

The Impact of De-influencing on Social Media on Gen Z's Purchase Intention: The Mediating Role of Source Credibility

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Abstract

De-influencing is a new trend that has attracted a lot of attention. Contrary to the usual product recommendations made by influencers, de-influencing involves influencers explicitly advising their audience not to buy certain products that they have reviewed in depth, or to be more discerning in their consumption of a product. This study examines the influence of de-influencing on Gen Z consumers' interest in purchasing technology products, with source credibility as the mediator. This quantitative study collected data from 385 Gen Z individuals who are active on social media, through Likert-scaled online questionnaires, utilizing simple random sampling. The data were then analyzed using SEM-PLS in SmartPLS 3. All hypotheses proposed were supported. The findings indicate that de-influencing on social media significantly affects the decline in Gen Z's interest in purchasing technology products. The role of source credibility acts as a mediator in reinforcing de-influencing on the decline in purchasing interest. The role of source credibility effectively mediates how de-influencing affects the decline in interest in purchasing technology products. In addition, this study proposes alternative dimensions for measuring de-influencing, role of source credibility, and purchase interest. This study can provide insight to Gen Z so that they can be selective in purchasing technology products by finding out the advantages and disadvantages of the technology products they are going to buy, as well as comparing products with specifications that are not much different even though they are from different brands. This study focuses on the purchasing intentions of Gen Z consumers influenced by de-influencing and source credibility. Future research could benefit from incorporating other key factors, such as the intensity or content presented on social media, to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

Keywords: De-influencing, Gen Z's, Purchase Interest, Role of Source Credibility, Social Media.

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1. Introduction

The digital marketing landscape has undergone a significant evolution, shifting from traditional advertising models to the dominance of influencer marketing. However, amid a flood of promotional content that is often lacking in transparency, a new trend called de-influencing has emerged in response to consumer fatigue and a desire for authenticity. This genre, termed “de-influence,” aligns with the growing emphasis on de-marketing and sustainable marketing [1] [2], where the primary focus for brands and marketers is not solely on promoting consumption. Unlike influencers who suggest purchasing products they have reviewed, de-influencings emphasize what should or should not be purchased, offer the best alternatives, and encourage their audience to think carefully before making a purchase. This prevents viewers from buying overpriced products, those of poor quality, or items that fail to meet expectations and are overly hyped. de-influencings are dedicated to analyzing pseudoscientific claims, fact-checking online trends, and critiquing deceptive marketing approaches through de-influencing [3].

Conventional influencers tend to promote products with boundless positivity, but de-influencings take a different approach, offering honest criticism and transparent evaluations of various products and trends. Furthermore, this de-influencing phenomenon has

demonstrated substantial reach on social media platforms. For example, the hashtag #deinfluencing has garnered over 233 million views on TikTok, and the trend continues to grow with over 48,700 posts using the hashtag. Although it initially emerged in the beauty and lifestyle sectors, the trend has expanded into various categories, including technology and fashion [4].

De-influencings challenge the norms of influencer marketing by exposing flaws, deceptive practices, and self-interest behind incentivized content, creating a key challenge to the authenticity and credibility of influencers [5]. When influencers increasingly prioritize brand partnerships and revenue over ethical principles, they risk losing trust and credibility with their audience [6]. De influencings respond by dismantling the illusion of perfection that influencers often project, encouraging audiencesto reflect critically on the content they consume, and questioning the authenticity of promotional messages [7]. This movement emerged as a direct reaction to the growing prevalence of inauthentic and misleading strategies within influencer culture [3].

Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, are true digital natives who are very familiar with technology and online shopping. In Indonesia, there has been a significant demographic shift, with Generation Z forming a large and influential part of the productive

age group. Internet penetration in Indonesia is also very high, reaching 79.5% in January 2024 and 74.6% in January 2025. Generation Z is the most active contributor to internet usage, accounting for 34.4% of total usage, even though the millennial group has a higher penetration rate [8].

Generation Z's dependence on social media for product discovery before making a purchase, viewing user reviews/experiences, and recommendations from influencers on social media such as TikTok and YouTube is striking. On average, they spend the most time on social media, with 81% using it every day and 50% spending more than 3 hours per day. Other studies also indicate an average daily usage of 3-4 hours, while some reports suggest up to 1-8 hours. Their spending patterns are influenced by lifestyle and identity, with the gadget and technology accessories sector experiencing rapid growth [8]. The rise of social media marketing has significantly transformed the marketing landscape by enhancing companies' ability to analyze consumer behavior and preferences [9] [10]. Social media is crucial in the consumer decision-making process [11]. However, the de-influencing movement, which opposes excessive consumption, has not yet been fully explored [12].

