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Generation Z's Involvement in Social Media in the Context of Its Representatives' Readiness to Shape the Marketing Activities of Enterprises

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Abstract:

Purpose: *The aim of this article was to discover the types of activities representatives of Generation Z engage in social media in the context of their readiness to influence the marketing activities of modern enterprises and the relationships between these categories.*
Design/methodology/approach: *A review of the literature confirms the existence of a cognitive and research gap regarding the social media activity of Generation Z in the context of their readiness to influence corporate marketing activities. These aspects have not been studied in the manner proposed in this article, which aligns with the S-O-R theory and H-2-H marketing theory. To address these gaps, empirical research was conducted using a survey method, involving 340 Polish adult representatives of Generation 'Z'. The primary data were subjected to statistical analysis, allowing for the verification of research hypotheses formulated based on literature analysis.*
Findings: *Key results include identifying relationships between nine out of eleven analyzed types of social media activities and the respondents' willingness to influence corporate marketing activities. Based on these features, respondents were segmented into groups.*
Practical implications: *The conclusions drawn from the research enrich the theory by filling identified gaps and offer practical value, serving as important recommendations for enterprises.*
Originality value: *The research findings contribute significantly to theory, particularly the S-O-R model and H-2-H marketing theory. The study identified relationships between specific virtual stimuli and their effects on the behaviors of Generation Z users, emphasizing the role of individuals as key participants in social media interactions.*

Keywords: *Social media, Generation Z, Generation Z's activity in social media, enterprise, marketing activities in social media, Generation Z's influence on marketing activities.*

JEL codes: *M30, M31.*

Paper type: *Research article.*

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1. Introduction

Research indicates that, regardless of country, Generation Z individuals are the most active users of social media. The percentage of this age group active in social media exceeds 90% in many countries (OECD Society at a Glance, 2024), and other data suggest it may be as high as 94% (Yaqub, 2024). This underscores the necessity of researching Generation Z's activities in these media. An important research area is their engagement in co-creating marketing values valuable to them and other social media users on both individual and social levels (Azzari, Mainardes, Cristo-Andrade, Durans, Vale, and Macedo, 2024).

Social media offer an ideal environment for enterprises to interact with users, creating previously unattainable opportunities (Dimitriu, and Guesalaga, 2017). However, as research shows, social media are still primarily used for communication (Dong, and Wu, 2015) and brand awareness (Kim, and Choi, 2019), rather than for collaboration with users. Consequently, the immense potential of this environment and its users, particularly from Generation Z, remains underutilized.

The research approach in this article aligns with Human-2-Human marketing theory (H-2-H marketing theory), which focuses on humans as key entities in contemporary market interactions (Kotler, Pfoertsch, and Sponholz, 2021). It also corresponds with the Stimuli–Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory, positing that all environmental aspects can stimulate specific reactions in organisms, leading to particular human behaviors (Chen, 2023), including social media users.

To the best of the author's knowledge, the social media activity of Generation Z has not been previously studied in the context of their readiness to shape corporate marketing activities. Thus, a cognitive and research gap exists in this area. The effort to bridge this gap led to the formulation of the research problem as follows: what types of activities do Generation Z representatives undertake in social media, considering their willingness to influence the marketing activities of contemporary enterprises?

To address this research problem, the goal was to discover the types of activities representatives of Generation Z engage in on social media in the context of their readiness to influence corporate marketing activities and the relationships between these categories. Achieving this goal involved testing research hypotheses based on the literature review results.

The structure of this paper is organized to address the research problem, achieve the article's goal, and test the research hypotheses. The introduction serves as a foundation for presenting theoretical bases related to social media and their use by Generation Z representatives, enabling the formulation of research hypotheses tested in primary studies. The course and results of these studies are presented in subsequent sections of the article.

The obtained results are then discussed scientifically, and the final section outlines the main conclusions, limitations of the research, and suggestions for future empirical studies.

2. Conceptual Foundation and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Theoretical Background

The considerations presented in this article are based on the Stimuli–Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory, which assumes that all aspects of the environment can act as stimuli and trigger reactions within an organism (Mehrabian, and Russell, 1974). According to this theory, these internal processes directly influence subsequent behavioral responses (Vieira, 2013).

The S-O-R model integrates these elements, allowing for a deeper understanding of user interactions in virtual environments, where emotional engagement plays a crucial role (Erensoy, Mathrani, Schnack, Elms, and Baghaei, 2024). Empirical studies confirm the model's ability to accurately capture the dynamic relationships between virtual stimuli and user behaviors (Chen, 2023), making it particularly useful for research on social media activity.

The S-O-R model is widely applied in the study of behavioral responses, including social media user behaviors (e.g., Muhammad, Adeshola, and Isiaku, 2024). Furthermore, previous studies (e.g., Zhang, Zhao, Lu, and Yang, 2016) indicate that in the context of social media, both the digital environment and psychological processes significantly influence user behavior.

The content available in social media—such as posts, images, or videos—acts as environmental stimuli that, combined with internal psychological states, lead to specific attitudes and behaviors (i.e., responses). In the context of this study, these responses include the willingness to shape marketing actions and specific social media activity.

Both this willingness and activity are expressed by individuals acting as social media users and are directed towards other users (both individual and collective, such as enterprises).

Therefore, the research presented in this article also aligns with the H-2-H marketing theory, which focuses on the human being as the key participant in interactions with other market actors, including those in the virtual space.

