BETWEEN LIKES AND PURCHASES: EVIDENCE ABOUT THE ROLE OF DIGITAL INFLUENCERS IN GENERATION Z CONSUMPTION IN JUIZ DE FORA/MG

ENTRE CURTIDAS E COMPRAS: EVIDÊNCIAS SOBRE O PAPEL DOS INFLUENCIADORES DIGITAIS NO CONSUMO DA GERAÇÃO Z EM JUIZ DE FORA/MG

ENTRE ME GUSTA Y COMPRAS: EVIDENCIAS SOBRE EL PAPEL DE LOS INFLUENCERS DIGITALES EN EL CONSUMO DE LA GENERACIÓN Z EN JUIZ DE FORA/MG

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ABSTRACT
This study investigated the role of digital influencers in the consumption decisions of Generation Z residing in Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais, using a mixed quantitative and qualitative descriptive approach. The objective was to analyze how digital influencers impact the purchasing decisions of this audience, identifying determining factors and consumption patterns. To this end, biblioFigureic and field research was conducted, with a structured questionnaire applied to young people between 18 and 30 years of age who are frequent users of social networks. The data were statistically analyzed and interpreted in light of correlations between sociodemoFigureic profile, digital habits, and purchasing behavior. The results indicate that most respondents have made purchases motivated by influencers, with credibility, practical demonstrations, and authenticity being the main influencing factors. It was also observed that, although the influence is significant, the frequency of purchases is predominantly sporadic, with the greatest impact in the fashion, beauty, and food segments. It is concluded that influencer marketing plays a relevant role among young adults, but its effectiveness depends on the authenticity and perceived relevance of the content to the audience.

Keywords: Digital Influencers. Influencer Marketing. Purchasing Behavior. Generation Z.

RESUMO
Este estudo investigou o papel dos influenciadores digitais nas decisões de consumo da Geração Z residente em Juiz de Fora/MG, por meio de uma abordagem mista, quantitativa e qualitativa, de caráter descritivo. O objetivo foi analisar como os influenciadores digitais impactam a decisão de compra desse público, identificando fatores determinantes e padrões de consumo. Para tanto, realizou-se pesquisa bibliográfica e de campo, com aplicação de

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questionário estruturado a jovens entre 18 e 30 anos, usuários frequentes de redes sociais. Os dados foram analisados estatisticamente e interpretados à luz de correlações entre perfil sociodemográfico, hábitos digitais e comportamento de compra. Os resultados indicam que a maioria dos respondentes já realizou compras motivadas por influenciadores, sendo que credibilidade, demonstrações práticas e autenticidade foram os principais fatores de influência. Observou-se ainda que, embora a influência seja expressiva, a frequência de compras é predominantemente esporádica, com maior impacto nos segmentos de moda, beleza e alimentação. Conclui-se que o marketing de influência desempenha papel relevante entre jovens adultos, mas sua efetividade depende da autenticidade e da relevância percebida do conteúdo para o público.

Palavras-chave: Influenciadores Digitais. Marketing de Influência. Comportamento de Compra. Geração Z.

RESUMEN
Este estudio investigó el rol de los influencers digitales en las decisiones de consumo de los residentes de la Generación Z en Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais, utilizando un enfoque descriptivo cuantitativo y cualitativo. El objetivo fue analizar cómo los influencers digitales impactan las decisiones de compra de este público, identificando factores determinantes y patrones de consumo. Para ello, se realizó una investigación bibliográfica y de campo, que incluyó un cuestionario estructurado aplicado a jóvenes de 18 a 30 años, usuarios frecuentes de redes sociales. Los datos se analizaron estadísticamente e interpretaron con base en correlaciones entre el perfil sociodemográfico, los hábitos digitales y el comportamiento de compra. Los resultados indican que la mayoría de los encuestados han realizado compras motivados por influencers, siendo la credibilidad, las demostraciones prácticas y la autenticidad los principales factores de influencia. También se observó que, si bien la influencia es significativa, la frecuencia de compra es predominantemente esporádica, con mayor impacto en los segmentos de moda, belleza y alimentación. Se concluye que el marketing de influencers desempeña un papel relevante entre los jóvenes adultos, pero su efectividad depende de la autenticidad y la relevancia percibida del contenido para la audiencia.

Palabras clave: Influencers Digitales. Marketing de Influencers. Comportamiento de Compra. Generación Z.

1 INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the advancement of digital technologies and the popularization of social networks have profoundly transformed the dynamics of consumption, especially among young people of the so-called Generation Z. This generation, characterized by high connectivity and digital protagonism, experiences new forms of interaction with brands and products, being directly impacted by the emergence of digital influencers as mediators of opinions and trends (Figueiredo, 2023). Contemporary consumer behavior, therefore, is strongly influenced not only by cultural, social, and psychological factors, but also by the virtual environment, in which influencers' recommendations play a strategic role in the purchase journey (Kotler; Keller; Chernev, 2024). As the studies analyzed demonstrate, aspects such as authentic reviews, practical demonstrations and identification with the influencer are among the main factors that guide consumption decisions in this new digital context (Paiva; Lima, 2023; Santos, 2021).

