

Impact of Short-Form Video Content (Instagram Reels & Youtube Shorts) on Purchase Intention of Fmcg Products Among Gen Z Consumers

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ABSTRACT

Short-form video platforms such as Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts have rapidly become central to how Generation Z discovers and evaluates brands, especially in frequently purchased categories like fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG). Existing empirical work from India and other countries consistently shows that short video marketing can lift brand awareness, engagement and purchase intention when the content is entertaining, relevant and perceived as genuine.

This paper uses a secondary research approach to examine how specific attributes of short-form video content influence Gen Z consumers' intention to buy FMCG products. Drawing on studies published mainly between 2019 and 2026, it focuses on entertainment value, informativeness, ease of use, influencer credibility, personalisation and platform characteristics as key stimuli. The discussion is organised around the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) and AIDA models and considers trust, attitude, emotional involvement and perceived value congruence as psychological mediators between short-form video exposure and purchase intention.

The synthesis indicates that short-form videos generally have a positive and significant impact on Gen Z's purchase intention for FMCG products, particularly when brands collaborate with relatable influencers, design visually strong story-driven content, and reduce friction between viewing and purchase. At the same time, issues such as ad fatigue, perceived inauthenticity and impulsive buying behaviour can weaken or complicate this relationship. The paper closes with managerial implications for FMCG marketers and suggests directions for future primary research on Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts in the Indian context.

KEY WORDS

Short-form video; Instagram Reels; YouTube Shorts; Gen Z; FMCG; purchase intention; social media advertising; India

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years, short-form video has moved from the margins of social media to the centre of everyday digital life for Gen Z users. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts package information, entertainment and self-expression into clips that last only a few seconds or minutes, matching the mobile, on-the-go lifestyles and limited attention spans associated with this cohort.

For marketers, this shift is particularly important in the FMCG industry, which includes food, beverages, personal care and household products purchased frequently and often with low involvement. Historically, FMCG brands relied on television and print advertising to build mass awareness, but fragmented media consumption and the rise of ad-blocking have made these channels less dominant. Short-form video offers an alternative route to consumers by weaving brand messages into entertaining, personalised and highly shareable content that appears in social feeds rather than in traditional ad breaks.

In the Indian market, several studies report that a large proportion of Gen Z consumers come across new brands first on social media, with Instagram and YouTube among the most influential platforms. Instagram Reels is often associated with lifestyle, fashion and trend-based content, while YouTube (including Shorts) is widely used for product research and reviews, which can increase confidence in purchase decisions. At the same time, Gen Z tends to be sceptical of

traditional advertising and places greater weight on peer recommendations and creator content that feels “real” rather than overly polished.

Against this backdrop, it becomes important to understand how and why short-form video content on Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts influences Gen Z consumers’ intention to buy FMCG products. This paper therefore aims to synthesise existing evidence, identify the main content and platform drivers, and discuss implications for marketers working in the Media & Society context.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Short-form video platforms and Gen Z

Short-form video is usually defined as video content between roughly 15 seconds and 5 minutes, optimised for vertical viewing and rapid scrolling on smartphones. Research shows that Gen Z is particularly drawn to this format because it combines audio, visuals and text in a compact and interactive way, enabling both quick consumption and creative expression.

Studies conducted in various markets highlight that time spent on short-form video platforms is high and often integrated into daily routines such as commuting, breaks between tasks or late-night viewing. In the Indian context, work focusing on Reels and Shorts points out that these formats are not only used for entertainment but also for discovering trends, learning new skills and exploring products across categories.

2.2 Short video marketing and purchase intention

A growing body of empirical research connects short video marketing to consumer purchase intention across different industries. In supermarket and FMCG environments, studies have found that short video campaigns increase purchase intention through engaging demonstrations, clear benefit communication and scenario-based storytelling that helps viewers imagine the product in their own lives.

Many of these studies use the SOR model, which treats content features such as entertainment, usefulness and ease of use as stimuli, internal states like trust and attitude as the “organism”, and behavioural responses such as purchase intention as the outcome. Results generally indicate that content that is fun, informative and easy to interact with improves both trust and purchase intention, with entertainment often having the strongest effect.

