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## Research Article

### The Role of Influencer-Generated Contents to the Cognition and Emotional Attachment Among Generation Z Consumers in Manila, Philippines

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#### ABSTRACT

Along with the rising digitalization of businesses, social media influencers (SMI) have been essential in redefining how the online promotional system operates. In the Philippines alone, social media influencers are central to all online discussions. The country is known as the "social media capital of the world," as 86.3% of Filipinos follow at least one influencer and spend about 11 hours each week on social media.

With the use of an existing theory and testable hypotheses, the researchers will gather data while adhering to the positivist philosophy. To obtain objective and statistically significant results, the researchers will measure, document, and examine the data through a survey. Moreover, the researchers will carry out various statistical testing, including PLS-SEM, average variance extraction (AVE), heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio, variance inflation factor (VIF), squared multiple correlation (R<sup>2</sup>), Stone–Geisser's Q<sup>2</sup>, etc. using SmartPLS.

Delving into the results, it was shown that influencer-branded content's interestingness does affect users to be emotionally attached. Research findings also revealed that influencer-generated content's novelty does not significantly affect users' emotional attachment to influencers. It was also shown that reliability positively affects emotional attachment, as well as information quality. But when it comes to understandability it shows no relationship with emotional attachment. Lastly, it is revealed that there is no significant relationship between emotional attachment and users' intention to disagree with the influencer.

As a conclusion, social media influencers have become instrumental in making digital platforms a more enjoyable place to dwell.

**Keywords:** *Generation Z, Influencer-Generated Content, Emotional Attachment, Cognition*

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## Introduction

Along with businesses' rapid digitalization, social media influencers (SMI) have been instrumental in reimagining how the online promotional system works. Influencers refer to prominent social media users who cultivate a significant following by creating compelling content that can sway opinions (Santora, 2022). Such a hybrid of old and new marketing tools, SMIs bridge the gap from product discovery to checkout by leveraging their established trust and psychological bond with their followers (Tafesse & Wood, 2020).

Considering how flourishing and accessible influencer marketing can be, marketers collaborate with SMIs more than ever. In fact, 93% of marketers surveyed have used influencer marketing, and 60% stated that influencer-generated content (IGC) performs better than brand-created ones (Santora, 2022). Regarding this, Zhang and Choi (2022) noted that influencer following is important to take into account when choosing which influencers to collaborate with, as it is strongly related to the influencer's effectiveness and popularity.

Significantly, SMIs need to instill emotional attachment to retain and captivate new followers. In the study by Semerádová and Weinlich (2022), marketing materials that emotionally engage a target audience are more likely to result in the required actions and consumer involvement. Through empathy, satisfaction, surprise, interest, and pride, the relationship they develop with their consumer already generates a wide range of emotions that will support the implementation of a vital influence process. It only means that customers will choose them over everyone since they provide a unique experience and know what their target market wants.

On the other hand, IGC's information quality can affect users' and consumers' attitudes, behavior, and comprehension. In the social media context, "information quality" is the perception of the accuracy, sufficiency, and consistency of SMI's generated content (Dedeoglu, 2019). Zhang and Choi (2022) mentioned that the emergence of low-quality information could negatively affect individuals, leading to dangerous conclusions due to inappropriate behavioral decisions and false perceptions.

Similarly, Rahaman et al. (2022) stated that marketers are encouraged to produce high-quality content since social media users view it as useful and it can influence their behavior favorably, considering how heavily they rely on it.

SMIs in the Philippines play a crucial role at the forefront of every online conversation. For instance, when it comes to fashion and elegance, Love Marie Escudero, also known as *Heart Evangelista* is the first to come to mind of Filipinos. Another one is when it comes to skincare and hygiene, the go-to search influencer is Jose Bryant Correa, commonly known as *Wear Sunscreen*. In line with this, Marj Maroket, known as "Marj" in her social media accounts, is reputable in terms of makeup advice, reviews, and tutorials, specifically, to the morena beauties. And the last is when the topic is inclined to short and easy-to-understand medical explanations, Ramon Christian "Arshie" Larga, is the tick among young Filipino audiences.

