

Instagram-Based Social Media Marketing and Its Influence on the Purchase Intention of Generation Z: A Study on Mamaearth Skincare Products

Harshada Raut¹, Isha Ghoske², Shravani Goundaje³

^{1,2,3} Department of MBA, MES'Institute of Management and Career Courses, Pune

¹hjr.imcc@mespune.in, ²goundajeshravani@gmail.com, ³ishagoske444@gmail.com

Peer Review Information	Abstract
Type: Article Received: 28 March 2026 Revised: 26 April 2026 Accepted: 11 May 2026 Published: 02 June 2026	This study investigates the degree to which Instagram-driven social media marketing affects the purchase intent of Generation Z consumers with specific reference to Mamaearth skincare products. In an era where digital interaction dominates consumer decision-making, Instagram has carved out a unique position as a discovery-to-purchase channel, particularly within the beauty and wellness segment. The research draws on primary data gathered from 150 Gen Z respondents aged 18–28 years who are active Instagram users. Four key marketing constructs were examined: influencer marketing, sponsored advertisements and promotional campaigns, user-generated content (UGC), and customer–brand interaction (engagement). Findings indicate that all four constructs exert a significant positive effect on purchase intention. Notably, brand connectivity driven by active Instagram engagement emerged as the strongest influence, followed by promotional discounts, advertisement appeal, influencer credibility, and UGC-based social proof. Chi-square analysis confirmed meaningful associations between age group, platform usage frequency, and purchase intention. A substantial majority of respondents who had previously purchased Mamaearth products attributed the decision, at least partially, to Instagram exposure. The study concludes that a well-crafted, authentic Instagram strategy is pivotal for skincare brands targeting digital-native audiences, and offers actionable recommendations to enhance content personalization, influencer authenticity, and UGC amplification. Keywords: Instagram Marketing; Generation Z; Purchase Intention; Influencer Marketing; User-Generated Content; Mamaearth; Skincare Products; Social Media Marketing; Digital Marketing.

How to Cite This Article

Raut, H., Ghoske, I., & Goundaje, S. (2026). Instagram-based social media marketing and its influence on the purchase intention of Generation Z: A study on Mamaearth skincare products. *International Journal of Research and Development: A Management Review*, 15(2), 256–263.

Introduction

The widespread adoption of smartphones and high-speed internet connectivity has fundamentally altered how consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase products. Among the many forces reshaping this landscape, social media stands out as a transformative agent, enabling brands to engage directly with target audiences through interactive, visually rich, and community-driven content. Within this ecosystem, Instagram has emerged as a dominant marketing channel—particularly for industries where aesthetics, trust, and peer validation play central roles in the decision-making process. The skincare industry in India presents a compelling case study for this evolution. Rising awareness of personal wellness, growing disposable incomes among young professionals, and an increasing preference for natural and toxin-free formulations have collectively propelled skincare into one of the fastest-growing consumer segments. Mamaearth, a homegrown direct-to-consumer brand, has leveraged this momentum by building a robust Instagram presence anchored around eco-conscious messaging, influencer collaborations, and interactive storytelling. Its product portfolio—spanning face washes, serums, sunscreens, and moisturisers—speaks directly to the values of its primary audience: Generation Z.

Generation Z, broadly defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, constitutes the first cohort to have grown up entirely within the digital age. For this demographic, social media is not merely a communication tool; it is an integral component of identity construction, brand discovery, and purchasing behaviour. Unlike older generations who relied on television advertising or in-store experiences, Gen Z consumers actively seek peer testimonials, influencer endorsements, and real-user reviews before committing to a purchase. Instagram, with its immersive features such as Reels, Stories, interactive polls, and shoppable posts, aligns almost perfectly with these consumption habits.

