

# A Study on the Attitude of Chinese Generation Z Towards Influencers

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## ABSTRACT

With the development of China's Internet, a new career was born—influencer. They are defined as people who have become famous on the Internet and have some influence on the Internet. More and more people are choosing to put themselves in this industry, especially young people in China's Z era. This study focuses on the Chinese Z generation's attitude towards influencers in order to better understand the young people's thinking changes and help the development of influencers. This report sent questionnaire survey to the Chinese Z generation, then it is found that TikTok has become the main platform for the Chinese Z generation to know the influencers and the influencers are not only about themselves but also connecting with the capitals and the pushers. Also, the attitude of the Chinese Z generation towards influencers is at a good stage that they barely follow the influencers blindly and their opinions will help influencers get better and better.

**Keywords:** Z generation, Influencers, TikTok

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Chinese Internet Direct Industry started at 1994. In those years, China first successfully had access to the international network and since then China has no turning back. The development of Chinese Internet can be divided into three periods. The first period was the establishment of the Internet company. They were known as Tencent, Alibaba and Baidu. In this first step, they created Search Engine (SE) and promoted it. As the Chinese Internet and SE have become more and more prevalent, it comes to the second periods that everyone in China can benefit from the Chinese Internet. For example, the Internet of blog started in 2002 and everyone can spread their ideas by typing on the keyboard. The biggest shopping platform Taobao also developed in this period. The most interesting thing was that in 2008, Chinese netizen first overtook the United States. The last periods began with the popularization of the mobile phone. As the development of the mobile phone, computer isn't the only way that people can surf the Internet. Those rising social impact apps such as WeChat, Instagram and TikTok redefine the Chinese Internet.

The fast-growing Chinese Internet has given the public a new job, and that is influencer. Influencers mean the people who become popular and have a bunch of fans on the Internet by having a unique skill. Although

the Chinese Internet is a huge Industry, social media, the product of the Internet, still can be divided into three large sections, text, pictures, and videos. Therefore, those influencers are active in these three different areas. For instance, a talented college student who become influencer in Weibo because his story may appeal over the public; A good-looking girl who has one million fans in Instagram because of her fancy pictures about her makeup and body-shape; A traveling vlogger posts his excellent videos on TikTok which attracts people who can't go aboard for holidays. All of those people can be defined as influencers because what they post online makes a huge influence on the public. When the influencers have a certain number of fans, they start making money from them. The process of e-commerce platform of the live becomes the main way to make money. A lot of companies give those influencers coupons or the cheapest price on the market to ask them selling products on their live shows, so that the fans have become a major consumer group. Other ways of making money are similar. Companies ask influencers to use their products for free and promote them on the social media. However, different influencers get different remunerations from the companies. It depends on the numbers of the fans, the likes, the hits and video playback amounts.

The Z generation, people who was born between 1996 and 2010, has become the main group of being influencers or fans, especially in recently years. They are the people who mostly benefit from the Chinese Internet because their growth is also the growth of the Internet. The Z generation are more likely to receive messages and be familiar with the Internet quickly and easily than other generations. At the same time, they are now the main force of this era, all the cutting-edge information can be mastered by them. So, they know better what people want, how to increase the number of fans and get the exposure.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to get the better understanding of the impact of the influencers, many scholars have published report on their researches. According to Sun Jing and Wang Xinxin's study, they defined the behavior that those influencers who make money from their fans as Wanghong Economy and they believed that this unique economic system could have a bright future [1].

Since there is the economic market, there will be consumers. Guo Yaqi pointed out that college students are willing to buy stuffs from those influencers and has become the major group. The author thought those behaviors affect student in a good way because they can save more time on the shopping. But it will still have some bad effects. In the recommendation of influencer, many college students will blindly follow the trend and become money worship. For these phenomena, the author gave the suggestions of rational consumption from four aspects to help college student [2]. This economic system of influencer developed the concept of repeated consumption especially among the teenagers. According to the Ren Jijia's research, the scholar used the SOR to verify e-commerce platform of the live has become a means of sales, greatly affecting teen's consumption behaviors [3].