Given that the Philippines is recognized as the social media capital of the world, it has an average of 86.3% have followed at least one influencer and spent almost 11 hours on social media (Statista, 2022; Baclig, 2022). With that information, the statistics revealed how Filipino consumers are easily swayed by sparking and provocative conversations. Meanwhile, Generation Z (Gen Z) has shown its support by engaging in various marketing campaigns. Their affection is a significant factor in developing the Philippines' consumption-driven economy (Leyco, 2022).

However, although the development of influencer marketing is deeply rooted in the influencer-follower relationship, studies on the initial stages of Filipino influencers' growth are still limited. For instance, the common types of influencer marketing studies in the country merely focus on influencers' effectiveness as a commercial strategy (Lim et al., 2022), psychological-related influential factors (Farivar et al., 2021), influencer credibility, and sponsorship disclosure (Abraham et al., 2022). In addition, Ki et al. (2020) emphasized that very few studies globally have focused on what followers hope to see and desire to fulfill by following an influencer. That is why it is interesting to determine what specific characteristics of IGC will

significantly draw users' attention and affect their behavior.

Moreover, influencer "cancel culture" has been rampant these days. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary (n.d.), it is defined as the engagement in mass canceling as a show of disapproval and exerting social pressure in response to public figures' objectionable actions. Here are some examples of Filipino influencers that are on the "cancel" list in the context of Philippine influencer culture: Donnalyn Bartolome for her troubling beliefs, Skusta Clee for his infidelity, then, Alex and Toni Gonzaga Sisters for their political affiliations. Delving deeper, choosing the right influencer to help the brand flourish significantly and not the opposite has been trickier than ever.

Hence, the researchers will conduct a quantitative study inspired by the work of Zhang and Choi (2022). This aims to explore in the Philippine context the effect of IGC characteristics on information quality and consumer emotional attachment using the information relevance and cognitive dissonance theory—as well as the relationship between IGC and influencer popularity.

In this aspect, the theory of information relevance plays a fundamental role. Information relevance theory refers to users' perceived utility of the information presented, a concept dating back to the 1970s (Xu and Chen, 2006). Prior research indicates that users evaluate information relevance based on factors like novelty, reliability, and understandability. With this regard, Zhang and Choi (2022) further expanded this concept by adding content interestingness, recognizing enjoyment as a primary motivation for social media use. This theory connects to the study's research questions by highlighting how the characteristics of IGC can impact users' emotional attachment and information quality, thereby addressing the extent to which these factors influence influencer popularity.

Meanwhile, the theory of cognitive dissonance offers a framework for understanding the complex dynamics of user-influencer relationships. As proposed by Leon Festinger, cognitive dissonance arises when a person's behavior is inconsistent with their beliefs, motivating them to resolve this tension through

attitude change (Elsevier, 2012). This theory is appropriate to the study as it provides an understanding of why users might involve themselves in "cancel culture" in response to influencers whose actions conflict with their moral values. In the context of emotional attachment and information quality, cognitive dissonance may urge users to reassess their connections with influencers, impacting their engagement and loyalty.

Theoretically, the developed conceptual model will help demonstrate the vital role of IGC in the influencer-follower relationship. In practice, the research findings will bear significant insights to sustainably improve influencer marketing in the Philippines, particularly in gaining broader public support and optimizing the value of each content created.

## 1.2 Industry Overview

In today's competitive business environment, influencer marketing keeps brands and digital content creators connected to drive genuine conversations. Given its broad access to all brands, with big budgets or not, influencer marketing is considered to be a formidable marketing strategy. As a quick run-through, the global influencer marketing industry has been growing exponentially since 2016 with \$1.7 billion to \$13.8 billion in 2021. In 2022 alone, the market is expanding at a whopping \$16.4 billion (Santora, 2022). Influencers from the US are the most popular amongst advertisers, followed by influencers in Canada, the UK, and Australia. Meanwhile, Generation Z and Millennials are more interested in pursuing social media sensations, unlike older generations, who tend to follow traditional celebrities (Collabstr, 2022).

