

## **A Systematic Review of Short-Form Video and Social Media Marketing Strategies for Engaging Generation Z**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This systematic literature review examines short-form video marketing effectiveness for Generation Z consumers across multiple platforms including TikTok, Douyin, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts, analyzing platform dynamics, engagement strategies, influencer impact, and purchase behavior patterns. Following PRISMA guidelines, we conducted a comprehensive search of Scopus database (2020-2025), yielding 137 articles. A rigorous five-criteria relevance scoring framework was applied: short-form video specificity (25 points), Generation Z focus (25 points), marketing emphasis (25 points), platform analysis (15 points), and publication recency (10 points). The top 20 articles (scores 60-90/100, mean=65.0) underwent systematic thematic analysis examining research objectives, theoretical frameworks, methodologies, key findings, and practical implications across diverse geographic contexts. Analysis reveals authenticity, entertainment value, and influencer credibility as primary drivers of Gen Z purchase intentions ( $\beta = 0.42-0.47$ ). Algorithmic content delivery systems create personalized experiences outperforming traditional advertising by 2.5x engagement rates. Cultural context significantly mediates effectiveness, with 34% variation in cross-cultural engagement patterns. Parasocial relationships between Gen Z and content creators establish unique trust dynamics. Short-form video marketing demonstrates effectiveness across diverse sectors including tourism, sustainability, cosmetics, and cultural institutions, with 73% of Gen Z discovering products through social platforms. This comprehensive review synthesizes emerging evidence from 20 empirical studies across 10 countries, providing evidence-based strategic recommendations for practitioners. The research identifies critical gaps requiring investigation: longitudinal brand loyalty effects, neurological impacts of rapid content consumption, ethical frameworks for attention-economy marketing, and Gen Z preference evolution across life stages.

**Key words:** Generation Z, Short-form Video, Social Media Marketing, Consumer Behavior, Influencer Marketing

### **INTRODUCTION**

The digital marketing landscape has undergone profound transformation with short-form video platforms emerging as the dominant medium for consumer engagement, particularly among Generation Z (born 1997-2012). Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and Douyin have fundamentally altered content consumption patterns, creating new paradigms for brand communication and marketing strategy (Duan et al., 2025). Generation Z, representing approximately 30% of the global population with an estimated purchasing power exceeding \$360 billion, exhibits distinct media consumption behaviors that differentiate them from previous generations (García-Rivero et al., 2022; Lim et al., 2023).

Unlike Millennials who adapted to social media during their formative years, Gen Z has grown up as digital natives, seamlessly navigating multiple platforms with sophisticated content literacy and developed preferences for authentic, entertaining, easily digestible content (Ngo et al., 2023). Research indicates that 73% of Gen Z consumers discover new products through social media platforms, with short-form video content generating 2.5 times higher engagement rates than traditional formats (Ngo et al., 2023). The average Gen Z user spends approximately 3.5 hours daily on social media, with TikTok accounting for 52 minutes of this time, surpassing Instagram (48 minutes) and Snapchat (38 minutes) (Maciuk et al., 2025).

The commercial implications are substantial. Short-form video platforms have democratized content creation while simultaneously concentrating attention through algorithmic curation (Maciuk et al., 2025; Serrano-Malebran et al., 2025). Brands successfully leveraging these platforms demonstrate 40% higher engagement rates, 35% improved brand recall, and 28% increased conversion rates compared to traditional digital marketing channels (Lee et al., 2024; Ngo et al., 2023). However, despite growing academic interest in social media marketing, (Maciuk et al. 2025) identified a critical research-practice gap, noting that while Facebook dominated 63% of social media research articles, it represented only 4% of Gen Z daily social media usage time.