The presence of digital influencers intensifies among young adults, who become part of consumer communities marked by strong exposure to sponsored content and personalized recommendations (Kotler; Kartajaya; Setiawan, 2021). Despite the significant reach, it is observed that the effectiveness of these strategies depends on elements such as credibility, authenticity and relevance perceived by the public. At the same time, there is an increasingly critical public, which values real experiences and demonstrates resistance to commercial approaches that are excessive or distant from their daily reality (Bertaglia et al., 2025; Bonotto; Castañeda, 2025; Saints; 2021).

Given this scenario, the problem that guides this study is: how do digital influencers impact the buying behavior of Generation Z living in Juiz de Fora/MG? The general objective is to analyze the effects of digital influencers on the consumption decisions of this audience. Specifically, it seeks to: (i) identify the main factors that influence the purchase decision; (ii) map the consumption patterns associated with influencer marketing; and (iii) understand Gen Z's perceptions of influencers' credibility and authenticity.

In addition to contributing to the academic literature on consumer behavior in digital contexts in Brazil, this research has practical relevance, as it provides subsidies for companies that wish to adopt more effective influencer marketing strategies aligned with the critical profile of Generation Z.

The research adopted a mixed quantitative and qualitative approach, with a descriptive objective, based on biblioFigureic and field research (Gil, 2017; Lakatos; Marconi, 2017).

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire applied online, with non-probabilistic convenience sampling (Vergara, 2015), including young people between 18 and 30 years old, living in Juiz de Fora/MG and active users of social networks. Data analysis was carried out with the support of descriptive statistical techniques and cross-referencing of variables, allowing the interpretation of the observed patterns and understanding the relationships between the main factors investigated.

The development of this article begins with a discussion of the factors that influence consumer behavior, followed by the analysis of the main characteristics of digital marketing and the role of digital influencers in the purchase decision process. Next, the methodological procedures adopted to carry out the research are presented and, subsequently, a detailed analysis of the data obtained and the correlations identified between the variables studied. Finally, the work concludes with the main final considerations and reflections on the results and their implications.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Consumer behavior is a field of study aimed at understanding the motivations, decisions, and impacts related to the consumption process. Kotler, Keller, and Chernev (2024, p. 66) define it as "the study of how individuals, groups, and organizations select, buy, use, and dispose of goods, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy their needs and desires." This process involves emotional, cognitive, and social aspects, going beyond simple purchase to also encompass the meanings attributed to consumption and its social implications (Solomon, 2016).

Among the factors that influence consumer behavior are cultural factors, which shape values and preferences; social, related to the family and reference groups; personal ones, such as age, income, and lifestyle; and psychological, which includes perceptions, beliefs, and motivations (Kotler; Keller; Chernev, 2024; Blackwell; Miniard; Engel, 2011).

One of the central theories for understanding such motivations is the hierarchy of human needs, proposed by Maslow (Figure 1), which organizes five levels: physiological, security, social, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1954; Solomon, 2016). This theory helps to understand how desires, shaped by culture, guide consumption.

Figure 1

Maslow's Pyramid
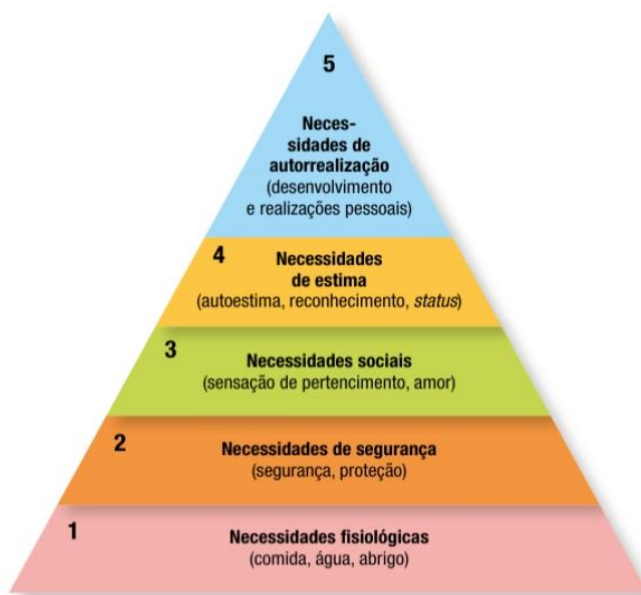
Source: Maslow, 1987 apud Kotler; Keller; Chernev, 2024, p. 73

The purchase decision process traditionally goes through five stages: recognition of need, search for information, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase behavior (Engel; Blackwell; Miniard, 1995). Currently, this journey is largely mediated by technology, as consumers resort to online information, evaluations, and opinions before deciding (Paiva; Lima, 2023). Thus, understanding consumer behavior requires considering both individual variables and the new digital contexts that influence these choices.

