

## THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SHAPING THE PURCHASING DECISIONS OF GENERATION Z IN THE DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS MARKET

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**Purpose:** Social media shapes consumer behaviour by offering various forms of information and advertising that can support purchasing decisions. The aim of the article is to determine the role of social media in shaping Generation Z's purchasing decisions in the dietary supplements market.

**Design/methodology/approach:** A literature review method and a survey targeting 124 Generation Z students who regularly use social media were employed.

**Findings:** Social media plays a key role in the marketing strategy of companies selling dietary supplements, helping them promote their products and educate consumers about new trends and products. They have a significant impact on shaping online purchasing behaviours by offering various forms of advertising and information that help consumers make informed purchasing decisions. Research indicates an inverse relationship between the frequency of social media use and susceptibility to advertising influence, meaning that more experienced users may be less susceptible to marketing stimuli.

**Research limitations/implications:** A limitation of the survey is its focus on a sample of 124 economics students. Non-random sampling prevents generalising the results to the entire population. In the future, it is recommended to conduct studies involving diverse groups of young people, taking into account criteria such as field of study, level of education, and other relevant variables.

**Practical implications:** The study's results offer practical recommendations and serve as a valuable resource for stores and online platforms that sell dietary supplements. These entities should adapt their marketing strategies to the dynamically changing preferences of Generation Z consumers. The study results can also help understand the behaviours of young consumers and develop preventive strategies against the misuse of supplements.

**Social implications:** The growing awareness of healthy lifestyles and preventive health is driving increased consumer interest in dietary supplements. Consumers are seeking products that support health and well-being, and their choices are influenced by emotions, beliefs, and the impact of digital technology. Social media plays a key role in educating consumers about products and the latest market trends. Particular attention should be paid to the improper use of dietary supplements, as this can lead to adverse health effects. It is crucial that the information shared on social media is based on scientific research and provides users with the knowledge necessary to make informed decisions about their health.

**Originality/value:** Social media is an essential tool in marketing strategies. However, not all consumers make purchasing decisions solely on the basis of the information found there. Young consumers seek authenticity and easy access to reliable and comprehensive product information. The opinions of other users play a crucial role in the purchasing decision-making process. Specifically, in the context of dietary supplements, the availability of information requires consumers to exercise great caution and the ability to critically filter content.

**Keywords:** social media, Generation Z, purchasing decisions, dietary supplements market.

**Category of the paper:** research paper.

## 1. Introduction

The role of social media in shaping the purchasing decisions of Generation Z in the dietary supplements market has become increasingly significant as social awareness of healthy lifestyles, health prevention, and health education grows. The trend towards healthy eating, regular physical activity, and the use of dietary supplements is becoming increasingly widespread.

Generation Z includes young people born between 1995 and 2012, being the first generation fully raised in the digital era. They use digital tools such as social media, virtual communication, and online communities to communicate, entertain themselves, acquire knowledge, make purchases, and seek information about products and services.

Social media has a significant impact on the purchasing decisions and recommendations of young people. These choices are often shaped by the diverse content available on online platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. These platforms serve as a source of inspiration in various aspects of life, including health and dietary supplementation.

For Generation Z, online shopping is not just a matter of convenience but also a way to discover new brands and products and gain consumer experiences. The purchasing decisions of young people are significantly influenced by influencers and bloggers promoting a healthy lifestyle, as well as by online reviews and recommendations.

Moreover, social media enables users to interact and share experiences. Young consumers can share opinions and receive advice. It is also worth noting that social media provides quick access to the latest trends and innovations in the dietary supplements industry. This way, Generation Z can stay up to date on new developments and adjust their choices to current health standards.

Nevertheless, social media can also exert manipulation, pressure, and introduce misinformation. Young people striving for ideal beauty may make impulsive purchases due to a lack of skills in assessing the credibility of sources. Therefore, it is important for them to be aware of the potential risks associated with unconsidered purchasing decisions and to be able to critically evaluate the content presented on social media.

The aim of the article is to determine the role of social media in shaping Generation Z's purchasing decisions in the dietary supplements market. The study is both theoretical and empirical. As part of the literature review, detailed objectives were achieved, which include:

- characteristics of Generation Z,
- presenting the attractiveness of the dietary supplements market.