2.3 Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts and Gen Z in India

India-specific research on Instagram Reels shows that the feature has quickly become a preferred content type for Gen Z, with higher engagement levels than static posts. One study among young Indian users found that perceived entertainment, visual appeal and editing style in Reels significantly predicted their intention to buy products featured in the videos.

Industry discussions suggest that YouTube plays a complementary role: Gen Z users frequently watch detailed product videos and reviews on YouTube before purchasing, and YouTube Shorts can act as short hooks that direct viewers to longer content. Comparative analyses argue that Reels works well at the top of the funnel to create buzz and aspiration, while YouTube (including Shorts) is more closely related to information search and evaluation.

2.4 Influencer marketing, authenticity and trust

Influencers and content creators are central to short-form video marketing strategies targeting Gen Z. Empirical work across platforms shows that influencer credibility, measured through expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness, has a significant positive relationship with attitudes towards the advertised product and purchase intention.

Micro-influencers with smaller but highly engaged communities are often seen as more relatable and trustworthy than traditional celebrities, particularly when they share personal experiences and disclose sponsorships transparently. Studies using structural equation modelling find that content features like entertainment and informativeness influence consumer trust, which in turn predicts purchase intention, suggesting that trust is a critical mediator.

2.5 Persona perception, shared values and social presence

More recent research extends the SOR model by considering persona perception and shared values in short video marketing. When viewers perceive that a creator or brand's personality and values match their own—for instance around sustainability or inclusivity—they are more likely to feel that they share common ground, which strengthens the effect of content on purchase intention.

The same work points to social presence—the feeling of being part of a community online—as another factor that can intensify responses to short-form video content. For Gen Z, who often use digital platforms to experiment with identities and communities, such persona- and value-based signals can make FMCG choices feel like expressions of lifestyle rather than mere routine purchases.

2.6 Impulse buying and psychological triggers

Short-form video environments also have the potential to trigger impulse buying, because content is rapid, emotionally charged and often connected directly to shopping options. Studies focusing on Gen Z show that continuous scrolling combined with limited-time offers, scarcity cues and heavy social proof (likes, comments, shares) can push viewers towards unplanned purchases.

A 2026 article examining short-form video and impulse buying among Gen Z reports that FOMO and emotional arousal significantly increased the likelihood of impulsive purchases, although lack of information transparency or complicated transaction processes sometimes reduced conversion. These dynamics are especially relevant for low-priced FMCG items, where the perceived risk of acting on impulse is relatively low.

2.7 Gaps in existing research

Despite rapid growth in the literature, gaps remain. Many empirical studies still focus on TikTok or Douyin rather than on Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts, and few concentrate specifically on FMCG products in India. Cross-sectional survey designs dominate, which limits understanding of whether short-form video-induced intentions translate into repeat purchase and loyalty. In addition, there is limited comparative work directly contrasting the effectiveness of Reels and Shorts for FMCG brands among Gen Z.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Type of data

The present paper is based entirely on secondary data. It reviews peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, open-access theses and industry reports that examine short-form video marketing, Gen Z consumer behaviour and FMCG purchase intention. Both quantitative and qualitative studies are included to capture a broad view of the phenomenon.

3.2 Sources of data

Relevant literature was identified using databases such as ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Google Scholar and specialised marketing journals, combined with industry insights and practitioner articles from consulting firms and professional networks. India-focused work on Instagram Reels and YouTube usage among Gen Z, as well as cross-country studies on short-form video marketing, were given particular attention.

3.3 Hypothetical framework and propositions

Based on the SOR and AIDA models and the reviewed studies, a conceptual framework is proposed:

- Short-form video content characteristics (entertainment, informativeness, ease of use, visual appeal, interactivity, personalisation) act as **stimuli**.
- Influencer credibility, persona perception and value congruence shape **trust and identification** with the source.
- Internal states such as trust, attitude, emotional involvement, FOMO and perceived social presence function as **organism-level mediators**.
- Behavioural outcomes include **purchase intention**, impulse buying tendency and potential word-of-mouth.