Among 5,000 advertisers using influencer marketing in 2021, Instagram ranked first with the highest share of influencer marketing dollars, commanding 48% overall share, followed by TikTok (46%) and YouTube (6%). Such reliance on social media influencers verifies that 89% of companies believe that the ROI from influencer marketing is much better than other marketing channels. Influencer Marketing Hub, Viral Nation, and NeoReach suggest that companies could earn up to \$5.20 per \$1 on influencer marketing (Santora, 2022). With that, it

is expected that 68% of marketers will increase their influencer marketing budget for the following year.

In the Philippines, technological progress like influencer marketing is growing and has offered valuable prospects in society. According to Wertz (2022), 90% of people are likely to trust a recommended brand. Based on the recent interview of John Rubio, the Meta country director, he said that (ANC News Ph, 2022): *"The third trend that shapes the business in the Philippines this year is around creators. When the pandemic hits, many physical things have to close, and creators need to find a way to start expressing themselves more; I think many of these happen digitally, whether on our platforms or YouTube or TikTok. Many creators migrated to the digital space, and companies are taking out, for example, Creamsilk, where they ask interactives, their creators, to share their own stories and videos. When you look into it will have a 10% increase."*

According to Statista (2022), ad spending in the influencer advertising segment is projected to reach \$77.34 million in 2022. Ad spending is expected to show an annual growth rate (CAGR 2022-2027) of 13.52%, resulting in a projected market volume of \$145.80 million by 2027. In global comparison, most ad spending will be generated in China (\$15,690.00 million in 2022). Overall, people trust influencers, which will help businesses bridge them to their brand. An increasing number of brands are making significant investments in social media marketing efforts to boost engagement and add it to the bottom line.

## Methods

The researchers employed a quantitative approach, specifically adopting a descriptive-exploratory research design. A descriptive research entails testing a prespecified hypothesis by measuring and observing without manipulating the variables. Also, applying an exploratory research design would be vital to deepen the understanding of the topic, particularly within the Philippine context, where there is a noticeable dearth of studies on the early stages of influencers' growth. (American Psychological Association, 2022). The researchers

ensured the objectiveness of the study about the impact of influencer-generated content characteristics on emotional attachment and information quality, as well as the influence of these variables on influencers' popularity through a quantitative descriptive-exploratory design of research.

More specifically, a survey research design was used, indicating that participants were asked to respond to inquiries through a survey questionnaire format. A survey research design is used to describe and explore influencer-generated content characteristics relative to users' cognition and emotional attachment, as well as influencers' popularity.

The study employed a combined approach of purposive and snowball sampling, with established criteria for identifying qualified participants. Utilizing a 5-point Likert scale, an online survey questionnaire featuring 31 closed-statement items adapted from peer-reviewed studies was employed by researchers to gauge the impact of influencer-generated content characteristics on users' cognition and emotional attachment to influencers' popularity. The questionnaire, divided into three sections, begins with an introduction elucidating the research's essence and obtaining consent and eligibility from participants. The subsequent section delves into the demographic profile of respondents, encompassing gender, education, age, and their most used social media platform for consuming influencer-generated content. The major part of the instrument is the set of statements in a Likert-scale form, a psychological evaluation instrument. When evaluating attitudes and viewpoints, respondents are asked to indicate whether they agree or disagree with a series of statements. The questions, framed within the Likert scale, aim to measure respondent agreement levels regarding Content Characteristics (Interestingness, Novelty, Reliability, Understandability), Emotional Attachment and Information Quality, and Continue/Intention to Follow the Influencer and Intention to Recommend the Influencer. Notably, the research instrument was not developed by the researchers, and pre-testing was omitted. Instead, it was sourced from peer-reviewed and published journals, where the authors verified its reliability with a Cronbach's

alpha ( $\alpha$ ) surpassing the recommended threshold of 0.7. Consequently, internal consistency is assured for each construct.

