lead to increased purchase intentions. According to this theory, influencer credibility directly influences purchase intention (H1) and also have an indirect effect through brand attitude (H4).

The Matchup Hypothesis Model (Kahle & Homer, 1985) claims that endorsement is more effective when there is congruence between the endorser and the product or brand. This match is alignment between the influencer and the target audience (H3, H6) or between the influencer's image and the brand identity (H2, H5). The model shows that such correspondence not only build up the direct relationship between influencer characteristics and purchase intention but also positively affects brand attitude, which plays a mediating role.

Research Methodology

The research methodology of this study adopts Saunders et al.'s (2019) Research Onion framework to assess the impact of influencer endorsement on Iranian Generation Z. This study adopts a positivist philosophy to explore how influencer endorsements shape consumer buying behavior. Under positivism, researchers use measurable observations to draw conclusions, often leading to statistically supported inferences (Chan, 2022). A deductive approach is followed, where hypotheses derived from existing literature are tested for validation. As deductive studies typically rely on surveys, Saunders et al. (2019) recommend surveys for such research. Surveys are favored due to their cost-effectiveness, ability to collect standardized responses from a broad audience, and ease of understanding for participants. They can capture various insights including attitudes, behaviors, and opinions, making them suitable for testing hypotheses in a deductive framework. This method also allows for analyzing relationships among variables, supporting decision-making and theoretical advancements.

A mono-method quantitative design is applied in this study. Quantitative analysis aligns well with positivist and deductive research. Therefore, a quantitative strategy is employed to examine relationships, validate theories, and test hypotheses (Saunders et al., 2019). The variables, though metaphysical, are quantified by coding participant responses, enabling statistical testing. This qualifies the study as a quantitative investigation.

The purpose of cross-sectional approach is to collect data at a specific point of time from a diverse group, including individuals from different regions and backgrounds. Like many academic studies that are time-constrained (Saunders et al., 2019), this study utilizes cross-sectional data collection through surveys.

Participants and Procedure

According to Forbes (2021), Generation Z is expected to drive economic growth and generate \$2 trillion by 2030. Hence, this study targets Iranian individuals belonging to Generation Z. The sampling strategy is guided by the research aim, target population, and resource limitations (Ibrahim & Marcaccio, 2022). Sampling, as Lohr (2021) defines, is the selection of a subset from a larger group to make generalizations about that population. This study uses non-probability sampling, specifically convenience sampling, due to the lack of comprehensive population data. It focuses on individuals from Generation Z in Iran.

Data will be collected from 80 participants from Generation Z through Google Forms. The survey link will be shared via email, Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, and other social media platforms to reach the intended audience.

Measurement of Variables

This study uses Rensis Likert's (1931) five-point scale, which is widely recognized in psychological and social sciences. The questionnaire will also gather demographic data, which includes age, gender, residence, education level, employment status, household income, marital status, etc.

Data analysis begins with descriptive statistics for both demographics and constructs using SPSS version 30. SPSS 30 will be used to perform further statistical descriptions of the variables. The reflective measurement model will be analyzed using SmartPLS version 4.1.0.1, using PLS-SEM. To confirm data's accuracy and consistency both the structural and measurement models will be examined. Direct and mediated connections will be evaluated using path coefficient analysis.

Ethical considerations include prioritizing participants' well-being and maintaining transparency throughout the research process. Privacy will be safeguarded, and participant identities will remain anonymous to prevent unintended disclosure.

Analysis and Findings

The data is analyzed using various statistical methods to derive clear and reliable results. The analysis is divided into two parts: descriptive analysis and structural equation modeling. Descriptive analysis typically focuses on examining the respondents' profile. This part of the analysis is carried out using SPSS version 27. The PLS-SEM method is also applied to evaluate the reliability, accuracy, and relationships amongst diverse variables. These analyses are performed using Smart PLS-SEM version 4.

Preliminary data analysis marks the first step in preparing the data. This involves coding, editing, and screening the data, all of which are completed before the main analysis begins. Descriptive statistics are brief numerical summaries that describe the key characteristics of a sample or population (Kranzler & Anthony, 2022). These include details such as respondents' gender, age, work experience, and educational background. The descriptive analysis is performed using SPSS version 27, which is short for Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. The outcomes of this analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive of Demographics

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
14-18	10	5.9
19-22	12	15.2
23-26	63	79.7
Gender		
Male	48	60.8
Female	37	39.2
Qualification		
Illiterate	1	1
Matriculate/O Level/SSC	2	2.5
Intermediate/A Level/HSSC	16	13.9
Bachelors	30	38
Masters	28	35.4
M.Phil/M.S	8	10.1
Working Experience		
No Experience	23	20.9
Less than 5 years	24	30.4
5 years or more	39	49.4

Based on the recommendations, the study found that all the constructs are reflective in nature. This means that any change in the overall construct leads to changes in its individual items. The items are similar and interchangeable, so removing one doesn't affect the overall meaning of the construct. Moreover, each construct is backed by previous research.

