



**An Exploration of the Influence that User-Generated Content (UGC) on Instagram
has on the Purchase Intention amongst South Africa's Generation Z.**

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Abstract

Generation Z spend a generous amount of their day on Instagram, therefore making it imperative for brands to operate on. However, brands need to recognize that brand-generated content will not provide them with the same receptibility that user-generated content (UGC) would. The aim of this research was to explore the extent to which UGC on Instagram influences the purchase intentions of South Africa's Generation Z to provide brands with insight into how to harness the tool. The research took an interpretivist approach, making use of a qualitative design, and was deductively led by Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour. The study's population consisted of South African Generation Z with an active Instagram account and have bought something as a result of UGC on Instagram. A qualitative questionnaire on Google Forms was distributed to participants via the researchers Instagram and WhatsApp. Non-probability, convenience and snowball sampling were utilized and obtained 12 valid responses. The data was then analysed using qualitative content analysis. What the researcher found was that when South African Generation Z view the UGC as credible, can see the product and service characteristics in the UGC, or they believe in societal subjective norms, their attitude toward the promoted brand is positively influenced and, thus, their intention to purchase. The researcher was also able to identify why and how these three facets influence these consumers, which provides brands and social media managers with the knowledge to create effective communication strategies to target Generation Z.

Keywords: Social media; User-Generated Content (UGC); Generation Z; Purchase Behaviour; Instagram

Declaration

I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the BA Honours in Strategic Brand Communication degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

Name: Zoe du Toit

Sign



Date: 25 Nov 2021

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Contextualisation

According to Schwab (2016), the Fourth Industrial Revolution is causing major shifts that are disrupting business in the 21st century. A prevalent shift is the changing ways that consumers behave and engage due to technological innovations (Schwab, 2016).

The introduction of digital technology has initiated innovations such as social media applications whereby users share multimedia content, be it, in accordance to their interests or day-to-day lives, and information for their “friends” or “followers” to view (Appel, Grewal, Hadi & Stephen, 2019). Due to its interactive nature, social media is becoming a part of society's everyday life (Jain, 2018; Allen, 2019). Instagram, in particular, is the fastest growing social media application, having a total of one billion active monthly users that spend approximately 30 minutes on the application per day (Jiang & Ngien, 2020; Osman, 2021). The most active age cohort on the platform is Generation Z, who spend approximately 3 hours on it per day (World Economic Forum, 2019).

Due to the high number of users and time spent on the application, it can be deduced that it is beneficial for brands to be active on Instagram too - in fact, it has become imperative for brands to operate on it in order to stay relevant (De Mers, 2015; Pütter, 2017). Actively posting brand content on social media is influential in connecting with consumers and creating awareness (Elkins & Webster, 2019). According to Newberry (2021), 200 million users visit at least one business profile per day. However, researchers found that more consumer purchases are made based on what others say and post about the brand, not on the content posted by the brand itself (Gesenhues, 2013). What others post about a brand is a form of electronic word-of-mouth referred to as user-generated content (henceforth UGC). UGC holds great power in creating brand awareness and, ultimately, profitability (Colicev, Kumar & O'Connor, 2019; Naem & Okafor, 2019).

Considering that Generation Z is the most active age cohort on Instagram and that UGC is more influential in consumer purchase intentions, the researcher would like to further explore if and why UGC on Instagram influences Generation Z purchase intentions. This information will give brands insight into the direction in which they should leverage the tool to reap the most benefits therefrom.

1.2. Rationale

Social media is a digital innovation that is playing a significant role in altering the way consumers behave and purchase (Jain, 2018; Allen, 2019). Generation Z, who is gradually gaining purchasing power, has differentiated ways in which they behave, engage and communicate in comparison to older cohorts due to their exposure to social media (Kahawandala & Peter, 2020). In the United States, 35% of the age cohort made at least one purchase due to social media per month, while another 30% made 2-5 purchases due to social media (World Economic Forum, 2019; Campaign Monitor, 2020). Additionally, according to a recent study, 97% of Generation Z say that social media is their main source of shopping inspiration (Ahmed, 2021; Kastenholz, 2021).

Social media is, therefore, driving business opportunities, which is important for brands to recognize (Di Virgilio & Antonelli, 2018). Drawing on the Instagram usage of South African brands, Dods (2016) states that Instagram is being used by an increasing number of local businesses to increase brand exposure and, ultimately, profits. As mentioned, the platform provides great awareness benefits for brands that are active on it. However, it is noteworthy to mention that the average engagement rate for a brand post is 0.96% while UGC posts about brands have a 28% higher engagement rate than standard brand posts (Agius, 2018; Austen, 2021; Newberry, 2021). Additionally, it is noted that younger generations are becoming “ad-blind” (avoiding advertisements and skipping advertising content) and they see brand content posts as advertisements (Handley, 2017; Mayrhofer, Matthes, Einwiller & Naderer, 2019; Gordon, 2021). This supports Gesenhues’ (2013) claim that UGC has a far greater impact on purchase intentions in comparison to brand-generated content (BGC).

Although it is evident that UGC poses more benefits for brands, there is a lack of research indicating the reason why users are so influenced by it. Considering that Generation Z is the most active age cohort on Instagram - and will soon have the majority of purchasing power - it is relevant to explore their behaviours. Additionally, according to a preliminary literature review, there is a lack of research on this topic in a South African context, therefore, the researcher has chosen to focus their attention on this geographic location. Thus, the researcher has attempted to identify why South Africa's Generation Z purchase intentions are influenced by UGC on Instagram.

It is anticipated that the results will contribute to local brands' knowledge of the power that UGC holds in creating stronger brand affinity and engagement with Generation Z and, potentially, for future generations to come (Elkins & Webster, 2019). The knowledge will assist brands in formulating effective marketing and communication strategies that leverage the aspects that influence Generation Z purchase intentions. Essentially, the research will add to the existing body of industry (brands that target Generation Z) knowledge.

1.3. Problem Statement

Generation Z consumers use social media on a daily basis to engage with society, get entertained, find shopping inspiration and do product research. These platforms are, therefore, important and beneficial for brands to operate on to connect with these consumers; however, they need to recognize that BGC will not provide them with consumer receptibility and engagement as much as UGC would.

Brands that neglect UGC are unable to take advantage of the opportunity to reach unaware, yet potentially interested markets, and gain credibility through a free, and more trustworthy, marketing tool. Therefore, losing an easy opportunity to receive brand affinity and profitability.

The problem lies in that the literature does not indicate as to why UGC plays such an influential role on Generation Z purchase intentions. Additionally, Instagram, the most popular Generation Z platform, has not received much recognition from researchers in

comparison to Facebook, YouTube and Twitter (Richard & Guppy, 2014; Wang, 2015; Akar & Dalgic, 2018). Moreover, the majority of research has only been conducted in first world countries, omitting data for developing countries. Therefore, there is a gap in the existing knowledge about the factors that make UGC influential, specifically in the context of Instagram and developing countries, which could assist brands and social media managers in developing effective communication strategies that will aid them in receiving the aforementioned benefits.

1.4. Research Goal

The purpose of this research is to explore the reason why UGC on Instagram influences Generation Z purchase intentions. More specifically, the research aims to identify which factors of Ajzen's (1985, 1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour are more prominent in the decision-making to purchase.

This study aims to understand the subjective views of Generation Z on the topic. Thus, a qualitative approach has been taken through means of a qualitative questionnaire. The data will contribute insights into why they are influenced by UGC, which will assist brands and social media managers in creating effective communication and marketing strategies.

1.5. Research Questions

1.5.1. Primary Research Question:

To what extent does UGC on Instagram influence South Africa's Generation Z purchase intentions?

1.5.2. Secondary Research Questions:

RQ1: What is the link between the credibility of UGC and purchase intentions?

RQ2: Do product characteristics or service experiences shown on UGC drive purchase intentions?

RQ3: Are implicit subjective norms derived from UGC driving purchase intentions?

1.5.3 Research Objectives:

1. To determine if there is a link between the credibility of UGC and purchase intentions.
2. To examine whether product characteristics or service experiences shown on UGC drive purchase intentions.
3. To explore whether implicit subjective norms derived from UGC are driving purchase intentions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Foundation

The research will make use of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) pioneered by Icek Ajzen (1985, 1991). The theory is a branch of consumer behaviour theory and is classified as a prescriptive cognitive consumer behaviour model - a type of model that was developed as a result of the increased attention on consumer beliefs and attitudes as determinants of their buying behaviour (Fawcett & Downs, 1992; Bray, 2008).

The Theory of Planned Behaviour, as seen in Figure 1, visually outlines the influencing factors that form consumer behaviour.

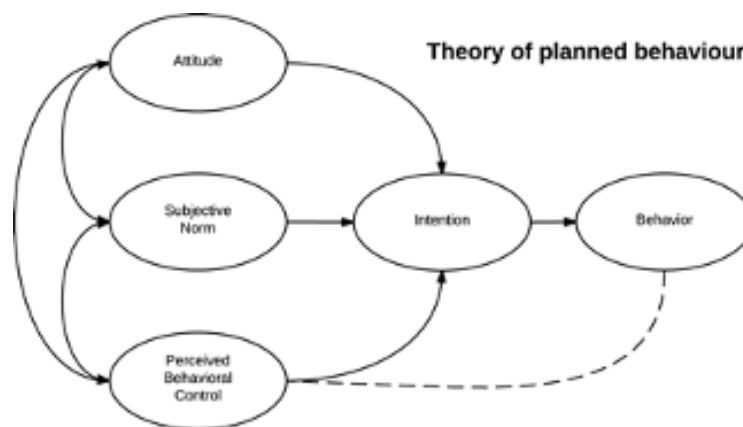


Figure 1: Ajzen I. and Driver B. 1992. *The Theory of Planned Behaviour* (Ajzen & Driver 1992).

2.1.1. Behaviour and Intention

Behaviour is the manner in which one conducts themselves (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.). Intention, which is a person's willingness to exert an effort, is a precursor of their behaviour (Ajzen & Driver, 1992). Ajzen and Driver (1992) noted that the stronger the intention to behave in a certain manner predicts the success of actual behaviour. However, intention cannot stand alone as a precursor to behaviour. Non-motivational

factors, such as resources (time and money), are also prevalent, representing the actual control a person has over their behaviour.

Ajzen (1991) proposes that the intent to behave in a certain manner can be predicted by three different antecedents: (1) the individual's attitudes toward the behaviour, (2) subjective norms and (3) perceived behavioural control. The TPB suggests that salient beliefs of a behaviour drive the actual behaviour and are deemed to be the determinants of the aforementioned antecedents (Ajzen, 1991). There are three beliefs that affect the antecedents accordingly: behavioural beliefs influence attitudes; normative beliefs shape subjective norms; control beliefs impact perceptions of behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). As a general rule, Ajzen (1991) stated that favourable attitudes and subjective norms in collaboration with greater perceived behavioural control will lead to a stronger intention to perform a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).

2.1.2. Attitude

The first antecedent to intention is the attitude toward the behaviour, which looks into the degree of favourability of the behaviour in question. Salient behavioural beliefs (the beliefs of possible consequences that may derive from performing the behaviour) play a role in the attitude formulation toward a behaviour (Manstead & Parker, 1995).

According to Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) expectancy-value model of attitudes, a person's attitude toward something is formed through the beliefs they have of it which are formed through attribute association - i.e., comparing it to alternatives, looking at its characteristics (Ajzen, 1991). When discussing attitudes toward a behaviour, Ajzen (1991) points out that a person's belief about a behaviour is linked to attributes such as the assumed outcome, the cost of performing the behaviour, and so forth. These attributes are consciously associated in a positive or negative manner, which forms a person's attitude toward the behaviour - positive attributes form favourable attitudes, while negative attributes form unfavourable attitudes (Ajzen, 1991).