Moreover, the researchers will carry out various statistical testing, including PLS-SEM,

average variance extraction (AVE), heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio, variance inflation factor (VIF), squared multiple correlation (R<sup>2</sup>), Stone–Geisser’s Q<sup>2</sup>, etc. using SmartPLS.

## Result and Discussion

### 4.1 Results

Table 4.1.1 Sex Profile of the Generation Z Respondents.

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Female	112	53.85
Male	96	46.15
<b>Total</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.1.1 shows the Generation Z respondents' profile according to sex. It was revealed that most of the sample, or 53.85% (112) of the 208 respondents, were female. The

remaining 46.15% (96) of respondents were male. Women outnumbered men in terms of participation, but still, it was relatively close.

Table 4.1.2 Education Profile of the Generation Z Respondents.

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Elementary	1	0.48
High School	44	21.15
Undergraduate	155	74.52
Masteral	8	3.85
<b>Total</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.1.2 displays the education profile of the Generation Z respondents. In this study with 208 participants, the majority were Undergraduates garnering 74.52% (155) of the

total responses, followed by High School students with 21.15% (44), those taking their master's with 3.85% (8), and lastly, Elementary student with 0.48% (1).

Table 4.1.3 Age Profile of the Generation Z Respondents.

Age	Frequency	Percentage
10-15	7	3.37
16-20	81	38.94
21-25	120	57.69
<b>Total</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.1.3 presents the Generation Z respondents' age distribution of 208 samples. Based on the survey, most respondents were from the age range of 21-25, with 57.69%

(120). It was followed by ages 16-20 (81), garnering 38.94%, and the least were ages 10-15, with 3.37% (7) of the total responses.

Table 4.1.4 Most Used Social Media Platform of the Generation Z Respondents.

Social Media Platform	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	47	22.60
Instagram	51	24.52

Social Media Platform	Frequency	Percentage
TikTok	58	27.88
Twitter	6	2.88
YouTube	46	22.12
<b>Total</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.1.4 reveals the preferred social media platform of Generation Z respondents. According to 208 Manileños, the most used social media platform for them was TikTok at 27.88% (58), Instagram at 24.52% (51), Facebook at 22.60% (47), YouTube at 22.12% (46), and Twitter at 2.88% (6). It was a very close distribution, but clearly, TikTok prevailed among the listed platforms.

Table 4.1.5 Composite Reliability and Convergent Validity of the Constructs.

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
I	0.747	0.756	0.601
N	n/a	n/a	n/a
R	0.829	0.839	0.619
U	n/a	n/a	n/a
EA	0.844	0.845	0.731
IQ	0.783	0.784	0.547
CIFI	n/a	n/a	n/a
IDI	n/a	n/a	n/a
IRI	0.856	0.857	0.598

The researchers identified items per construct that may not be reliable for measuring latent variables. Complete details on which items were dropped can be found in the Appendices.

Table 4.1.5 shows the composite reliability and convergent validity for each latent variable on the adjusted model of the framework. The convergent validity was assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which indicates values higher than the recommended value of 0.5 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). The result revealed that all the constructs achieved a value greater than 0.5. Note that Continue/Intention

to Follow the Influencer, Intention to Disagree with the Influencer, Novelty, and Understandability contain only one item per construct in the adjusted model and, therefore, cannot compute the value of the said statistic.

Meanwhile, the reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha composite reliability, where each latent variable attained a value higher than the benchmark of 0.7 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The result shows that the adjusted model's composite reliability and convergent validity were satisfied.

Table 4.1.6 Assessment of discriminant validity using HTMT.