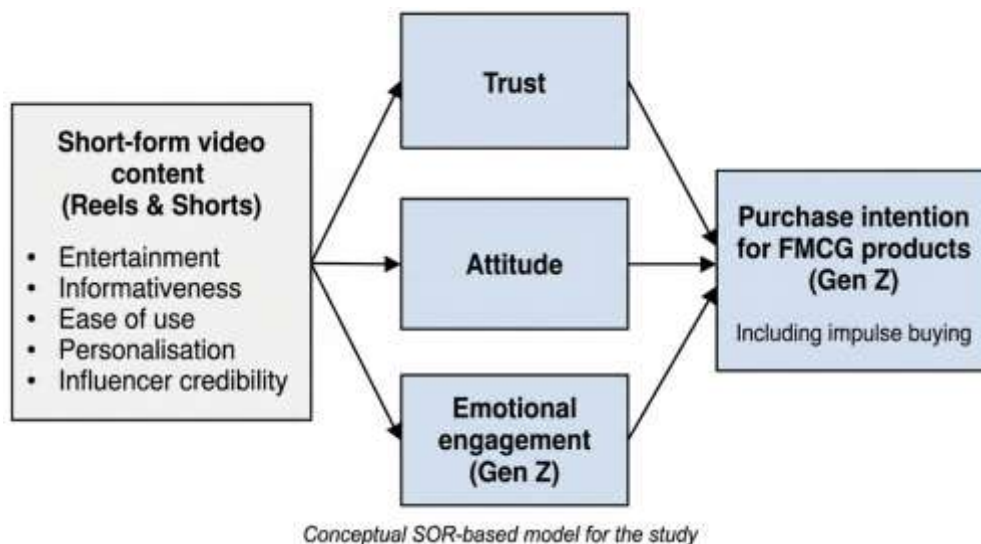


Figure 1: Conceptual SOR-based model linking short-form video content to Gen Z FMCG purchase intention.

From this, the following propositions (not empirically tested here) are derived:

- Content that is entertaining, informative and easy to use positively affects Gen Z consumers’ trust and attitude towards FMCG brands featured in short-form videos.
- Higher influencer credibility and perceived authenticity increase Gen Z consumers’ purchase intention for FMCG products promoted via Reels and Shorts.
- Personalised and algorithmically relevant short-form video feeds strengthen the effect of content on purchase intention by improving perceived relevance.
- Trust, attitude, emotional engagement and shared values mediate the relationship between content characteristics and purchase intention.
- Excessive exposure to promotional content produces advertising fatigue, which weakens the positive effect of engagement on purchase intention.

3.4 Time period of data

The review focuses mainly on studies published between 2019 and early 2026, when short-form video platforms—including TikTok, Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts—expanded rapidly and introduced sophisticated creator tools and shopping features. This helps ensure that the discussion reflects current platform realities. [echetana](<https://www.echetana.com/short-video-platforms-and-gen-z-a-comparative-analysis-of-reels-and-youtube-shorts-consumption-trends/>)

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Content features and FMCG purchase intention among Gen Z

Across the literature, entertainment value clearly stands out as a key reason why Gen Z engages with short-form video content. Humour, music, trending challenges and creative transitions hold attention and make product messages more memorable. For FMCG brands, this means that functional benefits need to be woven into entertaining narratives, such as quick recipes using packaged foods or “before-and-after” clips for personal care items.

Informativeness and usefulness also matter, especially for products linked to health, hygiene or performance. Studies find that short videos that show how to use a product, explain ingredients or compare options tend to produce stronger purchase intentions than purely aesthetic or vague content. Interface simplicity and clear calls to action, like product tags, swipe-up links or embedded shop features, help convert interest into concrete purchase behaviour.

Personalisation by algorithms ensures that users see content aligned with their interests and behaviour, which increases the likelihood that FMCG videos will feel relevant rather than intrusive. However, when promotional videos appear too frequently, users may feel overwhelmed, resulting in ad fatigue and negative reactions to brands.

4.2 Role of influencers, authenticity and trust

Evidence suggests that most Gen Z consumers follow at least a few influencers whose recommendations strongly shape their perceptions of brands. When such influencers incorporate FMCG products into everyday routines, morning skincare, coffee habits, cleaning hacks, viewers often interpret these as genuine endorsements, especially if the creator’s persona is seen as consistent and honest.

Multiple studies show that influencer credibility has a measurable impact on purchase intention through its effect on trust and attitude. Micro-influencers who engage directly with followers in comments and disclose sponsorships seem to generate higher levels of trust than celebrity endorsers who promote many different brands. For FMCG marketers, this indicates that investing in long-term relationships with carefully selected creators may be more effective than one-off campaigns with very famous personalities.