According to this theory, these interactions are based on long-term and authentic trust. Trust, in turn, is one of the most highly valued attributes for Generation Z (Putri, Prasetya, Handayani, and Fitriani, 2023).

2.2 Social Media and their Development

Social media constitute an environment where a significant portion of daily activities takes place for nearly every contemporary individual. In academic literature, they are defined as tools for social interaction that leverage readily accessible and scalable communication methods—such as internet and mobile technologies—to transform traditional communication into an interactive dialogue (Lim, and Rasul, 2022).

For some individuals, particularly young people, including representatives of Generation Z, the majority of their activities occur in the virtual world, especially on social media. The average young person from Generation Z spends approximately 10.6 hours daily in the virtual world, with a significant portion of this time (nearly one-third) dedicated to social media (Yaqub, 2024).

Social media have become ubiquitous (Fernandes, and Oliveira, 2024), serving as a space for social, professional, and even family life. It is now difficult to imagine building relationships without the assistance of social media. These platforms have completely eliminated geographical, linguistic, and even psychological barriers between users. One could argue that they have enabled individuals to assume the role of global citizens, engaging in interactions with others regardless of geographic location.

However, this also has its downsides (Dwivedi, Ismagilova, Hughes, Carlson, Filieri, and Wang, 2021), ranging from the reduction of face-to-face interpersonal interactions to unethical behaviors, including manipulative, misleading, or even hate-driven actions (Talwar, Dhir, Kaur, Zafar, and Alrasheedy, 2019).

Nevertheless, the dark side of social media does not slow down their rapid—indeed, explosive—growth. It is projected that by 2027, over 6 billion people worldwide will be social media users (Statista, 2022). This expansion is driven by social media's fundamental characteristics: they provide a space for fast, easy, and interactive communication while enabling content creation and intuitive content management (Bleier, Fossen, and Shapira, 2024).

2.3 Generation Z and Its Activity in Social Media

Consumers in today's market can be classified according to various criteria, one of the most significant being generational affiliation. In the literature, six primary generations are typically distinguished (Sidor-Rządkowska, 2018; Dacka, 2023):

1. Traditionalists – born before 1945.
2. Baby Boomers (BB) – born between 1946 and 1964.
3. Generation X (Post-Boomers) – born between 1965 and 1979.
4. Generation Y – born between 1980 and 1994.
5. Generation Z (C) – born between 1995 and 2010.

6. Generation Alpha – born from 2011 to the present.

Some researchers argue that the birth period of Generation Z begins in 2000 (Ozkan, and Solmaz, 2015). However, the prevailing consensus places the lower boundary at 1995. These discrepancies have little impact on the defining demographic characteristics of this generation. Generation Z comprises young individuals, up to 30 years old, who grew up in an era of rapidly expanding digitization affecting nearly every aspect of daily life (Chen, and Ha, 2023).

While Generation Alpha also exhibits this characteristic, its members have not yet reached adulthood. As a result, Generation Z remains the only fully digital generation that includes adults. This generation encompasses all undergraduate and graduate students in full-time education, as well as a significant portion of doctoral candidates and young professionals who have recently entered the labor market (Barhate, and Dirani, 2022).

They are shaping the job market in alignment with their attitudes and shared values. Their behaviors strongly influence the consumer goods and services market, in which they actively participate as final purchasers and consumers to varying degrees.

Furthermore, Generation Z is the largest generation globally, making up approximately one-third of the world's population (Ribeiro, Seyfi, Elhoushy, Woosnam, and Patwardhan, 2022). This demographic dominance further enhances their marketing significance, both as consumers and as potential or actual creators of value in the marketplace (Tirocchi, 2024).

The term Generation Z is the most commonly used designation for this age group of purchasers. However, some researchers have attempted to introduce alternative names (Jayatissa, 2023). Despite the variations, most of these names highlight the defining characteristic of this generation—its advanced digital proficiency compared to previous cohorts.

The most frequently used synonyms include (Jayatissa, 2023): digital natives, gen tech, iGeneration, Internet generation, Google generation, new silent generation, app generation, .com generation, facebook generation, online generation, and clicking generation. Each of these terms underscores the natural affinity Generation Z has with the digital world. This encompasses nearly every aspect of life (Lim and Rasul, 2022) and includes their roles as final purchasers, consumers, and prosumers (Malodia, Filieri, Otterbring and Dhir, 2024).

It is worth noting that the term 'Social Media Generation' does not appear among the listed names, even though, in the author's opinion, it very accurately reflects the characteristics of Generation Z. While some researchers refer to this generation as the 'Facebook Generation' (see above), its representatives do not use only this social media platform —they engage with various social media, especially Instagram

(Olejniczak, 2022). It thus seems that this name better reflects the space in which a significant portion (if not the majority) of Gen Z's activity takes place.

As rightly noted by Ameen, Hosany, and Taheri (2023), the behaviors of Generation Z have been extensively and thoroughly analyzed in the literature. However, these researchers point to the need to explore four other, previously unexamined research areas related to this group.

One of these areas concerns Generation Z in the context of globally significant issues, particularly economic and social matters, sustainability and environmental protection, as well as health and well-being. Identifying the scope of activity of this age group in social media, in the context of their readiness to shape corporate marketing activities, clearly falls within this area. It affects companies' economic outcomes, reflects social trends, and is linked to sustainable socio-economic development, as it contributes to building a conscious and responsible society (Prados-Peña, Gálvez-Sánchez, and García-López, 2023).