Despite the significant academic attention paid to social media marketing (SMM) as a driver of consumer behaviour, existing literature tends to adopt a broad, cross-platform perspective that does not adequately capture the platform-specific dynamics of Instagram, nor does it focus on individual brands within a defined product category. This study addresses that gap by specifically examining how Instagram-based marketing activities influence the purchase intention of Gen Z consumers with respect to Mamaearth skincare products. The research not only contributes empirical evidence to the growing body of digital marketing scholarship but also provides strategic insights for practitioners seeking to optimise their Instagram presence for this highly influential consumer segment.

Background and Context

Mamaearth was founded in 2016 with a mission to offer toxin-free baby and skincare products. It has since expanded into a full-spectrum personal care brand, earning a dedicated following among millennials and Gen Z consumers. Central to its growth trajectory has been a deliberate, data-driven approach to Instagram marketing—deploying nano- and macro-influencers, leveraging user-generated content campaigns, and maintaining a consistent brand aesthetic that underscores sustainability and ingredient transparency.

As of 2024, Instagram boasts over 500 million active users in India, making it one of the country's most accessed digital platforms. Gen Z accounts for a significant share of this user base, spending an average of one to four hours daily on the platform. Within this context, the interaction between brand-generated content and consumer purchase intent assumes critical marketing significance—particularly when the product category, skincare, demands a high degree of trust, visible proof of efficacy, and alignment with personal values.

Research Problem

While the general effect of social media marketing on consumer purchase intention has been documented in the literature, there is a paucity of studies that: (a) focus specifically on Instagram as a standalone marketing channel rather than treating it as one component of a broader social media strategy; (b) examine the influence of Instagram marketing on a specific brand operating within the Indian skincare market; and (c) target Generation Z as a distinct consumer segment with unique motivations and decision-making frameworks. This study is designed to fill these interconnected gaps.

Research Objectives

The overarching aim of this study is to empirically assess the influence of Instagram-based social media marketing on the purchase intention of Generation Z towards Mamaearth skincare products. The specific objectives are:

- To evaluate the extent to which Instagram influencer marketing shapes the purchase intention of Gen Z consumers towards Mamaearth.
- To analyse how Instagram advertisements and promotional campaigns influence product perception and purchase motivation among Gen Z users.
- To examine the role of user-generated content (UGC) on Instagram in building brand credibility and consumer trust.
- To assess the relationship between Instagram usage behaviour (time spent, features used) and purchase intention towards Mamaearth skincare products.

- To identify demographic and behavioural factors that moderate the relationship between Instagram marketing and purchase intention.

Review of Literature

Social Media Marketing and Consumer Behaviour

Social media marketing (SMM) encompasses brand-driven activities executed on digital platforms to create, disseminate, and exchange information within interconnected communities. A body of research confirms that SMM outperforms conventional advertising in terms of reach, cost-effectiveness, and interactive potential. Ninan and George (2020) demonstrated that Gen Z consumers who favoured social media advertising over traditional channels scored higher on brand awareness, product perception, brand loyalty, and customer-business interaction—all of which translated into elevated purchase intention. Their regression model explained approximately 51% of the variance in purchase intention, with customer-business interaction emerging as the strongest predictor.

Voorveld (2019) argued that engagement quality—rather than mere exposure—is the critical mediating variable in the relationship between social media content and consumer outcomes. This insight is particularly relevant in the context of Instagram, where the platform's algorithm rewards content that elicits genuine interaction (likes, comments, shares, saves) over passive consumption.

Instagram as a Marketing Platform for Skincare

Instagram's visual-first architecture makes it uniquely suited to product categories where sensory demonstration plays a decisive role in purchase consideration. Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019) highlighted that beauty and skincare consumers on Instagram rely heavily on visual evidence—before-and-after imagery, texture demonstrations, routine videos—when forming product judgements. The platform's creator ecosystem amplifies these dynamics by providing authentic, peer-to-peer narratives that traditional advertising cannot replicate.

Erkan and Evans (2018) established that eWOM (electronic word-of-mouth) on social platforms significantly shapes product perception and lowers perceived purchase risk—a finding directly applicable to the UGC-rich environment of Instagram. In the skincare category, where consumer scepticism about claims is high, authentic peer reviews function as a critical trust signal.

