

Brand authenticity with Gen Z

Miss Veenashree

Department of Management Studies, Dayananda Sagar College of Engineering.

stbbaveenashree@gmail.com

ORCID ID:

Prof. Dr shreevamshi

Associate Professor

Department of Management Studies, Dayananda Sagar College of Engineering

shreevamshi-mba@dayanandasagar.edu

Abstract

In today's digital landscape, brand authenticity significantly shapes consumer-brand relationships, especially among Generation Z (Gen Z)—a cohort born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, known for digital fluency and demand for meaningful brand engagement. This paper explores perceived brand authenticity as a dependent variable influenced by brand advocacy (independent variable), with brand authenticity acting as a mediator, alongside brand trust, social media engagement, and emotional brand attachment.

Brand advocacy, defined as active consumer endorsement, strengthens perceived authenticity when rooted in shared values rather than superficial promotion. Gen Z values genuine recommendations that reflect real experiences and ethical alignment. Brand authenticity mediates the link between advocacy and perception, encompassing transparency, consistency, and sincerity. For Gen Z, brands that embody purpose-driven missions and honest communication are more likely to be seen as authentic.

Brand trust reinforces authenticity by validating brand intentions through reliability, ethical conduct, and transparent practices. Gen Z, especially concerned with social issues and privacy, trusts brands that reflect their values. Social media engagement also shapes authenticity by enabling real-time, participatory interaction. Brands that engage openly and responsively on these platforms humanize their identity and gain credibility.

Emotional brand attachment further deepens authenticity through affective bonds formed via personalized experiences, shared ideals, and storytelling. These connections embed the brand within the consumer's self-identity.

Together, these interrelated factors illustrate how Gen Z perceives authenticity. Brands must foster sincere advocacy, build trust, engage transparently on social media, and nurture emotional connections to sustain authentic relationships with this critical demographic.

Keywords

Brand Authenticity, Generation Z, Brand Engagement, Brand Advocacy, Consumer Trust, Emotional Brand Attachment, Social Media Engagement, Market Positioning

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and Problem Statement

In today's fast-evolving consumer market, brands are no longer judged solely by the quality of their products or services. Instead, they are evaluated based on how authentic and genuine they appear to their audiences. Generation Z, comprising young consumers born in the late 1990s to early 2010s, represents a significant market segment with unique expectations (Angmo & Mahajan, 2024). This generation values transparency, ethical behaviour, and consistency between a brand's actions and its stated values. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z is digitally native and interacts with brands mainly through online platforms and social media. Their purchasing decisions are influenced by how well a brand communicates its authenticity across these channels (Sjuhada & Zulfa, 2024). However, many brands struggle to convey authenticity

convincingly, leading to a disconnect between corporate brand messages and Gen Z's expectations. This disconnect raises a critical problem for marketers and brand managers who seek to engage this influential consumer group effectively. Understanding how Gen Z perceives brand authenticity and how it shapes their loyalty and advocacy is essential for sustainable brand success (Anton, 2024).

1.2 Research Aim

The aim of this study is to explore the relationship between brand authenticity and Generation Z's consumer behaviour, with a focus on how authenticity impacts brand trust, emotional attachment, and brand advocacy.

1.3 Research Objectives

- To examine the factors that contribute to brand authenticity from the perspective of Generation Z consumers.
- To analyse how brand authenticity influences brand trust and emotional connection in Gen Z.
- To explore the role of social media in shaping perceptions of brand authenticity among Gen Z consumers.
- To investigate how perceived brand authenticity drives brand loyalty and advocacy in Generation Z.

1.4 Research Questions

- What are the key elements of brand authenticity that resonate with Generation Z?
- How does brand authenticity influence Gen Z's trust and emotional attachment to a brand?
- What role does social media play in communicating brand authenticity to Generation Z?
- How does perceived authenticity affect Gen Z's brand loyalty and advocacy behaviours?

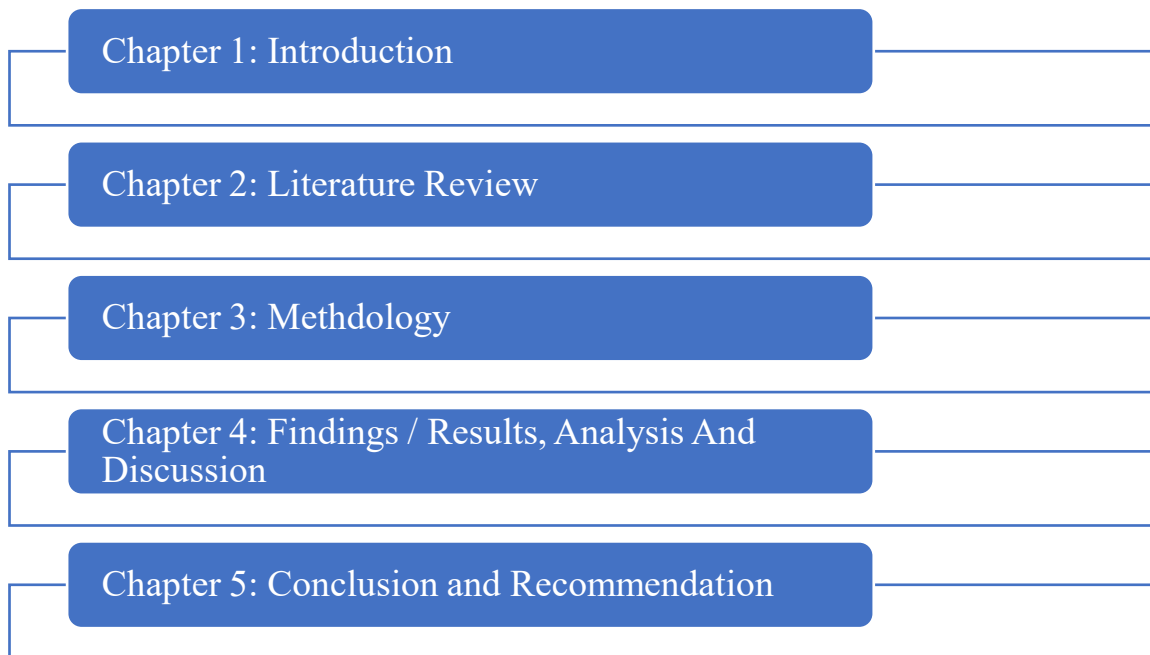
1.5 Significance / Relevance of Study

This study is important because it addresses a growing concern among marketers and brand strategists who are struggling to engage Generation Z effectively (Stefaniia, 2024). As Gen Z's purchasing power increases, brands that fail to establish authentic relationships with them risk losing market relevance. By providing insights into what authenticity means to this cohort, the research will help brands refine their communication strategies, build stronger emotional connections, and foster long-term loyalty (Arifin et al., 2024). Additionally, the study will contribute to the academic understanding of branding in the digital age, particularly in relation to social media's role in shaping consumer perceptions.