Measurement Model Analysis

The measurement model is employed to assess the accuracy and consistency of the items. Composite reliability is recommended as a better measure of internal consistency than Cronbach's alpha (Hair et al., 2017; McNeish, 2018), with values ranging from 0 to 1. In PLS-SEM, both Cronbach's alpha and the coefficient of reliability (CR) are considered satisfactory if they are 0.70 or higher (Sovey et al., 2022). As shown in Table 3, all constructs meet this threshold, indicating acceptable consistency.

Figure 2

Measurement Model

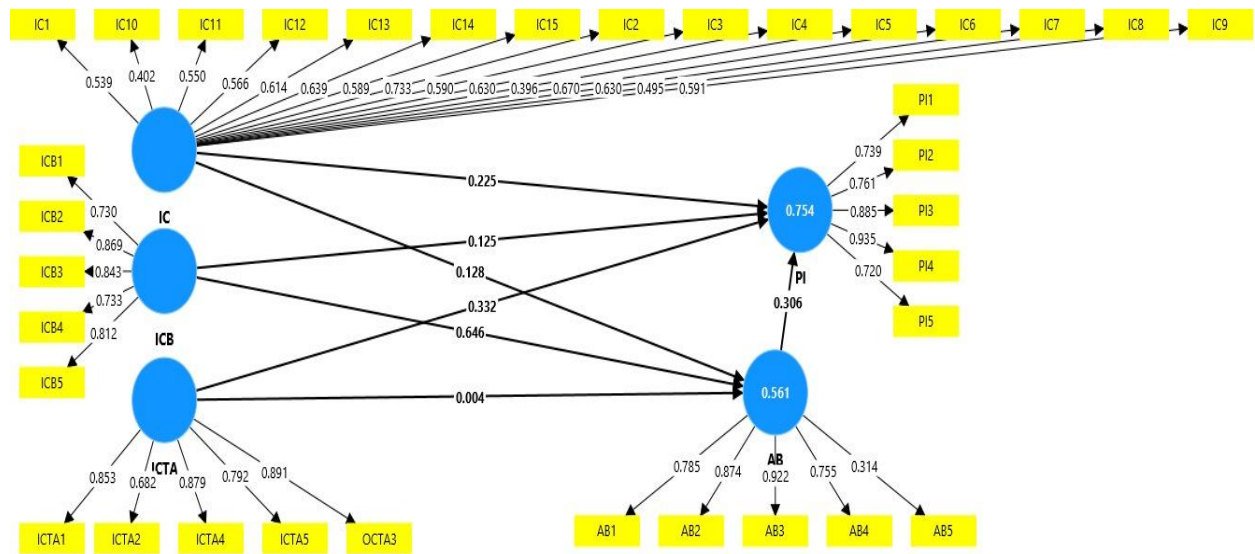


Table 3

Internal Consistency and Reliability

Constructs	Cr_alpha	Cr_a	Cr_c	AVE
Attitude towards Brand	0.79	0.86	0.86	0.58
Influencer’s Credibility	0.86	0.87	0.88	0.34
Influencer’s Congruence with brand	0.86	0.86	0.89	0.64
Influencer’s Congruence with target audience	0.88	0.90	0.91	0.68
Purchase Intention	0.87	0.89	0.91	0.66

To check how well the constructs measured what they were supposed to, the study looked at convergent validity using something called the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). For good validity, AVE should be above 0.50, meaning the construct explains at least half of the variation in its items (Hair et al., 2021). Even if the AVE is a bit lower, it's still considered acceptable if the Composite Reliability (CR) is above 0.60 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In this study, all constructs had AVE values over 0.50, confirming their validity—except for influencer credibility, which still showed acceptable results based on other supporting measures.

Discriminant validity—which checks whether constructs are truly distinct from each other—was tested using three approaches: cross-loadings, the Fornell-Larcker criterion, and the HTMT ratio. According to the Fornell-Larcker rule, a construct’s AVE square root should be higher than its correlation with other constructs. Table 3 shows that this condition was met for all constructs except influencer credibility, which didn’t show as strong a distinction as the others.