In relation to the empirical research, answers were obtained to the following research questions:

- How often do young consumers use social media to obtain information about dietary supplements?
- Where do they most frequently search for information on social media?
- What are the motives for online shopping, and what role do social media play in shaping knowledge about products and trends?
- What forms of promotion and advertising for dietary supplements most attract the attention and interest of young consumers?
- What are the relationships between the frequency of seeking information and the propensity to purchase supplements after viewing an advertisement or recommendation?

The analyses conducted provide a better understanding of the dynamics of social media's impact on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z and identify key factors influencing their consumer preferences.

A limitation of the survey study is its focus on a sample of 124 economics students. Non-random sample selection prevents generalising the results to the entire population. In the future, it is recommended to conduct studies involving diverse groups of young people, taking into account criteria such as field of study, level of education, or other significant variables.

The study's results provide practical recommendations and serve as a valuable resource for stores and online platforms that sell dietary supplements. The findings also have significant social implications. Social media plays a key role in educating consumers about products and the latest market trends. Particular attention should be paid to the improper use of dietary supplements, as this can lead to adverse health effects.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Characteristics of Generation Z

Generation Z demonstrates high proficiency in using technology, which is integral to their personal and professional lives. They grew up in the era of smartphones, laptops, the internet, and digital media. Consequently, their approach to life, work, shopping, and interpersonal relationships differs from that of previous generations.

They are characterised by mental activity, sensitivity, openness to new experiences, and a love for entertainment and unique experiences (Chen, Lin, 2024). They emphasise the need for spontaneity and personalisation in interpersonal interactions (Chen, Lin, 2024). They exhibit great diversity, which is reflected in their communication methods (Jayatissa, 2023). In addition to face-to-face conversations, they often communicate via text messages, virtual meetings, and social media platforms (Jayatissa, 2023).

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok have become spaces where influencers exert significant influence on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z. Young people often rely on recommendations from those they follow, which provides them with a better understanding of the practical application of products than traditional advertisements (Kotarbiński, 2025). Generation Z is also described as more sceptical and critical in their purchasing processes (Ho et al., 2026). They value personalisation and interactivity, which is reflected in their shopping preferences. They expect brands to tailor their offerings to individual needs and preferences, made possible by advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (Schroth, 2019). They are particularly sensitive to content enhanced by artificial intelligence (Taylor, Armes, 2024). AI-generated advertisements garner more interest than traditional ads (Jackson et al., 2025).

Social media provides Generation Z with quick access to the latest product and service information, helping them stay up to date with current trends and promotions. This availability of information significantly influences their purchasing behaviour (Zhang et al., 2024). Young consumers often rely on reviews and opinions from other users before making a purchase decision. They value others' authentic experiences, which helps them assess the quality and functionality of products (Ho et al., 2024).

Generation Z demonstrates a greater awareness of sustainable development and environmental protection. They prefer eco-friendly and socially responsible products, which significantly influences their consumer choices (Mohr et al., 2022; Abbasi et al., 2024).

## 2.2. The attractiveness of the dietary supplements market

The dietary supplements market is extremely attractive due to its dynamic growth, product diversity, and the development of online distribution channels. This growth is linked to increasing consumer health awareness and interest in alternative methods to support health, as well as to a large number of internet advertisements (Nuworsu, 2025).

In Poland, the value of the dietary supplements market in 2022 amounted to 7.7 billion PLN, and forecasts for the coming years indicate the potential to exceed 20 billion PLN (Dateshidze et al., 2024). The increased health awareness of consumers and their concern for their own health contribute to the growing demand (Wang et al., 2023). Dietary supplements include a wide range of products, such as vitamins, minerals, herbs, and probiotics, allowing the offer to be tailored to individual consumer needs (Dateshidze et al., 2024). This diversity increases the market's attractiveness, enabling producers to reach different customer segments.

There are various distribution channels operating in the market. E-pharmacies and online stores are gaining significance due to the convenience of online shopping and the availability of a wide range of products and information (Starek et al., 2025). It is predicted that by 2029, online sales will increase their share at the expense of stationary sales by approximately 2 percentage points (Marszałek, 2025). Dietary supplements are considered food and are not subject to pharmaceutical law, so they must be safe for consumers (Zovi et al., 2024).

High demand for dietary supplements is associated with the risk of excessive consumption, which can lead to health problems (Hassan et al., 2020). Therefore, it is crucial to provide consumers with education on the rational use of supplements. Such education will raise awareness and counter unwarranted consumerism (Hys, 2020).