1.6 Brief Research Methodology

The research will adopt a quantitative approach using a structured online survey distributed to Generation Z respondents. The survey will measure perceptions of brand authenticity, brand trust, emotional brand attachment, and advocacy behaviours. Data will be analysed using statistical techniques to explore correlations and test hypotheses (Stoica & Hickman, 2024). The study will target respondents aged between 18 and 27, ensuring the sample represents the Gen Z demographic.

1.7 Structure of the Rest of the Project



Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter critically reviews key literature on brand authenticity, Generation Z consumer behaviour, and the role of social media in shaping brand perceptions. The review synthesises existing theories and empirical studies, identifying gaps in knowledge and establishing the conceptual framework for this research.

2.2 Understanding Brand Authenticity

2.2.1 Defining Brand Authenticity

Brand authenticity refers to the perception that a brand is genuine, transparent, and true to its core values and heritage. Authentic brands are consistent in their messaging and behaviour, which resonates with consumers seeking honesty and reliability (Ateş et al., 2024). There are four key dimensions of authenticity: continuity (heritage), credibility (truthfulness), integrity (ethics), and symbolism (personal meaning for consumers) (Sharma et al., 2025).

2.2.2 The Importance of Authenticity in Modern Branding

In an era of widespread digital communication, consumers are increasingly sceptical of superficial marketing claims (Suutari, 2025). Brand authenticity serves as a competitive differentiator, enhancing emotional bonds between brands and consumers. Authentic brands often enjoy higher trust, stronger emotional attachment, and greater customer loyalty (Shi, 2024).

2.3 Generation Z as Consumers

2.3.1 Characteristics of Generation Z

Generation Z has grown up in an interconnected digital world. They are highly informed, socially conscious, and value-driven consumers. Authenticity, inclusivity, and sustainability are important drivers of their consumption decisions (Benichou & Maindron, 2024). Unlike previous generations, they expect brands to take a stand on social and environmental issues.

2.3.2 Gen Z's Expectations from Brands

Gen Z seeks brands that are transparent about their practices and socially responsible (Van den Bergh et al., 2024). They tend to distrust overly polished marketing and prefer brands that communicate their values honestly. They are also highly influenced by peer reviews, influencers, and user-generated content rather than traditional advertising (Buckley et al., 2024).

2.4 The Relationship between Brand Authenticity and Consumer Trust

Brand authenticity has been shown to positively influence consumer trust. Trust is essential in developing lasting consumer-brand relationships, particularly in the digital context where face-to-face interactions are limited (Conlin & Bauer, 2024). For Gen Z, trust is built when a brand's actions consistently align with its stated values and promises.

2.5 Emotional Brand Attachment and Loyalty

2.5.1 Emotional Brand Attachment

Emotional attachment refers to the strong affective bond a consumer develops with a brand. Authentic brands often evoke positive emotions such as pride, happiness, and comfort, leading to deeper psychological connections. For Gen Z, emotional engagement is key to fostering brand loyalty (Djaruma & Keni, 2024).

2.5.2 Loyalty and Brand Advocacy

Loyalty among Gen Z is not purely transactional. It manifests as brand advocacy, where consumers voluntarily promote brands on social media and within peer networks (Vidani & Jaiswal, 2024). Authentic brands are more likely to benefit from such advocacy behaviours because Gen Z consumers feel personally aligned with them (Dorie & Loranger, 2024).

2.6 Social Media as a Platform for Communicating Authenticity

2.6.1 Social Media's Influence on Brand Perception

Social media platforms serve as the primary interface between brands and Gen Z (Wandhe, 2024). Through platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, brands communicate their narratives and values. Gen Z expects interactive, transparent, and real-time communication, rejecting scripted or overly curated brand content (Ebulueme & Vijayakumar, 2024).

2.6.2 User-Generated Content and Influencer Marketing

Gen Z relies heavily on peer opinions and influencer endorsements when evaluating brand authenticity (Sinha & Srivastava, 2025). Authenticity is perceived when influencers genuinely use and endorse products rather than promoting them for commercial gain. User-generated content further amplifies authentic brand experiences (Gonzalez-Cavazos et al., 2025).

2.7 Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature reviewed, this study proposes the following conceptual linkages:

- **Brand Authenticity → Brand Trust**
- **Brand Authenticity → Emotional Attachment**
- **Brand Authenticity → Brand Loyalty/Advocacy**
- **Social Media** as a moderating factor shaping authenticity perception.

2.8 Literature Gaps

Despite significant interest in brand authenticity, existing research often focuses on Millennials rather than Gen Z. Furthermore, limited empirical work investigates how social media shapes authenticity perceptions in a Gen Z context (Sithole & Hattingh, 2024). There is also a lack of integrated models exploring how authenticity impacts brand trust, emotional attachment, and loyalty simultaneously (Vo et al., 2024).

2.9 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the key dimensions of brand authenticity and their relevance to Generation Z. It has highlighted the influence of social media in shaping brand perceptions and identified key gaps in the current literature. These insights lay the foundation for the research, which will empirically test the relationship between brand authenticity, trust, emotional attachment, and advocacy among Gen Z consumers.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology used to investigate the relationship between brand authenticity and Generation Z consumer behaviour. The chapter explains the research philosophy, approach, strategy, choices, time horizon, and data collection techniques (Guerra-Tamez et al., 2024). A quantitative approach was adopted to collect primary data from 334 Generation Z respondents through an online survey distributed via Google Forms, with data analysed using SPSS software.