Referring to previous researchers, no one has explicitly discussed how de-influence affects Gen Z's purchasing interest. The closest is the research, which states that De-influencing messages significantly affect attitude and purchase intention [3]. However, their research focuses more on the de-influencing, such as: the views of millennial consumers, gender, and consumer attitudes toward content. In contrast, this study focuses more on the impact of de-influencing content on Gen Z's purchasing interest in technology products. Based on previous research, it can be assumed that de-influencing has a positive relationship with a decrease in purchasing interest. H1: De-influence significantly affects purchase intention.

When it comes to the role of de-influencings in raising awareness about excessive consumption patterns, de-influencing content tends to be viewed as more educational and credible when it is based on a rational perspective detached from commercial interests [12] [13]. Other studies have found that de-influencings are more credible than traditional influencers [3]. Based on previous research, it can be assumed that de-influencing has a positive relationship with a decrease in purchasing interest. H2: De-influence significantly affects Role of Source Credibility.

There has been no research discussing the credibility of de-influencings on purchasing interest. However, researchers will draw from the credibility of influencers, where credibility is viewed from the perspective of beauty and trust, which has a positive relationship with purchase intention [14] [15]. Based on previous research, it can be assumed that Role of Source Credibility influencer has a positive relationship with a decrease in purchasing interest. H3: Role of Source Credibility significantly affects purchase

intention.

This study will examine the effect of de-influence on Gen Z's purchasing interest, mediated by the role of source credibility. However, no previous research has explored the relationship between de-influence, purchasing interest, and the credibility of a de-influencing. Nevertheless, based on audience reviews of influencers who are honest and authentic in reviewing technology products, the role of source credibility can be used as a mediating variable in this study. This data is also supported by findings from the E-Commerce Influencer Marketing in SEA 2023 report, which indicates that over 80% of consumers have admitted to purchasing products based on influencer recommendations [16].

Indonesia is the leader in Southeast Asia in terms of influencer-based shopping trends. Around 76% of consumers admit to purchasing products due to the influence of content creators. The product categories most frequently purchased through affiliate links in Indonesia are fashion (81%), beauty (69%), and electronics (63%). This indicates that the majority of people in Indonesia make purchases or refrain from making purchases based on recommendations from influencers whose credibility they trust. Based on previous research, it can be assumed that Role of Source Credibility influencer has a positive relationship with a decrease in purchasing interest. H4: De-influencing significantly effects on purchase intention with Role of Source Credibility as mediating.

2. Research Method

Research design, employing a quantitative approach, this study yields objective, measurable data crucial for informed decision-making. It utilizes structured questionnaires and rigorous statistical analysis to investigate relationships among the variables under examination [17]. The study utilized a cross-sectional, one-shot design, collecting data at a single time point [18]. Population and sample, this study was conducted by distributing an online questionnaire from January 2025 to June 2025. The study used a sample of 385 respondents from Generation Z who are active on social media, which is statistically and ethically justified for PLS-SEM analysis based on power and representativeness. A sample size of 385 was used because the population size was unknown, so the Lemeshow formula was applied [19]. Additionally, this study employed simple random sampling, a basic probability technique ensuring that each element of the target population has an equal and independent chance of being selected [20].

Variable measurement and operational variables, Research variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale, a standard academic tool for capturing perceptions and attitudes. As a psychometric instrument, it provides a structured approach to quantifying subjective experiences, making it particularly useful in various fields, including exercise science [21]. The Likert scale, developed by Rensis

Likert, is a versatile and easy-to-use staple in survey design, offering ordinal response options for indicating agreement [22]. This research instrument was developed based on the findings of [23] [24] [25] [26] [27]. The operational variables and indicators are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1. The Operational Variables and Indicators

Variable	Dimension Theory	Label	Instrumen
De-influence (DI)	McQuail (2010), Petty & Cacioppo (1986), Kotler & Amstrong (2018)	X1	Content exposure frequency
		X2	Content that exposes flaws
		X3	Content helps to think before buying
		X4	More Attention to negative reviews
		X5	Make de-influencing a priority
Role of Source Credibility (RSC)	Hovland et al. (1953), Ohanian (1990)	M1	Honesty
		M2	Have knowledge
		M3	Credibility
		M4	Dependable
		M5	Based on experience
Purchase Intention (PI)	Ajzen (1991), Bettman et al. (1998), Obermiller & Spangenberg (1998)	Y1	Delay on purchase
		Y2	alternative search options
		Y3	The tendency not to buy products that are hyped up
		Y4	Become hesitant before buying
		Y5	Declining interest in purchasing

To unravel complex variable interdependencies, this study employed SEM-PLS. This method was selected for its recognized robustness in analyzing intricate analytical models [28]. Specifically, SEM-PLS facilitates rigorous testing of mediating effects through the integrated assessment of its outer and inner model components [29]. The empirical analyses were conducted using SEM-PLS 3 software. Furthermore, this approach enables the evaluation of both measurement validity and structural relationships simultaneously, providing a comprehensive understanding of the causal paths among variables. The use of SEM-PLS is also suitable for studies with relatively small sample sizes and non-normal data distributions, ensuring the reliability and accuracy of the estimated parameters.