2.1.3. Subjective Norms

The next antecedent of intention is subjective norms. Subjective norms focus on the perceived social pressures of a behaviour - focussing on whether a social group will

approve or disapprove of a behaviour (Ajzen & Driver, 1992). Salient normative beliefs (the individual's beliefs about the importance of a referent individual's or group's attitude toward a certain behaviour) determine subjective norms of a behaviour (Manstead & Parker, 1995).

2.1.4. Perceived Behavioural Control

The final antecedent is perceived behavioural control. This refers to how an individual perceives the behaviour to be in terms of ease or difficulty of performing it (Ajzen & Driver, 1992). An individual may make use of past experiences, information from secondary sources who have experienced it or identify additional resources that they possess (Ajzen, 1991). Taking all this information into consideration either motivates or demotivates them to take action. According to Armitage and Christian (2003), if a behaviour is perceived to have few obstacles, the more likely the person will have intentions to perform it.

Accordingly, the TPB is a relevant theoretical framework for the research as it aims to look into which factors of UGC on Instagram influences Generation Z purchase intention. The attitude toward behaviour antecedent will be studied in this research; more specifically, whether the credibility of UGC influences their attitude to purchase as well as whether the product/service itself shown on UGC influences their attitude to purchase. Additionally, the subjective norms antecedent will be looked into as the researcher wants to understand if social pressures are influencing purchase intention - i.e., looking at the extent to which Generation Z purchase intentions are influenced by UGC content of a "trendy" restaurant. Finally, perceived behavioural control will be excluded from the research. The research does not intend to study the level of ease or difficulty that Generation Z perceives the behaviour of purchasing to be, therefore it does not play an integral role in answering the main research question.

2.2. Conceptualisation

2.2.1. Social Media

Appel et al. (2019) broadly define social media as a technological ecosystem where a vast number of interactions and behaviours occur between users - be it between person-to-person; person-to-business; or business-to-business. Simply put, it consists of digital platforms whereby people showcase parts of their lives. Appel et al. (2019) add that it has grown from its primary function of “content/information creation and sharing” into a social necessity for people, brands, institutions and so forth. Thus, indicating the functionality it has for brands in terms of a marketing platform.

2.2.1.1. Instagram

Instagram is the fastest growing social media platform (Jiang & Ngien, 2020). According to Statista (2020a), there were 1 billion Instagram users in 2020, which is projected to reach 1.2 billion by the end of 2023. The platform allows users to post images and videos of their daily lives, interests and so forth, onto their feed in the form of posts, stories, reels and live videos.

This research will address Instagram specifically as a social media platform where users can share content for the purpose of others to see it.

2.2.2. User-generated Content

User-generated content (UGC) is a form of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Colicev, Kumar and O'Connor (2019) simply define it as the creation of brand-related content by users. Additionally, Mohammad, Quoquab, Thurasamy and Alolayyan (2020: 40) define UGC as the creation of “videos, texts, audios, and images” by individuals that are shared online. Furthermore, Naem and Okafor (2019: 194) and Kumar, Bezawada, Rishika, Janakiraman and Kannan (2016) specify three conditions of UGC: it must be posted on social media or a website; it is created “outside professional practices” (influencers and branded content), and it should have some creative effort.

For the context of this research, UGC will refer to the unpaid content created for a brand on Instagram by those who have either purchased or experienced a brand.

2.2.3. Generation Z

Generation Z is the age cohort of those born between 1995 and 2015, aged 3 to 24 years old (Betz, 2019). This generation was born and raised in a century that witnessed radical technological innovations, such as the introduction of the internet and smartphones (Dolot, 2018).

This generation has also been termed the C Generation. “C” refers to “connected”, implying their connectivity through the means of the internet, smartphones and WIFI. This also lends to the term “connected consumer” as they have access to a lot of information before purchasing - i.e., reviews, websites, social media and so forth. Generation Z is the unit of analysis for this research; therefore, their purchase intentions will be investigated in terms of UGC.

2.2.4. Purchase Intention

Spears and Singh (2004: 56) define purchase intention as “an individual’s conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand”. Factors such as the product or service characteristics influence a consumer’s purchase intention, as well as the factors mentioned in the TPB - attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. This research refers to purchase intention as the intent to purchase a product/service from a brand as seen on UGC according to consumer attitude, the product/service characteristics or subjective norms the consumer implicitly recognizes.

2.3. Review of Previous Literature

This section aims to provide a general overview of the existing body of literature on the topics of social media, purchase behaviours, Generation Z purchase behaviours and the influence UGC has on purchase intentions in line with the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

2.3.1. Social Media as a Brand Tool for Market Change

Social media is changing both the way in which consumers interact and engage with brands, as well as welcoming new ways of communicating and targeting for brands (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016; Pauliene & Sedneva, 2019).

Brands are viewed as co-creators of the social world; therefore, they need a strong online presence to be relevant (Pütter, 2017). According to Akar and Dalgic (2018), brands should increase their abilities to “understand and speak with their consumers on digital platforms like Facebook and Twitter”. Additionally, Gong (2017) stated that in order to improve marketing communication and advertising strategies regarding new or existing products/brands, it is advisable to elevate their social media presence. As noted, social media is greatly beneficial for brands to increase their brand awareness (Colicev, Kumar & O'Connor, 2019; Cheriyan, Roy & Ninan; 2020).

However, there is a growing consensus that having a social media presence is not enough for brands. According to Mir and Rehman (2013) and Urrutia (2019), 85% of users believe that multimedia UGC plays a greater influence in their decisions as opposed to brand advertisements. Hence, UGC is a more effective way for brands to communicate and engage with consumers, even though it is not entirely controlled by them (Malthouse, Calder, Kim, & Vandenbosch, 2016; Mohammad et al., 2020).

UGC poses various benefits for a brand. First, UGC easily creates brand awareness for unfamiliar consumers (Colicev, Kumar & O'Connor, 2019). It reaches consumers who have not previously liked, followed, or subscribed to a brand's page, therefore allowing a brand name to filter out into a largely unfamiliar audience. Additionally, UGC creators are essentially a brand's “free assistant”, which indicates its cost-effectiveness (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016; Nosita & Lestari, 2019: 174; Mayrhofer et al., 2019). Naem and Okafor (2019) and Mayrhofer et al. (2019) also make note of how much more profitable a brand becomes after receiving positive UGC. Finally, brands are given access to first-hand feedback from UGC creators which can help them to create improvements for their offering and stabilize customer-relationship management (Naem & Okafor, 2019; Nosita & Lestari, 2019).

UGC is of greater benefit to brands than a regular social media presence. Sources recommend that it is possible for brands to actively try to stimulate the creation of UGC and that it is not just up to the public to generate (Godes & Mayzlin, 2009; Olenski, 2017; Naem & Okafor, 2019). Moreover, Godes & Mayzlin (2009: 723) claim that eWOM driven by a brand is a profitable strategy even if the users are aware of the potential that it is being created by the brand.

2.3.2. Social Media and Purchase Behaviour

Purchase behaviour is the study of the consumer activities performed before making a purchase (Kahawandala & Peter, 2020). The 21st century has witnessed the embrace of new technologies which created the “always-on” and “constantly connected” consumer (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). Presently, consumers spend a great portion of their day on social media: Generation Z spends approximately three hours per day on social media, which is an hour more than Millennials (World Economic Forum, 2019). Consumers' high usage of social media has facilitated novel changes such as the ability to share information quickly, and across borders, which plays a significant role in purchasing behaviour (Nosita & Lestari, 2019).

Various research has examined how different social media platforms affect consumer purchase behaviours —particularly on Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter (Richard & Guppy, 2014; Wang, 2015; Akar & Dalgic, 2018). Richard and Guppy (2014:1) found that Facebook’s “like button, location-based check-in services, and the share button applications” positively influence a user's purchase intentions. Wang’s (2015) study found that a YouTube viewer's attitude toward the video influenced future purchase intention while Akar and Dalgic (2018) found that Twitter users' purchase intention was influenced by their attitude and social influence toward making a purchase.

2.3.3. Generation Z purchase Behaviours

Digital culture has created significant differences in expectations of different aged consumers (i.e., Generation Y, Generation Z), signifying that an individual's age cohort conditions their purchase behaviour (Lee, 2009; Priporas, Stylos & Fotiadis, 2017). Additionally, Tabassum, Khwaja and Zaman (2020) support this statement with the notion

that different generations vary in shopping behaviours. For the purpose of the research, the focus will be put on Generation Z.

Generation Z has gained significant attention due to their alternate purchase behaviours. Priporas, Stylos and Fotiadis (2017) state that this generation is challenging to grasp as their purchase behaviour differs from prior generations. Generation Z grew up during the digital age and because technology was part of their upbringing they are now “more sophisticated in terms of connectivity and information” (Tabassum, Khwaja & Zaman, 2020:1). Kahawandala and Peter (2020) mention that their exposure to advanced communication technology has altered their ways of communication. Tabassum, Khwaja and Zaman (2020) add that because the cohort utilizes numerous digital channels, they are exposed to unlimited information which, in turn, lends to their preference for quick solutions. Furthermore, Pauliene and Sedneva (2019) mention that Generation Z has higher expectations and are more attracted to the experiential element offered by brands. Additional characteristics they possess are that they are trend-followers, are not brand loyal, and prefer realistic and relatable multimedia content over text (Pauliene & Sedneva, 2019; Tabassum, Khwaja & Zaman, 2020).

There is an evident link between their preference for multimedia content and their high receptibility to social media such as Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter (Kahawandala & Peter, 2020). According to Statista (2020b), South Africa’s overall top three social media platforms are, WhatsApp, YouTube and Facebook. However, Generation Z is shifting away from Facebook and moving more toward YouTube and Instagram, which are primarily built on multimedia content (World Economic Forum, 2019).

Furthermore, social media has given Generation Z access to both the brand’s message (BGC) and the consumer experiences of that brand (UGC) (Tabassum, Khwaja & Zaman, 2020). Approximately 35% of Generation Z had made at least one purchase due to social media, however, it is uncertain as to whether this was due to BGC or UGC (Campaign Monitor, 2020). Earlier studies propose that consumers prefer UGC over BGC (Ho-Dac, Carson, & Moore, 2013; Seadle & Greifender, 2014) while a more recent study conducted by Cheriyan, Roy and Ninan (2020) found that BGC on social media positively affects Generation Z purchase intention and brand awareness.

2.3.4. Impact of UGC on purchase intentions

Purchase intention refers to a user's motivation to purchase a product or service. Ajzen & Driver's (1992) TPB notes that intention is decided upon by three antecedents, two of which will be regarded in this research: attitude and subjective norms.

a. Attitude in terms of credibility

Credibility is "the attitude towards a source of communication" that a receiver holds (McCroskey, 1997: 87). Wang (2015) states that UGC credibility is an important factor for purchase behaviour because people are interested in the recommendations made by credible sources. Since UGC reflects "wisdom of the crowd" - that is the first-hand brand experiences and opinions shared by everyday consumers (not influencers) without a profit motive - it provides consumers with credible information (Colicev, Kumar & O'Connor, 2019; Hussain, Huang, Ilyas & Niu, 2020). A study conducted by Mir and Rehman (2013) found that if UGC on YouTube was perceived as credible, users' future purchase intentions were positively influenced. Thus, it can be assumed that when users encounter positive UGC, they form a positive attitude toward it, which influences a positive purchase intention.

b. Attitude in Terms of Product/Service Characteristic

Attitude toward purchase behaviour is influenced by a consumer's evaluation of the object being purchased (Albarracin, Johnson & Zanna, 2005). In terms of UGC, this refers to how well a brand's product or service is portrayed to the viewer.