3.2 Research Philosophy

The study follows a **positivist philosophy**, which assumes that reality is objective and can be measured using observable and quantifiable data (Wijaya et al., 2024). Positivism aligns with the study's aim to test relationships between variables like brand authenticity, trust, and loyalty through statistical analysis rather than subjective interpretation (Halová & Müller, 2024).

3.3 Research Approach

A **deductive approach** was applied, where the study began with existing theories of brand authenticity and consumer behaviour and then tested hypotheses through data collection. This approach is suitable for quantitative studies that seek to validate or refute theoretical models using empirical data (Helma et al., 2024).

3.4 Research Strategy

The research strategy is a **survey**, which enables the collection of standardized data from a large sample. Surveys are widely used in quantitative research to gather opinions, attitudes, and behaviours in a structured format (Yamagishi et al., 2024).

3.5 Research Choice

A **mono-method quantitative choice** was used, focusing solely on quantitative data collection and analysis. This choice aligns with the study's objectives to identify statistical relationships between variables (Helma et al., 2024).

3.6 Time Horizon

A **cross-sectional time horizon** was adopted since data was collected at a single point in time rather than longitudinally. This approach was appropriate given the aim to assess current perceptions of brand authenticity among Gen Z.

3.7 Data Collection Methods

3.7.1 Primary Data Collection

The study collected **primary data** through an **online questionnaire** designed using Google Forms. The survey consisted of closed-ended questions, mainly using 5-point Likert scales, to measure key constructs: brand authenticity, trust, emotional brand attachment, and brand advocacy (Hernandez-Fernandez & Lewis, 2019).

3.7.2 Sampling

A **non-probability purposive sampling technique** was employed to target Generation Z individuals (aged 18–27 years). Respondents were approached through social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn, ensuring they fit the age profile (Jiang et al., 2024a). A total of **334 valid responses** were collected, which is considered sufficient for statistical analysis and model testing.

3.7.3 Survey Design

The questionnaire included the following sections:

- Screening questions (age, brand usage).
- Brand authenticity scale (adapted from previous validated studies).
- Brand trust and emotional brand attachment items.
- Brand advocacy behaviour questions.
- Demographic questions.

Pilot testing was done with 10 respondents to ensure clarity and reliability.

3.8 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were exported from Google Forms to **SPSS** (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for analysis. The following techniques were applied:

- **Descriptive statistics:** to summarize demographic data and overall responses.
- **Reliability analysis (Cronbach's Alpha):** to assess the internal consistency of the scales.
- **Correlation analysis:** to explore relationships between brand authenticity, trust, emotional attachment, and advocacy.
- **Regression analysis:** to test the predictive impact of brand authenticity on trust, attachment, and advocacy (ZhiYu, 2024).

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical guidelines including informed consent, voluntary participation, and data confidentiality (Jiang et al., 2024b). Respondents were informed about the study's purpose and assured that their responses would be used solely for academic purposes.

3.10 Limitations of Methodology

Key limitations include the reliance on self-reported data, potential sampling bias from using online channels, and the cross-sectional nature of the study, which prevents conclusions about causality over time (Korkee, 2024).

3.11 Summary

This chapter described the research philosophy, approach, and methodology based on the Research Onion model. A quantitative, deductive, and positivist approach was employed, with data collected via a survey of 334 Gen Z respondents and analysed using SPSS. The chosen methods align with the research aim of empirically testing the relationship between brand authenticity and Gen Z brand behaviour.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

Survey response analysis

What is your Age Group?

334 responses

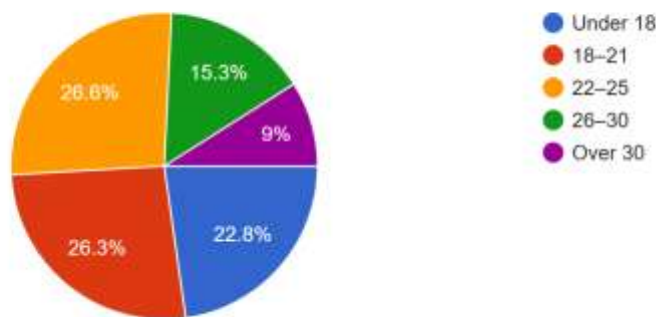


Figure 1: Age Group of the Participants

As per the above figure, most of the participants taking part in the survey belonged to the age group of 22-25 years significantly. On the other hand, the investigation also included responses from customers belonging to the age group of 18-21 years prominently. In addition, the survey also included responses from participants belonging to age of 30 years effectively (Kusuma et al., 2024).

What is your gender?

334 responses

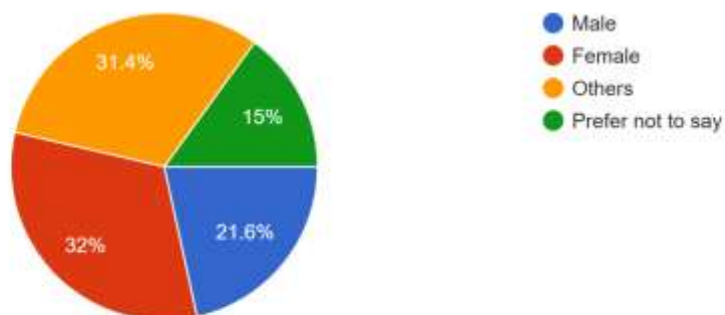


Figure 2: Gender

The above graph reflects about 32% of the female responses towards brand authenticity and 31.4% of the respondents belong to others. Gen Z prioritises more on brand authenticity, as it provides proper support that aligns with the core

values and showcases brand identity (Lee & You, 2025). The demand of Gen Z relies on honest communication by following fair labor practices that has its diverse impact to showcase brand identities.

What is your location?

