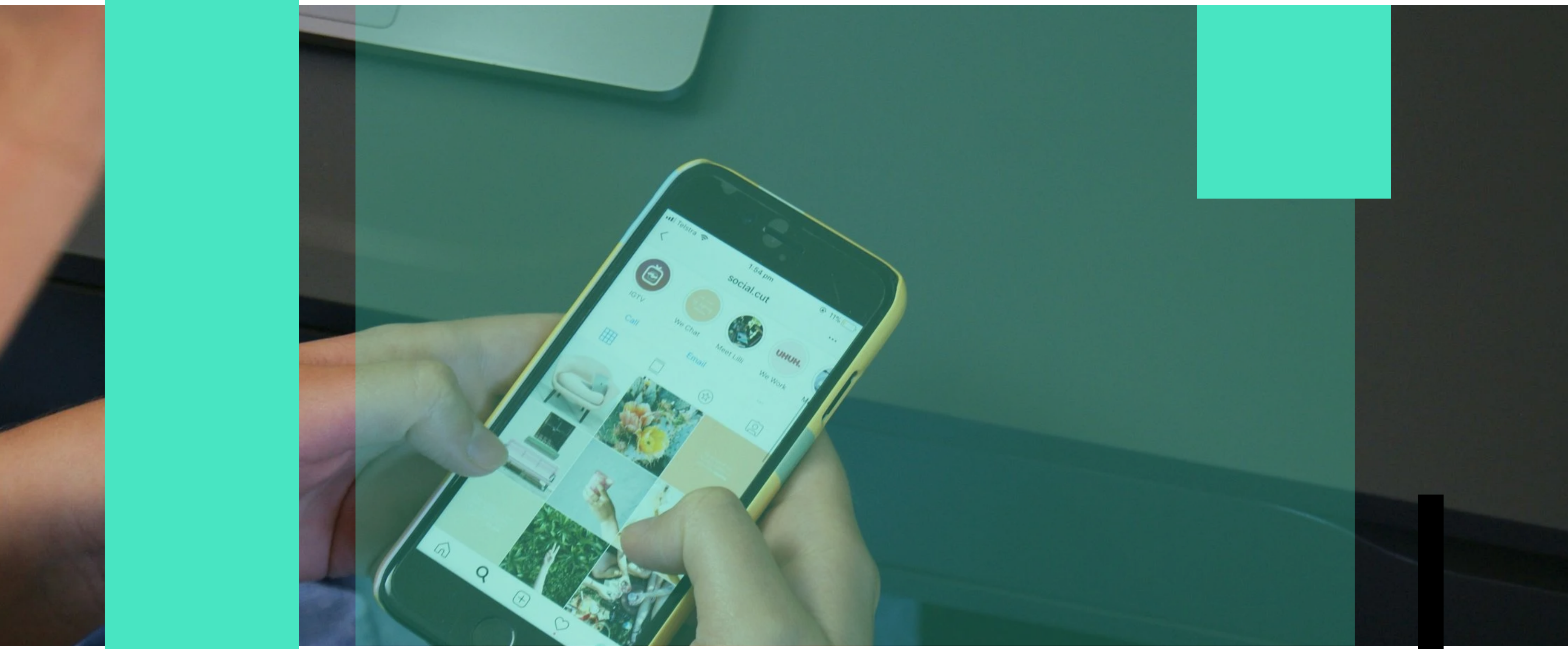
(R)evolutional Perspectives on **Influencer Marketing**



The Effective Use of This Key Brand Connector and Driver of Consumer Actions Starts with Re-Thinking Its Role

Dynamik Influence

4media group
INTELLIGENT COMMUNICATIONS

It seems near daily that marketers are inundated with articles and reports touting “hot trends to watch” and “top (insert number) things to know” to remain relevant. That’s all great, but portions of that information tend to be recycled from who knows when, with the latest social media network to emerge thrown in for good measure. We took some time to let that settle, letting marketers’ minds unwind from repeated information.

Now that we’re all past that, let’s get into some **actionable insights backed by data** from our friends at Atomik Research. Along the way, we’ll pause to ponder what it means for marketers.

Ready? Go!

What's Inside:

Foundational Elements: Social Media Apps

Most Present, Most-Used & Frequency of Use

Let's start with some highlights at the foundation of influencer marketing: social media. Atomik recently shared that a social media classic is still on more phones of U.S. adult consumers. YouTube and Instagram round out the top three.