According to Nosita and Lestari (2019), this refers to the quality of the content. Quality of content is how useful the information within the UGC is for a viewer to evaluate its utility against competitor offerings, which should ultimately influence their purchase decision. Nosita and Lestari (2019) further mention that quality refers to the "usefulness of content", which is how relevant and beneficial the content was to the user in terms of meeting their functional needs (Mohammad et al., 2020).

c. Subjective Norms

Nosita and Lestari (2019) noted that consumers seek opinions from reference groups - either friends and family, or opinion leaders. Social media and UGC give consumers instant access to such opinions, even though they may not be actively searching for it. Referent power concerns the popular views of friends and family that may influence a consumer purchase intention (Naem & Okafor, 2019). According to Godes and Mayzlin (2009), those in the same social circle share the same brand choices. On the other hand, consumers are also influenced by the recommendations of opinion leaders or “influencers” (socially popular individuals with a large following that have the power to increase a brand's awareness through association) (Nosita & Lestari, 2019). Since the social connectivity between Generation Z is high, the social pressure amongst them is predicted to be high (Kahawandala & Peter, 2020). This describes coercive power: where consumers believe that, if they do not follow the popular trend or view, they become socially isolated (Naem & Okafor, 2019).

2.3.5. Identified Gaps

The findings presented in the literature review give importance to the notion that UGC may be a beneficial tool for brands. What is evident is that UGC is more influential in users' decisions in comparison to brand advertisements as it is more engaging and trustworthy. Additionally, it can generate widespread awareness to social media users who have not yet liked, followed or subscribed to the brand's pages.

With reference to the variables under study, Ajzen's (1991) TPB is noted as being a relevant model for looking at how Generation Z purchase intentions are influenced. The literature has shown that attitudes, in terms of credibility and quality of information, and subjective norms play a significant role in purchasing behaviour as a result of UGC.

The literature review makes a strong argument for the influence of UGC on purchase intentions. However, there is a lack of research focussing on what is the most influential factor affecting Generation Z purchase intentions as a result of UGC. Additionally, prior

research focuses on how consumers are influenced by the content posted on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, thus showcasing a lack of research on Instagram. Finally, the existing literature has not studied the matter in a South African context.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter aims to address the research method and plan that the study intends to follow. Attention will be drawn to the research paradigm, research design and approach, population and sampling, data collection method, data analysis method and trustworthiness.

3.1. Research Paradigm

The chosen paradigm for this research is interpretivism. Interpretivists believe that reality is a social construct, therefore the only way to understand it is to understand social human behaviour (Mertens, 2005). Social human behaviour is studied through gaining an empathic, subjective and in-depth understanding of how people make sense of their daily experiences (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). The paradigm was influenced by phenomenology, which aims to understand how a group of humans make sense of a phenomenon (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

Employing interpretivism in this research will allow the researcher to understand the main research question: “Why does UGC on Instagram influence Generation Z purchase intentions?”, from a human perspective. Through the acquisition of linguistic data - specifically gaining opinions, views and beliefs from those who are personally involved in this phenomenon - will provide an answer to the aforementioned research question. Additionally, the collected subjective opinions and beliefs will provide further insight as to which factors are the most pertinent to their purchase intentions – attitude (credibility or quality of the product/service shown) or subjective norms. The paradigm additionally allows the researcher to gain insight into differing opinions and views as the participants will be from diverse backgrounds. Thus, interpretivism is an appropriate paradigm to use.

3.1.1. Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of knowledge. The paradigm believes that humans are constantly adapting to the changes of their environment, therefore facts can only be context-dependent and based on the interpretation of information (Du Plooy-Cilliers,

Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). This research cannot use facts to explain why UGC influences purchase intentions because appropriate meaning can only be deduced from a human interpretation of the social context.

3.1.2. Ontology

Ontology is the study of being. Not all humans experience reality in the same way therefore reality cannot be objective (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). This research aims to study humans from their subjective, personal experiences to understand how different participants make sense of the phenomena.

3.2. Research Design

Considering that the interpretivist paradigm was employed, a qualitative approach was taken. Qualitative research aims to “explore, understand and describe” a phenomenon using linguistic data (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). This approach was appropriate as it assisted in the collection of subjective data that aided in the development of knowledge regarding the phenomena of UGC and purchase intentions among Generation Z. It allowed for insights that would not have been attained through statistical data. The study was classified as an empirical study as the phenomena of how UGC influences Generation Z purchase intentions was confirmable through experience, which was captured through a qualitative questionnaire (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

A phenomenological research design was utilised in this study. Phenomenology aims to gain an understanding of a social phenomenon from the perspectives of those involved and aims to describe what all of them have in common as they experience it (Groenewald, 2004; Maree & Creswell, 2019). This design, therefore, aided the researcher in gaining knowledge of the UGC and purchase intentions phenomena from the lived experiences of Generation Z participants. Considering that the researcher wanted to explore whether and to what extent Generation Z is influenced by UGC in South Africa, the study will be exploratory. Exploratory research looks into exploring an unknown field to provide a better

understanding of an existing problem (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014; Pollfish, n.d.).

Furthermore, deductive reasoning was used as the research employed the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Finally, this research followed a cross-sectional design as data was only collected from the participants on this one occasion.

3.3. Population

3.3.1. Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this study were people, or more specifically Generation Z in South Africa.

3.3.2. Target and Accessible Population

The targeted population included all South African Generation Z (age 3-24) that are active on social media and have made a purchase as a result of viewing UGC.

The accessible population for this study included Capetonian Generation Z (aged 18-24) that were active on Instagram during the time of the study, have made a purchase as a result of viewing UGC on Instagram and were contactable via the researchers WhatsApp and Instagram.

3.3.3. Population Parameters

Population parameters are the shared characteristics of the population (Du Plooy- Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). The population parameters of the study were:

- Participants must be South African citizens
- Participants must be born between 1997 and 2015 (Generation Z)
- Participants must have an active Instagram account
- Participants must have bought something as a result of UGC on Instagram
- Participants must have purchasing power

3.4. Sampling

Sampling is a subset of the identified population that is selected by the researcher to take part in the data collection (Turner, 2020).

Non-probability sampling, a non-random approach to selecting a sample, was employed by the researcher as there was not a complete list of the accessible population (Parveen & Showkat, 2017). The researcher went through a process of identifying potential participants that fit the population parameters from the researcher's acquaintances. Thus, the specific form of non-probability sampling that was used was convenience sampling.

Convenience sampling involves the selection of a sample in accordance with who is readily accessible to the researcher (Parveen & Showkat, 2017). The researcher contacted the prospects via WhatsApp, Instagram Stories and DM (direct message) asking if they were available to participate in the study by answering the online questionnaire. The message was clear about the purpose of the research, the sought-after population and that participation was voluntary. Two of the participants offered to share the survey with other prospects that fit the population parameters, allowing a form of snowball sampling to take place. Moreover, the researcher made an effort to ensure that there was a balance in the age and gender of the participants in order for the research to be more diverse and, ultimately, more reliable.

Non-probability, convenience and snowball sampling allowed the researcher to obtain data from the sample in a cost-efficient and time-efficient manner (Galloway, 2005). It also allowed the researcher to ensure the correct population parameters were met by the participants. However, this sampling method concedes that data may not be generalisable to populations outside the current research context (Jager, Putnick & Bornstein, 2017).

The researcher aimed to obtain responses from 15 participants but was able to receive 17 responses of which only 12 responses were valid. Two of the participants were dismissed from the Google Forms survey as they did not meet the criteria of the qualifying questions and three of the responses were a duplicate of an existing response as Google

Forms glitched and provided the researcher with an inaccurate number of responses. The researcher then had to filter through all the responses and delete the duplicated ones.

Various sources recommend that a qualitative research study requires a minimum sample of 12 participants to reach data saturation (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2016; Fugard & Potts, 2015 cited in Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe & Young, 2018). Therefore, the sample of 12 participants was adequate to gain an understanding of the views and opinions of Generation Z as well as to draw conclusions about the topic.

3.5. Data-Collection Method

Data collection is the process of obtaining data relevant to the research topic via a data collection tool (that is guided by the research design) which is distributed to participants (Dimagi, 2021). This particular research used a qualitative design, meaning that the researcher wanted to “explore, understand and describe” the topic of South African Generation Z purchase intentions due to UGC on Instagram using linguistic data (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014:174). In order to obtain such data, a qualitative data collection method was employed.

According to Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout (2014), qualitative data collection requires symbolic interactionism and social constructionism. Symbolic interactionism recognizes that a person's experiences and views are symbolic of their interaction with society, which is conveyed through their use of language (Aksan, Kisac, Aydin & Demirbüken, 2009; Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). Moreover, social constructionism recognizes that every individual subjectively constructs their own reality based on their subjective experiences (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). In order to obtain both these facets of qualitative data collection, the researcher employed an online qualitative survey.

3.5.1. Online Qualitative Survey

An online qualitative survey contains a set of open-ended questions that is distributed to participants (via an online survey tool) with the intention to receive long-form typed answers (Deakin University, 2021).

The qualitative survey makes use of open-ended questions that aim to obtain contextual information about the participants' opinions, experiences and/or attitudes about a topic in their own words (Deakin University, 2021; Pollfish, 2021). An open text box is provided to allow the participants to freely express and explain their subjective opinions, experiences and/or attitudes about the topic (Pollfish, 2021). The goal is to obtain in-depth, exploratory data about the topic which may reveal new information and opportunities (SurveyMonkey, n.d.).

Furthermore, the surveys include quantitative questions to obtain qualifying and/or demographic information. The survey is usually distributed in a written format via email or through an online survey tool. Finally, this data obtained is meant to describe, not predict, the topic (SurveyMonkey, n.d.).

3.5.1.1. Benefits and Limitations of Online Qualitative Surveys

There are various benefits related to utilizing an online qualitative survey, both in general and for the provided research question. Generally, an online qualitative survey provides the researcher with a greater number of responses within a shorter time period, in comparison to in-person interviews and focus groups. Since the survey is able to obtain more responses, the results are more diverse, thus making it more valuable (SurveyMonkey, n.d.). It is a more cost-efficient method as the utilized online survey tool is free, and there are no petrol or printing costs involved. Furthermore, considering the current political and social climate due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this data collection method is safer for both the researcher and the participant.

In terms of the specific research question, an online qualitative survey works for various reasons. Firstly, the question is investigating Generation Z, an age cohort that is active

on digital and social media via their smart devices on a daily basis. Their familiarity and comfort with using these platforms make them more accessible and more prone to partake in the survey because it is online. Additionally, due to it being online there was no urge to answer quickly. This means it gives participants more time to consider their answers, increasing the possibility of the researcher obtaining truthful opinions and experiences. Furthermore, this data collection method was suitable in obtaining contextual, linguistic responses that meet the qualitative nature of the research question.

The limitations of utilizing an online qualitative survey are also present. Firstly, the researcher could not probe the participant's responses, which could have resulted in vague responses that lack depth and insight (Deakin University, 2021). Moreover, considering that Generation Z is a generation that is used to instant gratification, they are not always motivated to put effort into typing out long, in-depth responses (Millennium Systems International, 2019).

3.6. Application of Data-Collection Method

To begin the data-collection process, the researcher formulated questions in line with the research objectives. These questions were organized to create a standardised survey questionnaire where a set of predetermined closed and open-ended questions would be distributed to all of the participants (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). The questionnaire was formulated on Google Forms (Annexure 1), a free survey administration platform included in Google's web-based suite (Demarest, 2021).

The questionnaire consisted of 5 sections and 21 questions. The first section included a well-articulated introduction to the study explaining the research purpose and provided the researcher and supervisor details. This section also included a consent form, (Annexure 1), stipulating that the participants were welcome to withdraw at any time and it assured them about how confidentiality and anonymity will be enforced. The participants were asked to agree or disagree to participate in the study: those who agreed could continue to the next section and those who disagreed were screened out from the survey.

