



## A Conceptual Framework on Short-Form Video Marketing and Its Influence on Purchase Intent among Gen Z Consumers

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### Article Info

ISSN (online): 2582-7138

Volume: 06

Issue: 04

July - August 2025

Received: 18-05-2025

Accepted: 14-06-2025

Published: 10-07-2025

Page No: 839-844

### Abstract

Short-form video platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts have emerged as a popular way for brands to reach consumers. These platforms, in particular, are Gen Z's go-to social media sites, who possess high levels of purchasing power and are trendsetters that impact consumer behavior in wider society. Brands are making major investments in short-form video campaigns, yet it is not well understood whether these campaigns are in fact influencing purchase intent. The present paper proposes a conceptual model that seeks to explain how and why short-form video marketing may affect purchase intent, specifically in the Gen Z consumer.

The proposed model, grounded in literature review and theoretical foundations, integrates five factors: exposure to short-form video marketing, perceived authenticity, influencer credibility, engagement and moderating effects of demographic variables. The model postulates that exposure to short-form video marketing may lead to an increase in purchase intent, but only if content is perceived as authentic, the influencer is perceived as credible, and if the user engages with the content. Gender, income, and location are among the demographic variables that may moderate the relationships posited in the model.

The proposed model makes contributions to areas that are understudied or not yet examined in existing literature, such as short-form video, multi-variate research, and Gen Z as a demographic segment. The model also aims to serve as a foundation and guide for future academic research, as well as a resource for marketers and practitioners designing short-form video campaigns targeting Gen Z consumers. The paper also briefly discusses the future directions of testing and expanding upon the model, as well as practical implications of the model for business.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54660/IJMRGE.2025.6.4.839-844>

**Keywords:** Gen Z, Purchase Intent, Influencer Credibility, Consumer Behavior, Short-Form Video Marketing

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### 1. Introduction

Short-form video platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts are rapidly gaining market share in the social media environment. Millions of consumers can be reached in a matter of hours as viral videos go through the social media networks, usually driven by Gen Z. Generation Z is a cohort born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s that now dominates the online consumer population and is in a unique position to influence market competition.

Marketers have rushed to compete with bite-sized videos, leveraging music tracks, memes, scripts, formats, and popular influencers to garner attention. The success of these campaigns in terms of exposure and reach is well-documented; however, research on the impact on *Purchase Intent* (PI) is limited and inconclusive. PI is one of the most reliable predictors of sales; therefore, the real question is whether *Short-Form Video* (SFV) campaigns have any effect on the metric and can be leveraged to drive results. Research into the effectiveness of digital marketing on consumers has been the focus of many past studies. However, most of this research is not specific to short-form video.

It is focused on measuring the impact of traditional advertisements or longer digital videos, often on platforms such as YouTube or Facebook. Short-form videos are much more ephemeral, usually under 60 seconds, and often rely on heavy interactivity, engagement, and recommendation algorithms that continuously feed new content to the consumer. As such, this subcategory of digital marketing is a very unique and hard-to-predict beast.

Furthermore, the factors that influence the SFV effectiveness in the market are unclear and are the focus of this paper. Is it authenticity? Is it the credibility of the influencer? Is it the engagement level? Is it the demographic? We do not know if all Gen Z consumers are affected in the same manner. Demographic factors such as gender, income level, or geographic location may alter the response to the content.

This paper therefore constructs a conceptual research framework to guide future research and marketing efforts. The paper is not based on any new research but rather is a literature review that compiles existing information from the body of work. A conceptual framework is postulated, and all paths of the model are explained with the available evidence. This structure can be leveraged in future studies as well as in the field by practitioners to focus their efforts in the most influential places.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first section is this introduction. The second section is the main part of the paper and includes a literature review and the proposed conceptual framework model. The third section consists of a summary and conclusions. The final section is the reference list.