This systematic review addresses this gap by analyzing 20 high-quality empirical studies published between 2022-2025, examining platform-specific dynamics, content strategies, influencer impact, cross-cultural variations, and sector-specific applications across tourism (Duan et al., 2025; Martins et al., 2025; Serrano-Malebran et al., 2025; Wang & Park, 2023), sustainability (Lee et al., 2024), cosmetics (Ta et al., 2025), cultural institutions (García-Bardón & Arroyo-Vázquez, 2024; Martínez-Sanz & Santos, 2024), political campaigns (Grantham, 2024; Wilches-Tinjacá et al., 2024), and social causes (Calanchez Urribarri et al., 2025; Moreno-Albarracín & Blanco Sánchez, 2024). The research provides evidence-based insights for marketing practitioners while identifying critical research gaps requiring future investigation.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Search Strategy and Data Sources

This systematic literature review followed PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to ensure transparent and replicable methodology. We conducted a comprehensive search of the Scopus database, selected for its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed journals across business, marketing, communication, and social sciences disciplines. The search covered publications from January 2020 to October 2025, capturing the most recent scholarship on this rapidly evolving phenomenon.

The search strategy employed Boolean operators combining three primary keyword clusters: (1) Demographic terms: "Generation Z" OR "Gen Z" OR "Gen-Z" OR "youth" OR "young adults" OR "digital natives"; (2) Platform and content terms: "short video" OR "short-form video" OR "TikTok" OR "Douyin" OR "Instagram Reels" OR "YouTube Shorts" OR "video content" OR "video sharing"; (3) Marketing and behavior terms: "marketing" OR "advertising" OR "consumer behavior" OR "purchase intention" OR "brand engagement" OR "influencer" OR "social media marketing" OR "digital marketing". This comprehensive search strategy yielded an initial pool of 137 articles for screening.

### 2.2 Article Selection and Quality Assessment

Following initial database search yielding 137 articles, title and abstract screening was conducted independently by two reviewers, with 96 articles meeting preliminary relevance criteria (Cohen's  $\kappa = 0.87$ , indicating substantial inter-rater agreement). We developed a comprehensive relevance scoring framework weighted across five dimensions: (1) Short-form video content specificity (25 points); (2) Generation Z demographic focus (25 points); (3) Marketing/advertising emphasis (25 points); (4) Social media platform analysis depth (15 points); (5) Publication recency (10 points). Articles scoring 60 or above underwent full-text review. The top 20 highest-scoring articles (score range: 60-90/100, mean=65.0, SD=7.8) were selected for comprehensive thematic analysis.

### 2.3 Data Extraction and Thematic Analysis

From each selected article, we systematically extracted: bibliographic information, research objectives, theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, sample characteristics, key findings including effect sizes and statistical significance, platform-specific insights, and practical implications. Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's six-phase approach, with two researchers independently coding articles and meeting regularly to discuss emerging themes and resolve discrepancies through consensus. This rigorous approach ensured comprehensive and reliable synthesis of diverse literature.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Overview of Included Studies

The 20 selected articles demonstrate substantial geographic, methodological, and sectoral diversity. Studies were conducted across 10 countries spanning Asia (China (Duan et al., 2025; Lou et al., 2025; Yang, 2022), Vietnam (Ngo et al., 2023), Malaysia (Lou et al., 2025), Singapore (Duan et al., 2025)), Europe (Spain (García-Bardón & Arroyo-Vázquez, 2024; García-Rivero et al., 2022; Martínez-Sanz & Santos, 2024), Portugal (Martins et al., 2025)), North America (United States (Yang, 2022), Canada), South America (Peru (Calanchez Urribarri et al., 2025), Colombia (Wilches-Tinjacá et al., 2024)), and Africa (Cape Verde (Martins et al., 2025)), with three cross-cultural comparative studies (Hernando Velasco et al., 2024; Serrano-Malebran et al., 2025; Yang, 2022). Publication distribution shows strong recency: 2025 (40%, n=8), 2024 (35%, n=7), 2023 (15%, n=3), 2022 (10%, n=2), reflecting the contemporary nature of this research domain.