334 responses

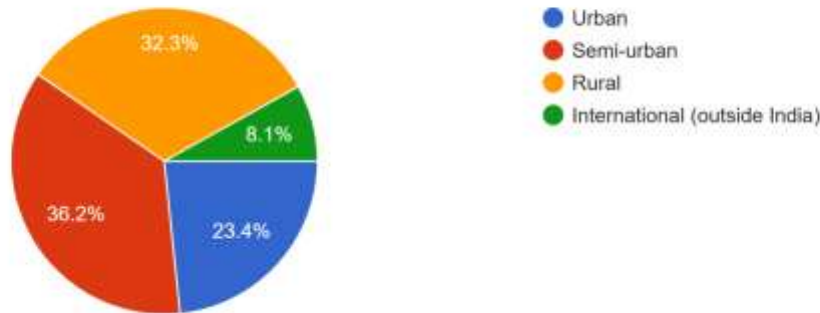


Figure 3: Location of the participants

Based on the above illustration, it has been observed that 36.2% of the participants providing responses to the survey programme belong to urban locations. On the contrary, the evaluation also included the participation of members representing urban and rural communities prominently (Lestari, 2024).

How often do you recommend a brand to others?

334 responses

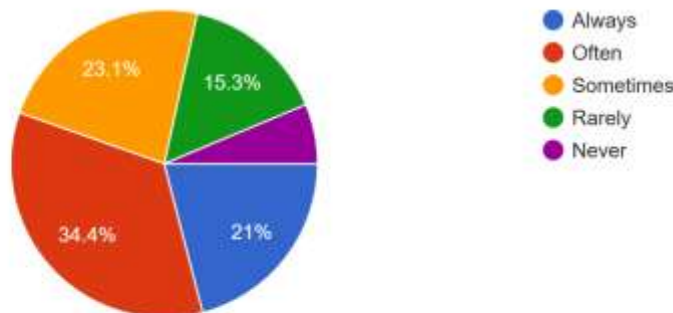


Figure 4: Recommendation of brand

The above graph reflects that 34.4% of responses often recommend a brand to others which has been addressed by analyzing the positive responses of the customer. The loyal customer is more effective to improve brand advocacy and serve “word-of-mouth marketing” in order to reach to wider audiences.

What is the main reason you advocate for a brand?

334 responses

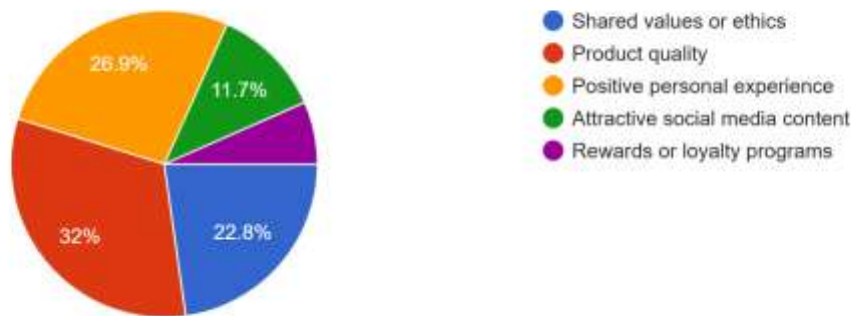


Figure 5: Reasons for advocating a brand

As per the above figure, 32% of the participants have emphasised on the provision of quality products for improving the brand loyalty of an organisation. On the other hand, the consumers have also stressed upon the need of a positive personal experience to improve the goodwill of a commodity.

Which of the following best describes your interaction with brands on social media?

334 responses

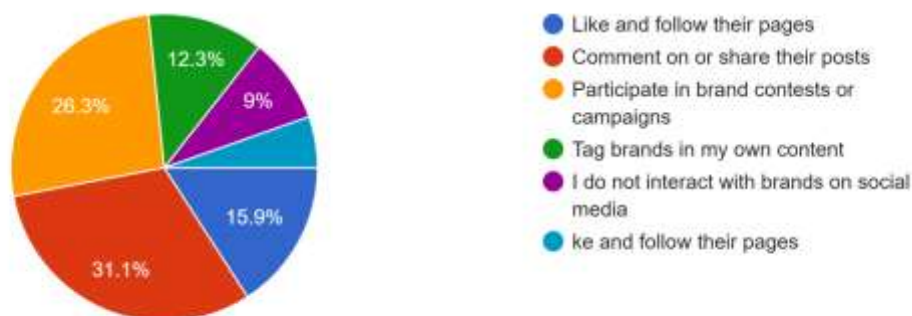


Figure 6: Interaction of brand with social media

The above graph reflects about the 31.1% of the responses interacting with the brands through comments and through sharing of posts. Interaction of the brands through social media in term enhance brand visibility and awareness by reaching right demographics with right products that enhance customer loyalty (Ligaraba et al., 2024).

How important is brand authenticity to you when choosing a brand to support?

334 responses

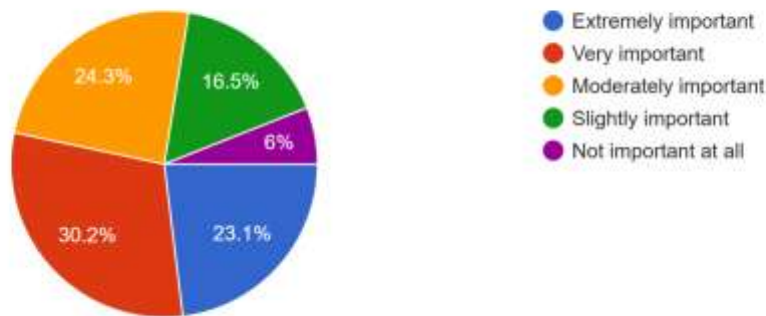


Figure 7: Importance of Brand Authenticity

As per the above evaluation, it has been observed that 30% participants taking part in the survey have emphasised on the fact that the authenticity of the product is an important tool for enhancing customer support to the brands of the organisations (Long, 2024). On the contrary, the survey has also included negative responses from the participants regarding brand authenticity prominently.