	CIFI	EA	IQ	IDI	R	I	N	R	U
CIFI									
EA	0.625								
IQ	0.619	0.707							
IDI	0.100	0.052	0.127						
IRI	0.685	0.802	0.775	0.090					
I	0.606	0.666	0.671	0.056	0.720				
N	0.419	0.465	0.558	0.011	0.591	0.703			
R	0.475	0.681	0.745	0.041	0.621	0.668	0.532		
U	0.396	0.542	0.686	0.004	0.551	0.556	0.440	0.566	

Note. CIFI= Continue/Intention to follow the influencer; EA= Emotional Attachment; IQ= Information Quality; IDI= Intention to disagree with the influencer; IRI= Intention to recommend the influencer; I= Interestingness; N=Novelty; R=Reliability; U=Understandability

Table 4.1.6 displays the heterotrait-mono-trait (HTMT) ratio of the correlation to assess the discriminant validity. Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015) suggest that HTMT should be less than 0.85 to make the discriminant validity

acceptable. Evidence suggests that the HTMT ratio of the correlation indicates the discriminant validity established on the adjusted model.

Table 4.1.7 Measurement Fit of the Model.

Fit Index	Recommended Value	Actual Model Value	Model Fit
(User vs. saturated model)	> 0.05	1431.085*	Poor Fit
NFI	> 0.90	0.860	Poor Fit
SRMR	< 0.08	0.061	Acceptable Fit

Note. \*Denotes significance at a 5% significance level.

Table 4.1.7 reveals the model fit indices on the importance of social IGC for user cognition and emotional attachment. Evidence suggests that using the chi-square value, the model has a poor fit ( $\chi^2=1431.085$ ) which is not surprising given the large sample size.

(SRMR) were used to capture the fit index to compensate for the chi-square test. The result reveals that the NFI (0.860) shows a poor fit for the model. On the other hand, as per Hu and Bentler (1999), using SRMR (0.061), the model shows an acceptable fit.

Furthermore, Normed Fit Index (NFI) and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual

Table 4.1.8 Coefficient of Variation on Each Dependent Variable.

Dependent Variables	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
EA	0.598	0.596
IQ	0.656	0.656
CIFI	0.454	0.452
IRI	0.730	0.729
IDI	0.034	0.032

Table 4.1.8 shows the coefficient of variation caused by the independent variables on each dependent variable. The adjusted R2 was mainly used since it adjusted on the added free parameters to the model, unlike the R2, where it increases even if the added variables cannot significantly contribute to the dependent variable. Evidence shows that the combination of emotional attachment and information quality contributes to a 72.9% variation in the

respondents' intention to recommend the influencer (Adj. R2=0.729).

Both the influencers' reliability and understandability can contribute a whopping 65.6% to the variation in the information quality. Moreover, interestingness, novelty, reliability, understandability, and information quality play an estimated 59.6% variation in the respondent's emotional attachment.

Table 4.1.9 Hypothesis Testing of the Model Parameters

Hypothesis	Path		T	P	Remarks
H1	I → EA	0.320	1.525	0.127	Not Supported
H2	N → EA	-0.097	0.764	0.445	Not Supported

Hypothesis	Path		T	P	Remarks
H3-1	R → EA	0.260	1.350	0.177	Not Supported
H3-2	R → IQ	0.524	5.260	<.001*	Supported
H4-1	U → EA	0.033	0.329	0.743	Not Supported
H4-2	U → IQ	0.389	3.881	<.001*	Supported
H5-1	IQ → EA	0.331	1.631	0.103	Not Supported
H5-2	IQ → CIFI	0.354	3.165	0.002*	Supported
H5-3	IQ → IRI	0.412	3.889	<.001*	Supported
H5-4	IQ → IDI	-0.250	1.950	0.051	Not Supported
H6-1	EA → CIFI	0.376	3.519	<.001*	Supported
H6-2	EA → IRI	0.512	5.563	<.001*	Supported
H6-3	EA → IDI	0.229	1.674	0.094	Not Supported

Table 4.1.9 displays the hypothesis testing conducted analyzing the importance of social IGC for user cognition and emotional attachment. Evidence suggests that the perceived reliability of content is positively correlated with information quality ( $\beta=0.524, p<.001$ ). Moreover, it shows that content understandability positively and significantly impacts information quality ( $\beta=0.389, p<.001$ ).