4.3 Platform comparison: Instagram Reels vs YouTube Shorts

Although Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts both offer short-form videos, they are embedded in different broader ecosystems. Reels sits within Instagram, a platform organised around visual self-presentation, social networks and trend cycles, which makes it ideal for quick, aspirational FMCG content. YouTube Shorts, in contrast, is closely linked to YouTube’s long-form videos, playlists and search functionality; Shorts can drive initial attention, while longer videos provide detailed information and reviews.

For Gen Z, this often translates into a two-step journey: they may first encounter a product casually on Reels and then look for more detailed explanations or comparisons on YouTube before purchasing. FMCG brands that coordinate creative assets across both platforms—using Reels for buzz and Shorts plus longer videos for depth—are therefore more likely to guide consumers from awareness to confident purchase intention.

Table 1: Comparative roles of Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts for Gen Z FMCG marketing

Dimension	Instagram Reels	YouTube Shorts / YouTube
Typical content positioning	Lifestyle, fashion, daily routines, trend-based entertainment.	Linked to long-form reviews, “how-to” and product tutorials.
Funnel role	Awareness and initial interest (top-of-funnel).	Evaluation and confidence-building before purchase.
Engagement style	Fast-paced, highly social, heavy use of music and challenges.	Short hooks leading to more detailed informational content.
Strength for FMCG	Creating aspirational usage moments, recipes, quick hacks.	Explaining benefits, ingredients and product comparisons.
Key success factors	Visual appeal, editing quality, influencer relatability.	Informational depth and credibility of reviewers/creators.
Main risks	Ad fatigue, over-commercialised feed.	Information overload, inconsistent quality of user content.

4.4 Psychological mechanisms and theoretical insights

Applying the SOR framework, short-form video content elements such as entertainment, usefulness and influencer cues function as stimuli that trigger psychological responses like emotion, trust and identification with the creator or brand. These organism-level reactions then shape behavioural responses including purchase intention and impulse buying. Empirical studies support this sequence, showing that trust and attitude partially mediate the effect of content features on purchase intention.

The AIDA model further clarifies the process: short-form videos are highly effective at capturing **Attention** and raising **Interest** because of their rapid pace and strong visual design, but moving viewers to **Desire** and **Action** requires clear

benefits, credible claims and straightforward paths to purchase. Persona perception and shared values add another layer by explaining why some creators' content resonates more deeply than others; when viewers feel that a creator "thinks like them", they are more inclined to act on recommendations.

4.5 Risks: impulse buying, ad fatigue and ethics

The same features that make short-form video powerful can also create risks. Continuous scrolling and embedded shopping links can encourage impulsive decisions, especially for low-cost FMCG items, driven more by mood and FOMO than by deliberate evaluation. Over time, this may have negative consequences for young consumers' financial habits and well-being.

Moreover, heavy commercialisation of feeds can lead to irritation and distrust. Studies on Instagram users report that a sizeable minority of Gen Z respondents feel annoyed when their Reels are dominated by sponsored content, and this can reduce their intention to purchase from the brands involved. Ethical issues also arise when influencers fail to disclose sponsorships clearly or when marketing messages blur the line between entertainment and advertising, especially for products with health implications.

For FMCG companies, a responsible approach would involve transparent labelling of paid partnerships, avoidance of misleading claims and inclusion of messages around moderation or sustainability where appropriate.

4.6 Managerial implications for FMCG brands

Based on the literature, several practical guidelines emerge for FMCG marketers targeting Gen Z through Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts:

- **Design content that blends fun with function:** Combine humour, music and trends with clear product benefits and demonstrations to appeal to both hedonic and utilitarian motives.
- **Work with authentic micro-influencers:** Prioritise creators who already use similar products and share the brand's values, instead of focusing only on follower numbers.
- **Use platform strengths strategically:** Deploy Reels to generate top-of-funnel awareness and aspiration, and use Shorts (plus longer YouTube videos) for education and reassurance before purchase.
- **Leverage personalisation but avoid clutter:** Use targeting tools to reach relevant audiences without flooding them with ads; monitor engagement and sentiment to detect ad fatigue early.
- **Simplify the path to purchase:** Integrate product tags, clear CTAs and in-app shopping features so that interested viewers can act immediately, particularly for low-priced FMCG products.
- **Communicate responsibly:** Ensure that health-related claims are accurate, sponsorships are disclosed and young audiences are not encouraged to over-consume.