Apps most commonly on consumers' phones:

72% Facebook

69% YouTube

51% Instagram

It's also worth noting that this data point was not related to a specific use of any of the apps – it was just to understand which social media apps were present on phones. However, presence is just one factor. In terms of most-used (just in general) social media apps: the same three apps top the list with Facebook first.

Most-used social media apps by mean score (0-10):

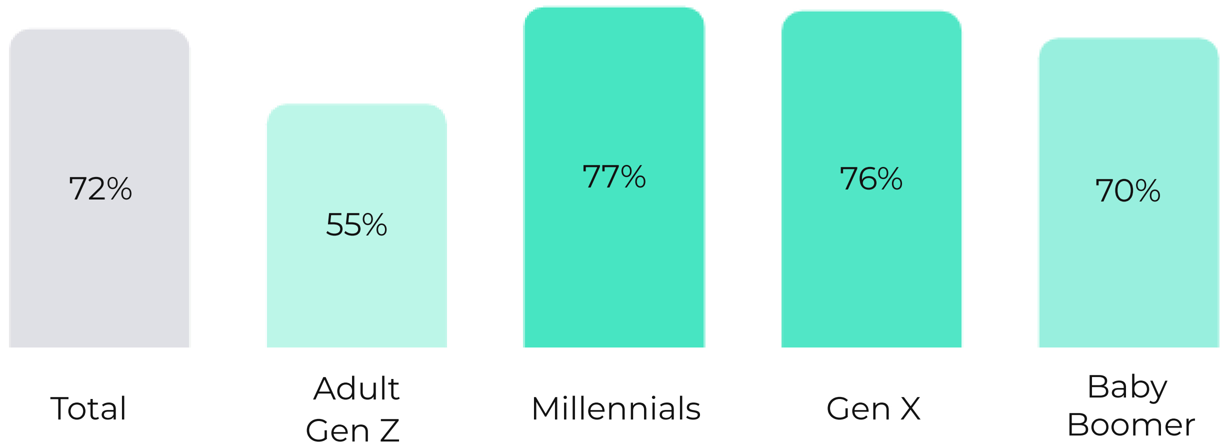
9.12 Facebook

8.55 Instagram

8.47 YouTube

Of course, generational differences exist, but it's **worth noting that Facebook remains present and most used by the majority of U.S. adult Gen Z.**

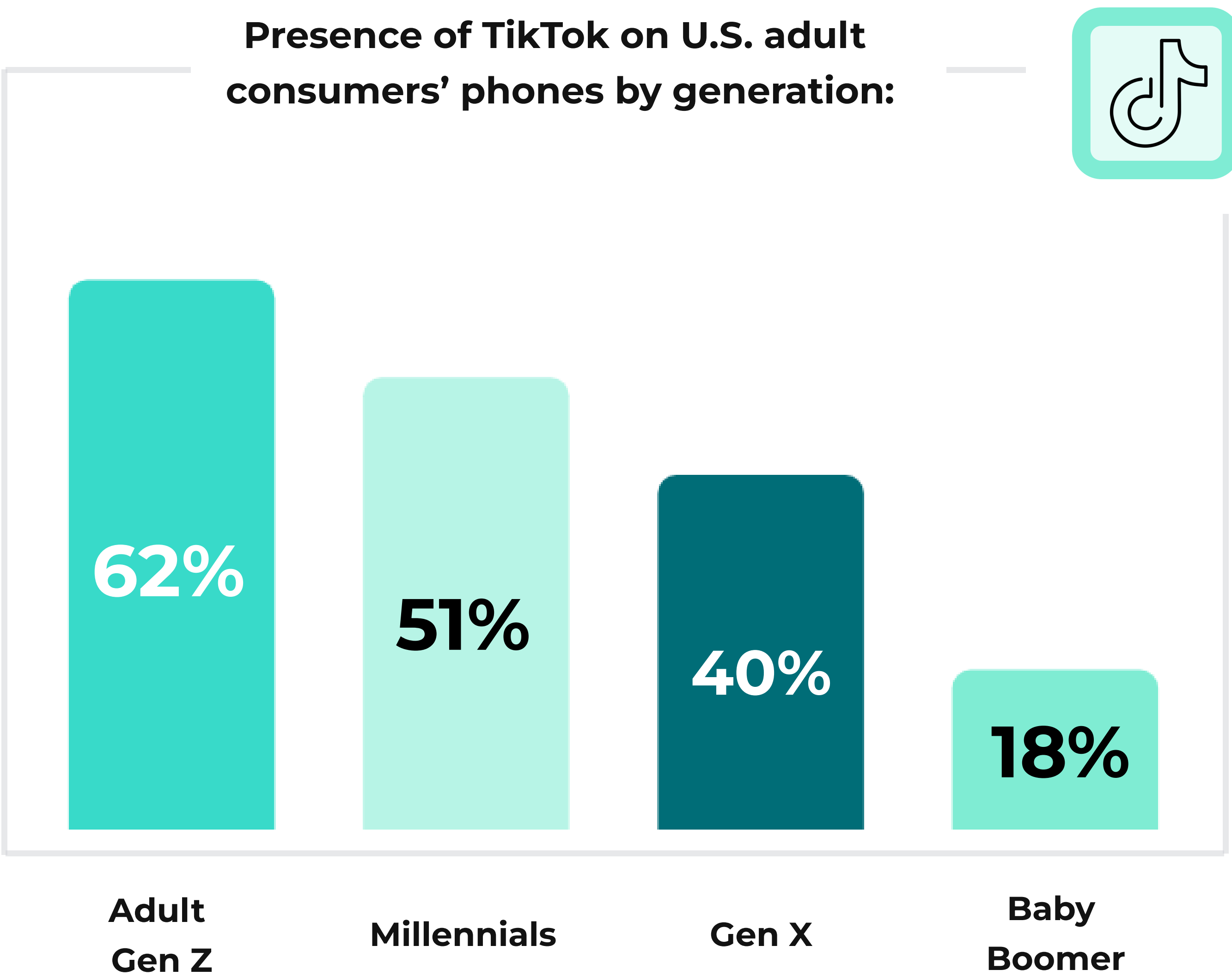
% that indicate having Facebook on their phone:



Further, **Facebook is one of the three social media apps most used by Gen Z adults, too.**

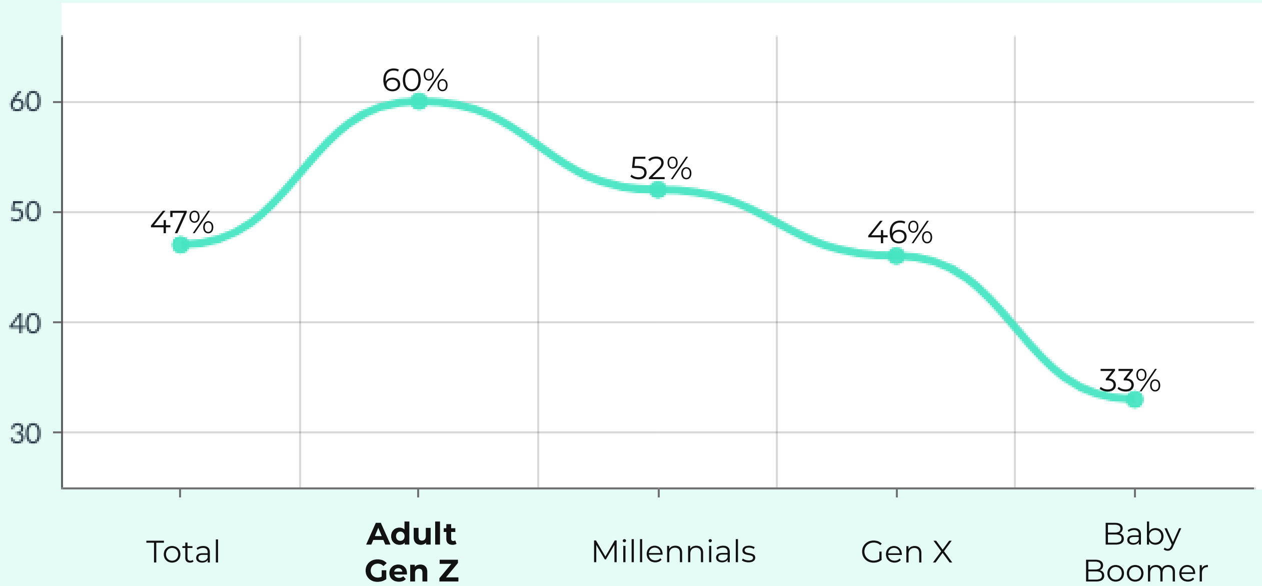
	Total	Adult Gen Z	Millennial	Gen X	Baby Boomer
Facebook	9.12	8.52	8.87	9.30	9.51
Instagram	8.55	8.71	8.62	8.42	8.33
YouTube	8.47	8.29	8.08	8.71	9.08
TikTok	8.24	8.75	8.22	8.02	7.97
Reddit	8.18	7.73	7.39	8.26	9.44
Twitter/X	8.10	7.81	8.17	8.08	8.10
Threads	7.10	7.09	7.36	6.57	7.86
Pinterest	7.09	7.16	6.86	7.10	7.48
Discord	6.98	7.00	7.03	6.76	7.63