3. Result and Discussion

Measurement model (Outer Model), the outer model test includes several stages to assess validity and reliability [29]. Validity assessment is divided into two main types: convergent validity (CV) and discriminant validity (DV). CV refers to the degree to which a measure aligns with other measures of the same construct [30]. It is established by demonstrating a strong correlation between the instrument and other theoretically related measures to represent the same

construct [31]. This is assessed using indicator loading factors and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), reflecting the average variance explained by the indicators.

The collected data will be entered into Excel in the form of data tables. The data will then be processed using the SEM-PLS 3 application, where in the outer loading test, one indicator was found to be below 0.6, which is the threshold for whether the indicator can be used in a study. The Y4 indicator has a value of 0.429, meaning that the indicator does not adequately reflect its construct, so it is considered for removal [32]. Therefore, the results presented by the researchers are the results of recalculation, in which variable indicators that do not reflect the construct are removed.

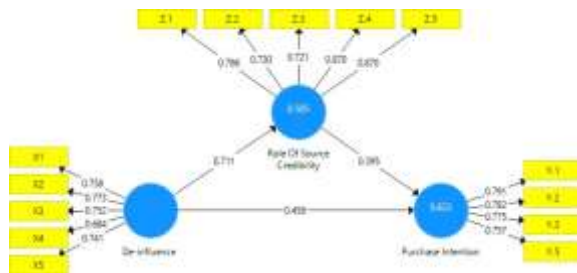


Figure 1. Outer Model Diagram Source: Smart-PLS 3 (2025)

Table 2. Outer Loading

Variable	De-influence (DI)	Purchase Intention (PI)	Role Of Source Credibility (RSC)
X1	0,758		
X2	0,773		
X3	0,752		
X4	0,684		
X5	0,741		
Y.1		0,791	
Y.2		0,782	
Y.3		0,775	
Y.5		0,757	
Z.1			0,786
Z.2			0,730
Z.3			0,721
Z.4			0,870
Z.5			0,870

In Figure 1 above, each indicator shows a value exceeding 0.55, thus meeting the established threshold [33], as well as Table 2. Each indicator in Table 2 shows an external load above 0.6, confirming the reliability of the measurements evaluated. The reliability of the research instrument, which is important for the development of consistent latent variables, has been confirmed, as all constructs (Table 3) exceed the Cronbach's Alpha threshold of 0.70.

Table 3. Reliability and Validity

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
De-influence (DI)	0,796	0,798	0,860	0,551
Purchase Intention (PI)	0,780	0,781	0,858	0,603
Role Of Source Credibility (RSC)	0,855	0,854	0,897	0,637

Table 3 above shows that construct validity is an important part of this process. Convergent validity is

considered adequate if the value exceeds 0.6 and the AVE is greater than 0.5 [33]. Discriminant validity assesses the extent to which a measurement differs from other constructs that are theoretically unrelated to it [31]. This is determined by comparing the AVE of each latent variable with the square correlation (R^2) between latent variables, and confirmed when the factor loadings for each variable exceed the cross-loadings on other variables [33]. Next latent variable correlations on Table 4.

Table 4. Latent Variable Correlations

Variable	De-influence	Purchase Intention	Role Of Source Credibility
De-influence	1,000	0,739	0,711
Purchase Intention	0,739	1,000	0,721
Role Of Source Credibility	0,711	0,721	1,000

Table 4 shows the strength and direction of linear relationships between variables. A value of 1.000 indicates a perfect correlation. However, in Table 4, the value of 1.000 is only for the variable itself, which is normal because latent variables are always 100% correlated with themselves. Meanwhile, the average values between variables are above 0.700. This indicates that any value above 0.700 signifies a strong correlation between variables.

Structural model (Inner Model), in this structural model, measurements are conducted to predict and examine causal relationships between the latent variables used [29]. One of the key parameters tested is the R-Square (R^2) value. A high R^2 value indicates a good research model with accurate measurement. Conversely, the Q^2 value reflects the predictive relevance of the model for the assessed parameters [33]. Hypotheses are typically considered significant when the path coefficient values, as indicated by the t-statistic, exceed 1.96 for a two-tailed test at a significance level of 0.05. The p-value indicates the probability of observing a result as extreme as, or more extreme than, the data, given the null hypothesis is true [34]. Next hypothesis testing on Table 5.