## 3. Research methodology

The aim of the study was to understand the impact of social media on the preferences and consumer decisions of young Generation Z individuals studying economics at a Polish university. A purposive sampling method was used to select participants who met two criteria: being Generation Z and being active social media users.

The study involved 124 students, of which 60% were male and 40% female. The research was quantitative, and the research tool was a developed survey questionnaire. Respondents were asked about the influence of social media on their consumer behaviour, particularly regarding online purchases of dietary supplements. Key aspects of social media use were analysed.

### **3.1. How often do young consumers use social media?**

Social media use among Generation Z is widespread and intense. Data analysis indicates that men constitute the largest group of users, spending 3 to 4 hours daily on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, or Facebook (22.2% of respondents). Women use social media less frequently (16.7%). Among users who spend 1 to 2 hours daily on social media, men also dominate (21.4%) compared to women (7.9%). Among the very active users who spend 5 to 6 hours daily on these platforms, men (13.5%) outnumber women (11.1%). However, among the most engaged users, who spend 7 or more hours daily, women (3.2%) surpass men (2.4%).

The analysis revealed significant differences in the intensity of social media platform usage between genders. Men dominate most time categories, especially in groups spending 1 to 6 hours daily on social media. The largest difference is observed in the 3-4 hours per day range, where men account for 22.2% of respondents, while women account for only 16.7%. However, among the most engaged users who spend 7 or more hours daily on social media, women outnumber men (3.2% compared to 2.4%). This indicates that while men are more likely to use social media moderately, women are more inclined to engage intensively.

### **3.2. How often do young consumers use social media to obtain information about dietary supplements?**

The study reveals diverse approaches among respondents to seeking information about dietary supplements on social media. Only 6% of respondents report using this source of information very frequently. 16% of respondents frequently use social media, while 26% use it occasionally, suggesting that it is one of many sources of information but not a dominant one.

The largest group, consisting of 35% of participants, rarely uses this channel, and 16% never use it, indicating a preference for other ways of obtaining information.

In summary, the study found that respondents' approaches to seeking information about dietary supplements on social media are varied. Most people use this channel infrequently, suggesting that social media is just one of many sources of information.

### **3.3. Where do young consumers most often search for information on social media?**

TikTok is a platform that has gained immense popularity among internet users. 37% of respondents report using this platform. Thanks to short videos, TikTok has become a place where users can express themselves and share their passions and interests. In second place in terms of popularity is Instagram, used by 35% of those surveyed. It is a platform that allows users to post photos and short videos, share experiences and inspiration, and build relationships with other users. The next spots are occupied by Allegro (28%) and YouTube (24%). Facebook is used by 17% of respondents. Reddit is a platform offering a wide variety of content, from memes to discussions on diverse topics; it is used by 10% of respondents, similar to Pinterest. The least popular among respondents were the platforms X (formerly Twitter) (9%)

and Snapchat (1%). It is worth noting that each of the mentioned platforms has unique features and advantages, which make young people choose them based on their own needs and preferences.

### **3.4. On which online platforms do young people buy dietary supplements?**

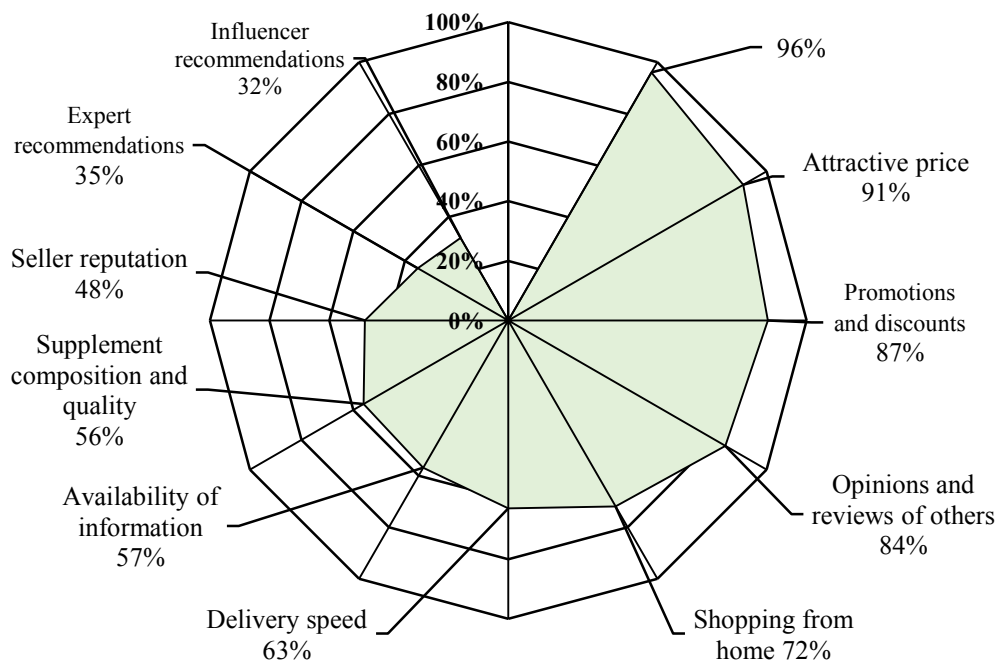
According to the survey, 51% of customers most frequently purchase dietary supplements on the Allegro platform. This indicates the immense popularity of this service among people searching for dietary supplements. A significant 46% of customers are eager to shop at Gemini Pharmacy. The Super-Pharm is less popular, with 35% of customers choosing to purchase dietary supplements there. It is also interesting that more and more people are deciding to shop at the online store Zdrowie i Uroda (Health and Beauty) (13%) and on the Ceneo platform (10%). This may be due to the search for better purchasing conditions, promotions, or a wider product selection.

