

Digital Brand Storytelling and Customer Engagement among Generation Z Consumers: Empirical Evidence from the Health and Wellness Products Market in Nairobi County, Kenya

Dr. Winnie Njeru * Dr. Jesse Kang'ethe Mukuria

Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Business and Management Sciences, University of Nairobi P.O. Box 30197-00100 Nairobi, Kenya

* E-mail of the corresponding author: wininjeru@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examined the influence of digital brand storytelling on customer engagement among Generation Z consumers in the health and wellness products market in Nairobi County, Kenya. Guided by Narrative Transportation Theory, Relationship Marketing Theory, and Uses and Gratifications Theory, the study determined the effects of authenticity, emotional appeal, interactive storytelling, user-generated content, and influencer storytelling on customer engagement. A quantitative cross-sectional research design was adopted, and data were collected from Generation Z consumers using a structured questionnaire administered in private universities, wellness and beauty stores, shopping malls, fitness centers, and social media communities. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis. The findings revealed that digital brand storytelling has a significant positive influence on customer engagement ($R^2 = 0.684$, $p < .001$). All five storytelling dimensions positively and significantly influenced customer engagement, with authenticity and interactive storytelling emerging as the strongest predictors. The study contributes to digital marketing literature by conceptualizing digital brand storytelling as a multidimensional construct and providing empirical evidence from Kenya's health and wellness products market. The study recommends that health and wellness firms prioritize authentic, emotionally engaging, and interactive storytelling, encourage user-generated content, and collaborate with credible influencers to strengthen customer engagement among Generation Z consumers. These findings provide valuable insights for marketers, brand managers, and policymakers seeking to develop effective digital engagement strategies within emerging markets.

Keywords: Digital brand storytelling; customer engagement; Generation Z; Health and wellness products; Nairobi County; Kenya

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1. Introduction

Digital technologies have fundamentally transformed marketing communication, shifting firms from traditional one-way promotional messages toward interactive, consumer-centred engagement strategies. The widespread adoption of social media, mobile technologies, artificial intelligence, and digital content platforms has enabled organizations to create immersive brand experiences that foster stronger emotional connections with consumers. Among these strategies, digital brand storytelling has emerged as a powerful marketing approach that combines narrative, visual content, and interactive communication to build authenticity, trust, and long-term customer relationships. Unlike conventional advertising, digital brand storytelling encourages consumers to participate in brand conversations, share experiences, and co-create brand meaning, thereby strengthening customer engagement and enhancing brand loyalty (Appel et al., 2020; Kotler et al., 2024; Vidrih & Mayahi, 2023).

Globally, the rapid expansion of social media has accelerated the adoption of digital storytelling across industries. More than five billion people actively use social media worldwide, with platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook becoming dominant channels for brand communication and consumer engagement. At the same time, the global health and wellness economy has surpassed US\$7 trillion, driven by increasing consumer awareness of preventive healthcare, healthy lifestyles, fitness, nutrition, and personal well-being (Global Wellness Institute, 2024; DataReportal, 2025). As competition intensifies, organizations are increasingly relying on authentic storytelling, influencer collaborations, and user-generated content to differentiate their brands and cultivate meaningful consumer relationships.

Generation Z, comprising individuals born approximately between 1997 and 2012, has emerged as the most digitally connected consumer cohort. This generation spends considerable time on social media, consumes predominantly short-form visual content, and places greater emphasis on authenticity, transparency, peer recommendations, and influencer-generated content than traditional advertising. Recent empirical studies

demonstrate that credible influencer content, authentic brand communication, and emotionally engaging narratives significantly influence Generation Z's brand attachment, purchase intentions, and customer engagement (Tiwari, 2024; Kholkina et al., 2024; Liu & Zheng, 2024). Likewise, authenticity management strategies including transparent sponsorship disclosure, genuine self-expression, and strong influencer-brand fit—have been shown to significantly increase digital engagement with branded content (Liao & Chen, 2024).