It turns out that one of Gen Z's most important expectations regarding social media is simply honesty and transparency in the content they consume (Roman, 2024). This is precisely why Generation Z prefers user-generated content (UGC) over content created by enterprises, which, in their view, is far less credible and authentic (Shetu, 2023). This reaction is consistent with their behavior in other forms and environments of marketing communication.

However, contradictions in Gen Z's attitudes and behaviors are evident. They are perceived as the most environmentally and socially conscious generation, valuing ethical principles, yet they form a key target segment for companies such as SHEIN—the world's largest non-sustainable fast fashion retailer (Zimand-Sheiner and Lissitsa, 2024). This company extensively utilizes social media influencer marketing in its targeted marketing efforts, leveraging the channels and forms of communication that dominate Gen Z's activities.

Gen Z gathers information online and uses it for online shopping, including purchases made through social media. They look for brands that align with their values (Arsel, Crockett, and Scott, 2022), primarily using social media for this purpose. They not only act as users of these platforms but also serve as influencers who shape the opinions of others in social media (Bhalla, Tiwari, and Chowdhary, 2021).

Due to their greater exposure to social media compared to older generations, these platforms also have a stronger influence on their attitudes toward products (Chang, and Chang, 2023). Research indicates that Gen Z individuals want to: do what brings them pleasure and have fun (43%), be rich (32%), and lead an exciting life (32%) (https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jun/07/power-hungry-hedonists-survey-reveals-what-drives-generation-z). Among previous generations, such as Millennials, these percentages were notably lower (38%, 26%, and 26%, respectively).

This shows that Gen Z primarily uses social media for hedonistic purposes (Barta, Belanche, Fernández, and Flavián, 2023), seeking momentary pleasure and exciting experiences. This raises the question: Can participating in marketing activities provide them with the kind of experiences they desire?

A review of the literature shows that Gen Z has been the subject of numerous studies. However, the scope of these studies differs significantly from the focus of this article. Other researchers have examined aspects of Gen Z's social media activities such as: attitudes and purchasing behaviors (Li, 2025; Djafarova, and Bowes, 2021; Putri, Prasetya, Handayani, and Fitriani, 2023), purchase intentions (Bratina, and Faganel, 2024), content creation (Stahl, and Literat, 2022; Cao, Meadows, Wong, and Xia, 2021), motives for engaging in social media (Malodia, Filieri, Otterbring, and Dhir, 2024), role as influencers (Fijałkowska, Krywalski-Santiago, and Danesi, 2024), etc.

Moreover, Consumer Social Media Engagement Behavior has been studied exclusively in relation to this last aspect. It is defined as behavior related to engagement with marketing content on social media, including content created by other users (Cao, Meadows, Wong, and Xia, 2021).

Regarding research on specific forms of Gen Z's activity on corporate social media profiles, there are significantly fewer studies. Moreover, existing research focuses on less engaging forms of activity and analyzes them in a different context than this article. For instance, Ławińska and Korombel (2023a) examined activities such as: visiting a company's official profile, participating in company-organized contests, commenting on and rating company posts, sharing company posts, and recommending particularly attractive company profiles to friends.

However, these activities were analyzed in relation to demographic and geographic characteristics, such as gender and place of residence, among respondents from Poland and the UK. In a follow-up study, the focus shifted to analyzing Gen Z's expectations regarding company actions that could drive their engagement in social media activity (Korombel, and Ławińska, 2024).

However, no research has been conducted in the context proposed in this article. Specifically, no studies have examined the relationship between Gen Z's social media activity and their willingness to shape companies' marketing strategies. This indicates the existence of a cognitive and research gap in this area.

To address these gaps, the study aimed to test the following research hypotheses:

H1 – There is a relationship between respondents' positive communication activity in social media and their willingness to shape companies' marketing strategies.
H2 – There is a relationship between respondents' negative communication activity in social media and their willingness to shape companies' marketing strategies.

H3 – There is a relationship between respondents' creative activity in social media regarding existing products and their willingness to shape companies' marketing strategies.
H4 – There is a relationship between respondents' creative activity in social media regarding new products and their willingness to shape companies' marketing strategies.
H5 – There is a relationship between respondents' creative activity in social media regarding product attributes and their willingness to shape companies' marketing strategies.
H6 – There is a relationship between respondents' creative activity in social media regarding promotional activities and their willingness to shape companies' marketing strategies.
H7 – There is a relationship between respondents' lack of activity in social media and their willingness to shape companies' marketing strategies.

This article aims to identify the types of activities undertaken by Generation Z representatives in social media in the context of their willingness to influence marketing activities of contemporary enterprises, as well as the relationships between these categories. Achieving this goal was possible through testing research hypotheses formulated based on a literature review.

Verifying these hypotheses will contribute significantly to theory, particularly H-2-H marketing theory and the S-O-R theory. Identifying both the forms of Gen Z's activity in social media and their willingness to shape marketing strategies, as well as the relationships between these variables, is essential for effectively engaging this important age group and leveraging their marketing potential in a way that benefits both sides of social media interactions.

3. Research Methods

To achieve the objective of this article and verify the formulated research hypotheses, an empirical study was designed and conducted. Primary data was collected using a survey method. The chosen means of contacting respondents was a remote contact method. A link to an online questionnaire, specifically prepared for this study, was distributed via email. The study was carried out in the fourth quarter of 2024 among 340 adults representing Polish Generation Z social media users.