Significantly, it reveals that the information quality is positively and significantly correlated with the intention to follow/continue to follow ( $\beta=0.354, p=0.002$ ) and recommend ( $\beta=0.412, p<.001$ ) an influencer. Moreover, it suggests that the emotional attachment positively affects users' intention to follow/continue to follow ( $\beta=0.376, p<.001$ ) and recommend ( $\beta=0.512, p<.001$ ) the influencer.

However, all the remaining paths remain insignificant since the p-values computed are greater than the 5% significance level.

#### 4.2 Discussions

As shown in Table 4.1.9, influencer-generated content's (IGC) Interestingness (I) was found insignificant to Generation Z Manileño users' Emotional Attachment (EA) towards social media influencers, rejecting H1. In the local context, this means that influencer-branded content's interestingness does affect users to be emotionally attached to them. Other studies indicated that content interestingness is positively associated with viewers' positive emotions and significantly increases emotional involvement (Siddiqui et al., 2021; Xu et al., 2021). On the flip side, Purwandari et al. (2022) study also stated that content's arousal factor or its perceived enjoyment and pleasure does

not positively affect social users' interaction and satisfaction. Therefore, being emotionally attached to influencers goes beyond the entertainment value of branded content.

Research findings also revealed that influencer-generated content's Novelty (N) does not significantly affect users' emotional attachment toward influencers, rejecting H2. According to the study of Casalo et al. (2020) and Photiou et al. (2021), content's perceived novelty positively affects intentions to interact and recommend. However, content's element of surprise may create a temporary spike in attention, but it does not guarantee emotional attachment or long-term loyalty from social media users. This notion is supported by the study of Casalo et al. (2018) that although novel content generates positive emotions, it still has lower effects on commitment. In a nutshell, the content novel may capture lots of attention. Regardless, it is not a primary driver of emotional attachment, as users may quickly move on to fresher influencer-branded posts.

The result on whether influencer branded content's Reliability (R) positively affects users' Emotional Attachment (EA) showed no significance, rejecting H3-1. Although Yan et al. (2021) study found content reliability as a significant source for users' emotional attachment, Larson et al. (2018) and Prolochs et al. (2021) studies revealed that reliability could adversely affect users' emotional attachment, especially when compounded with the spread of false rumors. Content reliability may initially contribute to fostering long-term trust, but emotional attachment is built on the overall experience with the influencer rather than mere reliable branded content. In the Philippine



context, other factors may play a significant role in establishing lasting emotional connections besides reliability.

On the other hand, content's Reliability (R) is positively correlated with Information Quality (IQ), significantly supporting H3-2. In today's world flooded with misinformation and distrust, users will likely value reliable information sources. The same goes for branded content. Influencers may be labeled as paid advertisers (AlFarraj et al., 2021), but their lack of formal certification could further confuse their audience about whether they are reliable (Chen et al., 2021). Providing a credible profile firmly impacts the users' perception and willingness to trust their recommendations (Zloteanu et al., 2018). This only demonstrates how the reliability and caliber of information can significantly affect people's online engagement behaviors.

When it comes to influencer-generated content's Understandability (U) and its relationship with users' Emotional Attachment (EA) to influencers, results showed no significance, rejecting H4-1. This means that although understandability is vital for effective communication, it does not inherently create a deeper emotional connection beyond mere comprehension. Multiple authors agreed that easy-to-understand content positively impacts overall customer experience, participation, and satisfaction (Atiq et al., 2022; Handani et al., 2022; Lu et al., 2022). However, in the study of Cao and Sun (2017), even the impact of information overload on regret and exhaustion is insignificant. Thus, other factors besides content understandability may create a sense of connection and resonance to social media users, at least for Generation Z Manileños.