So, what about TikTok? Where does it fit in? TikTok is the fourth most-present social media app on U.S. adult consumers' phones at 41%, beating out X by just one point. As expected, it's on more adult Gen Zers' phones that any other generation. It's also the most-used social media app by adult Gen Zers as well, holding a mean score of 8.75, which is just barely ahead of Instagram (8.71).



Frequency of use of any of the social media network apps on phones of at least five times per day – the highest frequency category across all generations – was highest among U.S. adult **Gen Z.**

% who use any of the social media networks on their phone/computer **at least 5 times a day:**



Pause to Ponder: The Social Media Mix

When developing influencer marketing strategies, marketers should consider a broader mix of social media networks to better reach target audiences, including adult Gen Z. While TikTok is present and most used by adult Gen Z compared to other generations, it's not the only social media network they're leveraging frequently. The mix matters. The inclusion of Facebook also offers another opportunity to drive engagement via boosting strategies as well, providing the opportunity to connect with even more of a brand's core audiences.

Hey There! Social Media in Preferred Ways to Engage with Brands/Products/Services

Now it's time to lean in and get a sense of U.S. adult consumers' preferred ways to engage. Atomik included websites and even in-store as options in its recent survey. Of course, there will be generational differences but it's very important to note that **social media channels are the preferred ways that three important generations of consumers prefer to engage with brands.** It's not until baby boomers that "in-store" takes the first spot followed closely by another digital channel (websites) and then social media channels.

Preferred ways to engage with brands/products/services:

	Total	Adult Gen Z	Millennial	Gen X	Baby Boomer
Facebook	19%	13%	22%	23%	16%
YouTube	16%	14%	16%	20%	14%
In-Store	15%	10%	4%	18%	29%
Brand/Product/ Service Website	13%	8%	8%	14%	24%
Instagram	10%	13%	17%	7%	3%
TikTok	9%	21%	11%	6%	1%
X/Twitter	9%	8%	15%	7%	2%
Pinterest	3%	7%	15%	3%	2%
Reddit	1%	3%	2%	0%	0%
Threads	1%	2%	2%	1%	0%

Who, How, Why:
Who's Following Influencers, How Many Influencers & Brand/Product/Services Discovery

Over half (52%) of U.S. adult consumers cite that they follow any influencers. It's a no-brainer that adult Gen Z and millennials follow influencers, but Gen X and even baby boomers do as well. The nuances exist in *why* they follow influencers.

Follow any influencers, by generation (responded "Yes")

69%
Adult Gen Z

75%
Millennials

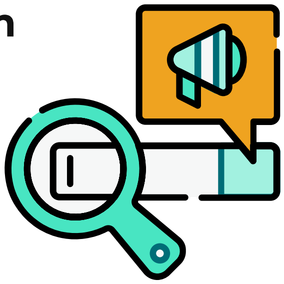
46%
Gen X

16%
Baby Boomers

Among those that follow any influencers, **across generations, most indicate they follow 2-4 influencers with up to 7 common across some.** The following table shows breakouts with orange highlights to the higher percentages for easy reference.