The second section consisted of close-ended questions in an attempt to obtain specific data for contextualisation, such as qualifying questions and demographics. It also included a definition and visual example of UGC for those who were unaware of the concept. The majority of the third and fourth sections comprised open-ended questions but also included two multiple-choice and one Likert scale question. Where closed-ended questions were employed, the researcher ensured that open-ended questions were able to interrogate the reasons for the responses chosen in the scaled questions.

The final section contained an open-ended and one multiple-choice question that was based on visual UGC examples from the researchers' own Instagram (permission was asked and granted from the owners of the content). Different visual contexts and/or visual quality images were used to understand how it may or may not influence their opinions. The combination of question types allowed the researcher to obtain contextual and subjective linguistic data that revealed the participants' views, opinions and beliefs about UGC on Instagram and how it influences their purchase behaviour.

Once the survey was finalized, it was distributed by means of non-probability, convenience sampling on social media. The data collection began in July 2021 and took place over two weeks. The researcher contacted familiar Generation Z acquaintances on WhatsApp and Instagram to ask for their voluntary participation in the study. Once they were deemed interested, an additional message was sent to them on the same platform explaining the research and was accompanied by the Google Forms URL link which directed them to the survey.

The researcher first asked close acquaintances on WhatsApp and Instagram Direct Message (DM) to participate, getting approximately seven total responses. Thereafter, the researcher took to Instagram to ask fellow followers for their participation via an Instagram Story¹ - the story stipulated the population parameters to ensure the correct population was invited. The researcher obtained three additional participants via the

¹ Instagram Stories allow users to share photos and videos to their Story — which is visible to followers of the user's Instagram account for 24 hours.

Instagram Story. The final responses were obtained as the researcher asked more acquaintances via WhatsApp. Two participants offered to send it to other prospects, which elevated the survey to 17 responses. As mentioned, the Google Forms platform glitched and provided the researcher with a false reading of the number of responses, therefore after filtering through the responses, the researcher was only left with 12 valid responses.

Moreover, a challenge the researcher discovered was the difficulty in obtaining responses from 18 to 19-year-olds. This is primarily due to the researcher's age and lack of acquaintances in that age cohort. This was overcome as one of the participants was within the age bracket and was asked to distribute it to their friends.

The collected data was stored by Google Forms for the researcher to access in an easy, convenient manner. The platform displays the data in a readable manner, displaying the data through colourful pie charts, histograms as well as textboxes for the captured linguistic data which was useful for the data analysis (discussed in 3.7).

3.7. Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was the analysis method for this research. It is a data analysis method for linguistic data that includes the researchers' subjective interpretation of the text data through a "systematic classification of coding" and identification of recurring themes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This form of analysis seeks to discover the "overt and covert" themes from linguistic data that demonstrate the phenomenon's wide variety of meanings (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009; Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014: 234).

More specifically, the study was analysed using deductive content analysis. Deductive content analysis is implemented when the research is guided based on previous knowledge, thus meaning that the analysis is structured according to the previous knowledge (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Due to the research being guided by Ajzen's (1991) TPB, the coding followed this theoretical foundation.

After the 12 responses were collected, the researcher analysed the data following Zhang and Wildemuth's (2009:309–311) eight steps in the process of qualitative content analysis which had been adapted by Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014).

The first step was data preparation. This would usually include the transcription of verbal interviews, however, due to the data collection method being a qualitative survey, the researcher did not have to do this. Instead, the researcher organized the data. Google Forms, the platform that was utilized to formulate and distribute the data, captured, stored and began the organization process for the researcher. The platform organized the quantitative questions into colourful pie charts and/or histograms with labels and organized the qualitative data into textbox format with each participant's written answers. Additionally, it allowed the researcher to see a summary of all the participants' answers or view each individual participant's answers. The researcher transferred all the data to an Excel spreadsheet and organized each question and its responses on different sheets. The quantitative questions were left as graphs while the qualitative questions were tabulated with the left column stating the participant number and the right column stating their answer. Each question and its relevant graph or table was then put onto a Microsoft Word Document which was printed for the researcher's convenience in terms of reading and making notes on it. The researcher then read and memoed the data to make sense of it, using a pencil to circle important quotes and write out reflective notes such as reminders of their thoughts and insights in relation to the research question.

Once the researcher familiarized themselves with the data, they moved onto the second step of the analysis whereby they defined the coding unit. The coding unit was guided by the research questions (which were informed by Ajzen's (1991) TPB), therefore the themes were guided by purchase intent, subjective norms and attitudes (credibility and attitude toward the promoted brands/products). The researcher went through the data again and began highlighting and underlining sentences and words that were relevant to these themes. Words or phrases that were recurring or were stated as important by the participant were underlined and coded according to the aforementioned themes. On the

left margin of the page, the researcher numbered and coded these phrases using descriptive labels.

The third step involves the development of categories and a coding scheme. After identifying the themes and coding the data, the researcher grouped the related coding units to form categories and a coding scheme. The coding scheme included the categories and a comprehensive list of what each code, theme and category is defined by. The main categories were “Credibility of UGC”, “Subjective norms induced by UGC” and “Attitudes toward the product or service in the UGC” and each category had a list of codes that related to it. The researcher believed that a coding scheme was useful because they were able to systematically apply it to the data to ensure they are coding it consistently.

Then, to ensure consistency and clarity of the coded category, the fourth step involved the testing of it on a sample text. The researcher used the first participant’s answered surveys as the sample text and encountered a high level of consistency, therefore did not find any problems in the coding categories.

Due to the researcher not encountering any problems with the sample text, they continued coding the remainder 11 answered surveys. The researcher made use of the line-by-line method to code all the text, whereby the researcher read through each line of text while marking words and sentences that are deemed relevant to the research. This was a very time-consuming method but it ensured that all the relevant codes had been marked correctly and consistently. The coding scheme was used throughout the process to prevent the researcher from drifting away from the correct definitions of the code.

When the researcher completed this coding process, they assessed the coding consistency to ensure the analysis was reliable and valid. What came to the fore was that after coding all the surveys, new codes had emerged, therefore taking the researcher back to defining the coding scheme and having to recode the data. This was necessary to ensure the analysis was trustworthy.

Once all the data had been coded with no new codes emerging, the researcher interpreted the data to draw conclusions therefrom. The researcher discovered various relationships between Generation Z and UGC as well as the extent to which they are influenced to make purchases of the promoted brands which is discussed in Chapter 4.

The final step of Zhang and Wildemuth's (2009:309–311) qualitative content analysis involves the researcher reporting their methods and data findings. This research report fulfils this step as it provides a background to the study and a rich description of the theoretical underpinnings of the research to display that the researcher's interpretations were knowledgeably guided. The collection process, coding process, the manner of analysis and interpretation, and the discovered results are also stipulated in the sections above as well as to follow.

3.8. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the level of certitude in the collection and analysis of qualitative data (Connelly, 2016). It is a vital measure of the quality of a study, thus stipulating its usefulness and integrity (Cope, 2013 cited in Connelly, 2016). The trustworthiness of a qualitative study is divided into its credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability which is discussed below with consideration of this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 cited in Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

3.8.1. Credibility

The credibility of a study is supported by the researchers' accurate interpretation of data (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). It is the first and most important criterion, according to Statistics Solutions (n.d.), to establish trustworthiness.

The researcher attempted to ensure credibility through utilizing a theoretical underpinning, research method and design that suited the research question (Maree & Creswell, 2019). Moreover, they developed an early familiarity amongst the participants by describing to them the intention and purpose of the study before they took part in the

survey. This ensured that participants understood the context of what they were answering. The chosen participants were also done purposively according to the various ages within Generation Z to ensure that the correct individuals took part in the study. Therefore, the researcher aimed to implement data source triangulation, which involves the collection of data from different sorts of people to get varied viewpoints and data validation (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe & Neville, 2014). Additionally, the researcher's sampling, data collection and data analysis process have also all been stipulated in this report for the reader's interest.

Finally, the researcher had frequent debriefing sessions with their superior through multiple document hand-ins and occasional meetings (Maree & Creswell, 2019).

3.8.2. Transferability

Considering that this study is qualitative with a limited scope, it cannot be generalisable. However, it may have transferability, which means that the qualitative findings can be applied to other situations (Slevin & Sines, 2000).

The researcher attempted transferability by providing thick descriptions. This means a substantial amount of information about the context studied, the participants and the manner in which the research was conducted was provided so that readers can make connections between elements of the study and their own environment (Schofield, 2000; Maree & Creswell, 2019).

Moreover, Strauss and Corbin (1990) (cited in Slevin & Sines, 2000) state that following a systematic approach within the research process, such as following a theoretical foundation, enhances the transferability of a study. This research paper followed a systematic approach as it was guided by Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned behaviour, hence adding to its transferability.

Finally, the sampling method was purposive, allowing the researcher to identify typical individuals who are relevant to the context being studied. Schofield (2000:78) mentions that typicality in research is "a guiding principle designed to increase the potential applicability of research".

3.8.3. Dependability

Dependability refers to the degree to which the research design, data collection method and data analysis processes, as well as a reflective appraisal of the project, have been reported, enabling a future researcher to repeat the same process without the intention to receive the same results (Shenton, 2004). The researcher has been transparent with regards to the three mentioned factors, giving a full explanation for how each has been understood and implemented for readers to conclude whether proper research practices have been followed.

3.8.4. Confirmability

Confirmability is the interpretivist equivalent to neutrality and objectivity required in a positivist study. It is the extent to which the findings are shaped by participants' opinions and experiences and not the researcher's bias (Maree & Creswell, 2019).

The researcher set out to make their research confirmable through triangulation, more specifically data triangulation, as both quantitative and qualitative questions were involved in the qualitative questionnaire (Turner & Turner, 2009). Moreover, the researcher admitted their own predispositions in Section 4, which is considered a key criterion for confirmability (Shenton, 2004).

Finally, the researcher had very little involvement with the participants, which increases the risk of bias edging into the research. The participants were only contacted via social media, hence there was no physical interview with them and snowball sampling allowed for complete anonymity.

Chapter 4: Findings and Interpretation of Findings

The following chapter will present and interpret the data that was collected via the qualitative survey on Google Forms. The chapter is divided into two subsections: the first will present the findings and the second interprets the findings. Themes have been derived according to content analysis and will be discussed in detail in section 4.2.

4.1. Presentation of Findings

This subsection is further divided into two more sections that focus on the demographics and quantitative questions (questions 1-6, 10, 12, 14) and the qualitative questions (questions 8, 9, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21), respectively.

4.1.1. Presentation of Quantitative Questions

Figure 2 displays the participants' gender, age and Instagram usage that was collected in Questions 1,2 and 4.

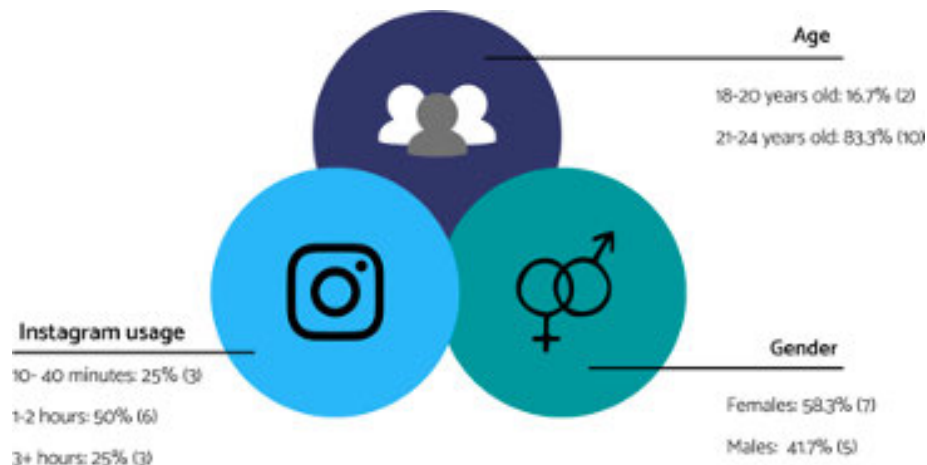


Figure 2: Participants Characteristics (n=12)

As displayed, seven participants were female and five were male. Ten were between the ages of 21-24 years and two of them were between 18-20, thus all falling in the Generation Z age range. Six participants spend 1-2 hours on the application per day. Thereafter, three participants spend 3 hours and more and 10-40 minutes, respectively,

on Instagram per day. This illustrates the range of time spent on Instagram per day, with 9 out of 12 participants spending at least one hour a day or longer on the platform.