For the purposes of the study, a widely accepted approach from the literature was adopted, defining Generation Z as individuals born between 1995 and 2010 (e.g., McKinsey and Company, 2024; Jayatissa, 2023). Members of Generation Z within this age range were included in the study for three main reasons: (1) their relatively high activity on social media (Yaqub, 2024), (2) their significant role in economic and social development, as highlighted in numerous demographic studies (Sztop-Rutkowska, 2023), and (3) their relatively large population size (constituting approximately one-fourth of Poland's total population – cf. *Polska w liczbach* 2024).

The study had a nationwide scope. A quota sampling method was applied, ensuring that the demographic structure of the sample was proportional to that of the general population, as reported by the Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS) (*Polska w liczbach* 2024). In 2024, the proportion of adult women under 30 in Poland was 49.01%. There were no official statistics available on the share of individuals who did not identify as either male or female. Respondents were given the option to select from three gender categories: woman, man, or a person not identifying with either gender.

However, no respondents selected the third option. Women accounted for 49.0% of the surveyed sample, which matched the demographic structure of the general population.

The conducted research was entirely confidential, anonymous, and objective. It therefore met the criteria required for quantitative studies (Podsakoff, Podsakoff, Williams, Huang, and Yang, 2024).

The research process analyzed the following variables, which reflect the scope of the study: respondents' opinions on whether social media enable building strong relationships between enterprises and recipients, their willingness to exert actual influence on companies' marketing activities, and the type of social media activity in interactions with enterprises.

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement related to these variables using a Likert scale, which is the most commonly used psychometric tool in social sciences (Joshi, Kale, Chandel, and Pal, 2015). A five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, hard to say, agree, strongly agree) was used for two of the variables. However, for the variable measuring 'willingness to exert actual influence on companies' marketing activities' a three-point scale (yes, hard to say, no) was applied.

Participants were presented with eleven types of social media activities. These categories were derived from a literature review (e.g., Ławińska, and Korombel, 2023b) and preliminary research using an unstructured interview method. The latter was conducted among twenty Generation Z representatives to refine the research instrument—the survey questionnaire—which was subsequently used to collect primary data in the main survey.

The primary data collected during the survey was subjected to quantitative analysis. The applied methods included comparative analysis, Pearson's chi-square independence test, the V-Cramer contingency coefficient analysis, and exploratory factor analysis. The chi-square test was used to determine whether statistically significant relationships existed between the analyzed variables. The V-Cramer contingency coefficient was used to assess the strength of relationships between variables.

This coefficient is applied when at least one variable has more than two values (King, Rosopa, and Minium, 2018), meaning when the contingency table dimensions are at least 2×3.

Exploratory factor analysis was used in the preparation of this article to reduce the set of variables affecting the studied category, i.e., 'type of social media activity,' and to identify internal dependencies among these variables (Abdi, and Williams, 2010). The principal component method was used to extract factors.

The Kaiser criterion technique was applied to determine the number of components, retaining only those with an eigenvalue greater than 1. Each component (or factor) explains a certain level of overall variance in the analyzed system, represented as a percentage of variance, which can be interpreted as a measure of how well the phenomenon is explained.

The factors were rotated using the oblimin method. Within each factor, variables with the highest factor loadings (≥ 0.7) were identified, as this threshold is widely accepted in the literature (Hair, Gabriel, da Silva, and Braga Junior, 2019; Watkins, 2018).

The collected primary data was statistically analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Ver. 25.

4. Research Results

According to more than three-quarters of respondents, the use of social media by companies in marketing activities facilitates building good relationships with recipients (Table 1). Only 6.2% of respondents disagreed, with just 2.2% expressing a strongly negative opinion.

Table 1. *Respondents' Opinions on Whether the Use of Social Media Enables Building Strong Relationships Between Enterprises and Recipients (in %)*

Respondents' Opinions	**Responses (%)**	
Strongly disagree	2.2	6.2
Rather disagree	4.0	
Hard to say	17.3	17.3
Rather agree	49.3	76.5
Strongly agree	27.2	

Source: *Own study based on research results.*

As shown in Table 2, the largest proportion of respondents expressed a willingness to influence companies' marketing activities. The smallest percentage of respondents stated they did not want to have such an influence. Notably, more than one-third of respondents were unable to answer this seemingly simple question.

Table 2. *Respondents' Declared Willingness to Exert Actual Influence on Business Marketing Activities (in %).*

Willingness to Influence Marketing Activities	Responses (%)
No	19.5
Hard to say	37.5
Yes	43.0

Source: *Own study based on research results.*

Although 43.0% of respondents confirmed their willingness to co-shape companies' marketing activities, nearly 36.0% stated categorically that they hardly ever visit company profiles on social media (Table 3). The remaining respondents primarily engaged in communicative activities, such as sharing positive opinions about a company's offers on its social media profile or simply followed a specific company's profile.

These were the only forms of engagement that received average scores above 3.00. It is worth noting that for the analyzed variables, the average values serve as a valid basis for hierarchical ranking, as evidenced by the ratio of standard deviation to the average value (*Variance and standard deviation*).