5. CONCLUSION

The secondary data reviewed in this paper suggest that short-form video content on platforms such as Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts has a clear and generally positive influence on Gen Z consumers' purchase intention for FMCG products. Entertainment, informativeness, ease of use and influencer credibility emerge as key drivers, operating through mediators such as trust, attitude, emotional engagement and perceived value alignment, as described by SOR and AIDA frameworks.

At the same time, the research highlights important boundary conditions: overexposure to promotional content can create ad fatigue, while psychologically powerful design features raise concerns about impulse buying and ethical communication to young consumers. For FMCG marketers, the challenge is therefore to use short-form video creatively and strategically—combining Reels and Shorts, leveraging authentic influencers and personalisation—while maintaining transparency and respect for consumer well-being.

Future primary research, particularly in the Indian context, could test the proposed framework using surveys or experiments that compare different content formats, influencer types and platform strategies specifically for FMCG categories among Gen Z. This would help move from general associations between short-form video and purchase intention towards more precise, actionable evidence for practitioners.

6. LIMITATIONS

This study is based solely on secondary data drawn from existing academic articles, reports and online publications; therefore, it cannot claim to provide original empirical evidence on Gen Z consumers in a specific geographic location such as Bengaluru or NSB Academy. Secondary data also limit control over sample design, measurement quality and statistical techniques used in the original studies.

Most of the reviewed empirical work relies on cross-sectional survey designs using self-reported measures of exposure and purchase intention, which restricts the ability to infer causal relationships or to track whether stated intentions actually translate into repeat purchases and brand loyalty. In addition, several influential studies are based on TikTok or generic “short video platforms” rather than explicitly on Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts, and they often examine broad product categories (fashion, cosmetics, electronics) rather than FMCG only.

The scope of the literature is also geographically constrained. While India-specific work on Instagram Reels is emerging, much of the rigorous quantitative evidence still comes from China, Southeast Asia and African markets, which may differ from Indian Gen Z in terms of culture, regulation and platform usage patterns. Furthermore, publication bias is likely: positive findings linking short-form video marketing to purchase intention are more visible in journals and practitioner outlets than null or negative results, which can overstate the strength of relationships.

Conceptually, the paper focuses primarily on the SOR and AIDA frameworks and does not integrate all possible theoretical perspectives such as behavioural economics or critical media studies, even though some recent work on impulse buying and behavioural nudges suggests additional mechanisms worth considering. Finally, the analysis does not include platform-level behavioural data (actual click-throughs or purchase logs) or neuromarketing evidence, which would provide a more objective view of how short-form video content influences FMCG purchasing decisions among Gen Z consumers.

7. SCOPE OF FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research can address these limitations by conducting primary studies with clearly defined Gen Z samples in India, ideally focusing on specific cities or campuses to capture local context. For instance, quantitative surveys or structural equation models could be used to test the proposed framework by measuring exposure to Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts, content factors, trust, attitude and FMCG purchase intention among Gen Z respondents. Longitudinal designs that follow the same respondents over time would help clarify whether short-form video-driven intentions lead to repeated FMCG purchases or long-term brand loyalty.

Experimental and quasi-experimental studies could manipulate different content variables—such as entertainment level, informational depth, or influencer type—to examine their causal impact on attitudes, trust and purchase intention, including impulse buying behaviour. Platform-level comparisons that systematically contrast Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, TikTok and indigenous Indian platforms for FMCG marketing would also provide finer-grained insights, especially if they measure the whole funnel from awareness to conversion.

There is also scope for more qualitative and mixed-methods work to understand how Gen Z interprets and negotiates short-form video advertising in their everyday media practices. In-depth interviews, digital ethnography or diary studies could explore issues such as perceived authenticity, ad fatigue, ethical concerns and strategies young consumers use to regulate their own consumption. Finally, future research could integrate behavioural economics and well-being perspectives by examining how design features (for example, auto-play, one-click purchasing, scarcity cues) interact with psychological traits to influence impulsive FMCG buying and post-purchase regret among Gen Z consumers.

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