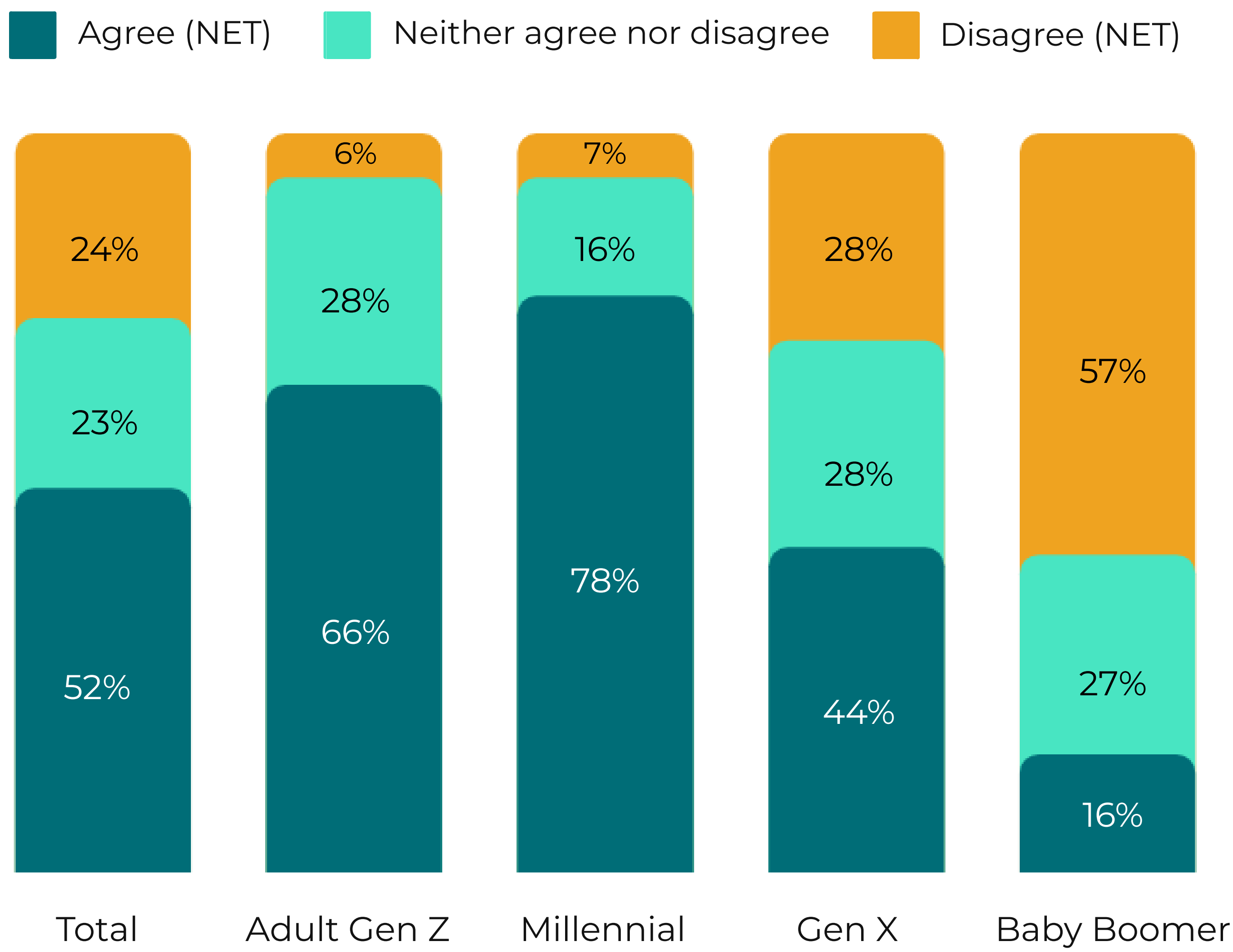
	Total	Adult Gen Z	Millennial	Gen X	Baby Boomer
Just one	9%	8%	5%	14%	19%
2-4	33%	25%	32%	38%	40%
5-7	26%	22%	32%	21%	13%
7-10	13%	14%	14%	10%	10%
More than 10	14%	17%	14%	15%	8%
So many I can't count them all	6%	14%	3%	3%	9%

Following any number of influencers represents a key factor, but it’s **the discovery of new brands/products/services that represents an important role in influencer marketing. The majority of U.S. adult consumers (52%) indicate that they discover new brands/products/services from the influencers they follow,** but notable differences exist by generation.



To what extent do you agree or disagree, if at all, with the following statement:

"I usually discover new brands/products/services from the influencers I follow."



Pause to Ponder:
Gen X and Boomers

Significantly fewer baby boomers cite discovery from influencers they follow. However, this doesn't mean that they don't learn from influencers about brands/products/services, meaning that influencer-first strategies for new offerings may not be the go-to approach to reach baby boomers. Instead, influencers could be a support element in providing baby boomers with additional details via the trusted review/commentary from influencers so long as they're viewed as "experts." Among the top characteristics of an influencer that would make them remain loyal to a brand/product/service, 37% of baby boomers cite "the influencer is clearly an expert about the brand/product/service, "which is the top factor for them and higher than younger generations.