Across Africa, rapid growth in smartphone adoption, mobile internet connectivity, and digital payment systems has accelerated the expansion of digital commerce and social media marketing. Young African consumers increasingly depend on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube for product discovery, wellness information, peer recommendations, and purchase decisions. Consequently, businesses are shifting from transactional marketing toward storytelling strategies that emphasize authenticity, community participation, and consumer experiences. Despite this transformation, empirical research examining how digital brand storytelling influences customer engagement within African consumer markets remains relatively limited, particularly in the health and wellness sector (GSMA, 2024).

Within East Africa, digital transformation has significantly reshaped consumer behaviour through increased internet accessibility, expanding mobile broadband infrastructure, and widespread adoption of social networking platforms. Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Rwanda have witnessed substantial growth in social commerce, digital entrepreneurship, and influencer marketing, with businesses increasingly leveraging social media to communicate brand values and engage digitally connected consumers. Nevertheless, scholarly evidence examining digital brand storytelling as an integrated marketing strategy within East African consumer markets remains scarce, with most existing studies focusing on influencer marketing or electronic word-of-mouth independently rather than as complementary storytelling dimensions.

Kenya has emerged as one of Africa's leading digital economies, characterized by widespread smartphone ownership, expanding internet penetration, and vibrant social media usage. Platforms such as TikTok and Instagram have become central channels through which brands communicate with consumers, particularly younger audiences. Simultaneously, Kenya's health and wellness products market has expanded considerably due to increasing health consciousness, rising urban incomes, and growing demand for nutritional supplements, skincare products, fitness services, organic foods, and preventive healthcare solutions. Empirical evidence indicates that influencer credibility, authentic communication, and user-generated content play increasingly important roles in shaping consumer attitudes, trust, and purchase intentions for wellness-related products (Añaña & Barbosa, 2023; Garg & Bakshi, 2024).

Nairobi County represents the epicenter of Kenya's digital economy and health and wellness market. As the country's commercial and technological hub, Nairobi hosts a high concentration of digitally connected Generation Z consumers, private universities, wellness and beauty retail stores, shopping malls, fitness centers, and digital content creators. Generation Z consumers in Nairobi increasingly interact with health and wellness brands through TikTok and Instagram, where influencer storytelling, customer testimonials, and user-generated content substantially shape brand awareness, product evaluations, and purchase decisions. Recent research further suggests that wellness-focused influencers inspire Generation Z consumers not only to adopt products but also to emulate healthier lifestyles when influencer content is perceived as credible, authentic, and relatable (Tiwari, 2024; Motta et al., 2024).

Although previous studies have examined social media marketing, influencer marketing, electronic word-of-mouth, and digital communication independently, relatively few have conceptualized digital brand storytelling as a multidimensional construct comprising authenticity, emotional appeal, interactive storytelling, user-generated content, and influencer storytelling. Moreover, most empirical evidence has been generated in developed economies, limiting its applicability to emerging African markets. Existing studies also provide limited understanding of how these storytelling dimensions collectively influence cognitive, emotional, and behavioural customer engagement among Generation Z consumers within Kenya's rapidly expanding health and wellness products market (Tiwari, 2024; Liao & Chen, 2024).

Accordingly, this study examines the influence of digital brand storytelling on customer engagement among Generation Z consumers in the health and wellness products market in Nairobi County, Kenya. Specifically, the study investigates the effects of authenticity, emotional appeal, interactive storytelling, user-generated content, and influencer storytelling on customer engagement. By extending digital storytelling research to an emerging market context, the study contributes to marketing theory while providing evidence-based insights for health and

wellness firms, digital marketers, content creators, and policymakers seeking to develop more effective consumer engagement strategies targeting Generation Z consumers.

1.1 Problem Statement

Digital brand storytelling has become an increasingly important strategy for enhancing customer engagement in the digital economy. Through authentic narratives, emotional content, interactive experiences, user-generated content, and influencer collaborations, organizations seek to establish stronger relationships with consumers across social media platforms. Globally, empirical studies consistently demonstrate that storytelling positively influences brand image, customer trust, and engagement. For example, Vidrih and Mayahi (2023) reported that authentic digital storytelling significantly strengthened customer engagement and brand trust among online consumers, while Tiwari (2024), studying Generation Z wellness consumers in India, found that credible wellness influencers inspired not only product adoption but also long-term behavioural engagement through authentic and educational storytelling. Similarly, studies on digital health interventions have shown that storytelling combined with influencer communication substantially improves consumer reach and initial engagement, although sustained engagement remains challenging.