Table 4

Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Constructs	Attitude towards Brand	Influencer's Credibility	Influencer's Congruence with Brand	Influencer's Congruence with target audience	Purchase Intention
Attitude towards Brand	0.76				
Influencer's Credibility	0.60	0.58			
Influencer's Congruence with the Brand	0.74	0.73	0.80		
Influencer's Congruence with Target Audience	0.61	0.76	0.78	0.82	
Purchase Intention	0.74	0.75	0.78	0.79	0.81

When evaluating how distinct the constructs are from each other, the acceptable HTMT value depends on how closely related the constructs are. For constructs that are very similar, the limit is 0.90. For completely separate constructs, the threshold is 0.85. If the HTMT score goes above these limits, it suggests the constructs aren't clearly different from one another (Henseler et al., 2014). In this study, as shown in Tables 4 and 5, all the constructs stayed within the acceptable range, confirming that they are sufficiently distinct.

Table 5

Heterotrait-Monotrait Criterion (HTMT)

Constructs	Attitude towards Brand	Influencer's Credibility	Influencer's Congruence with Brand	Influencer's Congruence with target audience	Purchase Intention
Attitude towards Brand					
Influencer's Credibility	0.64				
Influencer's Congruence with the brand	0.87	0.81			
Influencer's Congruence with target audience	0.72	0.87	0.90		
Purchase Intention	0.87	0.82	0.89	0.86	

Structural Model Analysis

Once validity and reliability were confirmed, the structural model was examined to assess predictive relationships between constructs. To rule out collinearity, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were evaluated. A VIF value below 3.3 indicates no collinearity problems (Temme & Diamantopoulos, 2016), while values below 5 are acceptable (Hair et al., 2017). Table 6 confirms no collinearity concerns.

Table 6

Lateral Collinearity Result

Path	VIF
IC → PI	2.69
ICB → PI	3.91
ICTA → PI	3.17

Figure 3

Assessment of Path Coefficients

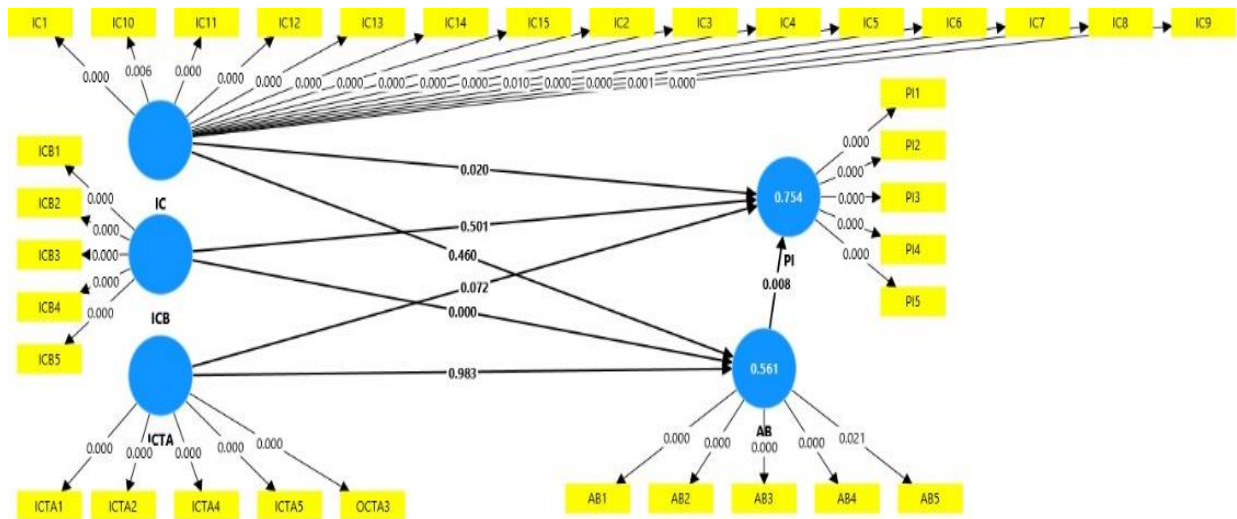


Figure 3 and Table 10 demonstrates path coefficients for hypotheses.