Meanwhile, the result shows that influencer-generated content's Understandability (U) positively and significantly correlates with Information Quality (IQ), accepting H4-2. It proves that when branded content is presented comprehensively with no unnecessary jargon, users will likely perceive it as relevant and apply it to their lives. Thus, enhancing their perception of the content's information quality. This is in line with Flores and Asuncion's (2020) and Mystakidis et al.'s (2022) findings that when high-quality data are very understandable, it will result in better

comprehension and even affection, for instance, risk/crisis communication. In this study's context, when influencers speak user-friendly, it says about their expertise and command of the subject matter.

Regarding branded content's Information Quality (IQ) positively affecting users' Emotional Attachment (EA) to an influencer, the result revealed insignificance, rejecting H5-1. This means other factors may drive emotional attachment rather than the information quality alone. Some findings suggest that the better the content's information quality, the more it positively affects emotional attachment (Chen et al., 2020; Jiang et al., 2021). However, Son et al. (2022) clarified that although information leads to sharing, it does not always lead to positive attitudes. Therefore, while information quality is essential, it does not necessarily create an emotional bond beyond the content's informational value, at least in the local context.

The result shows that Information Quality (IQ) positively and significantly affects Continue/Intention to Follow an Influencer (CIFI). That as IQ increases, CIFI also increases, supporting H5-2. This proves that when social media influencers consistently deliver accurate, adequate, and consistent content, it enhances the respondent's trust and makes them interact with them more. Such finding is consistent with other studies that influencers do not automatically have strong connections with their audience, but when they provide helpful information, and it satisfies content needs, users will likely follow and interact (Al-Rahmi et al., 2021; Mazarolo et al., 2021; Balaban et al., 2022). Indeed, the influencer-generated content's information quality is now a crucial factor that should align with their desire for a trustworthy online experience.

Additionally, Information Quality (IQ) positively affects the Intention to Recommend an Influencer (IRI), agreeing with H5-3. Similar to the previous one, when influencer-generated content provides high-quality information, it increases the likelihood of a user trusting influencers as a reliable source of valuable information. Thus, users will also develop positive opinions on the influencer's content. This supports Halim et al. (2020) and Xu et al. (2021) findings that users' trust will grow if

influencer-generated contents provide relevant information and perceived value, as satisfaction is a significant factor of loyalty and recommendations. Thus, this significant relationship emphasizes the importance of providing quality information to build a robust reputation and foster positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

Following the hypothesis testing, it is revealed that Information Quality (IQ) has no significant effect on the Intention to Disagree with the Influencer (IDI), rejecting H5-4. This means that variable IQ cannot predict the respondents' intention to disagree with the influencer. Contrary to other studies, dissatisfaction and insincerity were critical for followers' discontinuance intentions (Morton, 2020; Chen et al., 2020). On the other hand, Belanche et al. (2021) made it clear that followers can judge a publication's lack of coherence, whether positive or negative perceptions; these users can unfollow influencers at any time. Conclusively, social media users could have predisposed opinions, or one's social validation can override the intention to disagree with an influencer other than information quality.

As for Emotional Attachment, whether it affects Continue/Intention to Follow an Influencer (CIFI), the findings showed significance, supporting H6-1. This highlights that when social media users feel a genuine connection towards influencer-generated content, they are likely to become part of a loyal fan base and remain engaged with their future content. This coincides with several other findings that followers may have a greater intention to follow an influencer if they publish valuable content that fits their interest and give them hedonic and enjoyable experiences (Jansom & Pongsakornrungrong, 2021; Tan, 2021; Barta et al., 2022). Therefore, emotional attachment contributes to digital belongingness. This sense of community further strengthens users' intention to follow or continue to follow social media influencers.

Based on the findings, Emotional Attachment (EA) positively affects users' Intention to Recommend the Influencer (IRI), agreeing with H6-2. This indicates that when Generation Z Manileños feel a strong emotional connection, they are more inclined to become advocates for

the influencer's brand, whether through social media shares, word-of-mouth, or other forms of endorsement. This aligns with several studies that users' attachment to social media influencers grows when they have commendable attitudes and credibility, which leads to spreading positive words to their loved ones and others (Rahmadini & Halim, 2018; Belanche et al., 2021; Xiao et al., 2022). Thus, emotional attachment impacts influencers' popularity through recommendations stemming from a desire to share a positive value with others.