## 2. Literature Review

This review explores what is known about short-form video marketing and its effect on purchase intent among Gen Z consumers. It addresses six main areas: direct effects, perceived authenticity, influencer credibility, engagement levels, platform algorithms, demographic differences, and research gaps.

### 2.1 Short-Form Video Marketing and Purchase Intent

Short-form video platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts have surged in popularity over the past few years. TikTok now boasts over 1.6 billion monthly active users globally in 2024, and under-27s make up the majority of its audience<sup>[1]</sup>. Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts have seen a similar explosion in use since their launches, each racking up younger audiences that spend an average of 95 minutes per day on these platforms<sup>[2]</sup>.

Purchase intent can be described as a consumer's likelihood or interest in buying a product or service. As such, it is a leading indicator of actual purchase behavior. However, there is surprisingly little research that looks specifically at short-form video as a format. Unlike traditional advertising, short-form videos are under 60 seconds in length, and are generally consumed in an endless vertical feed of entertainment and peer-generated content. This has the benefit of making the marketing content seem less intrusive, but also presents challenges to effectively communicating complex brand messages.

One study has suggested that short-form video can be effective when it is well-executed. Duffett & Maraule<sup>[3]</sup> found that TikTok campaigns that incorporated humor and interactive features such as stickers and hashtags significantly increased purchase intent among a Gen Z sample in South

Africa. However, some research also suggests that this effect is inconsistent, depending heavily on creative execution and product relevance to the audience<sup>[4]</sup>.

### 2.2 Perceived Authenticity

Authenticity is one of the key drivers of consumer response to short-form video marketing efforts. Content that is perceived as real, unfiltered, and relatable is more likely to be seen as trustworthy. Authenticity can be expressed through user-generated content, behind-the-scenes footage, or storytelling that eschews overly polished production values<sup>[5]</sup>.

Gen Z consumers are particularly sensitive to authenticity. Audrezet *et al.*<sup>[6]</sup> found that younger viewers were more likely to tune out when a short-form video brand's content appeared staged or inauthentic. This is part of why TikTok has been such a game-changer: the platform's culture embraces imperfection and humor, rather than the highly-curated look and feel of Instagram<sup>[7]</sup>.

Authenticity also mediates the relationship between exposure and purchase intention. Studies indicate that even if consumers are repeatedly exposed to branded content, their positive brand attitudes will be blunted if they see the content as disingenuous<sup>[8]</sup>. On the other hand, authentic content can reinforce brand credibility and thereby increase purchase intent<sup>[9]</sup>.

### 2.3 Influencer Credibility

Influencers are a critical component of short-form video content ecosystems. They are trusted messengers who connect brands with their audiences, and who deliver promotional messages in a highly personalized and engaging manner. Influencer credibility, or the extent to which an influencer is seen as trustworthy, knowledgeable and authentic, is a major factor in how effective those messages are<sup>[10]</sup>.

Research has shown that influencers can gain credibility through consistent behavior, transparent communication about brand partnerships, and alignment with their followers' values and interests. Ki and Kim<sup>[11]</sup> found that consumers were more likely to take an influencer's product recommendations if they perceived them as authentic and similar to themselves.

It is worth noting that macro-influencers (those with very large followings) and micro-influencers (those with smaller, niche audiences) may have different impacts on audiences. While macro-influencers offer more reach, micro-influencers often see higher engagement and are perceived as more relatable<sup>[12]</sup>. In short-form video, influencer credibility may be especially important, because content is ephemeral and audiences have to quickly decide whether to trust it.

### 2.4 Engagement Level

Engagement – liking, commenting, sharing, saving or clicking – increases the reach and effectiveness of short-form videos. Algorithms promote content that gets strong engagement to more users. Engagement also provides social proof, signaling to others that a video is worth their time<sup>[13]</sup>. This can build awareness and favorably influence purchase intent.