Path coefficients, which range from -1 to +1, were then analyzed to test hypotheses. Relationships are deemed significant at a p-value less than 0.05 and t-values greater than 1.96. Similarly for significant relationships p-value should be less than 0.05 (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 7

Path Coefficients of Direct Effects

Path	β	(ST_DEV)	T statistics	P values	Hypothesis Decision
IC → PI	0.23	0.10	2.33	0.02	Supported
ICB → PI	0.12	0.19	0.67	0.50	Not Supported
ICTA → PI	0.33	0.18	1.80	0.07	Not Supported

IC has a direct and significant impact on PI ($\beta = 0.23, p = 0.02$), implying that trust in influencers directly increases the likelihood of purchase without necessarily altering brand attitudes. Therefore, H1 is accepted. However, ICB has no significant effect on PI ($\beta = 0.12, p = 0.50$), meaning that even if influencers match the brand image, it does not necessarily lead to increased purchasing intentions—thus, H2 is rejected. ICTA has a marginally significant impact on PI ($\beta = 0.33, p = 0.07$), suggesting a subtle influence on purchasing decisions. As a result, H3 is also rejected.

Table 8

Coefficient of Determination (R_Square)

Construct	R²	R² adjusted	Predictive Accuracy
Attitude towards Brand	0.56	0.54	Moderate
Purchase Intention	0.75	0.74	Large

R² values were used to assess predictive accuracy. The R² for PI is 0.75, indicating strong predictive power, while the R² for AB is 0.56, suggesting that 56% of the variance in brand attitude is explained by its predictors.

Due to addition or removal of the predictor construct f² effect size, the value of R² of the endogenous construct changes. The f² shows the comparative impact of an exogenous construct on an endogenous variable (Cohen, 1992). Effect sizes (f²) further contextualize predictor influence.

Table 9

f-square

Path	f-square
IC → PI	0.08
ICB → PI	0.02
ICTA → PI	0.14

IC has a small effect on PI (0.08). ICB has little impact on PI (0.02). Whereas, ICTA has a moderate effect on PI (0.14). These results emphasize that while influencer-brand alignment greatly improves brand attitudes, only alignment with the target audience and direct credibility influences purchase intentions.

Mediation Analysis

The mediation analysis was conducted to examine whether AB mediates the relationship between IC, ICB, ICTA, and PI, based on Baron and Kenny’s (1986) framework of complete mediation and partial mediation. If both the direct and indirect effects are strong, it means partial mediation is taking place. But if the direct effect is weak or small, and the indirect effect (through the mediator) is strong, then it's considered full mediation.

Table 10

Indirect Effects

Path	β	(ST_DEV)	T statistics	P values	Recommended Decisions
IC → AB → PI	0.04	0.06	0.65	0.51	Not Supported
ICB → AB → PI	0.20	0.08	2.37	0.02	Supported
ICTA → AB → PI	0.001	0.06	0.02	0.98	Not Supported

No mediation effect was found between IC and PI through AB ($\beta = 0.04, p = 0.51$), indicating that influencer credibility affects PI directly without involving brand attitude—thus, H4 is rejected. However, AB significantly mediates the relationship between ICB and PI ($\beta = 0.20, p = 0.02$),

supporting H5. This implies that when influencers align with the brand, they improve brand attitude, which in turn enhances purchase intention. No significant mediation was found in the relationship between ICTA and PI ($\beta = 0.001$, $p = 0.98$), indicating that ICTA influences purchase intentions directly, not through brand attitude—so H6 is rejected.

In summary, the mediation analysis reveals that Gen Z’s attitude toward brands mediates only the relationship between influencer-brand congruence and purchase intention. For influencer credibility and audience congruence, the effect on purchase intention is direct and not reliant on brand perception. This emphasizes the importance of using influencers who align with brand image to cultivate positive attitudes, which are pivotal for influencing Gen Z’s buying behavior in Iran’s clothing industry.

Lastly, Q^2 values were assessed to confirm the predictive relevance of the model. Values greater than 0 suggest predictive capability (Chin, 2010). As shown in table 11, with Q^2 values of 0.61 and 0.60, the model exhibits strong predictive relevance, indicating that the exogenous variables effectively predict the endogenous constructs. These values of Q^2 for PI predicts the future purchasing power of Iranian Gen Z whereas the Q^2 value for AB shows that attitude towards brand is highly influenced by IC, ACB and ICTA.