Despite this growing body of evidence, existing global studies present important conceptual limitations. Most investigate storytelling as a mechanism for influencing purchase intention, brand image, or consumer inspiration rather than conceptualizing digital brand storytelling as a multidimensional construct comprising authenticity, emotional appeal, interactive storytelling, user-generated content, and influencer storytelling. Consequently, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the combined influence of these storytelling dimensions on customer engagement.

Within Africa, social media has become an important platform for health communication and consumer engagement. Simba and Girma (2025) demonstrated that social media influencers can significantly enhance trust, engagement, and behavioural change in health communication across African countries through credible and interactive content. Likewise, evidence cited from campaigns in Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa showed that influencer-led communication substantially improved audience engagement with health information. However, these studies primarily focused on public health communication rather than commercial brand storytelling, and they did not empirically examine the multidimensional nature of digital storytelling or its influence on customer engagement within consumer markets.

At the regional level, empirical evidence remains limited. In Kenya, Du Plessis and Waititu (2025) examined how marketing agencies integrate content marketing and influencer marketing to enhance brand engagement. Their findings showed that content relevance, authenticity, and consistency significantly improve engagement, while influencer marketing alone was insufficient unless integrated with high-quality content. Although the study provided valuable insights into the East African marketing context, it focused on marketing agencies rather than consumers and did not investigate Generation Z or the health and wellness products market.

Existing Kenyan consumer studies reveal similar limitations. Mong'are (2024), examining skincare consumers at USIU-Africa, established that influencer credibility, attractiveness, and popularity significantly influenced purchase behaviour, but the study focused on purchase decisions rather than customer engagement and considered influencer characteristics only. Similarly, Kithandi and Kithandi (2024) found that digital marketing strategies positively influenced customer engagement among micro, small, and medium enterprises in Nairobi County, yet digital marketing was treated as a broad construct without isolating storytelling dimensions. More recently, Njeru (2025) reported that social media influencers significantly enhanced Generation Z brand loyalty in Kenya's soft drink industry, but the study concentrated on influencer attributes and brand loyalty rather than the broader storytelling ecosystem.

Collectively, these studies reveal four major research gaps. First, a conceptual gap exists because previous studies have examined influencer marketing, content marketing, social media marketing, or digital marketing independently rather than integrating authenticity, emotional appeal, interactive storytelling, user-generated content, and influencer storytelling into a comprehensive digital brand storytelling framework. Second, a contextual gap exists because most empirical evidence originates from developed economies, with comparatively limited studies conducted within African consumer markets. Third, a sectoral gap persists because little empirical research has examined digital storytelling within the rapidly growing health and wellness products industry,

despite its increasing reliance on social media engagement. Finally, a geographical gap remains because few studies have investigated how digital brand storytelling influences customer engagement among Generation Z consumers in Nairobi County, where digital media adoption, influencer culture, and wellness product consumption are particularly high.

Accordingly, this study examined the influence of digital brand storytelling on customer engagement among Generation Z consumers in Nairobi County, Kenya, by investigating the effects of authenticity, emotional appeal, interactive storytelling, user-generated content, and influencer storytelling. By addressing the identified conceptual, contextual, sectoral, and geographical gaps, the study contributes to the growing digital marketing literature while providing evidence-based guidance for health and wellness firms seeking to develop more effective customer engagement strategies in emerging markets.

2. Theoretical and Empirical Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study is underpinned by Narrative Transportation Theory, Relationship Marketing Theory, and Uses and Gratifications Theory. Together, these theories provide complementary perspectives for explaining how digital brand storytelling influences customer engagement among Generation Z consumers by integrating narrative persuasion, relationship development, and media consumption behaviour.