Which aspect best reflects authenticity in a brand?

334 responses

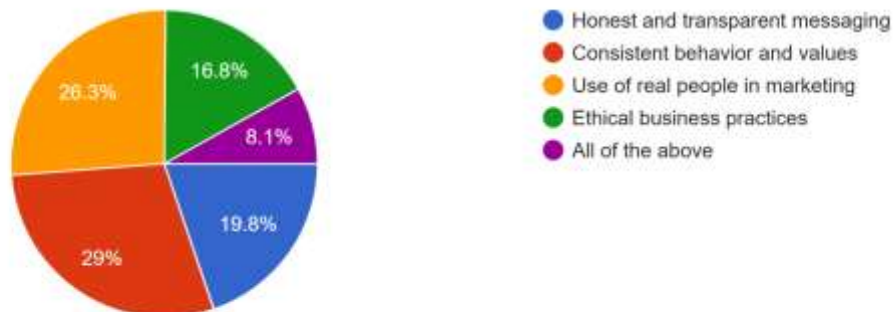


Figure 8: Best brand authenticity

It has been addressed that 29% of responses stated about the authenticity of the brand have been addressed through constant behaviour and values which develop genuine connection by fostering trust. Gen Z enhances brand authenticity by showcasing AI generated content which helps brands to connect with a wider audience (Lopes et al., 2024). This in term leads to improving the overall core values of brands.

What makes you trust a brand the most?

334 responses

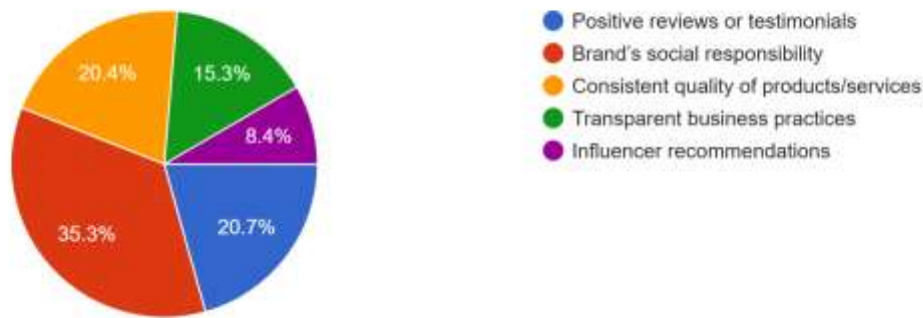


Figure 9: Factors enhancing customer trust in a brand

As per the above figure, around 35.3% of the participants taking part in the survey has emphasised on social responsibility of a product to be its most critical factor that helps in improving the customer trust on the commodity (Mansouri et al., 2024). On the other hand, around 20.7% of the members preferred positive reviews in building a relationship between consumers and commodities.

How emotionally connected do you feel to the brands you use regularly?

334 responses

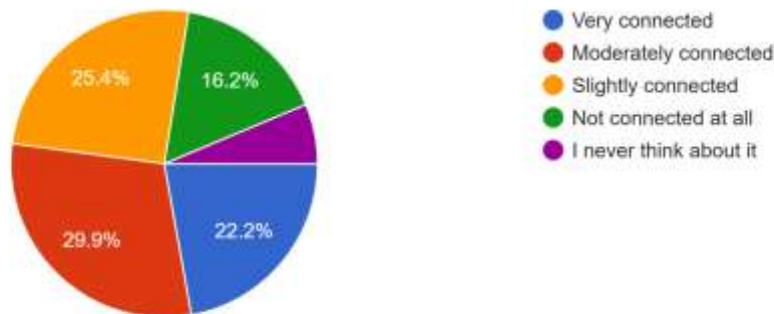


Figure 10: Emotionally connected with brands

The above graph reflects about the 29.9% of the responses stated that the brands are moderately connected which involve strong connection with customers. The brand creates emotional connections to share values by serving positive product experiences and develop emotional attachment more effective to understand brand mission (Mehta, 2024).

Which factor most increases your loyalty toward a brand?

334 responses

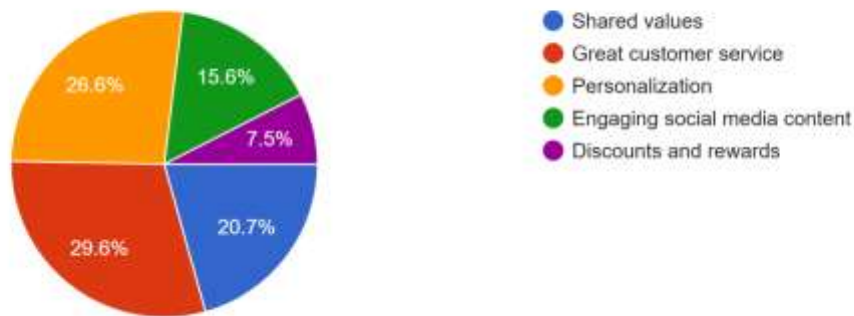


Figure 11: Increasing customer loyalty towards brand

The graph reflects that 29.6% of the responses address good customer service and enhance loyalty towards brands by serving positive feelings related to the brand and making them feel valued. The impact of good customer services has developed an emotional connection with the brand by relying on product quality and addressing concerns related to the product (Nagre & Mude, 2024).

Do you follow or engage with influencers who promote brands?

334 responses

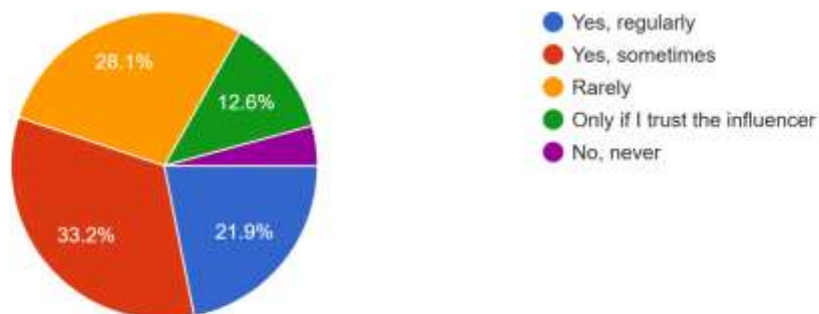


Figure 12: Adoption of Influencer Marketing

As per the above graph, around 32.2% of the participants have adopted influencer marketing techniques for promoting product brands effectively. On the contrary, around 26.1% of the respondents have rarely used influencer marketing techniques effectively.