Engagement has been found to mediate the relationship between exposure and purchase intent. For instance, Schivinski and Dabrowski<sup>[14]</sup> found that simply watching a video was insufficient to increase brand attitudes; it required

users to engage with the content in some way to increase familiarity and trust. Engagement is particularly important for Gen Z, who desire brands to interact with them rather than broadcast one-way messages.

Commenting, in particular, has the potential to deepen the brand relationship. When a user comments on a brand's video and that comment receives a response, it humanizes the brand and builds goodwill [15]. Companies that design their videos to encourage participation, such as challenges, questions or other interactive features, experience stronger marketing effects [16].

## 2.5 Platform Algorithms

Another important, but often neglected, ingredient is platform algorithm. The TikTok algorithm, for example, personalizes a user's "For You Page" according to their viewing history, which means content can go "viral" very rapidly, but also die out quickly [17].

Algorithm systems are designed to surface content which keeps people on the platform. This is great for brands whose videos are engaging, but this unpredictability is unnerving. An exceptionally well-made campaign could be invisible to a target audience if it's not algorithmically served.

Algorithmic dependence is also a recipe for ethical dilemmas. The opacity of algorithm systems makes it difficult to predict outcomes for brands and measure true exposure for researchers. Further research is needed to examine the impact of algorithmic bias on exposure and purchase intent.

## 2.6 Demographic Differences

Gen Z is not homogeneous. Gender, income and location can all moderate how consumers respond to short-form video marketing. For example, women may be more influenced by visual content in categories like fashion and beauty, while men may be more responsive to technology or gaming content.

Income can also play a role. Higher-income consumers may have a stronger purchase intention response because they have fewer budget constraints [18]. Location can influence exposure and accessibility. Urban Gen Z consumers are more likely to be exposed to digital marketing campaigns and have easy access to products. In contrast, rural consumers may experience barriers such as delivery and availability [19].

Cultural differences can also be a factor. A campaign that resonates with Gen Z in one country may not have the same impact in another due to different norms and values. For example, influencer marketing is widely accepted in Southeast Asia, but can be met with skepticism in some European markets [20].

These demographic factors can help explain why some members of Gen Z have a stronger purchase intention response to short-form video marketing than others. Marketers should consider how to tailor their strategies to different subgroups within the cohort. Similarly, researchers should be wary of treating Gen Z as a single homogeneous group.

## 2.7 Gaps in the Research

Research on short-form video platforms is still nascent. The majority of the literature on digital marketing centers around longer content forms or is broadly on social media utilization [21]. We have not fully understood how the inherent characteristics of short-form videos – short length, algorithmic feeds, heightened peer influence – impact

consumer decision-making.

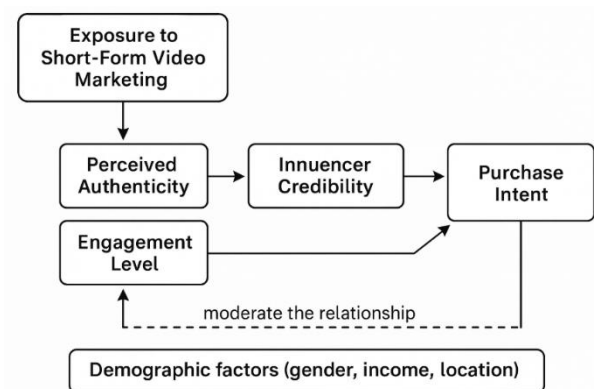
Moreover, there is a dearth of studies on the relative significance of authenticity, influencer credibility and engagement. It is unclear which among these is most impactful in driving purchase intent. There is also a lack of evidence about the moderating effect of demographic differences on these relationships.

Last, the role of platform algorithms has not been studied extensively. Little do we know about how these algorithms boost certain kinds of content while burying others, and what effect this has on brand metrics?

Taken together, these knowledge gaps point to the need for a comprehensive framework to integrate a range of variables, and also to facilitate future empirical investigations. The subsequent section proposes a framework and testable hypotheses drawing on the literature above.