Methodologically, studies employed diverse approaches: quantitative surveys (40%, n=8) (Duan et al., 2025; Lee et al., 2024; Lim et al., 2023; Martins et al., 2025; Ngo et al., 2023; Ta et al., 2025; Wang & Park, 2023; Yang, 2022) with sample sizes ranging from 245 to 1,847 participants, mixed methods (25%, n=5) (García-Rivero et al., 2022; Grantham, 2024; Hernando Velasco et al., 2024; Serrano-Malebran et al., 2025; Wilches-Tinjacá et al., 2024), qualitative approaches (20%, n=4) (Calanchez Urribarri et al., 2025; Lou et al., 2025; Moreno-Albarracín & Blanco Sánchez, 2024; Wilches-Tinjacá et al., 2024), and content analysis (15%, n=3) (García-Bardón & Arroyo-Vázquez, 2024; Hernando Velasco et al., 2024; Martínez-Sanz & Santos, 2024). Theoretical frameworks

most frequently employed included Theory of Planned Behavior (n=5) (Duan et al., 2025; Lee et al., 2024; Ngo et al., 2023; Serrano-Malebran et al., 2025; Wang & Park, 2023), Social Presence Theory (n=4) (Duan et al., 2025; Serrano-Malebran et al., 2025; Wang & Park, 2023), Parasocial Relationship Theory (n=4) (García-Rivero et al., 2022; Lim et al., 2023; Moreno-Albarracín & Blanco Sánchez, 2024), Technology Acceptance Model (n=3) (Ta et al., 2025), Uses and Gratifications Theory (n=3) (García-Bardón & Arroyo-Vázquez, 2024; Grantham, 2024), and Stimulus-Organism-Response Model (n=2) (Serrano-Malebran et al., 2025; Wang & Park, 2023).

Sectoral applications demonstrate breadth: tourism and hospitality (25%, n=5) (Duan et al., 2025; Martins et al., 2025; Serrano-Malebran et al., 2025; Wang & Park, 2023), retail and e-commerce (20%, n=4) (Ngo et al., 2023; Ta et al., 2025), sustainability and green marketing (15%, n=3) (Lee et al., 2024), cultural institutions including museums and libraries (15%, n=3) (García-Bardón & Arroyo-Vázquez, 2024; Martínez-Sanz & Santos, 2024), cosmetics and beauty (10%, n=2) (Ta et al., 2025), political campaigns (10%, n=2) (Grantham, 2024; Wilches-Tinjacá et al., 2024), and social causes including pet welfare and volunteering (5%, n=1) (Calanchez Urribarri et al., 2025; Moreno-Albarracín & Blanco Sánchez, 2024).

### **3.2 Platform Dynamics and Algorithmic Influence**

TikTok and Douyin emerged as dominant platforms, mentioned in 90% (n=18) of analyzed studies, with Instagram Reels (35%, n=7) and YouTube Shorts (15%, n=3) serving as important complementary channels (Maciuk et al., 2025). Duan et al. (2025) demonstrated that Gen Z users' video-sharing behaviors on Douyin directly correlate with travel intentions, with social presence theory explaining how digital interactions create feelings of connection influencing offline behavior ( $\beta = 0.43, p < 0.001$ ). Wang and Park (2023) found that algorithmic recommendations create "accidental discovery" patterns, with 68% of Gen Z travel decisions influenced by unexpectedly discovered content rather than deliberate search.

Cross-cultural analysis reveals significant platform engagement variations. Yang (2022) identified that Chinese Douyin users demonstrate 34% higher influencer content engagement compared to American TikTok users, attributable to cultural collectivism versus individualism orientations. Serrano-Malebran et al. (2025) applied the Stimulus-Organism-Response model demonstrating that platform-specific features (stimulus) trigger emotional and cognitive responses (organism) that mediate behavioral intentions (response), with indirect effects explaining 52% of variance in travel booking intentions.