Surprisingly, platforms such as Amazon, eBay, iHerb, and OLX attract less consumer interest. Only 10% of customers choose to shop on Amazon, 5% on eBay, 6% on iHerb, and just 4% on OLX. This may be due to lower availability of dietary supplements on these platforms, a lack of promotions, or customer concerns about the authenticity of the products offered. It is worth noting that the dietary supplements market is rapidly evolving, and customers have an increasing number of options for where to purchase. Despite globalisation, domestic preferences play a key role in consumers' purchasing decisions.

### **3.5. What are the online shopping motivations of young Generation Z consumers, and what is the role of social media in shaping product knowledge and trends?**

Based on analyses of data on online shopping motivations and the role of social media in shaping product knowledge and trends, interesting conclusions can be drawn (Figure 1). Respondents indicated a wide range of products (96%) as the primary motivation for online shopping. The internet provides consumers with access to a vast number of stores and brands, allowing for thorough analysis and comparison of products. Additionally, online shopping enables price comparisons and user reviews, which facilitate purchasing decisions.

In second place is the attractive price of products (91%). Consumers often use price comparison tools to quickly find the most advantageous offers. Promotions and discounts are an important factor for 87% of respondents. Consumers are more inclined to make purchases when they feel they are saving money, making promotional strategies a key element of e-commerce marketing. Opinions and reviews from other customers support the purchasing process for 84% of those surveyed. This highlights the importance of building a positive brand image and encouraging customers to share their experiences.



**Figure 1.** Main reasons for online shopping among young consumers.

Source: own elaboration.

Online shopping, which allows transactions to be completed without leaving home, is particularly valued by 72% of respondents who emphasise time savings and convenience. Delivery speed is important to 63% of consumers and has become a standard in the e-commerce industry. The composition and quality of dietary supplements matter to more than half of those surveyed (56%). Thanks to platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, numerous articles, videos, and posts are available regarding nutritional ingredients, their impact on health, and potential side effects.

Unfortunately, this information is not always reliable and valuable. In the age of fake news and disinformation, it is important to exercise particular caution and critical thinking when consuming content on social media. Many people running profiles or channels dedicated to a healthy lifestyle and supplementation often lack appropriate scientific knowledge, which can lead to the spread of false information. 57% of respondents find access to information about dietary supplements on social media important. Providing complete and transparent information not only meets customer needs but also builds their trust, enabling the establishment of long-term relationships. According to the respondents, platforms such as TikTok (17.5%) and Instagram (16.7%) offer a space for exchanging experiences and opinions, contributing to building consumer trust. This interactive environment allows for the exchange of experiences and reviews, which is particularly important for young consumers who value transparency and authenticity.

The role of algorithms that personalise the content displayed to users cannot be overlooked. Thanks to them, dietary supplement advertisements are precisely tailored to consumers' individual preferences and needs, increasing the likelihood of purchase. Research indicates that even among people who have not made a purchase influenced by social media, there is a belief in their impact on expanding product knowledge. In this group, 23% of respondents believe the media helps, and 14.3% say it definitely helps them acquire information about supplements.