Now influencers play important role in China, what characteristics does influencers have? In fact, it is their own characteristics in the Internet driven by the unlimited amplification of netizens. The emotional senses of netizens fit helped this characteristic to get everyone's pursuit. So, in somehow, influencer is not spontaneous. However, under the network media environment, influencer is the product that need the network pusher's help and the audience's needs [4]. At the same time, Ao Peng combed the network influencers, analyzed the motivation of current popular network culture communication as trying to sum up why the influencers become well-known. He concluded that people like influencers because of the audience psychology, and influencers got help through the promotion of capital so that being influencers become easily. In the other words, everyone can be influencers as long as there is a lot of capitals and the helps from the network pusher [5]. Well, since everyone has the chance to be influencer, it is

necessary to control and develop it in a good way. Liu Jiuming and Li Xunpeng came up with some ideas. They believed that the government needs to strengthen the supervision of influencer who show the harmful effects and the fans has the right to report when the influencer set an unhealthy example [6]. Although the authors gave the helpful suggestions about how to clean up, but they didn't mention the dangers if there were too many bad influencers. According to this article written by Tan Fei, there were a group of people in order to get famous, doing the bad things such as imitating the dog on the street, using dirty water to instant noodles...Over time, these actions are bound to be emulated. The society needs to function benignly, and the channels of communication that affect all kinds of social ideas are particularly important [7].

Influencer on social media is affecting today's college students. Zhu Rong, Song Feichao, and Lv Yingjie believed that influencers have a good and bad influence on the value of college students. For the positive side, they put forward that college students could get different information or news through influencers and the social media platform give the opportunity for the college student to stand up and speak up. However, some influencers pay too much attention on fame rather than spreading positive energy which make a bad influence on college students [8]. Although influencers' culture may not have too much power to affect the whole college students, as a way of communication, it still can bring shock to the undergraduate. According to Li Li and Chang Qing's study, influencer has a huge difference between the Internet and the reality. Most of the college students still can't have critical thinking skills. Influencer is also a kind of rapid subculture, after understanding more will pose a certain threat to the mainstream culture [9]. Moreover, a lot of college students want to be a influencer which is good thing that can help them to find the purpose of life. Hu Deiping pointed out that as long as the school can correct the bad behaviors of college students' influencers in time, help them to establish the concept of spreading positive energy, and set the good example of college students' influencers model, they could become the communicators in this society [10].

Appreciating those studies and researches above give those background information about influencers in advanced. However, there is still a research gap. This research finds out that though there are many studies that focus on the college students, there isn't any studies that focuses on the Z generation. What's more, most of the researchers expressed grave concern at impact of the influencers and how and why the influencers become popular, also, the economic system of influencers in China has attached a lot of attentions, none of them want to hear the Z generation' voices and to know what exactly the Chinese Z generation's attitude about the influencers. Our purposes are to get better understanding of the transmutation of the thoughts between the Chinese Z

generation. As the generation who benefit most from the influencers, they need to know this huge new industry carefully and particularly. This research can help them to analyse influencers deeply. Additionally, the Chinese Z generation' attitudes can really give influencers different inspirations, so that they can get better and better. In order to achieve this purpose, this research will study the Chinese Z generation's attitude about the influencers.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

In order to know better about the Chinese Z generation's attitude about the influencers, this research will use questionnaire survey, asking several questions to the Chinese Z generation to find out their thoughts about influencer. Before starting to set up questions, this research needs to make sure that those questions are helpful for subsequent research and discussion, instead of asking irrelevant questions. After the discussion, this research decided to keep the questions within 12 channels and all of these questions are set as close-ended questions because it is useful for later analysis and research. When the preparation of the preliminary work was completed, the research entered the stage of making the survey. This research selected commonly used tool in China to make questionnaires. It is known as WJX.cn. Some questions can be set as 5-scales, such as very good, good, ordinary, bad very bad. Some questions that ask for the reasons need to be set to multiple-choice questions because perhaps there is more than one reason. The most important thing is that some questions need to be logical. For instance, if the respondent to the previous question chose "don't like influencers", then do not appear the following questions that ask about the reason why you like the influencers. When the questionnaire survey is done, it can be sent to the Chinese Z generation. This research uses the Moment in WeChat as the main platform to share the survey. Some teachers are involved to share this survey because their student is also the target. This research successfully collected 216 questionnaires over a one-week period. How long the questionnaire is sent is determined by the number of received questionnaires. Sometimes there are invalid questionnaires. For example, all the answers are chosen the same, questionnaire is not filled in complete and the answer is obviously regular. However, in this research, all the 216 questionnaires are effective and completed well by the Chinese Z generation.