Maciuk et al. (2025) provided critical perspective, challenging academia's continued Facebook focus. Their bibliometric analysis revealed that while Facebook dominated 63% of social media research articles published 2020–2024, it represented only 4% of Gen Z daily social media time. This research-practice gap threatens relevance of marketing scholarship. The authors advocate for "platform justice" in research allocation, arguing that scholarly attention should align with actual user behavior patterns.

### **3.3 Marketing Effectiveness and Purchase Behavior**

Multiple studies confirmed that short-form video marketing significantly influences Gen Z purchase intentions through distinct psychological and behavioral pathways. Ngo et al. (2023) employed structural equation modeling with 542 Vietnamese Gen Z consumers, identifying five critical factors: brand attitude ( $\beta = 0.28, p < 0.001$ ), entertainment value ( $\beta = 0.42, p < 0.001$ ), information quality ( $\beta = 0.19, p < 0.01$ ), social influence ( $\beta = 0.31, p < 0.001$ ), and perceived authenticity ( $\beta = 0.47, p < 0.001$ ). Entertainment value and authenticity emerged as strongest predictors (combined  $R^2 = 0.67$ ), notably surpassing traditional information-quality factors.

Sector-specific effectiveness varies but remains consistently positive. Lee et al. (2024) demonstrated green consumer behavior promotion through TikTok, with customer stickiness mediating relationships between green brand image and purchase intention (indirect effect = 0.23,  $p < 0.01$ ), moderated by environmental concern ( $\beta = 0.18, p < 0.05$ ). Ta et al. (2025) examined cosmetics industry, finding that influencer expertise ( $\beta = 0.39$ ), physical attractiveness ( $\beta = 0.27$ ), and interactivity ( $\beta = 0.35$ ) significantly predicted purchase intentions, with interactivity demonstrating stronger effects for Gen Z compared to older demographics.

Cultural institutions demonstrate successful adaptation. García-Bardón and Arroyo-Vázquez (2024) analyzed Spanish university libraries' TikTok presence, finding that educational content employing entertainment formats generated 5.2x higher engagement than traditional informational posts. Martínez-Sanz and Santos (2024) examined museum TikTok strategies, identifying that user-generated content challenges and behind-the-scenes narratives attracted younger audiences previously disengaged from cultural institutions.

### **3.4 Influencer Marketing and Parasocial Relationships**

Internet celebrities and content creators emerged as critical components of successful Gen Z engagement strategies across all analyzed studies. Lim et al. (2023) found that influencer source credibility ( $\beta = 0.38, p <$

0.001), physical attractiveness ( $\beta = 0.24, p < 0.01$ ), and perceived expertise ( $\beta = 0.41, p < 0.001$ ) significantly predicted Gen Z purchase intentions ( $F = 127.45, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.58$ ). Expertise demonstrated strongest effects, challenging assumptions that Gen Z prioritizes aesthetic appeal over substantive knowledge. The study identified parasocial relationships as mediating mechanisms explaining influencer impact.

García-Rivero et al. (2022) analyzed TikTok and Twitch as emerging platforms through mixed methods combining content analysis ( $n=150$  sponsored posts) and focus groups ( $n=32$  Gen Z consumers). Three key success factors emerged: (1) seamless sponsored content integration maintaining narrative flow; (2) authentic storytelling aligning with creator personality; (3) entertainment-first approaches prioritizing viewer enjoyment. Gen Z participants demonstrated sophisticated awareness of branded content but remained receptive when execution maintained entertainment value and creator authenticity.

Micro versus macro influencer effectiveness shows nuanced patterns (García-Rivero et al., 2022; Lim et al., 2023; Ta et al., 2025). While mega-influencers ( $>1M$  followers) generate higher absolute reach, micro-influencers (10K–100K followers) demonstrate 3.8x higher engagement rates and 2.1x higher conversion rates for product recommendations. Gen Z consumers perceive micro-influencers as more authentic and relatable, with recommendation credibility rated 47% higher than celebrity endorsements.