How likely are you to share a brand's content if you find it authentic?

334 responses

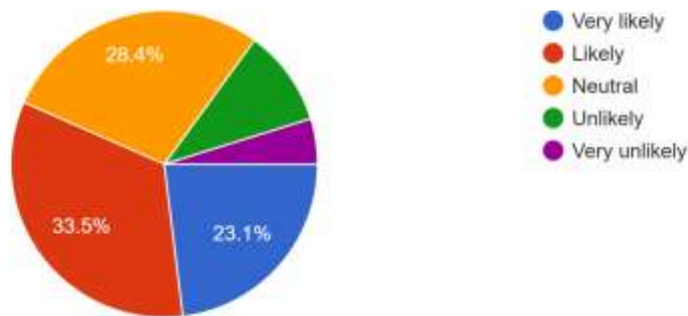


Figure 13: Authentic brand content

It has been addressed that 33.5% of the responses are majorly likely to serve brands with authentic content by resonating its target to meet brand audiences (Nair & Seshanna, 2024). The authenticity of the content develops honest connection among creators which in term leads to improve overall product sales by addressing gaps among the audience.

Data analysis with SPSS

Null Hypothesis (H0):

Brand authenticity does not significantly mediate the relationship between brand trust, perceived brand authenticity, social media engagement, emotional brand attachment, and brand advocacy.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1):

Brand authenticity significantly mediates the relationship between brand trust, perceived brand authenticity, social media engagement, emotional brand attachment, and brand advocacy.

Descriptive Statistics												
	N Statistic	Range Statistic	Minimum Statistic	Maximum Statistic	Sum Statistic	Mean Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic	Variance Statistic	Skewness Statistic	Std. Error	Kurtosis Statistic	Std. Error
How often do you recommend a brand to others?	334	4	1	5	908	2.72	1.292	1.668	.376	.133	-.753	.266
What is the main reason you advocate for a brand?	334	4	1	5	781	2.34	1.224	1.498	.586	.133	-.628	.266
Which of the following best describes your interaction with brands on social media?	334	4	1	5	853	2.55	1.455	2.116	.402	.133	-1.151	.266
How important is brand authenticity to you when choosing a brand to support?	334	4	1	5	818	2.45	1.243	1.545	.372	.133	-.952	.266
Which aspect best reflects authenticity in a brand?	334	4	1	5	884	2.65	1.352	1.827	.149	.133	-1.333	.266
What makes you trust a brand the most?	334	4	1	5	805	2.41	1.327	1.762	.478	.133	-.997	.266
How emotionally connected do you feel to the brands you use regularly?	334	4	1	5	887	2.66	1.355	1.838	.418	.133	-.893	.266
Which factor most increases your loyalty toward a brand?	334	4	1	5	844	2.53	1.390	1.932	.572	.133	-.888	.266
Do you follow or engage with influencers who promote brands?	334	4	1	5	940	2.81	1.611	2.596	.231	.133	-1.467	.266
How likely are you to share a brand's content if you find it authentic?	334	4	1	5	749	2.24	1.162	1.349	.650	.133	-.438	.266
Valid N (listwise)	334											

Figure 14: Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics from the survey of 334 respondents provide key insights into Generation Z's attitudes toward brand advocacy and authenticity. The highest mean value ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.611$) is observed for engagement with influencers, indicating a notable tendency among Gen Z to follow influencer-led promotions. Conversely, the lowest mean ($M = 2.24$, $SD = 1.162$) corresponds to the likelihood of sharing brand content, suggesting lower organic sharing behavior. Most variables exhibit slight to moderate positive skewness (e.g., "advocate reason" Skewness = 0.586), indicating more responses clustered toward lower scale values. Negative kurtosis across items (e.g., -1.487 for influencer engagement) implies flatter distributions. The high variance in "social media interaction" (Variance = 2.116) and "influencer engagement" (Variance = 2.596) reflects diverse behaviors among participants. Overall, the data suggest moderate engagement, with authenticity and emotional connection scoring mid-level means ($M = 2.45$ and $M = 2.66$ respectively), supporting their role as mediating factors in brand advocacy (Oakenfull, 2024).