For none of the analyzed forms did the average score exceed 3.22. Given the use of a five-point Likert scale, these were relatively low values. Creative activities—especially those related to product marketing attributes and promotional actions—ranked lower. The lowest-ranked activity was sharing ideas for product packaging on a company's social media profile. This was the only form with an average score below 2.20, and notably, no respondent strongly confirmed engaging in this activity. On a positive note, nearly one in four respondents expressed a desire to be more involved in companies' marketing activities through social media. Similarly, they expected companies to increase their social media engagement in building relationships with consumers.

Table 3. *Cross Table Showing the Type of Social Media Activity in Relations with Enterprises in the Context of Respondents' Declared Willingness to Exert Actual Influence on Business Marketing Activities (in %).*

Analyzed Variable		Willingness To Influence			Total	Average value	Standard dev.	Rank
		No	Hard to say	Yes				
I share positive opinions about a company's offer on its social media profile	Strongly disagree	26.4	12.7	8.5	13.6	3.22	1.290	1
	Rather disagree	18.9	23.5	13.7	18.4			
	Hard to say	17.0	18.6	12.0	15.4			
	Rather agree	24.5	30.4	49.6	37.5			
	Strongly agree	13.2	14.7	16.2	15.1			
I share negative opinions about a company's offer on its social media profile	Strongly disagree	32.1	20.6	13.7	19.9	2.70	1.246	5
	Rather disagree	22.6	32.4	34.2	31.3			
	Hard to say	17.0	16.7	9.4	13.6			
	Rather agree	24.5	24.5	35.9	29.4			
	Strongly agree	3.8	5.9	6.8	5.9			

I share ideas for changes in a company's products on its social media profile	Strongly disagree	45.3	29.4	20.5	28.7	2.47	1.294	7
	Rather disagree	22.6	33.3	30.8	30.1			
	Hard to say	13.2	13.7	15.4	14.3			
	Rather agree	17.0	16.7	22.2	19.1			
	Strongly agree	1.9	6.9	11.1	7.7			
I share ideas for new products on a company's social media profile	Strongly disagree	47.2	34.3	20.5	30.9	2.36	1.269	8
	Rather disagree	20.8	32.4	40.2	33.5			
	Hard to say	7.5	16.7	9.4	11.8			
	Rather agree	20.8	11.8	19.7	16.9			
	Strongly agree	3.8	4.9	10.3	7.0			
I share ideas for promotional activities on a company's social media profile	Strongly disagree	56.6	36.3	27.4	36.4	2.25	1.296	10
	Rather disagree	22.6	35.3	33.3	32.0			
	Hard to say	3.8	10.8	10.3	9.2			
	Rather agree	13.2	8.8	20.5	14.7			
	Strongly agree	3.8	8.8	8.5	7.7			
I share ideas for product packaging on a company's social media profile	Strongly disagree	60.4	39.2	32.5	40.4	2.13	1.229	11
	Rather disagree	26.4	30.4	30.8	29.8			
	Hard to say	3.8	12.7	12.8	11.0			
	Rather agree	9.4	10.8	17.9	13.6			
	Strongly agree	0.0	6.9	6.0	5.1			
I express willingness to participate in a company's marketing activities on its social media profile	Strongly disagree	54.7	37.3	31.6	38.2	2.32	1.330	9
	Rather disagree	20.8	25.5	23.9	23.9			
	Hard to say	5.7	16.7	9.4	11.4			
	Rather agree	13.2	13.7	29.1	20.2			
	Strongly agree	5.7	6.9	6.0	6.3			
I want to be more engaged in companies' marketing activities via social media	Strongly disagree	52.8	21.6	13.7	24.3	2.64	1.264	6
	Rather disagree	18.9	31.4	21.4	24.6			
	Hard to say	3.8	25.5	23.9	20.6			
	Rather agree	18.9	14.7	34.2	23.9			
	Strongly agree	5.7	6.9	6.8	6.6			
I want companies to use social media more in their interactions with me	Strongly disagree	43.4	12.7	10.3	17.6	3.00	1.260	4
	Rather disagree	18.9	22.5	9.4	16.2			
	Hard to say	13.2	30.4	24.8	24.6			
	Rather agree	18.9	22.5	45.3	31.6			
	Strongly agree	5.7	11.8	10.3	9.9			
I regularly follow a specific company's social media profile	Strongly disagree	35.8	18.6	13.7	19.9	3.15	1.400	2
	Rather disagree	17.0	18.6	8.5	14.0			
	Hard to say	15.1	19.6	11.1	15.1			
	Rather agree	26.4	27.5	41.9	33.5			
	Strongly agree	5.7	15.7	24.8	17.6			
I hardly ever visit company profiles on social media	Strongly disagree	2	12.7	22.2	16.9	3.03	1.436	3
	Rather disagree	17.0	26.5	32.5	27.2			
	Hard to say	9.4	16.7	15.4	14.7			
	Rather agree	24.5	18.6	14.5	18.0			
	Strongly agree	35.8	25.5	15.4	23.2			

Source: *Own study based on research results.*

The results presented in Table 3 suggest the existence of a relationship between the type of social media activity and expectations in this regard, as well as the declared willingness to shape business marketing activities. To determine whether such relationships indeed exist, statistical testing was conducted. The chi-square test results

indicate that statistically significant relationships exist for nine out of the eleven analyzed variables. The significance level 'p' for these cases is less than the accepted threshold of 0.05. These variables are highlighted in bold (Table 4). The strongest relationship was discovered for the variable reflecting the expectation that companies should use social media more in their interactions with users.