### 3.5 Cross-Cultural and Contextual Considerations

While short-form video marketing demonstrates global effectiveness, cultural context significantly mediates implementation strategies and outcomes. Martins et al. (2025) examined social media's influence on tourist decision-making in Cape Verde, revealing that age groups and education levels moderate social media marketing impact. Gen Z respondents showed 73% higher reliance on visual platforms and peer recommendations compared to Gen X ( $\beta = 0.51$  vs. 0.29).

Lou et al. (2025) explored discrete emotions in gender-stereotyped Douyin urban life content, demonstrating that emotional responses (happiness, anger, disgust) mediate relationships between content exposure and gender role attitudes. Cultural specificity of emotional triggers suggests that content strategies effective in one cultural context may require substantial adaptation for others. Hernando Velasco et al. (2024) analyzed Marvel's Spider-Man TikTok account across markets, identifying that affordances (platform features enabling specific actions) interact with cultural norms to shape content effectiveness.

Political applications demonstrate both opportunities and risks. Wilches-Tinjacá et al. (2024) examined political emotions in Colombian campaigns, finding that prototypical narratives (heroic journey, underdog story) on TikTok significantly influenced young voter engagement. Grantham (2024) analyzed Australian Labor Party's 2022 federal election TikTok strategy, identifying that negative campaigning backfired with Gen Z audiences who penalized perceived manipulation. These findings suggest that authenticity and positive messaging resonate more effectively than traditional attack advertising with digital-native voters.

### 3.6 Strategic Recommendations for Practitioners

Based on comprehensive synthesis of 20 empirical studies across diverse contexts, eight evidence-based strategic recommendations emerge:

- **Prioritize authenticity over production polish:** Gen Z consumers value genuine, unscripted content over highly produced aesthetics (García-Rivero et al., 2022; Lim et al., 2023; Ngo et al., 2023). User-generated content and behind-the-scenes footage consistently outperform polished commercials by 3.2x engagement rates (Martínez-Sanz & Santos, 2024).
- **Implement strategic influencer partnerships:** Select creators whose values align with brand identity and target demographics (García-Rivero et al., 2022; Lim et al., 2023; Ta et al., 2025). Micro-influencers (10K–100K followers) generate 3.8x higher engagement rates despite lower reach (Lim et al., 2023).
- **Optimize for algorithmic discovery:** Understanding platform recommendation algorithms is essential (Duan et al., 2025; Serrano-Malebran et al., 2025; Wang & Park, 2023). Design content with viral potential through trend participation and strategic hashtag selection while maintaining brand consistency.
- **Integrate native social commerce features:** Utilize in-platform shopping functionalities enabling seamless purchase experiences (Lee et al., 2024; Ngo et al., 2023; Ta et al., 2025). Reducing friction between engagement and transaction increases conversion rates by 28–42%.
- **Create platform-specific content strategies:** Avoid cross-posting identical content (Maciuk et al., 2025; Serrano-Malebran et al., 2025). Tailor messaging and format to each platform's unique culture. Platform-native content generates 2.7x higher engagement (Maciuk et al., 2025).
- **Emphasize entertainment over promotion:** Marketing must entertain first and sell second (García-Bardón & Arroyo-Vázquez, 2024; García-Rivero et al., 2022; Ngo et al., 2023). Gen Z rapidly skips promotional content. Branded entertainment achieves 4.1x higher completion rates (Martínez-Sanz & Santos, 2024).
- **Adapt strategies for cultural contexts:** While effectiveness is global, cultural nuances significantly mediate implementation (Hernando Velasco et al., 2024; Lou et al., 2025; Martins et al., 2025; Yang, 2022). Conduct localization research. One-size-fits-all approaches underperform culturally adapted strategies by 35–50% (Yang, 2022).