Question 10 inquired about the type of Instagram content participants found most influential.

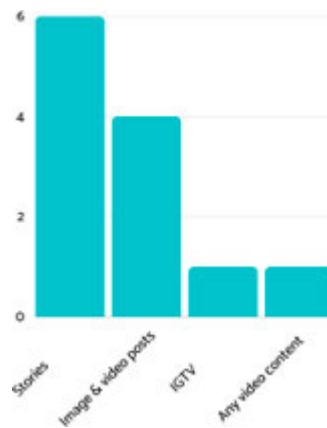


Figure 3: Type of Instagram content that participants find most influential (n=12)

As shown in Figure 3, stories account for the most influential content as six participants marked it. Thereafter, four participants chose image and video posts, while one participant marked IGTV's and another stated that "any video content" influences them. This allows the researcher to conclude that UGC, in the form of Instagram stories, is what participants are most receptive to.

Question 12 inquired about which UGC aspects influence their purchase intention toward the brand it is promoting. This question was multiple-choice with a maximum of two choices allowed per participant, therefore the figure displays more than 12 responses.

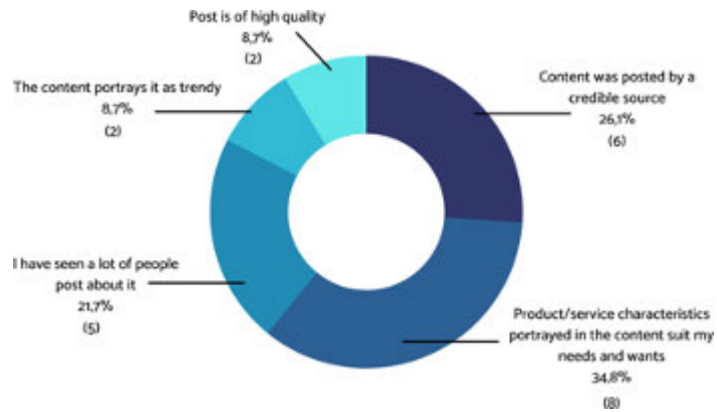


Figure 4: Aspects of UGC that influence participants to purchase from the promoted brand (n=12)

As displayed in Figure 4, the highest-rated aspect was product/service characteristics as it received eight responses. “Content was posted by a credible source” was the second most important, receiving six responses. Thereafter, “I have seen a lot of people post about it” received five responses, while “Content portrays it as trendy” and “Post is of high quality” both received two.

Question 14 asked whether the frequency participants had seen content for a brand had impacted their desire to purchase from it.

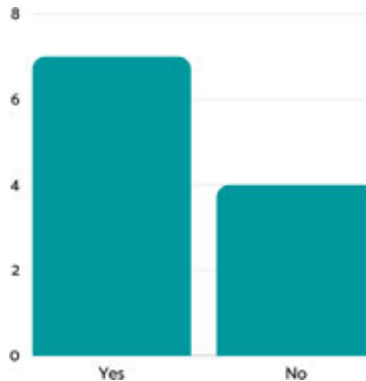


Figure 5: Participants desire to visit a brand due to the frequency of exposure to UGC about it (n=11)

As seen, seven of the participants said “Yes”, four said “No” and one participant did not answer. This indicates that over half of the sample expressed a desire to engage with a brand after exposure via UGC. This tentative finding introduces the notion that UGC may indeed influence Generation Z consumers. This will be explored further in Section 4.2.

4.1.2. Presentation of Themes from Qualitative Questions

Table 1 summarizes the themes and categories captured from Questions 8, 9, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21.

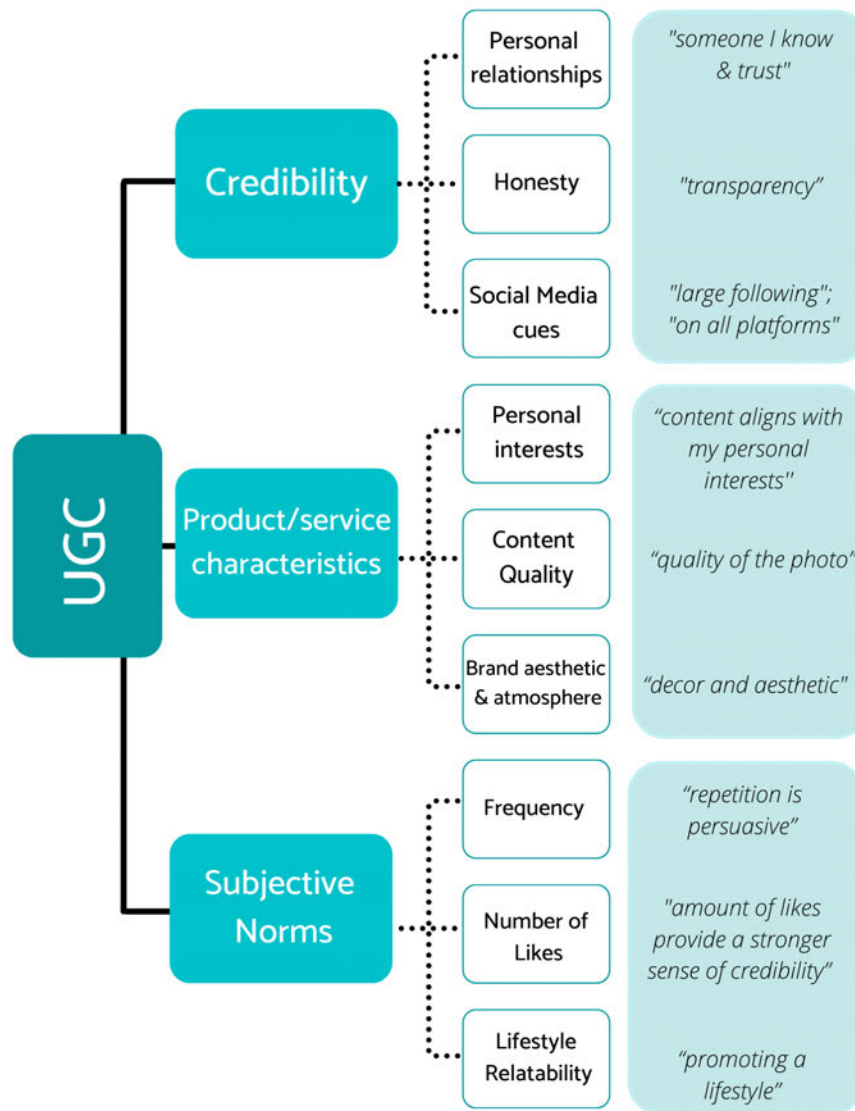


Table 1: Hierarchy of themes derived from qualitative questions

4.2. Interpretation of Findings

The following section discusses the three themes, namely Credibility, Product/Service Characteristics and Subjective Norms, and their respective sub-themes that are displayed in Table 1.

4.2.1. Credibility

i. Personal Relationships

When asked about how the participant believes a past UGC persuaded them to make a purchase, one participant mentioned “[the] relationship I have with that person”. Moreover, when asked about what they believe makes a source credible, two participants mentioned “personal relationship” and “someone I know and trust”. The data displays the same result as Nielsen Global Survey (2015), which states that the most credible sources are those that people know and trust.

The researcher believes that if users see UGC created by someone they have a relationship with, their attitude toward the brand would be more favourable which would inspire purchase intention; per Ajzen’s (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB).

ii. Honesty

When asked about what aspects would make a source credible, “proof” and “transparency” were mentioned. An additional participant mentioned “if they enjoyed it, I trust it was good”, which implies how simple one can be influenced if they believe the source is honestly displaying their brand experience. This data correlates with Colicev, Kumar and O’Connor’s (2019) study which shows that UGC reflects “wisdom of the crowd” because users provide first-hand brand experiences and opinions to viewers.

The researcher understands that UGC credibility may stem from an honest portrayal of the brand, the experience, the benefits as well as the drawbacks it may impose. This can be beneficial or detrimental to brands, therefore emphasizing the importance of integrated brand communications so that the brand is consistently portrayed through UGC.

Corresponding with the TPB, if viewers believe that the UGC is honestly portraying the brand, their view of it being a credible source is more likely, which alters their attitude toward the brand and aids their intention to purchase.

iii. Social Media Cues

Participants noted that for the person posting the UGC to be credible, they needed to have a large following, be active on all platforms and deliver engaging content. Two comments stipulated that the higher the amount of likes the UGC gets, the stronger the brand credibility. This explains that the popularity of the poster has a definite impact on how the viewers perceive the promoted brand, influencing their consideration to purchase from that brand. This stands in line with Mir and Rehman's (2013) study which found that Generation Z is susceptible to opinion leader recommendations. Although this may seem similar to influencers, there are still Instagram users with a high following and obtain a lot of likes due to their creative content, but aren't influencers because they don't have brand sponsorships.

Although the content may not be posted by influencers, UGC is more influential if it comes from someone who has an active profile with a large number of followers and posts engaging content that is of interest to the viewers. This shows that UGC with these aspects convey to the viewer that the source is credible, which is influential in how they perceive the promoted brand, which in turn influences their purchase intention as the brand forms part of the consumer's consideration set; standing in line with the TPB.

iv. Discussion

The credibility of the source is proven to viewers by their personal relationship, the honesty of the UGC, as well as the relevant social media cues. If these aspects are present, viewers recognize the source to be credible meaning that they trust the portrayal of the brand which, in turn, shapes their attitude toward the brand and the intention to purchase; hence aligning with Ajzen's (1991) TPB.

4.2.2. Product and Service Characteristics

i. Personal Interest

Four participants stated that they would be intrigued by the content if it is promoting something that would “benefit [them]” or was “something [they’ve] wanted”. This was an important factor of consideration as it was the highest-rated in Figure 4 and was restated when asked to choose between three different UGC examples that would most engage with them - “suits my style”, “meets my demands”. This aligns with Nosita and Lestari (2019) who mention that the “usefulness of content” is how relevant and beneficial the content is to the user in terms of meeting their functional needs.

The researcher understands this factor to be of considerable importance because internal interest is a large contributor to purchase behaviour. As Albarracin, Johnson and Zanna (2005) bring to the fore, a consumer’s attitude toward a purchase behaviour is influenced by a consumer’s evaluation of the object being purchased, and this evaluation includes whether it will fulfil their needs and wants.

This infers that when an internal interest (need or want) is met by the brand in the UGC, the viewers’ attitude toward the content is favourable; and so is their attitude toward the promoted brand. Following the TPB, if these are favourable, the consumer’s intention to act toward the behaviour of purchase is more probable.

ii. Content Quality

Four participants mentioned that the quality of UGC influenced a past purchase - “posted gorgeous photos”, “quality of the photo”, “aesthetically pleasing”. However, only two participants mentioned it in reply to what would generally influence them, which was reinforced in Figure 4 as it only received two responses. This shows that when participants were given an open-ended opportunity to answer, UGC reflected that quality was top-of-mind and an important factor that influenced their purchase intention, however, when they were given quality in a multiple-choice it did not prevail as the most important. The participants using it in an open-ended answer as to why they have previously been

influenced by UGC shows the researcher that, although they do not rate it as important in a multiple-choice answer, it is a facet that is greatly influential to their purchase intentions.