Narrative Transportation Theory, developed by Green and Brock (2000), posits that consumers become cognitively and emotionally immersed in compelling narratives, increasing the persuasive effectiveness of brand messages. When consumers are transported into a story, they are more likely to develop favourable attitudes, trust the brand, and engage in desired behaviours. Recent studies have shown that authentic and emotionally engaging digital stories significantly enhance customer engagement, particularly among Generation Z consumers who primarily consume short-form visual content on social media (Vidrih & Mayahi, 2023; Tiwari, 2024). In this study, the theory explains how authenticity, emotional appeal, influencer storytelling, and user-generated content immerse consumers in brand narratives, thereby strengthening cognitive, emotional, and behavioural engagement.

Relationship Marketing Theory, introduced by Berry (1983) and further developed by Morgan and Hunt (1994), emphasizes that sustainable organizational success depends on developing long-term relationships founded on trust, commitment, communication, and value creation. Within digital environments, storytelling enables brands to establish continuous interactions, strengthen emotional bonds, and cultivate consumer trust through authentic and transparent communication. Empirical evidence indicates that authentic communication and influencer credibility positively influence customer engagement by enhancing relationship quality between consumers and brands (Liao & Chen, 2024; Garg & Bakshi, 2024). The theory therefore provides a useful framework for explaining how digital storytelling fosters enduring customer-brand relationships among Generation Z consumers.

Uses and Gratifications Theory, proposed by Katz et al. (1973), argues that media audiences actively select content that satisfies their informational, entertainment, social interaction, and self-expression needs. As active digital users, Generation Z consumers engage with storytelling content because it provides product information, emotional experiences, peer interaction, and opportunities for identity expression. Recent studies demonstrate that platforms such as TikTok and Instagram satisfy these needs through interactive storytelling, influencer content, and user-generated experiences, thereby enhancing customer engagement (Kholkina et al., 2024; Liu & Zheng, 2024). The theory therefore explains why Generation Z consumers actively consume and interact with digital brand storytelling within the health and wellness products market.

Collectively, these theories provide a robust theoretical foundation for the study. Narrative Transportation Theory explains the persuasive power of storytelling, Relationship Marketing Theory explains how storytelling strengthens long-term customer relationships, and Uses and Gratifications Theory explains why Generation Z consumers actively engage with storytelling content on digital platforms. Their integration provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how authenticity, emotional appeal, interactive storytelling, user-generated content, and influencer storytelling influence customer engagement among Generation Z consumers in Nairobi County.

2.2 Empirical Review

Recent empirical evidence demonstrates that digital brand storytelling has become an important determinant of customer engagement, particularly among Generation Z consumers who increasingly rely on social media for product discovery, brand evaluation, and purchase decisions. Globally, Simões et al. (2022) found that authentic and emotionally compelling digital storytelling significantly enhances consumer trust, interaction, and brand engagement by creating meaningful brand experiences. Similarly, Martínek (2022) reported that Generation Z consumers are more likely to engage with digital content that reflects authenticity, transparency, and shared values, while Aprila et al. (2025) established that digital brand storytelling positively influences customer engagement, which subsequently strengthens purchase intentions. Likewise, Dessart and Veloutsou (2023) observed that interactive storytelling encourages consumers to actively participate in online brand communities through commenting, sharing, and content co-creation, thereby reinforcing customer engagement. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that storytelling enhances engagement through authenticity, emotional appeal, and consumer participation. However, most were conducted in developed economies and primarily examined overall storytelling effects rather than the relative influence of specific storytelling dimensions.