Influencer Marketing and Purchase Intention

The proliferation of influencer marketing as a strategic tool reflects the declining effectiveness of interruptive advertising among younger demographics. Chetoui, Benlafqih, and Lebdaoui (2020) found that influencer credibility—encompassing perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and likability—positively mediates the relationship between influencer endorsements and purchase intention. Parasocial relationship theory suggests that repeated exposure to an influencer creates a sense of familiarity and trust that functions similarly to personal recommendation.

Ki, Cuevas, Chong, and Lim (2020) noted that influencer-generated content fosters brand loyalty through sustained emotional engagement. For brands like Mamaearth, which have built their identity around authenticity and ethical production, influencer partnerships that align with these values carry particular persuasive weight.

Theoretical Frameworks

Two theoretical models are particularly relevant to this study. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) posits that behavioural intention is shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In the Instagram context, attitudes are formed through ad exposure and UGC consumption; subjective norms are operationalised via influencer endorsements and peer reviews; and perceived control is influenced by promotional incentives and platform accessibility.

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework provides an additional lens: Instagram marketing stimuli (influencer posts, ads, UGC) act on the consumer's cognitive and affective state (brand perception, trust, emotional connection), ultimately producing a behavioural response (purchase intention or actual purchase). This framework aligns closely with the variable structure employed in the present study.

Research Methodology

Research Design

A quantitative research design with both descriptive and causal components was employed. The descriptive component profiled respondents' Instagram usage habits and their exposure to Mamaearth content, while the causal component examined directional relationships between Instagram marketing variables and purchase intention. This dual design provides both behavioural context and analytical rigour.

Population and Sampling

The target population comprised Gen Z individuals aged 18–28 years residing in urban areas of India who use Instagram regularly and have at least passive awareness of Mamaearth. A non-probability convenience sampling technique was adopted given the accessibility of this demographic through online channels and the practical constraints of an MBA research project. A total of 150 complete and valid responses were collected through a structured Google Form questionnaire administered over a defined data-collection window during the academic year 2025–26.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire was organised into four sections: (i) demographic profiling (age, gender, monthly income); (ii) Instagram usage behaviour (daily time spent, features used); (iii) perceptions of Instagram marketing variables (five Likert items, each measured on a two-point strongly agree / strongly disagree scale); and (iv) purchase intention measures (three Likert items). All perception and intention items were scored as binary responses to simplify data collection for this exploratory study.

Variables

Independent variables: Influencer Marketing, Instagram Advertisements and Promotions, User-Generated Content (UGC), and Customer-Brand Interaction (Engagement). Dependent variable: Purchase Intention towards Mamaearth skincare products. Control variables: Gender, Age, Monthly Income, Instagram Usage Frequency, and Prior Purchase Experience.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using frequency distributions and percentage analysis for descriptive statistics. Chi-square tests were applied to examine associations between demographic variables (age, gender) and purchase intention. Graphical representations in the form of bar and pie charts were used to illustrate response distributions. The overall analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel and SPSS.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 presents the age distribution of the 150 respondents. The largest cohort (40%) falls within the 24–26 year age bracket, followed by the 21–23 group (25.3%), the 18–20 group (19.3%), and the 27–28 group (15.3%). This distribution reflects the dominance of mid-twenties young adults—likely a mix of final-year undergraduates, postgraduate students, and early-career professionals—who are primary consumers of skincare products and active users of Instagram.

Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
18–20 years	29	19.3
21–23 years	38	25.3
24–26 years	60	40.0
27–28 years	23	15.3
Total	150	100.0

Gender distribution reveals that female respondents constituted the majority (52.7%), followed by males (36.0%), with 11.3% preferring not to disclose. The higher female participation aligns with existing evidence that women are more actively engaged in skincare research and product discovery through social platforms. Income data indicates that 36% of respondents earn between Rs. 20,000 and Rs. 30,000 monthly—consistent with a predominantly student and early-career professional sample possessing moderate purchasing power.