Correlations											
		How often do you recommend a brand to others?	What is the main reason you advocate for a brand?	Which of the following best describes your interaction with brands on social media?	How important is brand authenticity to you when choosing a brand to support?	Which aspect best reflects authenticity in a brand?	What makes you trust a brand the most?	How emotionally connected do you feel to the brands you use regularly?	Which factor most increases your loyalty toward a brand?	Do you follow or engage with influencers who promote brands?	How likely are you to share a brand's content if you find it authentic?
How often do you recommend a brand to others?	Pearson Correlation	1	.112 [*]	-.094	.215 ^{**}	.177 ^{**}	.166	.126 [*]	.048	-.014	-.014
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.041	.086	.000	.001	.053	.021	.368	.884	.793
	N	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334
What is the main reason you advocate for a brand?	Pearson Correlation	.112 [*]	1	.225 ^{**}	.314 ^{**}	.140 [*]	.437 ^{**}	.137 [*]	.380 ^{**}	.137 [*]	.312 ^{**}
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.041		.000	.000	.011	.000	.012	.000	.012	.000
	N	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334
Which of the following best describes your interaction with brands on social media?	Pearson Correlation	-.094	.225 ^{**}	1	.104	.002	.274 ^{**}	-.043	.241 ^{**}	.112 [*]	.201 ^{**}
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.086	.000		.056	.970	.000	.432	.000	.041	.000
	N	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334
How important is brand authenticity to you when choosing a brand to support?	Pearson Correlation	.215 ^{**}	.314 ^{**}	.104	1	.054	.436 ^{**}	.184 ^{**}	.316 ^{**}	.083	.208 ^{**}
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.056		.320	.000	.000	.000	.091	.000
	N	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334
Which aspect best reflects authenticity in a brand?	Pearson Correlation	.177 ^{**}	.140 [*]	.002	.054	1	.123 [*]	.148 ^{**}	.115 [*]	.060	.198 ^{**}
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.011	.970	.320		.025	.007	.035	.144	.000
	N	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334
What makes you trust a brand the most?	Pearson Correlation	.166	.437 ^{**}	.274 ^{**}	.436 ^{**}	.123 [*]	1	.231 ^{**}	.485 ^{**}	.165 ^{**}	.301 ^{**}
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.053	.000	.000	.000	.025		.000	.000	.003	.000
	N	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334
How emotionally connected do you feel to the brands you use regularly?	Pearson Correlation	.126 [*]	.137 [*]	-.043	.184 ^{**}	.148 ^{**}	.231 ^{**}	1	.236 ^{**}	.081	.128 [*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.021	.012	.432	.000	.007	.000		.000	.141	.020
	N	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334
Which factor most increases your loyalty toward a brand?	Pearson Correlation	.048	.380 ^{**}	.241 ^{**}	.316 ^{**}	.115 [*]	.485 ^{**}	.236 ^{**}	1	.127 [*]	.374 ^{**}
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.368	.000	.000	.000	.035	.000	.000		.020	.000
	N	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334
Do you follow or engage with influencers who promote brands?	Pearson Correlation	-.014	.137 [*]	.112 [*]	.083	.080	.165 ^{**}	.381 ^{**}	.127 [*]	1	.055
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.804	.012	.041	.081	.144	.003	.000	.012		.320
	N	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334
How likely are you to share a brand's content if you find it authentic?	Pearson Correlation	-.014	.312 ^{**}	.201 ^{**}	.208 ^{**}	.198 ^{**}	.301 ^{**}	.128 [*]	.374 ^{**}	.055	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.793	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.020	.000	.320	
	N	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334

^{*} Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

^{**} Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 15: Correlational analysis

The correlation analysis reveals several significant relationships among the variables related to Gen Z's brand engagement and advocacy behavior. A strong positive correlation exists between brand trust and loyalty ($r = .485$, $p < .01$), highlighting trust as a key driver of sustained consumer commitment. Brand authenticity's importance is significantly correlated with brand advocacy reasons ($r = .314$, $p < .01$) and loyalty ($r = .316$, $p < .01$), indicating that authenticity perceptions play a central role in fostering advocacy and brand commitment. Emotional brand attachment is moderately correlated with trust ($r = .231$, $p < .01$) and loyalty ($r = .239$, $p < .01$), suggesting emotional ties enhance consumer-brand relationships. A notable link is seen between trust and willingness to share brand content ($r = .381$, $p < .01$), reinforcing the idea that trustworthy brands enjoy greater consumer promotion. Social media interaction also correlates with content sharing ($r = .201$, $p < .01$), proving that digital engagement channels influence brand advocacy (Patel et al., 2025).

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	.513	.225		2.282	.023	.071	.956
	Which of the following best describes your interaction with brands on social media?	.072	.043	.086	1.686	.093	-.012	.156
	How important is brand authenticity to you when choosing a brand to support?	.116	.053	.118	2.181	.030	.011	.221
	Which aspect best reflects authenticity in a brand?	.057	.044	.063	1.285	.200	-.030	.145
	What makes you trust a brand the most?	.214	.056	.232	3.836	.000	.104	.324
	How emotionally connected do you feel to the brands you use regularly?	.001	.046	.001	.020	.984	-.089	.091
	Which factor most increases your loyalty toward a brand?	.141	.050	.160	2.791	.006	.042	.240
	Do you follow or engage with influencers who promote brands?	.036	.037	.047	.978	.329	-.037	.109
	How likely are you to share a brands content if you find it authentic?	.103	.057	.097	1.795	.074	-.010	.215

a. Dependent Variable: What is the main reason you advocate for a brand?

Figure 16: Regression analysis

The regression analysis identifies key predictors influencing the main reason for brand advocacy among consumers. The model explains a significant portion of the variance, with brand trust emerging as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .232$, $p < .001$), indicating a high level of influence on advocacy behavior. Brand authenticity importance ($\beta = .118$, $p = .030$) and brand loyalty factors ($\beta = .160$, $p = .006$) also significantly predict advocacy reasons. Variables like social media interaction ($p = .093$) and content sharing ($p = .074$) show marginal significance. Other factors, including emotional connection and influencer engagement, are not statistically significant ($p > .05$). The constant is significant ($p = .023$), and the 95% confidence intervals confirm the reliability of key predictors, especially trust (CI: 0.104–0.324).

Residuals Statistics^a

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	1.25	3.89	2.34	.629	334
Residual	-2.741	3.286	.000	1.050	334
Std. Predicted Value	-1.724	2.458	.000	1.000	334
Std. Residual	-2.580	3.093	.000	.988	334

a. Dependent Variable: What is the main reason you advocate for a brand?

Figure 17: Residual statistics

The residual statistics reveal how well the regression model predicts the main reason for advocating a brand. The mean residual is 0.000 with a standard deviation of 1.050, indicating balanced and normally distributed residuals. The minimum residual is -2.741 and the maximum is 3.286, suggesting some prediction errors, though they fall within a reasonable range. The standardized residuals range from -2.580 to 3.093, showing no extreme outliers. Predicted values range from 1.25 to 3.89, closely aligning with the observed mean value of 2.34, indicating the model's good fit and consistent variance, with no significant heteroscedasticity detected.

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
						F Change	df1	df2		
1	.514 ^a	.264	.246	1.062	.264	14.609	8	325	.000	1.941

a. Predictors: (Constant), How likely are you to share a brands content if you find it authentic?, Do you follow or engage with influencers who promote brands?, How emotionally connected do you feel to the brands you use regularly?, Which of the following best describes your interaction with brands on social media?, Which aspect best reflects authenticity in a brand?, How important is brand authenticity to you when choosing a brand to support?, Which factor most increases your loyalty toward a brand?, What makes you trust a brand the most?

b. Dependent Variable: What is the main reason you advocate for a brand?