## 3. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

The conceptual framework proposed in this paper is informed by the literature reviewed above and incorporates multiple variables that are likely to affect purchase intent among Gen Z consumers in the context of short-form video marketing. The framework is visually represented in Figure 1.



**Fig 1:** Conceptual Framework of Purchase Intent in Short-form Video Marketing among Gen Z Consumers

### 3.1 Exposure and Purchase Intent

The first two variables in the framework, exposure and purchase intent, represent the core relationship this paper aims to explore. Exposure refers to the frequency and recency with which a consumer encounters a brand or product through short-form video content. Purchase intent is a consumer's expressed likelihood of purchasing a product or service. Research suggests that exposure to a brand increases familiarity and recall, positively impacting purchase intent [22]. However, the impact of exposure is not linear or guaranteed: content that is not engaging or relevant to the viewer can be easily skipped or even create negative brand perceptions.

### 3.2 Perceived Authenticity as a Mediator

Authenticity is one potential mediator of the relationship between exposure and purchase intent. Authenticity in marketing is often defined by how real, relatable, and genuine the content appears to the viewer. Content that is perceived as authentic can foster positive attitudes toward a brand. Authenticity is known to enhance trust and credibility, which are strong predictors of purchase intent.

### 3.3 Influencer Credibility as a Mediator

Influencer credibility is another possible mediator in the framework. Influencers serve as opinion leaders, and their recommendations can significantly shape consumer attitudes and intentions. Influencer credibility depends on the audience's perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and similarity to the influencer. Followers are more likely to accept and act on recommendations from influencers they perceive as authentic and knowledgeable.

### 3.4 Engagement Level as a Mediator

Engagement with the content, whether through likes, shares, comments, or clicks, is another mediator. Engagement not only signals to platform algorithms that a viewer found the content interesting, potentially increasing its reach, but it also strengthens the psychological bond between the viewer and the brand. Consumers who actively engage with content are more likely to remember it and act on it.

### 3.5 Demographic Factors as Moderators

Demographic factors such as gender, income, and location can moderate the relationships between the variables. For example, gender may influence the effectiveness of authenticity or influencer credibility. Women might respond more to authentic storytelling for beauty and fashion products, while men might be more influenced by credibility in areas like technology or gaming<sup>[23]</sup>. Income can moderate whether purchase intent translates into purchase behavior, and location can influence both exposure to campaigns and product availability<sup>[24]</sup>.

### 3.6 Hypotheses

Based on the proposed conceptual framework, the following hypotheses are proposed for testing in the research:

H1: Exposure to short-form video marketing increases purchase intent among Gen Z consumers.

H2: Perceived authenticity mediates the relationship between exposure to short-form video marketing and purchase intent such that higher perceived authenticity strengthens the effect of exposure on purchase intent.

H3: Influencer credibility mediates the relationship between exposure to short-form video marketing and purchase intent such that higher influencer credibility strengthens the effect of exposure on purchase intent.

H4: Engagement level mediates the relationship between exposure to short-form video marketing and purchase intent such that higher engagement leads to stronger purchase intent.

H5: Demographic factors (gender, income, location) moderate the relationship between exposure to short-form video marketing and purchase intent such that the strength of the relationship varies across different demographic groups.

## 4. Methodology for Future Studies

### 4.1 Measurement Strategy

Researchers can evaluate the study model by employing either survey methods or experimental approaches.

### Sample

The sample should consist of Gen Z consumers aged 18–27. A minimum of 300 respondents would allow for robust statistical analysis. Participants should be regular users of TikTok, Instagram Reels or YouTube Shorts.

Measures:

The proposed variables should be measured with established scales.

- Exposure - this can be assessed by asking about the frequency and duration of watching brand or influencer short-form videos.
- Authenticity - the items in the scale should capture how real, genuine and transparent the content is perceived to be.
- Influencer credibility - use scales that assess both trustworthiness and expertise of the influencer.
- Engagement - frequency of likes, shares, comments and clicks on links or CTA buttons.
- Purchase intent - likelihood of buying a product after viewing the short-form video.