2.2 TRANSFORMATIONS OF MARKETING IN THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

Traditional marketing was based on mass media such as television, radio and newspapers, characterized by one-way communication and broad segmentation (Kotler; Keller; Chernev, 2024; Solomon, 2016). With the popularization of the internet, there was a transition to more dynamic, interactive, and low-cost practices, capable of connecting brands and consumers in real time (de Souza et al., 2023).

In this context, digital marketing has consolidated itself as a set of strategies that explore electronic channels to attract, engage, and retain customers. Among the most widespread practices are content marketing, with relevant materials that reinforce the brand's image (Torres, 2020); e-mail marketing, which favors personalized communication (Silva; Caracini, 2023); social media marketing, which allows immediate interaction and precise

segmentation (Silva; Heinski, 2021); and paid traffic, which increases visibility through sponsored ads (Pavanelli, 2020).

More than migrating from offline to online, digital marketing represents a structural transformation, marked by consumer centricity. Today, the public actively participates in the communication process, comparing products, evaluating brands and sharing opinions in real time (Paiva; Lima, 2023; Torres, 2022).

2.3 DIGITAL INFLUENCERS AND PURCHASING DECISIONS

In this scenario, digital influencers emerge as strategic actors. They are content creators who gain credibility by maintaining a close relationship with followers and become a reference in certain niches (Silva; Tessarolo, 2016; Corim; Viana, 2024). Its power of persuasion is supported by formats such as short videos, live broadcasts, tutorials and personal narratives, resources that bring the public closer and make its recommendations more reliable than traditional advertising (Bonotto; Castañeda, 2025).

In addition, they use psychological triggers, such as social proof and scarcity, to enhance the desire to consume (Glenister, 2022). Transparency is also key: signaling paid partnerships strengthens credibility, as long as the content maintains authenticity (Bertaglia et al., 2024).

The impact of this phenomenon is evident in different sectors. In the cosmetics market, personal recommendations associated with fair price and perceived quality increase purchase intention (Bonotto; Castañeda, 2025). Small businesses report a significant increase in sales by adopting partnerships with influencers (Silva et al., 2024). However, the loss of authenticity and saturation of sponsored content pose risks, which can generate public rejection and encourage impulsive consumption (Brito, 2023; Bertaglia et al., 2025).

For Generation Z, influence is more effective when there is identification with the influencer's values, a decisive factor in the acceptance of recommendations (Santos, 2021). More than promoting products, these creators shape lifestyles and trends, influencing not only what to consume, but also how to consume it (Figueiredo, 2023).

Thus, digital influencers are consolidating themselves as central agents of contemporary marketing, especially among Generation Z, whose relationship with consumption is increasingly linked to identity and lifestyle. Its relevance, however, depends on the ability to maintain authenticity and build lasting bonds of trust with the public.

3 METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a mixed approach, quantitative and qualitative, with a descriptive objective. The choice of the mixed method is justified by the possibility of integrating the objectivity of statistical measurement with the interpretative richness of individual perceptions, allowing greater depth in the analysis of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2010).

The research was developed in two stages: biblioFigureic research and field research. The first consisted of a survey of studies on consumer behavior, digital marketing, and the influence of social networks, according to Lakatos and Marconi (2017), based on articles, theses, dissertations, and books published in the last five years. The second stage involved the application of a structured questionnaire to young people belonging to Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2010), living in Juiz de Fora/MG and active users of social networks.

The instrument had 14 closed questions and one open question, addressing sociodemoFigureic profile, digital habits, interaction with influencers and consumption patterns. The sample was obtained by convenience (Vergara, 2015), resulting in 91 valid responses, collected online between July 11 and 24, 2025. Only respondents up to 30 years of age, living in Juiz de Fora, were included.

Data analysis was performed using Microsoft Excel software, using descriptive statistics and cross-referencing of variables. The open question was interpreted qualitatively, allowing the capture of perceptions and feelings that could not be quantified (Minayo, 2001).

4 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This topic aims to present and interpret the main results obtained from the application of the research questionnaire to the target audience of this study. Therefore, it sought to identify patterns, correlations and relevant perceptions, in order to understand how influencer marketing manifests itself in the local context and what are its impacts on consumption decisions.

4.1 SOCIODEMOFIGUREIC PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The research sample shows the predominance of certain groups in terms of age group, gender and monthly family income, as observed in Table 1, essential characteristics for understanding the context of influencer marketing.

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Table 1

Respondents' profile

Question	Alternatives	Percentage
1 - Age	Up to 18 years old	6,59%
	18 to 21 years old	28,57%
	22 to 25 years old	32,97%
	26 to 30 years old	31,87%
2 - Sex	Female	58,24%
	Male	41,76%
3 - Monthly Family Income	Up to R$ 1,518.00	10,99%
	From R$ 1,518.01 to R$ 3,036.00	26,37%
	From R$ 3,036.01 to R$ 6,072.00	25,27%
	From R$ 6,072.01 to R$ 9,108.00	7,69%
	From R$ 9,108.01 to R$ 15,180.00	13,19%
	Above R$ 15,180.01	16,48%

Source: Survey data, 2025.