Though not as strong as millennials and adult Gen Z, the number of Gen X citing "Any Agree," which is combined levels of strongly agree and agree, the amount of "Neither…" suggests that there are likely more than 44% of Gen X that could be closer to "Any Agree." This indicates that influencer-first approaches could be viable and effective options in reaching Gen X with new offerings.

Character Traits:
What U.S. Consumers Want in Influencers

Influencer expertise, shared passion for the brand/product/service and compelling storytelling represent the top three characteristics respectively that impact loyalty.

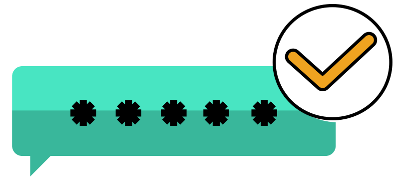
Top characteristics influencers must possess that keep audiences loyal to brands/products/services:

25% The influencer is clearly **an expert** about the brand/product/service

19% The influencer clearly **shares my passion** for the brand/product/service

18% The influencer is **telling a compelling story** about the brand/product/service

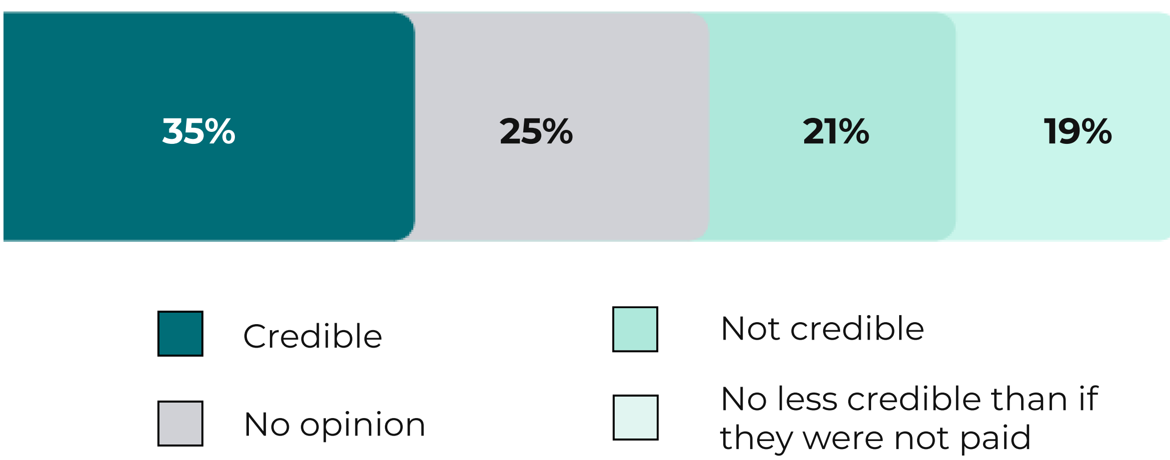
Storytelling and shared passion edge slightly ahead of expertise for adult Gen Z and millennials, while expertise is more important to Gen X and boomers.



Threat Level Zero:
Influencer Credibility & Brand/Company Influence on Information

The combination of “Credible” and “No less credible than if they were not paid” suggests that paid influencer approaches won’t suffer in terms of connecting and moving consumers to action.

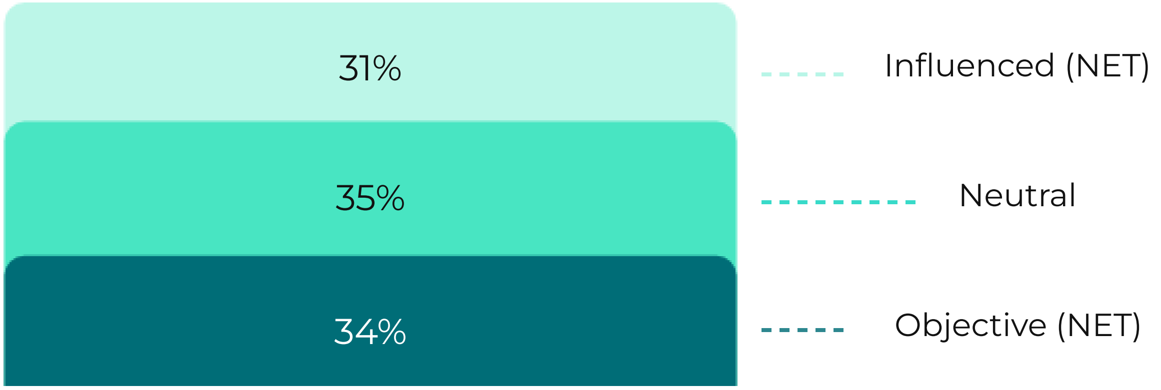
How credible are influencers who are paid by the brands/products/services they share information about on their social media, blogs/vlogs, website or other platforms?