Table 5. Hypotesis Testing

Correlation	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standar Deviation	T-Statistic	P-Values	Result
DI -> PI	0,458	0,462	0,053	8,618	0,000	Supported
DI -> RSC	0,711	0,711	0,039	18,056	0,000	Supported
RSC -> PI	0,395	0,392	0,055	7,221	0,000	Supported
Mod -> PI	0,281	0,279	0,044	6,351	0,000	Supported

The measurement model results are presented in Table 5. All direct effect hypotheses were supported by bootstrap analysis. Hypothesis 1 (H1) indicate that De-influence has a significant effect on Purchasing Interest, confirmed by a T- statistic of 8.618 (>1.96) and a P-value of 0.000 (<0.05). Hypothesis 2 (H2) indicate that De-influence has a significant effect on Role of Source Credibility, with a T-statistic of 18,056 and a P-value of 0.000. Hypothesis 3 (H3) asserts that Role of Source Credibility significantly affects Purchasing Interest, supported by a T-statistic of 7.221 and a P-value of 0.000. Lastly, Hypothesis 4 (H4) demonstrates that De-influence significantly and simultaneously impacts Purchasing Interest with the

Role of Source Credibility as a mediator, confirmed by a T-statistic of 6.351 and a P-value of 0.000.

This study found that de-influencings have a strong influence on Gen Z's decisions to delay, cancel, reduce their interest in purchasing, or even seek alternatives to technology products, with the role of source credibility acting as a mediator. These findings align with previous research indicating that consumer purchase interest is influenced by de-influence [3]. Although few researchers have explored this topic, it suggests there is significant opportunity for authors to conduct further research, particularly regarding the impact of de-influence on Gen Z consumption behavior, beyond just purchase interest.

Although the current discussion effectively describes the observed effects, academic research should focus on deeper theoretical integration by exploring psychological or sociological frameworks as they relate to consumer behavior patterns, as well as patterns of need, such as in Maslow's theory. Such an approach would significantly enrich the theoretical foundation of this field, provide more accurate practical insights for practitioners, and enhance the overall academic contribution.

This study also proves that the honesty of the content, the knowledge possessed by the de- influencing, the absence of commercial ties with specific companies, the reliability of the information provided, and the results of direct reviews of technological products in the video content they present to their audience will affect the credibility of the influencer. Consumer trust in de-influencings in Indonesia can be seen in the number of followers they have on social media. Some de-influencings in the tech field, like David Brendi with his YouTube channel Gadgetin, had 13.4 million followers on YouTube as of July 25, 2025. Then there's Malvin Nathaniel with his channel BestindoTech, which has 736,000 followers, and other influencers.

Furthermore, the credibility of de-influencings can serve as a role model for Gen Z to be cautious of overly exaggerated marketing and excessive consumption patterns [4]. It can therefore be concluded that de-influencings already play a role in shaping consumer perceptions and behavior [13]. The credibility obtained by de-influencings in this study shows that the Role of Source Credibility influences Gen Z's interest in purchasing technology products. This is in line with the results of studies that say that credibility influences purchasing interest.

This study significantly enriches the existing theoretical framework in consumer behavior and digital marketing. Future research could analyze the spesific mechanisms through which orther variables might mediate this research, such as Authenticity, Brand image, Subjective Norms, and Ethical Consideration. Furthermore, investigating the longitudinal effects of these mediations and their potential variations across cultural or economic contexts could provide more detailed insights, contributing significantly to both

academic understanding and practice of marketing strategies for leisure-oriented business

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that de-influencing has a significant effect on Gen Z's purchasing interest, with the role of source credibility as a mediating variable. This indicates that Gen Z trusts de-influencing that educates them, encouraging them to be more prudent and selective before purchasing something, such as technology products, which are known to have varying price points, ranging from inexpensive to moderate to expensive. The findings also show that de-influencing content encourages Gen Z not to purchase trendy technology products without considering the quality of the product and the affordability of the product relative to their financial circumstances. Furthermore, the researchers recommend further research, particularly from Indonesia, be able to raise the de-influencing phenomenon even more deeply, because until July 2025 no researchers from Indonesia have discussed de-influencing. So it's a very wide open discussion room that's even wider about this de-influencing. The author also recommends that all generations, especially the Z gene be careful before purchasing technology products, have a stronger perception. It is not easy to be tempted by products that are being hype but the quality of products is not as expected, and also the price of products that are too expensive. The presence of de-influencings should be able to keep GenZ from wasteful consumption patterns. Despite the findings of the study, the study was still limited to an exclusive focus on de-influencing and GenZ's purchase interest in technology products, mediated solely by the Role of Source Credibility, thus requiring broader future research into additional variables. Furthermore, it is essential to adjust and correct the dimensions used to measure these variables to introduce new insights related to this topic.

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