According to the data collected, there is a greater predominance of the age groups between 22 and 25 years (32.97%) and 26 to 30 years (31.87%), which together represent almost two-thirds of the sample. Participants between 18 and 21 years old represent 28.57% of the sample, while respondents up to 18 years old are a minority.

Regarding the gender of the participants, the distribution shows a greater participation of women (58.24%) than men (41.76%). This predominance of women is close to the sex ratio data of the last Census carried out in the city by the Brazilian Institute of GeoFigurey and Statistics - IBGE (2022).

When analyzing the variable of monthly family income, it is noted that most respondents fall into the ranges between R$ 1,518.01 and R$ 3,036.00 (26.37%) and between R$ 3,036.01 and R$ 6,072.00 (25.27%), an income profile that represents the urban middle class.
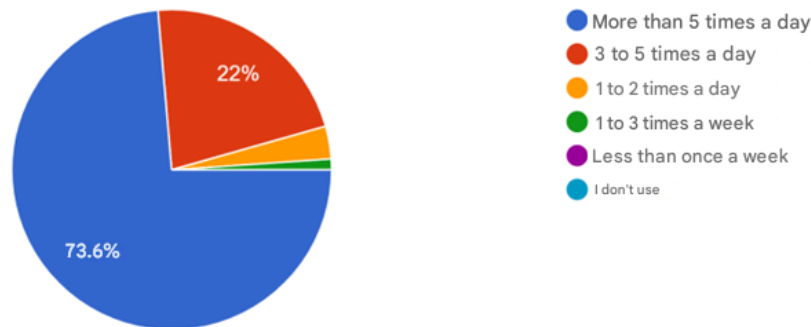
4.2 DIGITAL BEHAVIOR OF PARTICIPANTS

The digital behavior of the respondents demonstrates high connectivity and great exposure to the social media ecosystem, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 2

Distribution of responses by frequency of use of social networks

How often do you use social media?
91 answers

- More than 5 times a day
- 3 to 5 times a day
- 1 to 2 times a day
- 1 to 3 times a week
- Less than once a week
- I don't use

Source: Survey data, 2025.

The intensive use of social networks is notorious: 73.6% access the platforms more than 5 times a day, while 22% use it 3 to 5 times a day. Less than 5% reported less frequent use, and none of the participants use social networks less than once a week, reinforcing the high daily exposure to digital content and influencers.
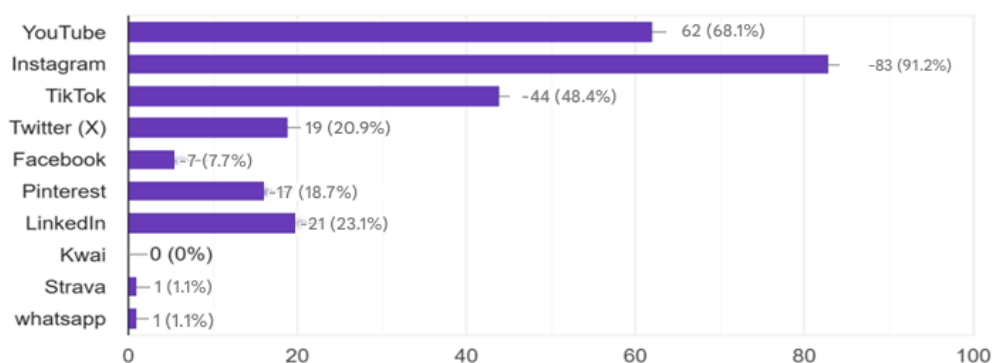
In the analysis of the most used social networks, as shown in Figure 3, the participants were able to select more than one alternative. It is observed that Instagram stands out as the main platform, used by 91.2% of respondents, followed by YouTube (68.1%) and TikTok (48.4%). Platforms such as LinkedIn (23.1%) and Twitter (X) (20.9%) appear in smaller proportions, while Facebook and alternative networks have minority use.

Figure 3

Distribution of responses by most used social networks

Which social networks do you use most? (You can select more than one option)
91 answers

- YouTube — 62 (68.1%)
- Instagram — 83 (91.2%)
- TikTok — 44 (48.4%)
- Twitter (X) — 19 (20.9%)
- Facebook — 7 (7.7%)
- Pinterest — 17 (18.7%)
- LinkedIn — 21 (23.1%)
- Kwai — 0 (0%)
- Strava — 1 (1.1%)
- whatsapp — 1 (1.1%)

Source: Survey data, 2025.

The habit of following digital influencers is present in 92.3% of the sample, demonstrating a wide reach of these figures in the participants' daily lives and reinforcing the importance of influencers as consumption mediators, who can influence the early stages of the purchase process (Figueiredo, 2023).