A comment that stood out was: “the quality of the picture shows the quality of the [product]”. This exhibits that there is an association between the quality of the UGC and the overall brand image, which is important for brands even though it is something they do not have control over as the content is being posted by the brand user.

In line with the TPB, the participants' evaluation of purchase behaviour is influenced by the quality of the content: If the quality is high, their perception of the brand is favourable which places the brand in a favourable position in their mind, which could lead to purchase. This disagrees with Mohammad et al. (2020) study which found that the design quality of UGC has “no direct effect on UGC values nor an indirect effect on customers' brand engagement”.

iii. Brand Aesthetic and Atmosphere

When participants were shown UGC examples, the majority of votes went to the example that displays the brand's offering and atmosphere. Substantiating comments were: “aesthetically pleasing”, “shows the quality of the [product]” and “can see the aesthetic of the restaurant, the food it offers”. Two comments in particular that stood out were “it's cool and different” and “decor and aesthetic, which is something I would post on my Instagram stories”. These suggest that brands with unique and aesthetically pleasing characteristics both intrigue people and can encourage users to create UGC.

UGC that showcases the brand's aesthetic and atmosphere (if it's a service provider) play a significant role in capturing participants attention. The effectiveness of this is heightened if the brand's physical identity is unique, which the researcher believes lends to the aesthetic appeal of the UGC that can be created.

Therefore, UGC that encompasses a brand's offering and atmosphere in an aesthetically pleasing manner creates a favourable attitude in Generation Z towards the content, which

allows for the creation of a favourable attitude towards the brand that would seemingly lead to a purchase intention.

iv. Discussion

These three subcategories all align with Azjen's (1991) TPB as they positively form their attitude toward the purchase behaviour. Their attitudes towards UGC are more favourable if the brand offering meets their interests, if the content is of high quality and if the characteristics of the brand offering and atmosphere are displayed. The participants have stipulated that these aspects are influential in shaping their perception of the brand, creating favourable attitudes that could lead to purchase intention.

4.2.3. Subjective Norms

i. Frequency

As displayed in Figures 4 and 7, the frequency of exposure to UGC about a brand is of some importance to participants. In Figure 4, it received 5 responses, making it the third-highest factor of consideration that influences their purchase intentions on UGC. In Figure 5, seven stated, yes, and four stated, no.

These statistics are supported by comments made in reply to the subsequent question, which included: "The more people post about it, the more likely...I'd enjoy it too", "more that people post about it, the more credible the brand seems", "repetition is persuasive". These remarks take the form of salient normative beliefs, mentioned by Manstead and Parker (1995), as the participant's beliefs about the importance of referent groups' attitude toward a brand determine their intention to purchase.

Seeing content posted repetitively could indicate that the brand is popular with a certain social group and if the individual also purchases from it, they will be accepted by that group. Therefore, if users believe that their social groups would accept them if they purchase from that brand, their intention toward the purchase would be more probable, thus adhering to the TPB.

However, when asked in general what would make them purchase from the brand after seeing it on UGC, there was no mention of the number of times they had seen it. This may suggest that frequency is influential, but the participants are not overtly aware of its influence, and thus its influence may be at a subconscious level.

The researcher believes that frequency of exposure does play a significant role to those who want to be a part of a social group, however, those who are not bothered by social groups/trends are not influenced by this.

ii. Number of Likes

The number of likes a UGC was mentioned by three participants. Two commented that the number of likes provide a “stronger sense of credibility” and “alludes to the notion that people like the brand and have tried it”. Similar to the credibility theme, the number of likes stand as an aspect related to subjective norms as they display the opinions of reference groups in terms of the brand’s quality and popularity. This agrees with Akar and Dalgic (2018) who found that Twitter users’ purchase intention was influenced by their social influence towards making a purchase.

However, the third participant mentioned that the likes are not influential to them. Therefore, the researcher believes that this matter is highly subjective. Some individuals may see the number of likes as an indicator of the quality and popularity of the brand, while others are more interested in what it is offering and how it meets their needs.

Therefore, in line with Ajzen’s (1991) TPB, those that are influenced by the number of likes believe that the promoted brand is worthy to purchase from because it is popular and trending amongst a social group.

iii. Lifestyle Relatability

When asked to choose between different UGC examples, the majority vote went to the example that was “more relatable” and “selling”/ “promoting a lifestyle”. One participant

noted that UGC would generally influence them if they “relate with the user, their personality or image”. This forms part of subjective norms as the participants are influenced by the lifestyle they want to have and see how people with that lifestyle are living. Relating to Ajzen & Driver (1992) definition of subjective norms, the participants believe that a social group (being those who are living the lifestyle the participants want to live) will approve the purchase behaviour of a certain product or service.

What can be deduced is that UGC that is posted by someone with a specific lifestyle will be more relatable for consumers who also aspire to that lifestyle. Consumers believe that if they purchase the same product/service, they will be part of the social group, thus believing that the social group will approve their purchase.

iv. Discussion

The three sub-categories of subjective norms indicate reasons why UGC influences Generation Z purchase behaviour. The frequency, number of likes and lifestyle relatability of UGC creates an impression that the promoted brand is being purchased by a certain social group, and if consumers want to be part of that social group their intention to purchase from it will be influenced. This aligns with Ajzen’s (1991) TPB as subjective norms influence the participants intention to purchase because they believe that the behaviour of purchasing from that brand will allow them to form part of a specific social group. It must be noted that subjective norms do not influence all individuals, but rather those who are concerned about assimilating with society.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to explore the reason why UGC on Instagram influences Generation Z purchase intentions to provide brands with valuable insights to create effective communication and marketing strategies to target this age cohort. In addition to this, it aimed to identify which factors of Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour are more prominent in the decision-making to purchase as a result of UGC.

The final chapter will report on the success of the study's ability to address this. A summary of the concluding answers to the secondary research questions will be discussed from which conclusions will be drawn to answer the primary research question. Thereafter, the researcher will provide for how ethical considerations were implemented in the research as well as the limitations the study encountered. Lastly, the final conclusions regarding the success of the research and its heuristic value will be discussed.

5.1. Concluding Answers to the Research Questions

The following section will address the success in which the researcher was able to answer the secondary research questions. Thereafter, the main research question will be addressed.

5.1.1. Research Question 1: What is the link between credibility of UGC and purchase intentions?

Primary Research

The primary research brought three factors to the fore that assist viewers in deciding whether the UGC is credible.

Firstly, the researcher inferred that if users see UGC created by someone they have a relationship with, their attitude toward the promoted brand would be more favourable, which would inspire purchase intention. Additionally, if the viewers believe that the UGC

is honestly portraying the brand, their view of it being a credible source is more likely, which alters their attitude towards the brand and aids their intention to purchase. Finally, the relevant social media cues, such as the UGC posters, having a large number of followers or the UGC post having a large number of likes, conveys to the viewer that they are a credible source. If this is present, the viewers' attitude toward the promoted brand is positively influenced, which in turn influences their purchase intention.

Conclusion

What has been deduced is that there are three factors that assist in establishing UGC as credible. These are: a personal relationship between the viewer and the poster, an honest portrayal of the promoted brand as well as relevant social media cues. If these factors are present, viewers recognize the source to be credible, meaning that they trust the portrayal of the brand, which then, in turn, shapes their attitude toward the brand and their future intention to purchase. Therefore, this aligns with Ajzen's (1991) TPB in that a consumer's attitude is an antecedent to their intention to perform a purchase behaviour.

From this, it can be concluded that there is a link between credibility of UGC and purchase intentions; thus, allowing the researcher to answer Research Question 1 and meet Research Objective 1. The researcher was able to demonstrate that credibility of UGC positively influences the viewers attitude toward the brand, which in turn influences their purchase intention; but was also able to identify why the credibility of UGC influences purchase intentions through probing into how Generation Z establishes credibility.

5.1.2. Research Question 2: Do product characteristics or service experiences shown on UGC drive purchase intentions?

Primary Research

The primary data indicated that product characteristics and service experiences showcased in UGC was the most important factor of consideration for Generation Z participants.

The participants' evaluation of the product and service characteristics showcased in UGC came down to three influential factors. Firstly, if viewers have a personal interest in the product or service being promoted, their attitude toward the content is more favourable, which means that their intention to act toward the behaviour of purchase is more probable. Moreover, the quality of the UGC implied that if the UGC quality is of high-resolution, their perception of the brand is more favourable which alters their attitude toward the brand to be more favourable, and this leads to purchase intention. Finally, if UGC encompasses a brand's aesthetic and atmosphere, it creates a favourable attitude toward the content, which allows for the creation of a favourable attitude toward the brand that would seemingly lead to a purchase intention.

Conclusion

What has been deduced is that there are three factors from which the Generation Z Instagram users evaluate a brand's products and services characteristics, namely their personal interest in the product or service, the content quality, and the portrayal of the brand aesthetic and atmosphere. The participants have stipulated that these factors are influential in shaping their perception of the brand, creating favourable attitudes that could lead to purchase intention, hence aligning with Azjen's (1991) TPB.

This has allowed for the researcher to confirm that product characteristics and service experiences shown on UGC drive purchase intentions, hence answering Research Question 2 and meeting Research Objective 2. The researcher was also able to establish exactly why product characteristics and service experiences shown on UGC drive purchase intentions.

5.1.3. Research Question 3: Are implicit subjective norms derived from UGC driving purchase intentions?

Primary research

The primary data found three factors of subjective norms that lend to the purchase behaviour of Generation Z.

The first factor was the frequency of times a user has seen a UGC post about the same brand. Seeing content posted repetitively indicates that the brand is popular with a certain social group and if the individual also purchases from it, they will be accepted by that group. However, this was not a prominent reason for why Generation Z are influenced by UGC, hence the researcher believes that frequency of exposure does play a significant role to those who want to be a part of a social group, however, those who are not bothered by social groups/trends are not influenced by this.

Furthermore, the number of likes a post gets also stands as a factor contributing to the influence of subjective norms on purchase intention. However, the researcher believes that this matter is highly subjective. Some individuals may see the number of likes as an indicator of the quality and popularity of the brand, while others are more interested in what it is offering and how it meets their needs. If they are influenced by this, their purchase intention was positively affected.

Finally, the lifestyle relatability of the poster stood as a factor. When participants viewed UGC that portrayed a lifestyle they could relate, or aspire, to, they believe that if they purchase the same product/service, they will be part of the social group, thus believing that the social group will approve their purchase. Hence, their purchase intention increased.

Conclusion

What the researcher inferred is that there are three factors of subjective norms that may influence Generation Z's purchase intention. These are: frequency, number of likes and lifestyle relatability of the UGC. However, the researcher noted that these are actually highly subjective and dependent on how the individual views society and the need to "fit" in.

The researcher is able to answer Research Question 3 by stating that implicit subjective norms derived from UGC drives the purchase intentions of those who feel the urge to

assimilate into society. Those who are unconcerned about this matter are not influenced by subjective norms.

5.1.4 Main Research Question: To what extent does UGC on Instagram influence South Africa's Generation Z purchase intentions?

The concluding answers to the Secondary Research Questions enabled the researcher to understand that South African Generation Z purchase intentions are influenced by UGC on Instagram, but it also provided why UGC is influential.

The extent to which South African Generation Z are influenced by UGC on Instagram is dependent on the presence of the following: they either view it as credible (they have a personal relationship with the UGC poster; believe the UGC is honestly portraying the brand; or the UGC poster has the relevant social media cues), they are able to see the product characteristics and service experiences (the product and services characteristics shown meet the personal interests of the viewer; the UGC is of high quality; or the UGC displays the brands aesthetic and atmosphere), or they are influenced by implicit subjective norms (frequently exposed to UGC about same brand; UGC received a high number of likes; the viewer relates to the lifestyle portrayed). If either of these are present to the UGC viewer, their attitude towards the brand is positively influenced, which positively affects their intention to purchase from the brand. Hence, the researcher was able to provide an answer to the Main Research Question.