However, none of the identified relationships proved to be strong, as indicated by the V-Cramer coefficient values, which do not exceed 0.3 for any variable. Only two variables did not show a relationship between the type of social media activity and respondents' willingness to influence companies' marketing activities. These include communicative activity ('sharing negative opinions about a company's offer on its social media profile') and creative activity ('sharing ideas for changes in a company's products on its social media profile').

Table 4. *Type Of Social Media Activity in Relation to Companies vs. Respondents' Declared Willingness to Influence Marketing Activities (in %).*

Social Media Activity	**Declared Willingness to Influence Marketing Activities**		
	chi2 test	**V-Cramer coefficient**	**Level of significance 'p'**
I share positive opinions about a company's offer on its social media profile	21.741	0.200	**0.005**
I share negative opinions about a company's offer on its social media profile	14.070	0.161	0.080
I share ideas for changes in a company's products on its social media profile	14.560	0.164	0.068
I share ideas for new products on a company's social media profile	22.416	0.203	**0.004**
I share ideas for promotional activities on a company's social media profile	19.055	0.187	**0.015**
I share ideas for product packaging on a company's social media profile	16.843	0.176	**0.032**
I express willingness to participate in a company's marketing activities on its social media profile	17.922	0.182	**0.022**
I want to be more engaged in companies' marketing activities via social media	45.185	0.288	**<0.001**
I want companies to use social media more in their interactions with me	48.860	0.300	**<0.001**
I regularly follow a specific company's social media profile	28.441	0.229	**<0.001**
I hardly ever visit company profiles on social media	17.021	0.177	**0.030**

Source: *Own study based on research results.*

The results of the chi-square test indicate that the relationships assumed in hypotheses H2 and H3 were not confirmed, whereas the relationships assumed in the remaining research hypotheses were validated (Table 5).

Table 5. *Research Hypotheses Testing Results*

Hypothesis	**Verification result**
H1	confirmed
H2	not confirmed
H3	not confirmed
H4	confirmed
H5	confirmed
H6	confirmed
H7	confirmed

Source: *Own study based on research results.*

In the next stage of the study, an attempt was made to determine the internal structure of respondents' activity in social media interactions with companies. To identify this structure and conduct a comparative analysis of the types of activity for the entire respondent group versus those who declared a willingness to shape marketing activities or expressed no such intent, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted for each of these three groups.

The Cronbach's alpha test yielded a value of 0.828, exceeding the threshold of 0.8. This indicates high reliability and, consequently, strong internal consistency within the analyzed set of activities (Kalkbrenner, 2021; Taber, 2018). It is important to clarify that for the purposes of the factor analysis, all respondents were aggregated into two groups: (1) individuals who expressed a willingness to exert real influence on business marketing activities (see Table 2) and (2) individuals who did not express such a desire (including both those who explicitly declared no willingness and those who were unsure).

Based on Kaiser's criterion, two factors were identified for each of the three respondent groups, with eigenvalues greater than 1. In every case, these factors explained more than 68% of the total variance of the studied phenomenon (Table 6).

Table 6. *Factor Hierarchy Based on Eigenvalues Determined Using Kaiser's Criterion (for the Total of Respondents and According to Declared Willingness to Exert Real Influence on Marketing Activities)*

Factor	**Eigenvalue**			**Cumulative Eigenvalue**			**% of Total Eigenvalues (variation)**			**Cumulative % of Eigenvalues**		
	Total	**No**	**Yes**	**Total**	**No**	**Yes**	**Total**	**No**	**Yes**	**Total**	**No**	**Yes**
1	5.291	4.982	5.983	5.291	4.982	5.983	48.101	45.292	54.392	48.101	45.292	54.392

2	2.209	2.608	1.946	7.500	7.590	7.929	20.078	23.713	17.695	68.179	69.004	72.088

Notes: *Total - Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) sampling adequacy measure = 0.897 (above the 0.7 threshold; cf. Chan and Idris, 2017); Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant (variables are statistically significantly related); chi² = 2090.424, p < 0.001.*
No - KMO = 0.820; Bartlett's test is significant; chi² = 474.382, p < 0.001.
Yes - KMO = 0.892; Bartlett's test is significant; chi² = 932.666, p < 0.001.
Total - All surveyed individuals; No - Respondents who declare lack of willingness to exert real influence on corporate marketing activities, including those who were unsure; yes - Respondents who declared a desire to exert real influence on corporate marketing activities.
Source: *Own study based on research results.*

For each analyzed group of individuals, the first factor includes at least five variables with factor loadings of at least 0.7 (Table 7). The largest number of variables forms Factor 1 in the case of individuals demonstrating a willingness to actively shape business marketing activities on social media. The smallest number is observed for the total of respondents. Notably, five of the same variables constitute Factor 1 for all three analyzed groups.

These include four variables related to creative activity and initiating participation in joint actions, which correspond to a significantly higher level of engagement than variables associated with communicative activity. On the other hand, Factor 2 for each group of respondents includes a variable corresponding to a significantly lower level of engagement—namely, the variable related to following a company's social media profile.

Among individuals who do not express a willingness to influence companies' marketing activities, this variable is accompanied by another one that reflects the expectation that companies should make greater use of social media in mutual interactions.