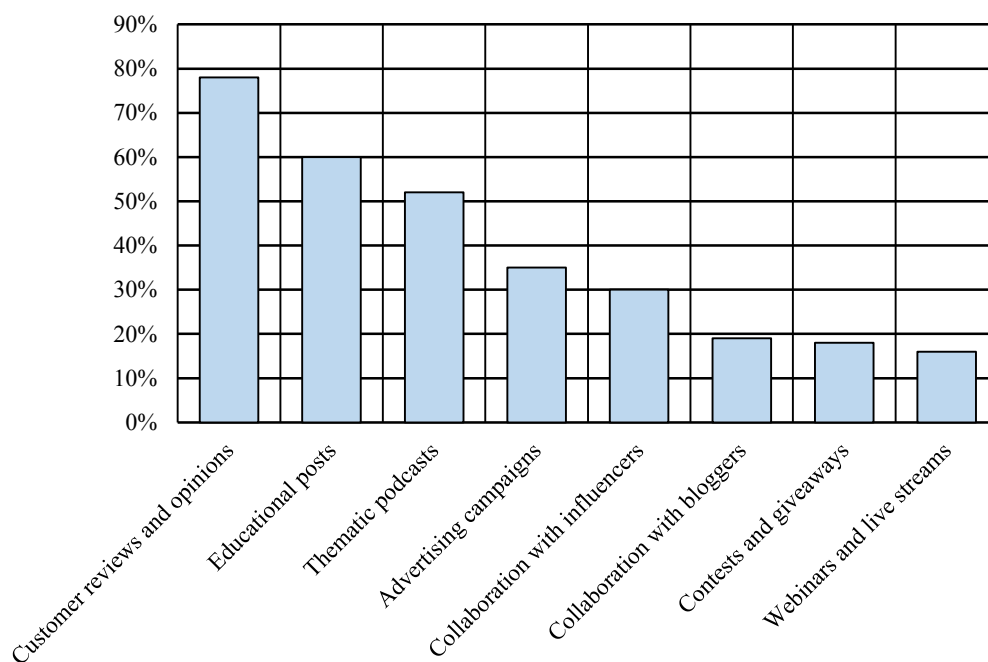
Consumers show greater trust in recommendations from specialists than in opinions from influencers. Only 35% of respondents value recommendations from specialists, while 32% attach importance to influencers' opinions. Influencers, often perceived as authorities in health and wellness, shape young people's purchasing preferences.

In contrast, educational posts and articles are significant for only 13.5% of respondents. This indicates that, in health matters, the opinions of scientific authorities and professional knowledge are valued more than those of social media personalities. To avoid the pitfalls of misinformation, it is essential to develop critical thinking skills and consciously use available online resources. It is recommended to use reliable sources of information, such as websites of specialists in dietetics, medicine, or pharmacology.

### **3.6. What forms of promotion and advertising for dietary supplements most attract the attention and interest of young consumers?**

An analysis of data on various forms of dietary supplement promotion and advertising on social media provides valuable insights into the preferences of Generation Z consumers (Figure 2).

The most commonly used form of promotion during online shopping is customer reviews and opinions. 78% of respondents recognise their positive impact on increasing product awareness. Trust in reviews varies by platform. Consumers show greater trust in local platforms such as Allegro (23%) and online pharmacies (20.6%), while international platforms like Amazon (2.4%) and eBay (0.6%) are less favoured. Educational posts on health, nutrition, and the benefits of supplementation are highly appreciated, with up to 60% of respondents rating them positively. Consumers are increasingly seeking valuable content that not only promotes products but also educates and provides reliable information. Building customer engagement and relationships is also important.



**Figure 2.** Forms of promotion and advertising of dietary supplements.

Source: own elaboration.

Thematic podcasts are less popular compared to reviews and educational posts. Although their impact is moderate (52%), they are gaining significance due to their focus on health and lifestyle topics. They require diversity and adaptation to the specific needs of different audience segments. Advertising campaigns, collaborations with influencers, and contests or giveaways have varying effectiveness. Advertising campaigns are effective for 35% of respondents, highlighting their important role in marketing strategies. Collaborations with influencers, although effective for 30% of respondents, require careful partner selection to ensure authenticity and alignment with brand values.

Collaboration with bloggers was reported by 19% of respondents, suggesting that bloggers have loyal readers who trust them and are willing to follow their recommendations. Contests and giveaways, aimed at attracting users' attention and encouraging their active participation, are used less frequently (18%).