Additionally, the researcher wanted to establish which of the themes are most prevalent in influencing Generation Z's purchase intentions. Contrary to the researcher's expectation guided by their own personal assumptions, subjective norms are not the most influential factor leading to Generation Z's purchase intentions. There was a greater response to products and service characteristics in both the quantitative and qualitative data, leading the researcher to believe that UGC content about a brand that meets the personal interest of the viewer (meeting their functional needs), is of high-resolution quality and portrays the brand's aesthetic and atmosphere (meeting their emotional

needs) engages with these consumers the most, therefore having a greater chance of influencing their purchase intentions.

In addition to answering the Main Research Question, the researcher was able to address the prevalent research problem. It provided insight as to why UGC plays an influential role on Generation Z purchase intentions; it studied UGC on Instagram, a platform that had clearly lacked recognition from researchers in comparison to Facebook, YouTube and Twitter; and it conducted research in a South African context which had also lacked relevant literature.

5.2. Ethical Considerations

It was vital that this study was conducted in an ethical manner. The following section discusses how the researcher employed ethical practices with regards to their participants and themselves. It is noteworthy that before the study commenced, the researcher was granted ethical clearance which specified that this particular study had no possible risks or would cause no harm for both the researcher and their participants, be it social, psychological, physical or legal.

5.2.1. Participants

- Informed consent: The researcher employed a letter of consent to receive informed consent from participants before they took part in the qualitative questionnaire. It defined the research topic as well as how the data was to be analysed. The participants had the right to withdraw and not answer. Participants had to be over the age of 18.
- Collecting data from participants: the participants were informed about how their identities would remain confidential. Additionally, good organisation of the questionnaire and its distribution was employed to avoid time wastage.
- Dealing with sensitive information: sensitive information was not dealt with in this study nor did it appear in the data collection and analysis process.

- Providing incentives: incentives were not utilized to thank participants. Willingness to participate was relied upon.
- Avoiding harm: the study did not deal with a sensitive topic; therefore, harm did not appear.
- Dealing with confidentiality: the researcher ensured participant confidentiality as the questionnaire did not require them to state their names. Hence, the participants remained anonymous.
- Avoiding deception: Deception was avoided as the purpose of the study was communicated to participants and the results will be made available to them once the research is complete.

5.2.2. The Researcher

- Falsifying information: the researcher did not tamper with the data in order to get desired results.
- Distorting results: all results were treated with equal significance to avoid the distortion of data.
- Bias: considering the researcher employed convenience sampling, there was a form of bias present when selecting participants. However, the participants were still applicable to the sample population. Besides this, the researcher was mindful of excluding bias when collecting and analysing the data.
- Misusing information: the data collected from participants was only to be used for this particular study only, unless permission had been obtained for the data to be used elsewhere.
- Inappropriate research methods: the research method was aligned with the research purpose, thus making it appropriate to collect data.

5.3. Limitations

Limitations of this study were the constraints the researcher encountered that were out of their control (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). These were time and financial limitations, as well as limitations regarding the access to participants.

This research study was limited to a time frame of nine months (March 2021 until November 2021). This restricted the amount of quality information the researcher was able to gather. Additionally, financial constraints limited the researcher's ability to access a larger population. For instance, the researcher could have implemented a social media advertisement that would have advertised the survey, however, this was out of their budget. Time and financial constraints together limited the accessibility to suitable participants. The researcher could also not access other suitable South African participants besides those that reside in Cape Town which, therefore, offers future research the possibility to collect data from participants around South Africa to ensure greater generalizability of the findings.

Moreover, the study encountered delimitations, which are the very specific constraints that the researcher encountered due to the chosen research design (Miles & Scott, 2017). Firstly, the study utilized convenience sampling which limited the diversity of the participants and, thus, the acquired data. The researcher also struggled to acquire a balance of participants that represent all the ages within the age cohort to provide an accurate representation of the cohort.

On this note, the results are not an accurate representation of the entire age cohort because of the ethical limitations regarding age - Generation Z comprises those aged 3 to 24 years old of which the research will only be able to obtain informed consent from those aged 18 to 24 (Betz, 2019).

Moreover, due to the research design being qualitative, the smaller sample size (12) cannot represent the entire age cohort. Considering that Generation Z is 44,74% of the South African population, the results will not be able to be generalized (TransUnion, 2020). This does provide an opportunity for future research.

Finally, the acquired responses were not as in-depth as the researcher would have liked due to it being an online qualitative questionnaire that required participants to write out their answers. Participants may have found this tedious and, therefore, did not answer the questions to their full potential. The researcher was also not able to clarify the meaning behind questions if participants were unsure about what was being asked.

5.4. Significance, Implications and Recommendations

5.4.1. Significance for South African Brands and Social Media Managers

This research study points to the notion that younger generations, such as Generation Z, have alternate consumer and purchasing behaviours. Their changing ways of connecting and communicating with one another are also changing the ways they engage with brands; hence it is important for brands to understand these changes so that they can maximise the return on their marketing investments and remain relevant with the consumers that will soon hold the majority of purchasing power.

The study points to the importance of UGC on Instagram and its higher receptibility from Generation Z in comparison to BGC. It also provides why Generation Z are receptive to it, giving brands and/or social media managers the opportunity to understand what about it needs to be leveraged to make it most effective. Harnessing UGC and implementing strategies to inspire the creation of it will easily provide brands with awareness, credibility and affinity in a cost-effective manner.

Finally, the study is significant for South African brands in particular because it gives them a more focussed perspective on the local Generation Z's purchasing behaviour in comparison to a global perspective.

This acquired knowledge from this research will, therefore, assist South African brands and social media managers in formulating effective marketing and communication strategies that leverage the specific platforms and tools that are known to influence Generation Z purchase intentions.

5.4.2. Notable Implications for South African Brands and Social Media Managers

This research has made various facets evident regarding UGC on Instagram for brands to take into consideration.

Firstly, stories account for the most influential content. This suggests that brands should opt to encourage the creation of this type of content - for instance, *“Tag us in your story”*, *“Repost this to your story”* which would need to follow with some type of incentive.

Moreover, an insight that has been deduced is that credibility of UGC is more prominent in content posted by typical consumers, not influencers. As noted, UGC credibility stems from a personal relationship between the viewer and the poster. This also prompts the thought that if a regular customer posts about a brand, the likelihood of them having a personal relationship with a number of their followers is high - meaning that the possibility of those followers viewing it as credible is more likely. This shows brands that they can obtain awareness, credibility and, hence, more prospective customers from the content created by their own consumers rather than paying large amounts to influencers.

The research also showcased that, although quality of the UGC may not be something brands can control, aesthetically pleasing characteristics, such as packaging or interiors, prompt users to post about it which engages with users who also find the aesthetic appealing. This is something that brands can take into consideration when addressing their physical characteristics as it can be a way for them to differentiate themselves, encourage more UGC and shares on social media and can also capture the attention of those who seek the same aesthetic.

Finally, the research points to the importance of the lifestyle associations brands create when establishing their identity. If done correctly, it will aid in capturing the target market who have and want to possess that lifestyle, which ensures that the appropriate people are posting about your brand and attracting unfamiliar markets who also want to encapsulate that lifestyle. Additionally, attracting the correct target audience would presumably mean that they would post about your brand, ensuring the frequency of posts circulating on Instagram.

5.4.3. Recommendations for Future Research

This research study was able to explore the influence of UGC on Instagram on the purchase intention amongst South Africa's Generation Z in a small-scale study. The researcher recommends that it can be utilized as a guideline to a large-scale study, consisting of a larger sample across South Africa to increase the generalizability of the study. Moreover, they recommend the use of an inductive method for future researchers to discover new, overt themes in comparison to being guided deductively by a theoretical framework. Additionally, the researcher suggests the following topics for future research:

- Study of the influence of UGC on TikTok and/or Snapchat.
- Study of the generational differences to receptibility to UGC.
- Study the difference between the effectiveness of UGC and influencer content.

The aforementioned research topics will provide brands with further insight in harnessing social media in the most effective ways.

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Annexures

Annexure A: Questionnaire with Consent Form

Section 1 of 5

The extent to which user-generated content on Instagram influences South Africa's Generation Z purchase intentions.

To whom it may concern,

My name is Zoe du Toit, a student at IIE Vega School completing my BA Honours in Strategic Brand Communication. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Carol Affleck about the influence that user-generated content (UGC) on Instagram has on the purchase intention amongst South Africa's Generation Z. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of why social media is changing the ways in which Generation Z is making purchasing decisions and how local brands can leverage this.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete the consent form below.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research because you fit within the population parameters. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to ask you questions in through a questionnaire about your experiences on social media regarding user-generated content. You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.

Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about your experiences on social media and how you believe user-generated content impacts your purchase decisions. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

- Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary;
- If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;
- Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at IIE Vega School, will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

Once I have collected all the questionnaires, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my BA Honours in Strategic Brand Communication. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate. You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

My contact details are as follows:
Zoe du Toit
[Redacted]

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:
Carol Affleck
[Redacted]

My contact details are as follows:

Zoe du Toit

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Carol Affleck

Consent

- ☐ I hereby agree to participate in the aforementioned research.
- ☐ I do not agree to participate in the aforementioned research.

Section 2 of 5

Section 1

Description (optional)

1. What gender do you identify with? *

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Prefer not to say

2. How old are you? *

- ☐ 18 - 20
- ☐ 21 - 24

3. How many followers do you have on Instagram & how many people do you follow? (separate with a semi-colon) *

Short answer text

4. How much time do you spend on Instagram per day? (estimate) *

- ☐ 10 - 40 minutes
- ☐ 1 - 2 hours
- ☐ 3 hours +
- ☐ Other...

5. Do you understand what is meant by the term "user-generated content"? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

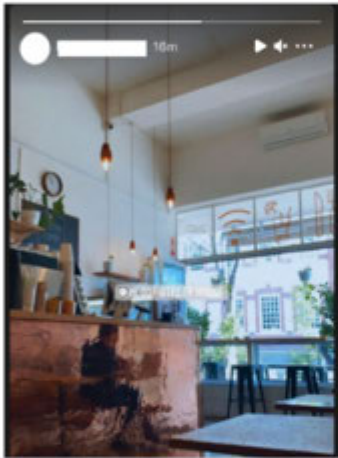
Definition of user-generated content (henceforth UGC):

UGC is the unpaid content created for a brand on Instagram with the purpose of sharing it to other social media users (followers or non-followers) by those who have either purchased or experienced a brand.

For example, one of the people you follow on Instagram posts about their visit to I Love The Dough; their new purchase from Cotton On etc.

***Please note, this is not content posted by influencers that have been paid to promote the brand.

Example:



6. Have you ever bought something or visited a service-related practice (hairdresser/restaurant etc.) due to someone else's post on Instagram? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

After section 2 Continue to next section

Section 3 of 5

Section 2

Description (optional)

7. What was the purchase (product or service) that you made due to seeing someone else post about it? *

Long answer text

8. In what ways do you believe the individuals content persuaded you into making the purchase? *

Long answer text

9. In general, why would someone else's content on Instagram influence you to make a purchase from the promoted brand? *

Long answer text

10. What type of content on Instagram do you believe influences you the most? *

- ☐ Image and video posts
- ☐ Stories
- ☐ Reels
- ☐ IGTV
- ☐ Other...

11. To what extent do you believe that UGC created by the people you follow influences your purchase intentions? *

Very little 1 2 3 4 5 A lot

Section 3

Description (optional)

12. Are you more influenced to purchase from a brand if... (Please choose 2 options only). *

- ☐ the content was posted by a credible source.
- ☐ you have seen a lot of people post about it.
- ☐ the product/service characteristics portrayed in the content suit your needs and wants.
- ☐ the content portrays it as trendy.
- ☐ the post is of high quality.
- ☐ the post is creative.
- ☐ Other...