4.3 CONSUMPTION INFLUENCED BY DIGITAL INFLUENCERS

The question regarding the most consumed content of digital influencers allowed the selection of multiple alternatives, allowing each participant to indicate more than one type of content followed. It is observed in Figure 4 that "Lifestyle (*Lifestyle*) / *Fitness*" (60.4%) is the most cited topic, followed by "Fashion / Beauty" (48.4%) and "Cooking / Gastronomy" (39.6%). " Education/Finance" (51.6%) and "Travel/Tours" (49.5%) also have significant representativeness. The data shows the multiplicity of themes, with a predominance of content related to daily life, consumption and well-being.

Figure 4

Distribution of responses by type of content consumed
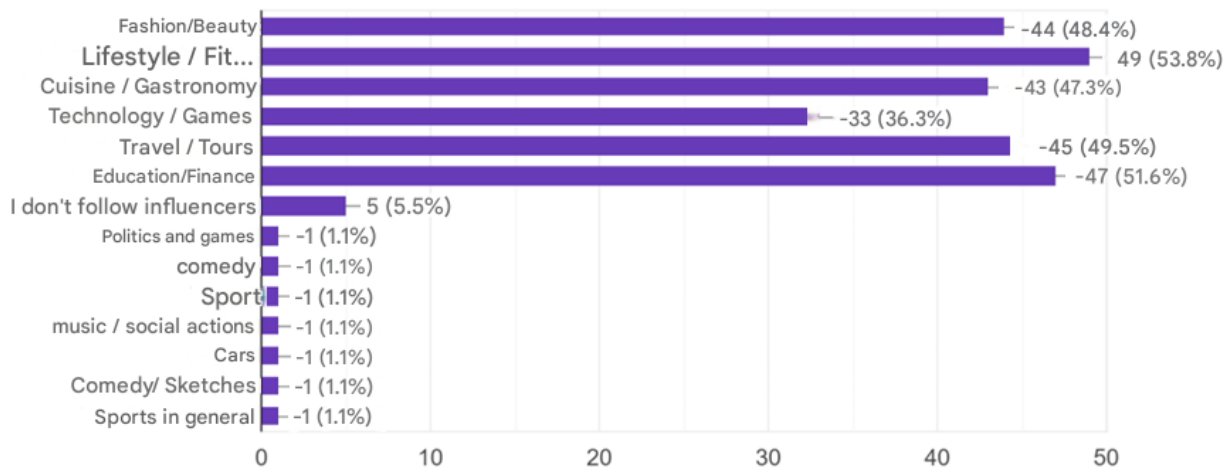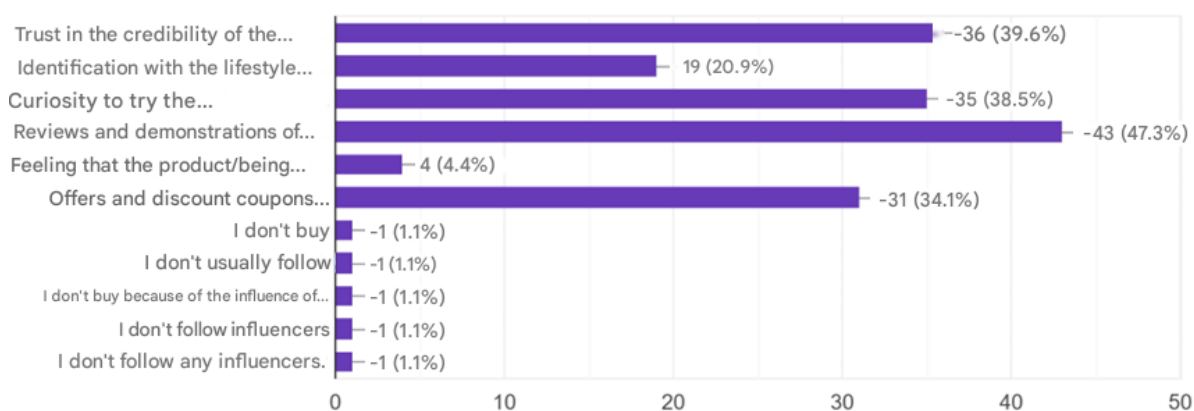

Source: Survey data, 2025.

As illustrated in Figure 5, reviews and demonstrations made by influencers are the main reason to consider the purchase (47.3%), followed by confidence in the influencer's credibility (39.6%) and curiosity to try the product or service (38.5%). Offers, discount coupons and identification with the lifestyle also have a significant impact, revealing a purchase decision marked by the combination of rational and emotional factors. It is

noteworthy that, in this question, the respondents were able to mark more than one alternative, allowing them to identify the joint influence of different factors on the purchase decision.

Figure 5

Distribution of responses by main reasons for purchase consideration

What is(are) the main reason(s) that lead you to consider purchasing a product/service recommended by an influencer? (You can select more than one option)

91 answers

Source: Survey data, 2025.

This analysis corroborates the study by Paiva and Lima (2023) in which consumers seek detailed information and practical evaluations about the product, but also establish a bond of trust and identification with the influencer, which enhances the predisposition to experimentation and adherence to novelties. Thus, it can be seen that the effectiveness of influencer marketing depends both on the influencer's ability to convey credibility and usefulness, as well as on their ability to create authentic connections with their audience.