Even among baby boomers, the combined data indicates that over one-third of baby boomers have a favorable perspective of paid influencers. This combined factor is even cited by the majority (52%) or Gen X respondents. “Ad,” “Sponsored” or other “paid” notations required by governmental guidelines won’t impact the credibility of the influencers so long as expertise, passion and compelling storytelling are in play.

So, what about the influence of brands/products/services on the information shared by influencers? **With over a third of U.S. adult consumers citing that influencers opinions are objective and nearly that same amount having no opinion at all, data suggests that it's of little overall concern.**

To what extent, if at all, do you believe that **the information provided in sponsored influencer content** is ***objective*** or ***influenced*** by the brand/product/service sponsoring the content?



Pause to Ponder: Paid is Okay

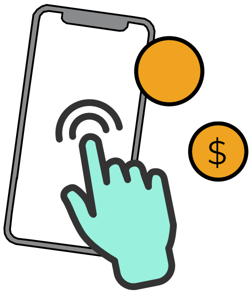
Across generations, opinions about the objectivity of influencer information are fairly strong, especially when considering some of the "on the fence" opinions that fall to neutral. Fewer baby boomers cite "Objective" (15%), but that group also accounts for the greater percentage that fall to neutral on the point (43%) compared to younger generations. When considering characteristics that this cohort favors, influencer expertise was cited by more baby boomers than any other generation. It's that expertise that can overcome and win with baby boomers.

It's in the Bag:
Influencer Impact on Direct Purchase

As an original use for it, the time is now for marketers to move beyond leveraging influencer marketing for visibility and awareness building. **It's time to leverage influencer marketing to drive direct action all the way to purchase.**

A look at some key points from Atomik's survey sheds some light on that direct impact. When it comes to using purchase features in social media channels, data suggest **a sizable portion of U.S. adult consumers leverage the functionality (44%)** – and that behavior by generation highlights opportunities.

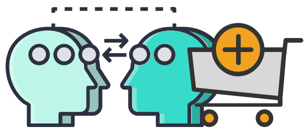
Used in-app purchase features on social channels over the last 6 months while watching an influencer video:



54%	72%	34%	16%
Adult Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers

The amount of purchases via in-app features adds to the story. **U.S. adult consumers were asked to think about purchases they've made over the last 6 months and indicate what percentage of those purchases were impacted by something they watched, heard and/or read from an influencer**. As would be expected, younger generations make a higher percentage of purchases that were impacted by something they learned from an influencer. However, that's not the end of the story.

% of purchases impacted by something they watched, heard and/or read from an influencer:



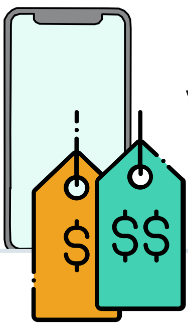
	Total	Adult Gen Z	Millennial	Gen X	Baby Boomer
0% - 20%	30%	13%	10%	32%	66%
21% - 40%	18%	18%	21%	21%	12%
41% - 60%	26%	37%	33%	24%	13%
61% - 80%	17%	26%	26%	13%	5%
81% - 100%	10%	10%	14%	11%	5%
Mean	40.76	50.49	53.16	38.45	20.09

Pause to Ponder: A Pivot for Boomers

Over two-thirds of baby boomers cited 0%-20% of purchases in the last 6 months as being impacted by influencers, and, when considering the median of 5.00 for this cohort, significantly fewer purchases in the last 6 months were impacted by influencers as compared to younger generations. Generally speaking, purchase calls to action (CTAs) won't move most baby boomers. Additionally, the preferred way to engage with brands/products/services is in-store, which, when coupled with the aforementioned factor, suggests that CTAs from influencers targeting baby boomers should focus on driving them to stores for the best chance of spurring purchase.