Table 11

Predictive Relevance Q^2

Constructs	Q^2	RMSE	MAE
Purchase Intention	0.61	0.65	0.54
Attitude towards Brand	0.60	0.69	0.53

Conclusion

The aim of this study is to explore how influencer marketing creates impact on Gen Z consumers' buying intents in Iran's clothing business. It mainly focuses on three main attributes of influencers; that are credibility, brand alignment, and target customer alignment. The study also determined how these attributes influence gen Z’s purchase intentions with direct as well as indirect impact through brand attitude. These findings will contribute to academic research by interpreting influencer’s role in shaping consumer behavior in today's fast moving technological world.

The research highpoints attitude towards the brand (AB) impacts the purchase intention (PI) the most. When consumers have positive image about the brand, they prefer to make a purchase, emphasizing the importance of favorable public view of brands. According to analysis influencer credibility (IC) is directly related to purchase intentions, but brand attitude does not have significant impact on PI. This implies that trustworthy influencers have greater impact on Gen Z consumers, regardless of how they feel about the brand. However, the modest indirect effect suggests that credibility alone may not majorly influence brand perception.

On the other hand, influencer brand congruence (ICB) positively affects PI both with a direct impact and through improved brand attitude. This depicts the value of doing collaborations with influencers whose image and values align with the brand, promoting originality and a stronger consumer connection. Meanwhile, influencer congruence with the target audience (ICTA) showed

slight impact on purchase intention when brand attitude is considered as mediator. It may still influence purchasing decisions directly, but the mediating role of attitude towards brand is limited.

The mediation analysis confirmed that brand attitude plays a key role in translating influencer-brand congruence into actual buying behavior, but not for the other two traits. This highlights how crucial it is to select influencers who genuinely align with the brand to foster positive consumer responses.

Conclusively, this study highlights the subtle relationship between influencer attributes, attitude towards brand, and buying intentions. It demonstrates that while trust and audience congruence are important, aligning the influencer with the brand is essential for effective marketing. Marketers should put those influencers at first place that fit in well with their brand image and also utilize their trustworthiness to positively influence buying decisions.

Recommendations

Marketers should strategically use influencer marketing to effectively involve Gen Z in Iran's apparel market. Choosing influencers who actually exemplify the brand's values and image significantly improves brand perception and increases the probability of purchases. Advantage of influencer credibility should also be considered while new product launching campaigns, limited time offer or special events. Highlighting an influencer's expertise or ability in fashion can build trust and rapid direct purchase behavior.

Sustainability, individuality, and inclusivity are the core values of Gen Z and they have equal importance to relate the content with audience. Interesting formats like Q&As, polls and tutorials will engage them and develop a strong relation with Gen Z. Moreover, marketers should opt for a data-driven approach which will keep the track of influencer performance through audience feedback, comments, engagement rates, and conversions. This will help in improving the future campaigns.

As Gen Z consumers are digitally skilled generation, brands should adapt their strategies accordingly. Brand perception can be enriched by combining influencer partnerships with bigger marketing efforts like community initiatives, experiential marketing, and targeted social media ads. Campaigns should be based on a consistent story that will show case the brand's values and fulfills Gen Z's desire for authenticity and worthy experiences.

The goal of brands should be to build long-term partnerships instead of one-time influencer deals. Even the influencers with smaller audience often have strong and genuine connection with their audience. Such influencers can be source of valuable investment.

Effective marketing strategies can be adopted by staying up to date with the latest social media and technology trends. By following these recommendations, businesses can increase their competitive advantage, expand customer engagement, and ensure sustainable growth in the continuously changing clothing industry.

Future Research Directions and Limitations

Although this study provides analysis of how Gen Z in Iran responds to influencer marketing in the clothing sector, it has several limitations that suggest need for future research. One limitation is the focus is on a single generation in one country. Future studies could find how influencer marketing works in different cultures or age groups such as Millennial to get better understanding of how different social and cultural factors influence consumer behavior globally.

The cross-sectional design of the study is another limitation as it captures data at one point in time. This makes it difficult to consider for changes in consumer attitudes over time. Longitudinal research can be adopted to study how Gen Z's inclinations alter as they grow older or as the technological environment evolves.

Additionally, this study focused on just three influencer traits: credibility, brand congruence, and audience congruence. Future research could expand by examining other factors, such as the influencer's content style, posting frequency, or the platforms they use. Exploring the role of emotional appeal or peer influence could also provide new insights into what drives purchase decisions.

Lastly, because the study was conducted within the Iranian apparel sector, the results may not be fully applicable to other industries or regions. In future this research can be replicated in different sectors and countries to test the generalizability of the findings.

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