More than half of the participants (79.1%) have already made purchases motivated by indications from digital influencers, proving the effectiveness of this type of marketing strategy and its influence on the purchase process, as pointed out by Figueiredo (2023).

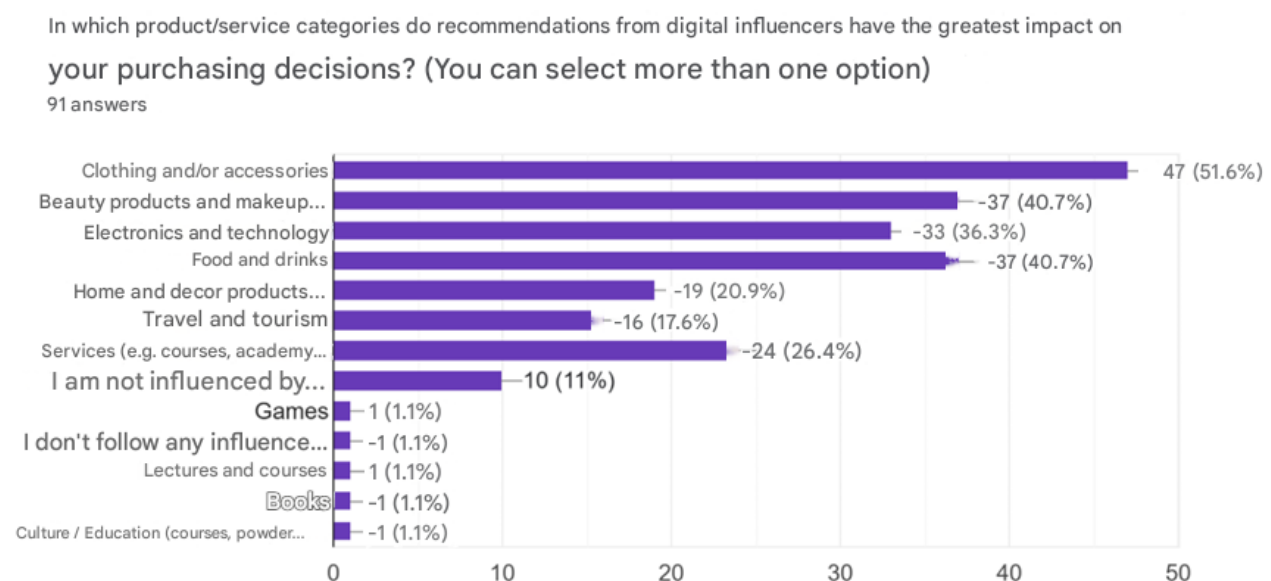The frequency of consumption influenced by indications from digital influencers demonstrates that most respondents make purchases motivated by these agents only sporadically. The most expressive group declared that they purchase products or services rarely (35.2%) on the recommendation of influencers, while 23.1% do so occasionally. Only 16.5% report buying frequently by referral, while 25.3% say they have never bought. This

result suggests that, although the influence is wide, recurring conversion is restricted to a smaller portion of the audience.

According to Figure 6, participants were able to select more than one category of products or services in which digital influencers infer the greatest impact on their purchasing decisions. It is observed that "Clothing and/or accessories" (51.6%) leads the indications, followed by "Beauty and makeup products" (40.7%), "Food and beverages" (40.7%) and "Electronics and Technology" (36.3%). Services, home products, and travel and tourism appear on a smaller scale, and only 11% said they were not influenced in any category, confirming the breadth of the reach of digital influencers in multiple segments of consumption.

Figure 6

Distribution of responses by categories of products/services in which digital influencers have the greatest impact

In which product/service categories do recommendations from digital influencers have the greatest impact on

your purchasing decisions? (You can select more than one option)
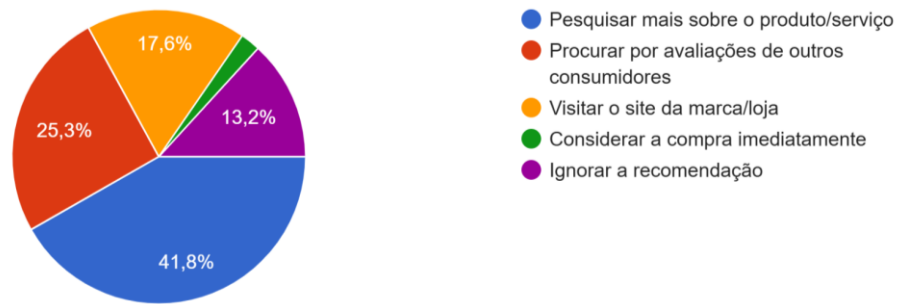
91 answers

Source: Survey data, 2025.

Most participants have an active and critical stance in the face of nominations, as stated by Santos (2021). It is observed that 41.8% of the respondents choose to research more about the product or service when they come across influencers' disclosures and 25.3% seek reviews from other consumers, as shown in Figure 7. Only 2.2% consider buying immediately, indicating that the influencers' effect usually goes through an additional validation step before the purchase decision.