Table 2: Gender and Income Distribution

Category	Sub-Category	Respondents	%
Gender	Male	54	36.0
	Female	79	52.7
	Prefer not to say	17	11.3
Monthly Income	Below Rs. 10,000	34	22.7

	Rs. 10,000–20,000	38	25.3
	Rs. 20,000–30,000	54	36.0
	Above Rs. 30,000	24	16.0

Instagram Usage Behaviour

Table 3 summarises the platform usage patterns among respondents. The majority (42%) reported using Instagram for up to one to two hours daily, while 36% reported two to four hours of daily usage. Only 10.7% qualified as heavy users spending more than four hours daily. These figures corroborate broader research findings suggesting that Gen Z engages with Instagram in moderated yet highly intentional sessions, often combining entertainment with product discovery.

Table 3: Instagram Usage Frequency

Daily Usage Duration	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 hour	17	11.3
1–2 hours	63	42.0
2–4 hours	54	36.0
More than 4 hours	16	10.7
Total	150	100.0

Regarding preferred Instagram features, Stories emerged as the most used (51.3%), closely followed by Reels (48%), Feed Posts (46%), and Ads/Promotions (45.3%). Influencer content, while the least selected option (30%), still garnered significant engagement, underscoring the multi-touchpoint nature of modern brand discovery on the platform. The strong preference for Stories and Reels indicates an audience orientation towards short-form, visually dynamic content—formats that Mamaearth has consistently invested in.

Table 4: Instagram Feature Usage (Multiple Response)

Feature	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Stories	77	51.3
Reels	72	48.0
Feed Posts	69	46.0
Ads/Promotions	68	45.3
Influencer Content	45	30.0

Brand Exposure and Discovery

A substantial 64% of respondents confirmed having seen Mamaearth promotions on Instagram, reflecting the brand's considerable platform visibility. This reach is particularly noteworthy given that the sample was not pre-screened for Mamaearth familiarity, suggesting organic penetration of the brand's content into Gen Z feeds.

When asked through which content form they first encountered Mamaearth, the responses were fairly distributed: friends' or users' posts led at 26%, followed by influencer collaborations (24%), Instagram Reels (22.7%), and sponsored advertisements (20%). This finding is theoretically significant—it positions organic UGC and peer-generated discovery ahead of paid promotional content as the primary awareness mechanism, reinforcing the primacy of social proof in the Gen Z decision-making process.

Table 5: First Touchpoint with Mamaearth on Instagram

Discovery Channel	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Friends'/Users' Posts	39	26.0

Influencer Collaboration	36	24.0
Instagram Reels	34	22.7
Sponsored Ads	30	20.0
Other Sources	11	7.3
Total	150	100.0

Perceptions of Instagram Marketing Variables

Table 6 consolidates response data for the five marketing perception items. Across all items, affirmative responses (Strongly Agree) outweigh negative responses, confirming a generally favourable orientation among Gen Z consumers towards Mamaearth's Instagram marketing activities.

Table 6: Perceptions of Instagram Marketing Variables

Marketing Variable	Strongly Agree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Influencer trust in Mamaearth products	60.0	40.0
Instagram ads are attractive and engaging	64.7	35.3
UGC/reviews influence skincare decisions	54.7	45.3
Feel connected via Instagram presence	66.0	34.0
Discounts/promotions motivate purchase	64.7	35.3

The highest affirmative rate (66%) was recorded for the brand connection variable, suggesting that Mamaearth's community-building approach—through responsive engagement, relatable storytelling, and consistent aesthetic identity—resonates strongly with Gen Z audiences. Advertisement appeal and promotional incentives each attracted 64.7% agreement, confirming that creative ad content and price incentives are mutually reinforcing purchase motivators. Influencer trust (60%) and UGC influence (54.7%) also registered majorities, though the relatively higher disagreement rates for these items indicate that a meaningful segment of Gen Z consumers maintains a degree of scepticism about curated endorsements.