Table 7. *Results of the Factor Analysis on the Type of Activity in Social Media in Relations with Companies in the Context of the Declared Willingness to Influence Business Marketing Activities*

Analyzed Variable	**Factor**					
	1			**2**		
	Total	**No**	**Yes**	**Total**	**No**	**Yes**
I share ideas for new products on a company's social media profile	**.887**	**.891**	**.881**	.105	.213	.065
I share ideas for product packaging on a company's social media profile	**.865**	**.761**	**.921**	.151	.288	.081
I share ideas for promotional activities on a company's social media profile	**.864**	**.842**	**.915**	.133	.184	.060
I share ideas for changes in a company's products on its social media profile	**.859**	**.821**	**.877**	.106	.108	.126
I express willingness to participate in a company's marketing activities on its social media profile	**.833**	**.727**	**.887**	.247	.499	.147

I share positive opinions about a company's offer on its social media profile	.665	**.719**	.659	.267	.152	.421
I want to be more engaged in companies' marketing activities via social media	.625	.643	**.769**	.580	.670	.375
I share negative opinions about a company's offer on its social media profile	.609	.635	**.751**	-.104	-.052	.029
I regularly follow a specific company's social media profile	.224	.269	.264	**.826**	**.786**	**.806**
I hardly ever visit company profiles on social media	.299	.256	.305	-.734	-.738	-.716
I want companies to use social media more in their interactions with me	.484	.474	.462	.668	**.741**	.644

Source: *Own study based on research results.*

From a marketing and consumer relationship-building perspective, the key significance of the factor analysis results lies in the fact that the identified factors can be equated with user segments. Their representatives exhibit identical or very similar attitudes and/or behaviors within a given segment while displaying different attitudes and/or behaviors compared to individuals in other segments (Zhang, 2019; Mojsiewicz, Batóg, and Wawrzyniak, 2008).

Table 8 shows that, for the total of respondents and both groups distinguished by their willingness (or lack thereof) to engage in business marketing activities, the first segment comprises individuals who demonstrate creative and communicative activity. In the case of those willing to engage in marketing activities, this is accompanied by a desire to increase such engagement.

Conversely, the second segment in all three analyzed groups consists of individuals with significantly lower levels of activity, which is limited to merely following a company's social media profile. Additionally, individuals unwilling to influence business marketing activities expect companies to expand their use of social media in interactions with them.

Table 8. *Segments of Respondents Identified Based on Their Willingness to Influence Business Marketing Activities and the Type of Activity They Engage in on Social Media in Relation to Companies*

Analyzed Group of Respondents	**Identified Segments of Respondents**	
	1	**2**
Total Of Respondents	'Offer Creators' - I share ideas for new products on a company's social media profile - I share ideas for product packaging on a company's social media profile - I share ideas for promotional activities on a company's social media profile	'Observers'

	- I share ideas for changes in a company's products on its social media profile - I express willingness to participate in a company's marketing activities on its social media profile	- I regularly follow a specific company's social media profile
Individuals Declaring No Willingness to Influence Marketing Activities or Unable to Decide	'Creators of Offer and Image' - I share ideas for new products on a company's social media profile - I share ideas for product packaging on a company's social media profile - I share ideas for promotional activities on a company's social media profile - I share ideas for changes in a company's products on its social media profile - I express willingness to participate in a company's marketing activities on its social media profile - I share positive opinions about a company's offer on its social media profile	'Observers with Expectations' - I regularly follow a specific company's social media profile - I want companies to use social media more in their interactions with me
Individuals Declaring a Willingness to Influence Business Marketing Activities	'Ambitious Creators of Offer and Image' - I share ideas for new products on a company's social media profile - I share ideas for product packaging on a company's social media profile - I share ideas for promotional activities on a company's social media profile - I share ideas for changes in a company's products on its social media profile - I express willingness to participate in a company's marketing activities on its social media profile - I want to be more engaged in companies' marketing activities via social media - I share negative opinions about a company's offer on its social media profile	'Observers' - I regularly follow a specific company's social media profile

Source: *Own study based on research results.*

5. Discussion

The results of the research indicate that over three-quarters of respondents believe that the use of social media facilitates building strong relationships between enterprises and users. These findings align with studies on businesses' perspectives (Dwivedi, Ismagilova, Hughes, Carlson, Filieri, and Wang, 2021).

According to those studies, integrating social media into marketing activities allows companies to build and strengthen relationships with recipients by increasing brand

and company awareness, shaping consumer attitudes and purchasing behaviors, obtaining feedback, and improving products more effectively. The findings also correspond with research by other researchers (e.g., Dobre, Milovan, Duțu, Preda, and Agapie, 2021; Korombel, and Ławińska, 2021), which reflect the views of Generation Z users. Xu, Pan, and Xia (2020) found that Generation Z is not interested in traditional forms of marketing communication, as they primarily expect the use of new technologies in this area (Szymkowiak, Melović, Dabić, Jeganathan, and Kundi, 2021).

The identified willingness of the largest proportion of respondents to exert actual influence on companies' marketing activities aligns with other authors' studies analyzing Generation Z's characteristics and attitudes. For instance, Prasanna and LakshmiPriyanka (2024) found that Generation Z is highly willing to support brands and engage in activities, particularly those related to social and environmental issues.