Figure 7

Distribution of responses by reaction to the promotion of products and services by influencers

Ao se deparar com um produto/serviço divulgado por um influenciador, qual sua primeira reação?
91 respostas

- Pesquisar mais sobre o produto/serviço
- Procurar por avaliações de outros consumidores
- Visitar o site da marca/loja
- Considerar a compra imediatamente
- Ignorar a recomendação

Source: Survey data, 2025.

For 49.5% of respondents, digital influencers have a greater impact than traditional advertising; Another 35.2% consider that this impact is manifested "in some cases". Only 15.4% do not perceive influence superior to traditional media. Such a perception reinforces the ideas of Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan (2021), in which influencer marketing has strategic relevance compared to traditional media, especially in the young-adult audience.

4.4 ANALYSIS OF CORRELATIONS OF THE STUDY

4.4.1 Age group x Types of content consumed by influencers

A cross-analysis was performed between the age group of the respondents and the types of content consumed on social networks, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Age group x Types of content consumed by influencers

Types of Content	Up to 18 years old	18 to 21 years old	22 to 25 years old	26 to 30 years old
Fashion / Beauty	50,00%	46,15%	43,33%	55,17%
Lifestyle / *Fitness*	33,33%	50,00%	46,67%	68,97%
Cooking / Gastronomy	33,33%	42,31%	43,33%	58,62%
Technology / Games	16,67%	50,00%	33,33%	31,03%
Travel / Tours	50,00%	30,77%	56,67%	58,62%
Education / Finance	33,33%	42,31%	60,00%	55,17%

Source: Survey data, 2025.

It is observed that the category of "Fashion/Beauty" is a constant interest among all groups, especially among participants aged 26 to 30 years. "Lifestyle (*Lifestyle*) / *Fitness*", "Cooking / Gastronomy" and "Education / Finance" also stand out, showing significant growth in the older age groups, signaling a greater search for well-being, healthy habits, gastronomic experiences and interest in personal and financial development as age increases.

4.4.2 Gender vs Most Impacted Product/Service Categories

The analysis in Table 3 shows differences in the impact of digital influencers between men and women on different product categories. The female audience stands out for the strong impact on beauty and makeup products (66.04%) and clothing and accessories (56.60%), while in the male audience the biggest highlight is electronics and technology (47.37%) and service category (42.11%).

The percentage of those who do not feel influenced by any category is relatively low in both (11.32% female and 10.53% male), which indicates that digital influence is present for the vast majority of respondents, although with different focuses of interest.

Table 3

Gender x Categories of products/services most impacted

Categories	Female	Male
Clothing and/or accessories	56,60%	44,74%
Beauty & Makeup Products	66,04%	5,26%
Electronics and technology	28,30%	47,37%
Food and drinks	43,40%	36,84%
Home & Home Products	26,42%	13,16%
Travel and tourism	18,87%	15,79%
Services (e.g. courses, academies)	15,09%	42,11%
I'm not influenced in any specific category	11,32%	10,53%

Source: Survey data, 2025.

These results reinforce the importance of segmented strategies, considering the specific preferences of each consumer profile to maximize the impact of influencer marketing (Kotler; Kartajaya; Setiawan, 2021).

4.4.3 Monthly family income range x Purchase frequency by influence

The analysis of the data in Table 4 reveals that, in all income brackets, most participants declare to make purchases motivated by digital influencers only "rarely" or "occasionally", with regular influencer purchases being infrequent. Among the groups with lower family income (up to R$ 3,036.00), a greater number of people who say they "never" buy on the recommendation of influencers, while frequent buying is practically non-existent. In the higher income brackets (above R$ 9,108.01), the trend persists: most continue to buy "rarely" due to digital influence.

Table 4

Monthly family income x Purchase frequency by influence

Monthly Family Income	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently
Up to R$ 1,518.00	20,00%	40,00%	40,00%	0,00%
From R$ 1,518.01 to R$ 3,036.00	25,00%	50,00%	20,83%	4,17%
From R$ 3,036.01 to R$ 6,072.00	17,39%	60,87%	17,39%	4,35%
From R$ 9,108.01 to R$ 15,180.00	8,33%	58,33%	33,33%	0,00%
Above R$ 15,180.01	6,67%	40,00%	46,67%	6,67%

Source: Survey data, 2025.

Thus, it is observed that both in lower and higher incomes, the influence of digital influencers is more limited to occasional experimentation, without consolidating itself as a regular consumption habit.

4.4.4 Frequency of use of networks × Frequency of purchase influenced

The analysis of the correlation between the frequency of use of social networks and the frequency of purchases motivated by digital influencers observed in Table 5 reveals an important relationship for understanding consumer behavior. The data show that only participants who access the networks 3 times a day or more have a consistent pattern of occasional or frequent purchases due to digital influence. In contrast, among users who use social media 1-2 times a day or 1-3 times a week, the number of those who have never made influencer-motivated purchases is growing significantly.