13. What do you believe makes a source credible? *

Short answer text

14. Do you believe that the amount of times you have seen people post UGC about a brand influences you more to purchase from that brand? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes

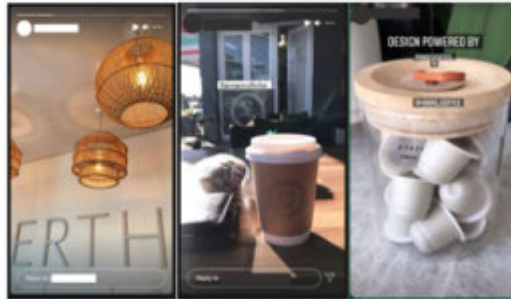
15. If yes, please elaborate on why you believe this impacts you.

Long answer text

Section 4

Description (optional)

Batch 1 - see questions that follow.



UGC 1

UGC 2

UGC 3

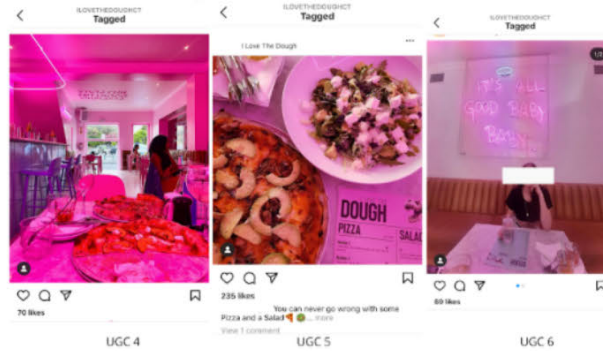
16. Have you ever bought/visited a brand because you believe it will help you keep up with social trends? *

Short answer text

17. Looking at the above images, which of them are more likely to influence you to purchase from that brand? Please elaborate on what aspects of the content you believe makes it more influential to you. *

Your answer

Batch 2 - see questions that follow.



18. The above images are all posted for the same brand. Which do you believe would intrigue you the most to visit that brand? Could you elaborate on which aspects of the content intrigues you. *

Your answer

19. With this brand in mind, have you witnessed numerous UGC posts about it? If yes, do you believe this has impacted you to want to go?

Your answer

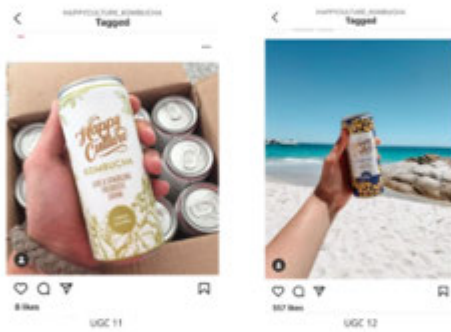
Batch 3 - see questions that follow.



20. Out of these images, which intrigues you the most?

- ☐ 7
- ☐ 8
- ☐ 9
- ☐ 10

Batch 4 - see questions that follow.



21. In your opinion, which of these images is more influential in making you want to buy the product (hypothetically)? Please elaborate on why.

Short answer text

Thank you so much for your participation! I greatly appreciate it.

Description (optional)

Annexure B: Ethical Clearance Documents



26 June 2021

Student name: Zoe du Toit

Student number: [REDACTED]

Campus: IIE Vega School Cape Town

Re: Approval of RESE8419 Proposal and Ethics Clearance

HONOURS ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and your supporting documents and instruments are in order to proceed. We hereby provide you with permission to proceed with your research.

In the event of you deciding to change your research methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued.

We wish you all the best with your research!

GENERAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

Permission is granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted.

Please note: The panel has not considered the merits, accuracy or ethical soundness of the research. The only merits examined are the use of The IIE as a sample.

Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all of the participants in his/ her sample if the study is not anonymous.
2. The researcher(s) may only use the data collected for research purposes and in no other way.
3. Photographs of human subjects may only be taken if relevant to the research, informed consent was obtained, and even with informed consent, the photographs may not be published on any online platforms.

4. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
5. No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the research and the research must be voluntary.
6. Please make it clear that the information will not be used punitively in any way and participants may in no way be counselled/advised based on this.

Supervisor/ Campus Postgraduate Coordinator (CPC) name:
Carol Affleck

Signature:



Vega Ethics checklist: RESE8419/p/w

Student Details												
Title	Prof	☐	Dr	☐	Ms	☒	Mrs	☐	Mr	☐	Mx	☐
First name(s)	Zoe											
Last name(s)	Du Toit											
Title of study	An exploration of the influence that user-generated content (UGC) on Instagram has on the purchase intention amongst South Africa's Generation Z.											
Qualification	BA Honours Strategic Brand Communication											

Supervisor Details												
Title	Prof	☐	Dr	☐	Ms	☐	Mrs	☒	Mr	☐	Mx	☐
First and last names	Carol Affleck											

Co-supervisor Details (if applicable)												
Title	Prof	☐	Dr	☐	Ms	☐	Mrs	☐	Mr	☐	Mx	☐
First and last names	Click or tap here to enter text.											

Explaining your research process											
Philosophical paradigm	Positivism	☐	Interpretivism	☒	Constructivism	☐					
	Realism	☐	Objectivism	☐	Pragmatism	☐					
	Functionalism	☐	Subjectivism	☐	Humanist	☐					
	Other:										
Research design:	Interview	☒	Questionnaire (self administered)	☐	Focus group	☐					
	Ethnography/ Observation	☐	Artefact analysis/website/ social media analysis	☐	Action Research	☐					
	Case Study	☐	Design Research (Practice based)	☐		☐					
	Other (if so, state)		☐	Click or tap here to enter text.							
Brief explanation of the population and number of participants/items	6 Generation Z individuals who have made a purchase due to user-generated content on Instagram.										
Target group sampling methods/artefact (No under 18's or vulnerable groups allowed)	Purposive	☐	Random	☐	Snowball	☐					
	Convenient	☒	Stratified	☐	Census	☐					
	Explain selection process		Convenient sampling based on population parameters.								

Ethics		
Documentation submitted with proposal	Gatekeeper's letter (institutional consent)	☐
	Completed Annexure E if you conduct research on IIE sites/students/staff	☐
	Instrument(s) (interview schedule or questionnaire)	☒
	Participant or respondent consent form	☒
	Audio-visual consent form (if applicable)	☒

Campus ethics committee recommendation	
Proposal has been reviewed by the supervisor and necessary ethics considerations have been included.	
☒ Accepted as is and provide letter	
☐ Accepted with provisions: Nature of provision: e.g. Instrument is not sufficient / included and need to be signed off by the supervisor	
☐ Major issues: Student should not continue with fieldwork. Actions to be taken: Click or tap here to enter text.	

Supervisor/Campus ethics panel member signature	
	2021/06/27

Annexure C: Final Research Report Summary Document Table

TITLE: “An exploration of the influence that user-generated content (UGC) on Instagram has on the purchase intention amongst South Africa’s Generation Z.”

Research Purpose	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/ Sources	Lit Review	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method(s)	Ethics	Key Findings	Recommendations
The purpose of this research is to explore the reason why UGC on Instagram influences Generation Z purchase intentions. More specifically, the research aims to identify which factors of Ajzen’s (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour are more prominent in the decision-	<i>“To what extent does UGC on Instagram influence South Africa’s Generation Z purchase intentions?”</i>	<i>Generation Z, who is gradually gaining purchasing power, has differentiated ways in which they behave & communicate in comparison to other age cohorts due to their exposure to social media (Kahawandala & Peter, 2020). In order for brands to engage with these consumers, having a social media profile will not suffice. UGC has a far greater impact on the purchase intentions in comparison with brand- posted content.</i>	Ajzen, I. 1991. The Theory of Planned Behaviour	Theme 1: Social media as a brand tool for market change Theme 2: Social media and purchase behaviour Theme 3: Generation Z purchase behaviours Theme 4: Impact of UGC on purchase intentions	Interpretivism Humans are constantly adapting to the changes of their environment; therefore, facts can only be context-dependent (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). Ontology Not all humans experience reality in the same way therefore reality cannot be objective (Du Plooy-Cilliers,	Qualitative Population	A qualitative online questionnaire on Google Forms. was distributed via the researcher’s Instagram and WhatsApp. The questionnaire contained both closed and open-ended questions.	Participants • A letter of consent was employed to receive informed consent from participants • They had to be over the age of 18. • Identities would remain confidential as their names were not stated; hence, the participants remained anonymous. • The study did not deal with a sensitive topic; therefore, harm did not appear. • Deception was avoided as the purpose of the study was communicated to participants and the results will be made available to them once the research is complete.	1. When participants believed a UGC was credible, their attitude toward the brand was positively altered, influencing their intention to purchase. Credibility stemmed from whether they had a personal relationship with the UGC poster; believe the UGC is honestly portraying the brand; or the UGC poster has the relevant social media cues. 2. When UGC showcased the brands products and services characteristics that meet the personal interests of the viewer, is of high quality, or it displays the brands aesthetic	• The researcher recommends a large-scale study, consisting of a larger sample to increase the generalizability of the study. • They recommend the use of an inductive method to discover new, overt themes. Suggestion for future research topics: • Study of the influence of UGC on TikTok and Snapchat. • Study of the generational differences to

making to purchase.		<i>By identifying the reasons why UGC influences their purchase intentions, it will assist brands in leveraging these factors in their communication strategies.</i>			Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014).	• Participants must be South African citizens • Participants must be born between 1997 and 2015 (Generation Z) • Participants must have an active Instagram account • Participants must have bought something as a result of UGC on Instagram • Participants must have purchasing power		The researcher • The researcher did not tamper with the data in order to get desired results. • All results were treated with equal significance to avoid the distortion of data. • Considering the researcher employed convenience sampling, there was a form of bias present when selecting participants.	and atmosphere, the participants attitude toward the brand was positively altered, influencing their intention to purchase. 3. If viewers believed if by purchasing from a brand, they will form part of a social circle, their intention to purchase increased. The subjective norm was presented to them through frequent exposure to UGC about same brand; the UGC received a high number of likes; the viewer relates to the lifestyle portrayed	receptibility to UGC. • Study the difference between the effectiveness of UGC and influencer content.
Research Problem	Secondary Questions	Key Concepts	Key Theories				Sampling	Data Analysis Method	Limitations	Key Contribution
Literature does not indicate why UGC plays such an influential role on Generation Z purchase intentions. Additionally, Instagram has not received	1. To determine if there is a link between credibility of UGC and purchase intentions. 2.To examine whether product characteristic	Social media (Instagram) User- generated content (UGC) Generation Z Purchase intentions	Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour				Non-probability, convenience and snowball sampling Sample size:12	Unit of Analysis The unit of analysis for this study is people, or more specifically Generation Z in South Africa. Data	• Limited to a time frame of nine months - restricted the amount of quality information the researcher was able to gather. • Financial constraints limited the researcher's ability to access a larger population. • Time and financial constraints together	The study points to the notion that younger consumers have different ways of engaging with brands – UGC being one of them. The study provides three reasons why UGC influences their purchase intentions as well as nine sub-reasons to give a better

much recognition from researchers in comparison to Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. Moreover, the majority of research has only been conducted in first world countries, omitting data for developing countries. aforementioned benefits.	s or service experiences shown on UGC drive purchase intentions. 3. To explore whether implicit subjective norms derived from UGC are driving purchase intentions.						Analysis Method: Qualitative content analysis	limited the accessibility of suitable participants. Delimitations • Convenience sampling which limited the diversity of the participants • Ethical limitations regarding age meant the researcher could not accurately present the population. • Acquired responses were not as in-depth as the researcher would have liked due to it being an online qualitative questionnaire that required participants to write out their answers.	understanding to brands. This acquired knowledge from this research will, therefore, assist South African brands and social media managers in formulating effective marketing and communication strategies that leverage the specific platforms and tools that are known to influence Generation Z purchase intentions.	
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