### 4. RESULT

When talking to the interests of following the influencers, 34.7% of respondents showed generally interests and 28.24% of them like being fan of the influencers. There are only 10 people hate following the influencers. It is clear that TikTok become the main platform for people to know the influencers. The percentage of people who follow the influencers through

Weibo and Little Red Book is similar, at 50.46% and 55.56% respectively. The development of the Internet is the reason that 74.07% of respondents think why there would be influencers. 48.61% and 46.76% of people believed that the economics of society and the attractiveness of influencers are the reason why the influencers are popular. The largest number of people like funny influencers, accounting for 71.3%. The number of people who like good-looking influencers and talent influencers is similar, at 59.26% and at 57.41% respectively. However, only two percent of people like the influencers who sell products and 56.94% of respondents hate them. It can be seen that most of respondents thought the Z generation attitude towards influencers was common. 26.85% of people showed the Z generation had a worse attitude towards influencers. The proportion of spending money on influencers is 46.76%. Meanwhile, the percentage of spending a lot of money on influencers is 53.47%. When taking about how to become the influencers, respondents identified talent (56.02%), the pushers (58.33%) and investing a lot of capital (57.87%) as the three most important reasons. The 41.2% and the 41.67% of respondents generally tend to believe that the number of fans between 10 thousand to 10 million determined the popularity of the influencers. The percentage of people who want to be influencers is similar to the proportion of people who doesn't want to be influencers, at 37.96% and at 41.67% respectively.

### 5. DISCUSSION

This research focuses on the Chinese Z generation's attitude about the influencers. After the questionnaire survey, this study finds out that nearly half of people follow the influencers, and less than five percent don't pay attention. Also, most of respondents believed that the development of the Internet and the society, the talent of the influencers, and the diversity of the job are the main reasons that why the influencers exist. The result is actually expected, because influencers have entered everyone's daily life. People will talk about influencers casually. As for those who don't like to follow the influencers, it perhaps that they believed that there are too many influencers now, it is easy to influence people's values in a bad way especially among the Z generation because they are too young to have critical thinking skill. As the fast development of the Internet and influencers, there would be more new unique job that has appeared. Such as, influencer assistants, short video photography, or platform anchor.

Since TikTok was developed, it has quickly become one of the popular social applications in the world. At the same time has it also become an important platform for people to know about the influencers. The main characteristic for TikTok is short video. People barely have time in their busy lives to sit and watch a long video, even if the video is wonderful. TikTok captures this

psychology, shortening the video to a few dozen seconds. It is easy for people to quickly discover a lot of good videos. Also, TikTok is giving the opportunity to everyone that want to be an influencer to post their excellent video on this platform. Although many people realize their dreams through TikTok, there are also some of people who neglect their real lives because they are addicted to those short video. This researcher suggests that TikTok could limit the user's time, only few hours per a day. After all, there are more beautiful moments in real life that worth capturing. For instance, the morning sunshine, the love from family and the sea.

The other result that this study finds out is that most of people like the influencers who has sense of humor and they don't like the influencers who sell products or write articles. It is easy to understand that wring is boring and selling products cost people's money. However, funny videos bring laughter to people's lives. Those funny influencers spreads happiness through its own sense of humor. These pleasures attract people's attention. It also brings power to people invisibly. Isn't that what influencer is all about? Spreading positive energy to this society is meaningful. Helping more people is the motive for being the influencers. This study suggests that all influencers can bring some positive energy to the society at their own fields in different ways. For instance, the influencers who sell the products could contact those farmers who have fresh products in the countryside but don't have the way to sell them out.