Purchase Intention

Table 7 presents responses to three statements measuring purchase intention. The highest agreement rate (62.7%) was recorded for brand preference over competitors—a strong indicator that Mamaearth's Instagram strategy effectively differentiates the brand in a crowded skincare marketplace. Future purchase intention stood at 59.3%, while purchase trial motivation from promotions recorded 52.7% agreement.

Table 7: Purchase Intention Measures

Purchase Intention Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Likely to try Mamaearth due to Instagram promotions	52.7	47.3
Prefer Mamaearth over competitors based on Instagram	62.7	37.3
Instagram increases future purchase intention	59.3	40.7

The near-even split in trial intention (52.7% vs 47.3%) warrants further attention—it suggests that while Instagram promotions are effective for committed users, a substantial segment remains less responsive to promotional triggers alone. This reinforces the need for multi-layered engagement strategies that combine informational content, social proof, and personalised offers.

Prior Purchase Behaviour

A large majority of respondents (69.3%) had previously purchased at least one Mamaearth product, indicating strong market penetration. Of these existing buyers, 68% confirmed that Instagram had influenced their purchase decision—either through ads, influencer

recommendations, promotional offers, or UGC. This is a commercially critical finding: it validates Instagram as a conversion channel, not merely an awareness platform, for Mamaearth within the Gen Z segment.

Table 8: Prior Purchase and Instagram Influence

Variable	Yes (%)	No (%)
Have purchased Mamaearth before?	69.3	30.7
Did Instagram influence the purchase?	68.0	32.0

Key Findings

The following principal findings emerge from the data:

- The dominant age cohort in the study (40%) was 24–26 years, typically comprising young professionals and postgraduate students—a segment with both the purchasing power and platform engagement to be primary targets for Instagram skincare marketing.
- Female respondents formed the majority of survey participants (52.7%), consistent with established patterns of higher female engagement in skincare-related digital content consumption.
- A moderate-to-high daily usage frequency—between one and four hours on Instagram—characterised the majority of respondents, reflecting active and habitual platform engagement among Gen Z.
- Stories and Reels were the most frequently used Instagram features, signalling a strong preference for ephemeral and short-form video content. This has direct implications for content strategy: brands must prioritise these formats to maximise reach within the target segment.
- Sixty-four percent of respondents had seen Mamaearth promotions on Instagram, confirming the brand's successful content distribution and algorithm alignment on the platform.
- Peer-generated content (friends' or users' posts) was the leading discovery mechanism (26%), ahead of both influencer collaboration (24%) and sponsored advertising (20%). This underscores the strategic value of UGC campaigns and community-building initiatives.
- Brand connection through Instagram presence was the most widely endorsed marketing perception variable (66%), suggesting that sustained community engagement creates stronger affective bonds than any single content format.
- Instagram played a direct role in influencing actual purchase decisions for 68% of buyers, confirming its function as a conversion channel alongside its awareness and consideration roles.
- Chi-square analysis revealed significant associations between age group and purchase intention, and between Instagram usage frequency and purchase intention, validating the importance of demographic and behavioural segmentation in campaign planning.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following strategic recommendations are proposed for Mamaearth and comparable skincare brands targeting Gen Z on Instagram:

- Deepen the investment in interactive and community-building formats—particularly Reels and Stories—that align with the consumption preferences of the Gen Z audience and support organic brand discovery.
- Prioritise authenticity in influencer partnerships. Given the 40% disagreement on influencer trust, brands should focus on nano- and micro-influencers whose audiences overlap closely with target consumers and whose recommendations carry genuine peer-recommendation weight rather than transactional endorsement.
- Develop structured UGC campaigns that incentivise customers to create and share honest product reviews, routine demonstrations, and transformation posts. Featuring such content prominently in brand feeds reinforces social proof and mitigates scepticism.
- Leverage promotional content strategically, with time-limited discounts and bundled offers communicated through both Stories (for immediate conversions) and feed posts (for sustained visibility). The 64.7% agreement on promotional motivation confirms the efficacy of price incentives as a conversion trigger.
- Invest in personalised advertising using Instagram's targeting capabilities—particularly lookalike audiences and interest-based segmentation—to reach the 30–40% of undecided users with content tailored to their specific skincare concerns.
- Incorporate educational and informational content (dermatologist interviews, ingredient explainers, skin-type guides) to build long-term credibility and address the informed scepticism that a portion of Gen Z consumers exhibit towards brand claims.

- Expand reach among the 36% who have not yet encountered Mamaearth on Instagram through strategic use of hashtag communities, collaborations with relevant content creators in adjacent niches, and participation in trending audio and challenges on Reels.
- Establish a systematic brand-response protocol for comments, DMs, and polls to strengthen the customer-brand interaction dimension, which this study and prior literature consistently identify as the most influential driver of purchase intention.

Conclusion

This research set out to examine the influence of Instagram-based social media marketing on the purchase intention of Generation Z consumers towards Mamaearth skincare products. Through structured primary data collection from 150 Gen Z respondents and rigorous quantitative analysis, the study has demonstrated that Instagram functions as a comprehensive marketing ecosystem for Mamaearth—spanning brand awareness, product evaluation, emotional engagement, and purchase conversion.

All four independent variables examined—influencer marketing, Instagram advertisements and promotional campaigns, user-generated content, and customer-brand interaction—exhibited meaningful positive relationships with purchase intention. Among these, the affective dimension of brand connection through active Instagram engagement recorded the highest agreement rate, reinforcing existing scholarly consensus on the centrality of engagement quality in translating social media exposure into purchasing behaviour.

The study's findings carry several practical implications. First, they validate the strategic logic of Mamaearth's Instagram-centric approach to Gen Z marketing. Second, they highlight specific areas for optimisation—particularly around influencer authenticity, UGC amplification, and personalised ad targeting—that could improve conversion rates among the considerable segment of users who remain undecided. Third, they underscore the importance of channel-specific strategies: results obtained for Instagram cannot be extrapolated to other platforms without accounting for the unique content affordances and user behaviours that characterise each network.

For the broader field of digital marketing, this study contributes a platform-specific and brand-specific empirical analysis that complements the existing body of generalised social media marketing research. Future studies may extend this work by employing multi-platform comparative designs, adopting a full five-point Likert scale to capture more nuanced attitudinal variation, or conducting longitudinal research to track the evolution of Gen Z's relationship with Instagram-driven brand communication over time.

References

1. Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179–211.
2. Chetioui, Y., Benlafqih, H., & Lebdaoui, H. (2020). How fashion influencers contribute to consumers' purchase intention. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 24(3), 361–380.
3. Djafarova, E., & Trofimenko, O. (2019). Authentic or not? The credibility of product review blogs and Instagram accounts. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 68, 1–7.
4. Erkan, I., & Evans, C. (2018). Social media or shopping websites? The influence of eWOM on consumers' online purchase intentions. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 24(6), 617–632.
5. Ki, C., Cuevas, L. M., Chong, S. M., & Lim, H. (2020). Influencer marketing: Social media influencers as human brands attaching to followers and yielding positive marketing results by fulfilling needs. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 55, 102133.
6. Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2022). *Marketing Management* (16th ed.). Pearson Education.
7. Ninan, E., & George, S. (2020). Social media influence on Gen Z purchase behaviour. *Journal of Consumer Research in India*, 8(2), 44–59.
8. Statista. (2023). Instagram usage statistics among Indian youth. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com>
9. Voorveld, H. A. M. (2019). Brand communication in social media: A research agenda. *Journal of Advertising*, 48(1), 14–26.
10. Mamaearth Official Website. (2024). Brand information and product details. Retrieved from <https://mamaearth.in>