### 4.2 Data Collection

The participants could be recruited through social media ads, research panels or university email lists. Screening questions could ensure that they are active users of short-form platforms.

### 4.3 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics could be used to provide a profile of the sample. Regression analysis or structural equation modeling (SEM) could test the direct and mediating relationships. Multi-group analysis could be done to test whether any demographic differences moderate the effects.

### 4.4 Alternative Approaches

Experiments could be done by exposing participants to different types of short-form videos and measuring their purchase intention. Mixed methods could include qualitative interviews or focus groups to better understand the “why” behind the findings.

## 5. Discussion and Implications

The results of the framework clearly demonstrate that exposure will likely not be enough to increase purchase intent on its own. There should also be an element of authenticity, credibility, and engagement present in order for purchase intent to increase.

### 5.1 Academic Implications

The proposed model adds to the existing literature by simultaneously linking several variables in short-form video contexts. In the future, there may be some interesting studies that test whether certain constructs may be more influential than others or if the direction of relationships may vary depending on different product categories. There is also room to conduct such studies on how the model would perform in different cultural contexts. Other possible future directions could include more precise measurements of some of the variables.

### 5.2 Business Implications

For marketers, the results of the model indicate that there should be a primary focus on the authenticity of the content that is being created. This means that a business would have to carefully select their influencers to those that their target audience will believe in and trust. It also means that the actual video content would have to be adjusted in a way that would allow for engagement. There also needs to be a more nuanced approach to different Gen Z segments as the same short-form



video campaign may not have an effect on both urban and rural audiences.

### 5.3 Broader Relevance and Ethical Considerations

Short-form video marketing is part of a larger trend in the changing nature of consumer discovery and research. With platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts, trends spread rapidly and even smaller brands can gain massive exposure. The speed and scale of these platforms, however, raise certain ethical considerations.

Algorithmic recommendation systems may not always lead to the most informed decision-making, and their optimization for engagement rather than utility can contribute to impulse purchasing. In the same way, influencer partnerships are now common on these platforms and must be carefully disclosed to not mislead consumers. Additionally, because these platforms track users across all parts of the internet in order to serve content, there are heightened issues of data privacy to consider. Brands need to ensure they're striking a balance between engaging consumers and respecting their autonomy.

### 5.4 Future Research Directions

Future research should apply the proposed model using surveys or experiments, as well as longitudinal designs, to capture both immediate and long-term impacts of short-form video marketing efforts. Cross-cultural studies may uncover differences in perceptions of authenticity and credibility.

Variables related to algorithms, peer influence and cultural factors that can influence engagement should also be investigated. Qualitative approaches, such as interviews or focus groups, may also help to understand how Gen Z perceives authenticity and engages with these marketing efforts. These steps will help to build a more solid foundation of evidence around effective and ethical short-form video marketing.

### 6. Conclusion

Short-form videos like TikTok, Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts are key for Gen Z brand interactions. This paper summarized existing research and created a framework about exposure, authenticity, influencer credibility, engagement, and demographic differences, and purchase intent.

The framework indicated exposure is not enough for purchase intent, and that the most successful campaigns offer authentic-feeling content, shared by influencers who seem credible and generate engagement. Gen Z is not a monolithic group, and gender, income, and location may change the effectiveness of short video marketing on buying behavior.

For researchers, this is a starting point for testing the framework with data, and future studies could focus on long-term effects, cross-cultural variations, and algorithm effects. For marketers, the paper highlights the importance of authenticity, credibility, and engagement for tangible results. In conclusion, this paper demonstrates the potential and challenges of short-form video marketing. Brands can build valuable relationships with Gen Z, but also have ethical responsibilities. By creating clear, engaging, and audience-centered campaigns, companies can succeed on short video

platforms, while empowering consumers.

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