In fact, more than half of people have not invested money because of the influencers. But anyone who has spent money for influencers will keep investing a lot of money. There are perhaps three reasons why people choose to spend money on influencers. First, over-like. Second, the purchase of influencers recommended products. Third, willing to pay to watch the influencers show talent. When people become a fan of influencers, they're willing to pay for whatever the influencers say, blindly believe that the recommended products are worth buying. Some can't help to purchase virtual gifts on the live shows just because the influencers could dance or sing for the fan who purchased the most. Although it is people's right to deal with their money, it still needs to be controlled. After all, the online world and real-life gap is a lot. Many false information is spread through the influencers, resulting in people being scammed. This study believed that the government need to be involved those influencers when it comes to the money, publishing some rules or laws, giving strict attitude towards those influencers in order to protect people's interest.

The majority of people think that talented, the pushers and a lot of capital can make people popular. In the other words, a lot of respondents believed that influencers is a kind of business. When someone become a influencer, there will be a lot of companies would like to work with them to make a profit by using its fans. Speaking to the

fans, most of people believed that when the influencers have the numbers of fans between 10 thousand to 10 million it can be defined as popular. So, in people's minds, fans are the core of influencers and the influencers need help from their fans. Therefore, becoming a influencer is not only relying on the support of fans or capitals, special talents or skills are also very important. Overall, influencer is not only a person in the efforts, but the result of efforts in all aspects. Influencers may have long been an industry. It's actually good, letting people to learn the team work and creating more jobs and GDP to this society. However, influencers industry still has a long way to go. This business behavior is worth exploring. For instance, what kind of talent can attract fans? and how much money to invest can get return as soon as possible?

Although being influencers become more easier, there are still nearly half of people don't want to be influencers because the Z generation think that influencers have been living in the public eye and this lifestyle will produce a lot of invisible pressure. Also, influencer's actions are monitored by fans, thus losing a lot of freedom. Nowadays, the influencers are become more and more so that there is a lot competitive pressure between them. In the Z era, they may be more yearning for a comfortable and simple life. There is still about one-third of people who want to be influencers. They probably are looking forward to the bright life of influencers. There are a lot of free clothes and many grand events to participate. Some of them may also want to use their power to help some people.

Whether or not to be the influencers, the Z generation's attitude towards influencers should be positive. Nearly half of them think they are right about influencers and a quarter of people think they don't treat influencers very well. Most the Z generations have a strong ability to accept new things. They like to follow the trend but don't follow it blindly. Most of them have their own independent values to live with. Influencer is not all about spreading positive energy. The Z generation can also be very good at resisting the vulgar influencers in order to create a healthy network society. This study suggests that the Z generation should become the main characters in building influencers. Also, the community need to adopt their suggestions more because their unique values for the influencers and the world are worthy of people to learn and reference.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This study puts efforts on the Chinese Z generation's attitude towards the influencers. Overall, the Chinese Z generation's attitude towards influencers is in a good stage. With the development of the network, influencer, this popular occupation, is gradually formed. Young people in China's Z era still have a lot of different views on influencers. Most of people can have the ability to see things from different angles, in order to avoid

overspending or blindly following the influencers without thinking. Nowadays, everyone has the opportunity to become an influencer. More and more online platform has been developed to support and give the chance for the influencers. Young people in the Z era prefer those who has already become influencers or who want to be the influencers in the future to spread positive energy on online platforms and to set a good example for the young generations. Although influencer has gradually evolved into a new industry, but many ideas on the influencers that comes from the Chinese Z generation can make this road go better. At the same time, government should also participate in building the healthy network society through enacting the law or regulating the online world especially the influencers. This research hope that the society will be able to listen more views from the Chinese Z generation in order to not only let the influencers, become more and more standardized, but also to help other areas because the Chinese Z generation is the future.

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