However, there is a lack of comprehensive research in the literature regarding the prosumer activity of Generation Z on company profiles. This confirms the existence of a research gap, which served as the impetus for this study. Among the studies conducted by other researchers (e.g., Stachowiak-Krzyżan, 2021), the focus has mainly been on the simplest forms of communicative activity, such as liking posts or photos, as well as slightly more engaging activities like commenting on posts and expressing opinions about products.

These studies covered a much narrower range of activities and did not analyze them in the context of respondents' willingness to influence business marketing activities. Moreover, they were limited to fashion brands. Stachowiak-Krzyżan's research showed that only 15% of respondents engaged in activities such as expressing opinions about products, a result significantly different from the findings presented in this article.

Although Ławińska and Korombel (2023b) examined a slightly broader range of activities, they still focused on relatively low-engagement communication behaviors such as commenting on, recommending, or sharing companies' posts. Their findings differ from those obtained in the present study. While commenting on posts—an activity somewhat related to expressing opinions—was not a primary focus in their study, it was a key activity in this research, surpassing other types of engagement, including creative engagement, which those researchers did not consider at all.

6. Conclusions

In summary, the research presented in this article has filled a cognitive and research gap identified through an analysis of global literature. This study also responds to the call in the literature (Gaber, Wright, and Kooli, 2019) for research on social media as a whole rather than focusing on specific platforms. The obtained results have enabled the discovery of relationships and phenomena that are of significant cognitive and

practical importance. They enrich existing theories and provide important guidance for actions that should be undertaken in business practice.

6.1 Theoretical Implications

The research findings contribute significantly to theory, particularly the S-O-R model and H-2-H marketing theory. The study identified relationships between specific virtual stimuli and their effects on the behaviors of Generation Z users, emphasizing the role of individuals as key participants in social media interactions. This has helped fill an existing cognitive gap and expand understanding of social media and its key user group, i.e. Generation Z.

The most important theoretical implications derived from the study include:

1. Identifying Generation Z respondents' opinions on the role of social media in building strong relationships between businesses and recipients.
2. Identifying Generation Z respondents' willingness to exert actual influence on business marketing activities.
3. Identifying the types of activities Generation Z respondents engage in within social media interactions with businesses.
4. Establishing a hierarchical order of the identified types of social media activities among Generation Z respondents in business interactions.
5. Discovering the significance of the declared willingness to exert actual influence on business marketing activities in relation to specific types of social media engagement.
6. Identifying statistically significant relationships between nine out of eleven analyzed social media activities of Generation Z respondents and the declared willingness to influence business marketing efforts.
7. Segmenting Generation Z respondents based on their willingness to influence marketing activities and the types of social media activities they engage in when interacting with businesses.

6.2 Managerial Implications

The study's findings also have substantial practical value. Knowledge of these results can guide managerial decisions, helping businesses effectively utilize social media for communication with Generation Z. This knowledge is particularly useful in shaping active consumer attitudes and behaviors as co-creators of marketing activities. Specifically, managers can enhance the effectiveness of social media content creation and dissemination by leveraging:

1. Knowledge of Generation Z's attitudes toward the role of social media in building strong business-user relationships.
2. Knowledge of Generation Z's declared willingness to exert actual influence on business marketing activities.

3. Knowledge of the spectrum of communication and creative activities that Generation Z displays on social media.
4. Knowledge of the hierarchy of communication and creative activities that Generation Z displays on social media.
5. Knowledge of the significance of Generation Z's declared willingness to exert actual influence on business marketing activities in relation to various forms of communication and creative activities in social media.
6. Knowledge of the relationships between different types of communication and creative activities that Generation Z displays on social media and their willingness to exert actual influence on business marketing activities.
7. Knowledge of Generation Z segmentation based on their willingness to exert actual influence on business marketing activities and the type of engagement they exhibit in social media interactions with businesses.

6.3 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As with any research, certain limitations apply to the study conducted by the author. These limitations stem from the chosen research approach, which influenced the scope of the study, including its subject matter, participants, and geographical reach. The selected approach also dictated the research methods used. The study employed quantitative research methods, allowing for data collection and hypothesis testing.

However, this approach did not uncover deeply rooted motivations driving respondents' behaviors, which would require qualitative research. Investigating these aspects was not the primary objective of the author. The study focused on a specific set of virtual activities in a general sense, without analyzing behaviors related to specific products or product categories.

Regarding the sample, the analysis was conducted on Generation Z individuals without further segmentation into narrower age categories or groups distinguished by other demographic characteristics. As previously mentioned, the scope of the study was determined by the chosen research approach, which defined the level and depth of analysis.

Future research should continue investigating social media usage by Generation Z, addressing the identified limitations. This would enable comparative analyses and insights into potential differences between various Generation Z subgroups, as well as changes in their activity over time. Such research would be highly valuable both cognitively and practically, given the dynamic nature of social media as a marketing environment.

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The Author declares that the survey research was fully anonymous and was conducted in accordance with all the rules of a properly prepared and conducted quantitative research process. Each respondent expressed his/her own, fully conscious consent to participate in the survey. The research, which involved collecting primary data using a survey method, was completely anonymous, and each respondent's participation was entirely voluntary. Minors were not included in the study, and each respondent had the full freedom to refuse participation. No personal data or other data that could identify a respondent were collected. No physical or psychological interference was inflicted on the respondents, which is consistent with the nature of properly designed and implemented research. Therefore, no active physical or psychological intervention occurred. In accordance with the provisions of the Code of Ethics of the Lodz University of Technology, individual consent is not required for such research.

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