On the other hand, webinars and live streams have the least impact on consumers' purchasing decisions (16%), which may be due to their nature and limited reach. They are often perceived as hidden forms of advertising that do not always provide reliable information about the product.

### **3.7. What are the relationships between the frequency of information seeking and the tendency to purchase supplements after seeing an advertisement or recommendation?**

The conducted study provides significant insights into the impact of the frequency with which customers seek information on their tendency to purchase supplements after encountering an advertisement or recommendation on social media. Customers who rarely seek

information about supplements on social media are most likely to purchase products after seeing an advertisement or recommendation (28.3%). This indicates that less engaged customers are more susceptible to the influence of advertisements and recommendations. On the other hand, customers who very frequently seek information about supplements exhibit the lowest purchase intent (21.4%). This may suggest that they are more critical and demanding of advertisements and recommendations, making them harder to convince to make a purchase. Meanwhile, customers who occasionally seek information are more likely to purchase (14.7%) than those who do so frequently (8.3%).

### **3.8. What are the relationships between the form of promotion and advertising of dietary supplements and the frequency of user engagement on social media?**

The interaction between the type of promotion and the frequency of social media engagement is complex and depends on many factors.

An analysis of the interaction between promotion type and the frequency of Generation Z's social media engagement reveals diverse preferences among young people. The majority of users engaging with promotions through reviews and opinions are those who rarely (27.0%) or occasionally (18.3%) use social media. On the other hand, those who use social media very frequently show low engagement (5.6%), suggesting they prefer other, more attractive forms of promotion.

Educational posts about health and supplementation attract the attention of 21.4% of people who rarely and occasionally engage (15.1%). A low level of engagement was noted among those who engage very frequently on social media (3.2%).

The largest group of respondents listens to health and lifestyle podcasts occasionally (15.1%) or rarely (15.9%). This indicates an interest that is not yet strong enough to become a regular habit.

Similarly, advertising campaigns most often engage people who do so occasionally (11.9%) and rarely (8.7%). Meanwhile, those who engage very frequently and frequently indicated advertising campaigns only to a small extent (4.0% each).

Collaboration with influencers is more attractive to people with lower social media engagement frequency (12.7%), while collaboration with bloggers attracts moderately active users (7.1%).

Contests and giveaways are effective in engaging users with varying levels of activity. The highest engagement was observed among those who rarely engage in other activities (4.8%).

Webinars and live streams are not effective in attracting users who regularly engage on social media (5.6%).

In summary, the interaction between the form of promotion and engagement on social media shows that consumers prefer content related to reviews and authentic opinions, as well as educational content tailored to their needs. Trust in various forms of promotion is varied, and social media, although important, is not the main source of information for most consumers.

#### **4. Summary**

The role of social media in shaping Generation Z's purchasing decisions in the dietary supplements market is complex and multifaceted. Social media users often engage with various online platforms multiple times a day, creating numerous opportunities for companies in the dietary supplements industry to promote their products. Social media serves as a popular source of information about dietary supplements, including product offerings, attractive prices, promotions, and discounts. Users are eager to rely on recommendations and opinions from others.

What are the relationships between the frequency of seeking information and the tendency to purchase supplements after seeing an advertisement or recommendation?

Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube not only provide young people with information but also encourage them to make purchasing decisions. They are filled with content about a healthy lifestyle, including dietary supplementation. Influencers model the behaviours of their followers by showcasing various products.

Social media offers diverse advertising options and provides easy access to reviews and opinions from other users. They play a key role in consumer education by publishing educational content about new products and trends. In this way, social media becomes not only a source of information but also a platform for exchanging experiences and building relationships with consumers, sellers, and brands.

Thanks to online interactions, young consumers become more aware of their needs and opportunities, leading to more thoughtful, conscious purchasing decisions. Research indicates an inverse relationship between the frequency of information seeking and the tendency to purchase supplements after seeing an advertisement or recommendation. This means that customers who frequently use social media are less likely to make purchases influenced by advertisements, while those who use them sporadically are more susceptible to the influence of individual ads or recommendations. This may suggest that less engaged users are more vulnerable to marketing messages.

Despite the many advantages social media offers, it is important to remember that the internet is rife with false information and to exercise caution to avoid falling for false promises. It is advisable to use professional sources of information and consult with experts to ensure that we are making the right decisions.

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