Lastly, it is revealed that there is no significant relationship between Emotional Attachment (EA) and users' Intention to Disagree with the Influencer (IDI), rejecting H6-3. Information quality alone does not automatically lead to the intention to disagree with an influencer. In the study of Lee et al. (2021) and Balaban et al. (2020), they found that once influencer violates the core principles of authenticity, transparency, and trustworthiness that their followers uphold, their social contracts are prone to break down. Contrastly, Walton (1978) emphasized that an individual's emotions are not necessarily connected to the behavior or motivation that could lead to disagreement. Therefore, users may have pre-existing preferences contributing to their disagreement intentions beyond the content information quality alone.

## Conclusion

In this study, it was found that all the presented content characteristics of influencer-generated content showed a negative statistical correlation to users' emotional attachment. This only means that other content factors besides interestingness, novelty, reliability, and understandability might be more prominent in influencing Generation Z Manileños to be emotionally attached to influencers.

Furthermore, the study revealed a noteworthy correlation, indicating that both reliability and understandability exert a significant and positive impact on information quality. And between the two, reliability has the most significant effect on information quality. This could mean Generation Z Manileños would not want to be a victim of misinformation, so they chose to prioritize content they can trust and rely on.

This supports the notion that when influencers provide a credible profile, it firmly impacts the users' perception and willingness to trust their recommendations (Zloteanu et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2021). Though findings showed no correlation between information quality and emotional attachment, influencers and brands can still leverage this insight to focus on credible information delivery to make users more receptive to their content and enhance their reputation in the digital landscape.

The last significant finding underscores that improving the quality of influencer-generated content and deepening users' emotional connections can lead to an uptick in their desire to follow influencers or recommend them to others. The only exception is the intention to disagree with the influencer. Regardless, such a positive relationship could help increase brand reach and follower count, thus, confirming that information quality and emotional attachment impact influencers' popularity. Relevantly, similar to the findings of Zhang and Choi (2022), emotional attachment is more likely to persuade users to advocate for their causes and content, much like a rabid fan. As stated in several studies, when individuals feel associated with influencers with commendable attitudes and credibility, they tend to recommend them to their loved ones and also imitate the influencer (Rahmadini & Halim, 2018; Blanche et al., 2021; Xiao et al., 2022). Therefore, the stronger the users' emotional attachment, the greater the influence on influencers' popularity.

Indeed, social media influencers have become instrumental in making digital platforms a more enjoyable place to dwell. The findings of this study are just the first of many more studies that explore the initial stages of an influencer's growth in the local context and the international literature.

Considering the findings, it is recommended that Filipino social media influencers differentiate themselves by being engaging and humane, particularly through interactive livestreams. Strategies such as "Comment to Win it," "Heart to Heart Calls," and Q&A sessions can drive awareness and engagement. Leveraging nostalgic storytelling, emotional journeys, and collaborating with experts for project exe-

cution are also emphasized, considering the importance of content reliability for Generation Z.

Businesses, both local and international, are advised to leverage infotainment content, strategically combining informative and entertaining elements for widespread reach and virality. Incorporating social causes and fostering community can enhance brand reputation, while visual storytelling, as demonstrated by Simple Sum Philippines, effectively resonates with consumers.

A research-driven approach is recommended for marketers, involving content gap analysis, A/B testing, and leveraging market research and consumer insights to create customized content. Social media analytics should be employed to measure campaign effectiveness and optimize content strategy, emphasizing the importance of a strong content strategy in supporting the customer journey and building lasting connections.

The study concludes by highlighting the challenge of determining the trustworthiness of content, encouraging consumers and social media users to discuss content in forums like *Reddit*. Given that reliability and recommendation are common actions, users are urged to engage in open discussions and seek opinions before making recommendations. The findings represent the initial stages of an influencer's growth in both local and international contexts, with further exploration recommended.

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