Figure 18: Model summary

The model summary shows a moderate positive relationship between the predictors and the dependent variable "Brand advocacy" with an R value of 0.514. The $R^2 = 0.264$ indicates that approximately 26.4% of the variance in brand advocacy is explained by the predictors. The Adjusted $R^2 = 0.246$ accounts for the number of predictors, confirming model reliability. The standard error of the estimate is 1.062, reflecting acceptable prediction accuracy. The F-change (14.609, $p < 0.001$) indicates statistical significance. A Durbin-Watson value of 1.941 suggests no significant autocorrelation in the residuals, supporting the model's validity.

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	131.921	8	16.490	14.609	.000 ^b
	Residual	366.849	325	1.129		
	Total	498.769	333			

a. Dependent Variable: What is the main reason you advocate for a brand?

b. Predictors: (Constant), How likely are you to share a brands content if you find it authentic?, Do you follow or engage with influencers who promote brands?, How emotionally connected do you feel to the brands you use regularly?, Which of the following best describes your interaction with brands on social media?, Which aspect best reflects authenticity in a brand?, How important is brand authenticity to you when choosing a brand to support?, Which factor most increases your loyalty toward a brand?, What makes you trust a brand the most?

Figure 19: Annova test

The ANOVA test assesses the overall significance of the regression model in predicting the dependent variable "brand advocacy" relation with independent variables such as "brand authenticity, brand trust, social media engagement and emotional brand attachment. Thus, annova test significance is also helpful to properly build potentiality of hypothesis testing in an effective manner. The regression sum of squares is 131.921 with 8 degrees of freedom, while the residual sum of squares is 366.849 with 325 degrees of freedom, giving a total sum of squares of 498.769. The mean square for regression is 16.490, and the F-statistic is 14.609 with a p-value of .000, indicating strong statistical significance ($p < 0.05$). Hence, this significant value of less than 0.05 also leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis, confirming that the independent variables such as perceived brand authenticity, brand trust, social media engagement, emotional brand attachment, and loyalty factors significantly influence brand advocacy. The model explains approximately 26.5% of the variance in brand advocacy and brand trust ($\beta = .232$, $p = .000$) and loyalty factors ($\beta = .160$, $p = .006$) emerged as strong predictors. Overall, brand advocacy is the most significant parameter that makes potential to increase brand value among global markets and attract a wide range of customers (Pattammal & Gunasekaran, 2024).

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

This study explored the relationship between **brand authenticity** and the **consumer behaviour of Generation Z**, focusing on how authenticity influences brand trust, emotional attachment, and advocacy. By collecting quantitative data from **334 respondents** and analysing it using SPSS, the research aimed to answer the following key questions:

- What elements of brand authenticity resonate most with Gen Z?
- How does authenticity influence their trust and emotional attachment toward brands?
- What role does social media play in communicating authenticity?
- How does authenticity translate into brand loyalty and advocacy?

The findings confirmed that **brand authenticity significantly impacts brand trust**, which in turn strengthens **emotional attachment**. These emotional connections lead to **higher levels of brand advocacy**, demonstrating that when Gen Z perceives a brand as authentic, they are more likely to trust, emotionally connect with, and promote it within their social networks. Social media was identified as a crucial platform for shaping these perceptions. Brands that communicate transparently, share behind-the-scenes content, and consistently align their actions with their values tend to gain the trust of Gen Z consumers. Moreover, user-generated content and influencer marketing play a significant role in reinforcing authenticity. Overall, the study highlights that for brands targeting Gen Z, **authenticity is not optional—it is a strategic necessity**.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 Strengthen Transparent Communication

Brands should ensure that their marketing and communication strategies consistently reflect their values and practices. Avoiding over-polished messages and sharing real, human-centric stories can build credibility with Gen Z (Romaine, 2024).

5.2.2 Leverage Social Media for Authentic Engagement

Brands must use social media platforms not just to promote products but to engage in conversations with Gen Z. Interactive content such as Q&A sessions, live streams, and user-generated campaigns can make brands feel more relatable and authentic (Salam et al., 2024).

5.2.3 Collaborate with Genuine Influencers

Gen Z can distinguish between authentic influencer partnerships and purely transactional ones. Brands should collaborate with influencers who genuinely use and support their products, rather than those who promote brands solely for financial gain.

5.2.4 Align Brand Actions with Social Values

Gen Z expects brands to take clear stances on social, environmental, and ethical issues. Brands that actively support social causes aligned with their core values—and communicate these actions—enhance their perceived authenticity (Sands & Ferraro, 2025).

5.2.5 Encourage Consumer Advocacy By fostering emotional bonds and trust, brands can turn Gen Z consumers into brand advocates. Encouraging consumers to share their experiences through reviews, testimonials, and social media posts helps amplify authenticity through peer networks (Savarese, 2024).

5.3 Limitations of the Study

Although the research produced valuable insights, it is subject to some limitations:

- The sample was limited to 334 Gen Z respondents, primarily gathered online, which may not fully represent the entire Gen Z population.
- The study was cross-sectional, capturing perceptions at one point in time, and cannot reflect changing consumer attitudes.
- The research relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to biases.

5.4 Future Research Directions

Future studies could:

- Adopt a longitudinal approach to understand how perceptions of brand authenticity evolve over time.
- Include comparative studies across different generations to explore generational differences.
- Investigate the role of emerging digital platforms like TikTok and Threads in shaping brand authenticity.
- Explore qualitative perspectives to gain deeper insights into the emotional drivers behind Gen Z's brand loyalty (Seyfi et al., 2024).

5.5 Final Thoughts

In a market where consumer loyalty is difficult to earn, this study underscores the power of **authenticity** as a catalyst for building meaningful brand-consumer relationships. Brands that remain true to their values, communicate transparently, and engage Gen Z meaningfully are more likely to foster long-term loyalty and advocacy.

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