Table 5

Frequency of use of networks x Frequency of purchase influenced

Frequency of Use	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently
I don't use it	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
1 to 3 times a week	100,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
1 to 2 times a day	33,33%	66,67%	0,00%	0,00%
3 to 5 times a day	5,00%	65,00%	30,00%	0,00%
More than 5 times a day	17,91%	50,75%	26,87%	4,48%

Source: Survey data, 2025.

Thus, it is observed that the habit of consuming by digital influence is more common among the most assiduous users of social networks, while among those who access the platforms less frequently, resistance to purchase motivated by influencers prevails. These results suggest that the impact of digital influencers on conversion into purchases is significantly greater among audiences with high exposure to social media, although frequent consumption is still restricted to a minority portion of this group.

4.4.5 Have already purchased by referral × Most impacted Categories

Analyzing the respondents who have already made purchases by indication of influencers according to Table 6, 61.11% say they are impacted by the indication of digital influencers in the category of "Clothing and/or accessories", 47.22% in "Beauty and makeup products", 45.83% in "Food and beverages" and 41.67% in "Electronics and technology".

Among those who have never bought by referral, the influence of all the categories analyzed drops to an average of 15%, and almost half of these respondents claim not to be influenced by any specific category in their purchase decision process.

Table 6

Have you already purchased by referral × Most impacted Categories

Categories	Yes	No
Clothing and/or accessories	61,11%	15,79%
Beauty & Makeup Products	47,22%	15,79%
Electronics and technology	41,67%	15,79%
Food and drinks	45,83%	21,05%
Home & Home Products	23,61%	10,53%
Travel and tourism	19,44%	10,53%
Services (e.g. courses, academies)	29,17%	15,79%
I'm not influenced in any specific category	1,39%	47,37%

Source: Survey data, 2025.

These results indicate that purchase history is decisive for the perception of influencers' impact, reinforcing that, although influencer marketing plays a relevant role in specific segments, its effectiveness depends directly on the consumer's predisposition to experimentation and their previous experience with purchases motivated by digital recommendations.

4.5 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES

The qualitative analysis of the responses in this study highlights some central points about the relationship between consumers and digital influencers. First, the relevance of practical evaluations and demonstrations carried out by influencers is highlighted, which many participants point out as a determining factor in the purchase decision, reinforcing the idea presented by Paiva and Lima (2023). This finding reinforces the quantitative results and is illustrated by testimonials that highlight how the real demonstration of the product by the influencer helps in the choice and adds value to the consumer experience.

Another recurring aspect in the comments concerns the identification and relevance perceived in the communication of influencers. Several respondents report that they only feel effectively impacted when there is an authentic connection with the influencer or when they recognize sincerity and closeness in their posture, corroborating the point of Bonotto and Castañeda (2025). This feeling of identification increases the credibility of recommendations and favors the propensity to buy, especially when the content deviates from the traditional advertising pattern or exclusively commercial partnerships.

On the other hand, concerns emerge about the excess of advertising present in influencers' profiles, an aspect that contributes to skepticism and disinterest on the part of the public. Many participants mention the saturation of sponsored content and the perception of lack of authenticity when the recommendation is seen only as a commercial strategy, without real involvement of the influencer with the product or service (Bertaglia *et al.*, 2024).

These opinions reveal an increasingly critical and demanding audience, which values transparency, relevance and commitment to the consumer. For brands and influencers who want to promote greater engagement, the data suggest the need to invest in more genuine relationships that are less guided exclusively by commercial logic, aligning communication with the real experience and trust of the public.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The integrated analysis of the data confirms the centrality of social networks and digital influencers in the consumption journey of Generation Z in Juiz de Fora. Most participants follow influencers, have already made purchases for their referrals, and recognize their relevance, especially in categories such as fashion, beauty, and food. These findings reinforce the role of influencer marketing as a prominent strategy in young-adult consumption.

The most cited motivations for the purchase were practical demonstrations, the influencer's credibility and perceived authenticity, as well as financial incentives such as discount coupons. Despite this, the frequency of consumption motivated by influencers was predominantly sporadic. This result suggests that, although the reach is wide, the conversion into recurring purchases still finds limits, due to the critical and selective profile of the public.

The qualitative responses evidenced the importance of authenticity and transparency. Participants highlighted the appreciation of real experiences and the distrust of excessively commercial content. This indicates that the effectiveness of influencer marketing depends less on the amount of advertising and more on the ability to build genuine relationships with the consumer.

From a practical point of view, the study points to the need for more personalized strategies, based on partnerships that reflect shared values between influencers and followers. For local businesses, this means prioritizing collaborations that convey credibility, relevance, and proximity to the public. From an academic point of view, the research contributes by offering empirical evidence on digital consumption in a specific Brazilian context, expanding the debate on the influence of social media on new generations.

As limitations, the small sample size and the geoFigureic area limited to Juiz de Fora stand out, which restricts the generalization of the results. Future research can broaden regional coverage, explore additional variables — such as content formats (stories, lives, short videos) and engagement levels (likes, comments, shares) — and comparatively analyze different age groups.

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