Making Dollars and Sense:
Purchase Thresholds of Influencer Marketing

Purchase price levels at some key intervals provide a quick perspective of consumer behavior and price thresholds. **Younger generations have a higher spending threshold in using in-app features for purchases but tend to tap out at the $100 mark.** Baby boomers spend up to $50, which is in line with other generations. However, more boomers tend to max out at $20.



Which of the following best represents the **price range of what you purchased using an in-app purchase feature in social media channels** that have the capability while watching an influencer's video?

	Total	Adult Gen Z	Millennial	Gen X	Baby Boomer
Under $20	**9%**	**13%**	**4%**	**17%**	**33%**
$21 to $50	**27%**	**29%**	**26%**	**30%**	**28%**
$51 to $100	**54%**	**47%**	**62%**	**44%**	**23%**
More than $100	**7%**	**7%**	**8%**	**8%**	**5%**

Pause to Ponder: Flexing the CTA

Spending thresholds related to in-app purchases suggest that CTAs and other drivers for purchases above $100 need to leverage brand websites and/or marketplace sites to encourage buys among generations younger than baby boomers. For boomers, the driver to a website should be included but as secondary to driving them to stores for purchase based on previously mentioned preferences for engaging with brands.

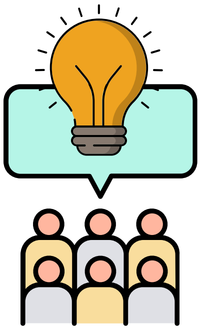
Ponder and Plan: Essential Considerations for Influencer Marketing Planning

Influencer marketing shouldn't be an "add on" to other integrated communications efforts. It represents a key connector to core audiences for marketers, including baby boomers. The same strategic thinking applied to other communications tactics needs to go into influencer marketing, too. It's the nuances therein that make it possible to leverage influencer marketing to drive all audiences to action. The following are some points to ponder but not the only nuggets of knowledge to digest.

Expand the social channel mix:

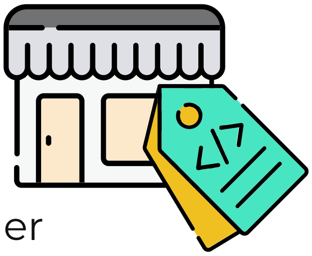
It's easy to get lost in trying to connect with a key audience such as adult Gen Z and focus efforts on one or two channels, such as TikTok and Instagram. However, data indicates that Facebook in particular is an important channel for adult Gen Z as well as other generations. In expanding the social channel mix, marketers can reach more of their core audience to connect and drive action, whether organically or through boosting. Including Facebook also helps to increase potential sharing across generations when essential to the communications effort.

Don't ignore Gen X:



At around 43-59 years old, this generation may be smaller compared to those before and after it, but it's a key generation. Gen X has reached a point in life where spending priorities change as some of their children reach adulthood while at the same time caregiver roles for their boomer parents evolve. Gen X is leveraging social media and following influencers, both of which are important factors for marketers in driving action related to purchases for generations bookending Gen Xers.

Be wise in reaching boomers:



Connecting with and driving action among baby boomers can be done with influencer marketing, but the same approaches for younger generations may not work as well. While some boomers take action to buy directly through in-app features, influencer marketing directed at boomers should focus on educating via an expert and drive boomers to purchase in-store while also including "buy now" options in apps and websites. Preferences for engaging with brands/products/services starts with in-store engagement for most boomers, followed by brand/company websites. Influencer marketing can push boomers down the funnel, but it's not as direct-to-purchase as for other generations.

Expertise, shared passion and compelling storytelling connect with consumers: While it's not brand-new information, it's worth remembering that these factors create trust and evoke authenticity. As influencer marketing continues to evolve and younger generations' preferences evolve as major life milestones are reached, their expectations and needs from brands/products/services will change, but their perspective on trusted expertise, shared passion and compelling stories are likely not to change. Marketers should continue to lean into these characteristics but evolve their strategic thinking by leveraging data-driven insights that drive actions shaped by generational preferences and behaviors.

Influencer Marketing is evolving, and re-thinking previous approaches is a must for marketers. At Dynamik, we think differently. In close collaboration with our insights partner Atomik Research, we leverage data-driven actionable insights to shape influencer marketing strategies focused on impacted brands' bottom lines. **Get to know us.**

Methodology: Atomik Research, an independent creative research agency, conducted a nationally representative survey of 2,005 adults throughout the United States. The margin of error is +/- 2 percentage points with a confidence level of 95 percent. Field work was conducted December 22-29, 2023.