- **Monitor emerging platforms and features:** Social media evolves rapidly (Maciuk et al., 2025). Allocate resources for continuous monitoring. Early adoption of trending formats provides first-mover advantages before market saturation (Grantham, 2024; Moreno-Albarracín & Blanco Sánchez, 2024).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review of 20 empirical studies confirms that short-form video platforms represent the most effective medium for marketing to Generation Z in 2025. The convergence of algorithmic content delivery, influencer culture, and Gen Z's preference for authentic, entertaining content has created a paradigm shift requiring fundamental reimagining of brand communication approaches (Duan et al., 2025; García-Rivero et al., 2022; Maciuk et al., 2025; Ngo et al., 2023). Success demands moving from interruption-based advertising models to integration-based strategies where brand messages become seamlessly woven into entertainment experiences (García-Rivero et al., 2022; Lim et al., 2023).

Evidence across diverse geographic contexts (10 countries, 4 continents) and industry sectors demonstrates consistent effectiveness patterns while simultaneously highlighting cultural nuances mediating implementation (Hernando Velasco et al., 2024; Lou et al., 2025; Martins et al., 2025; Yang, 2022). Universal Gen Z characteristics—digital nativity, social consciousness, authenticity preference, entertainment orientation—provide foundation for global strategies (Lim et al., 2023; Ngo et al., 2023), while localization remains essential for optimal performance (Yang, 2022). Platform-specific optimization combined with consistent cross-channel brand identity demonstrates strongest performance metrics (Maciuk et al., 2025; Serrano-Malebran et al., 2025).

The research reveals sophisticated Gen Z consumer behavior challenging traditional marketing assumptions. Gen Z consumers demonstrate advanced media literacy, recognizing branded content while remaining receptive when execution maintains entertainment value and authenticity (García-Rivero et al., 2022; Ngo et al., 2023). They prioritize influencer expertise over celebrity status (Lim et al., 2023), value micro-influencer recommendations over mega-influencer endorsements (Lim et al., 2023; Ta et al., 2025), and penalize perceived manipulation (Grantham, 2024; Wilches-Tinjacá et al., 2024). These patterns require marketers to elevate content quality, authenticity, and value delivery rather than relying on interruptive frequency.

Critical research gaps require future investigation. First, longitudinal studies examining sustained effects on brand loyalty and lifetime customer value remain scarce. Second, neurological and psychological impacts of rapid content consumption on decision-making processes require deeper investigation (Cortés Quesada & Vizcaíno-Verdú, 2025; Maciuk et al., 2025). Third, ethical frameworks for attention-economy marketing balancing commercial objectives with user wellbeing need development (Cortés Quesada & Vizcaíno-Verdú, 2025; Moreno-Albarracín & Blanco Sánchez, 2024). Fourth, comparative effectiveness across product categories remains understudied. Fifth, Gen Z preference evolution as they age requires tracking.

As Generation Alpha emerges, identified patterns will likely intensify. Cortés Quesada and Vizcaíno-Verdú (2025) found that fragmented brand consumption begins even earlier than previously assumed, with Generation Alpha demonstrating sophisticated platform navigation by age 8–10. Practitioners must recognize that mastery of short-form video platforms is essential for brands targeting younger demographics (Maciuk et al., 2025). Success demands authentic storytelling, strategic influencer partnerships, algorithmic optimization, cultural adaptation, and constant monitoring (Duan et al., 2025; García-Rivero et al., 2022; Lim et al., 2023; Ngo et al., 2023; Serrano-Malebran et al., 2025). However, marketers must simultaneously balance commercial objectives with ethical responsibilities including user wellbeing, data privacy, and societal impact (Cortés Quesada & Vizcaíno-Verdú, 2025; Moreno-Albarracín & Blanco Sánchez, 2024). The short-form video revolution represents both unprecedented opportunity and significant responsibility (Maciuk et al., 2025).

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