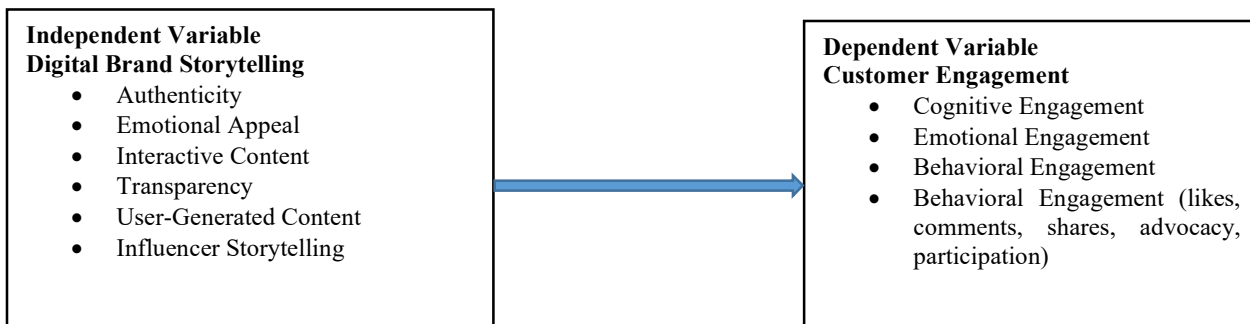
Within Africa, empirical research on digital storytelling remains relatively limited, with most studies focusing on broader digital marketing strategies. Nyagadza et al. (2022) argued that storytelling enhances brand identity and stakeholder relationships, although their work was primarily conceptual and did not empirically examine customer engagement. In South Africa, Mpinganjira and Maduku (2023) found that social media content quality and consumer interaction positively influenced online customer engagement among retail consumers, while Simba and Girma (2025) reported that authentic influencer communication significantly improved audience engagement in health communication campaigns across several African countries. Although these studies underscore the growing importance of digital communication and authentic content, they largely examined influencer marketing or social media engagement independently without conceptualizing digital brand storytelling as an integrated multidimensional construct.

In Kenya, empirical studies have similarly concentrated on individual digital marketing practices rather than digital brand storytelling. Gitau (2022) established that influencer marketing significantly enhanced customer engagement and customer-based brand equity among clothing retail firms in Nairobi. Kithandi and Kithandi (2024) found that digital marketing strategies positively influenced customer engagement among micro, small, and medium enterprises in Nairobi County, although digital marketing was examined as a broad construct. More recently, Njeru (2025) reported that influencer authenticity and credibility significantly enhanced brand loyalty among Generation Z consumers in Kenya's beverage industry. While these studies provide valuable insights into digital marketing effectiveness within the Kenyan context, they focus primarily on influencer marketing, digital promotion, or brand loyalty and do not examine how authenticity, emotional appeal, interactive storytelling, user-generated content, and influencer storytelling collectively influence customer engagement within the health and wellness products market.

Overall, the reviewed literature demonstrates that digital storytelling positively influences consumer engagement across different contexts. However, three major empirical gaps remain evident. First, previous studies have predominantly examined influencer marketing, social media marketing, or digital marketing as separate constructs rather than conceptualizing digital brand storytelling as a multidimensional construct comprising authenticity, emotional appeal, interactive storytelling, user-generated content, and influencer storytelling. Second, most empirical evidence originates from developed economies, with relatively limited studies conducted within African consumer markets. Third, there is limited empirical evidence examining the influence of digital brand storytelling on customer engagement among Generation Z consumers in Kenya's health and wellness products market, particularly within Nairobi County. This study addresses these conceptual, contextual, and sectoral gaps by examining the influence of the five dimensions of digital brand storytelling on customer engagement among Generation Z consumers in Nairobi County, Kenya.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the proposed relationship between digital brand storytelling and customer engagement among Generation Z social media consumers. The framework posits that digital brand storytelling, characterized by authentic narratives, emotional appeal, interactivity, transparency, and user-generated content, positively influences customer engagement, which is reflected in consumers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral interactions with brands.



3. Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research approach based on the positivist research paradigm to examine the influence of digital brand storytelling on customer engagement among Generation Z consumers in Nairobi County, Kenya. A cross-sectional survey design was employed to collect data at a single point in time, enabling the examination of relationships between digital brand storytelling dimensions and customer engagement.

The target population comprised Generation Z consumers aged 18–27 years who actively purchase or engage with health and wellness products through digital platforms. Respondents were recruited from four major consumer touchpoints: private universities (Strathmore University and USIU-Africa), wellness and beauty retail stores located in shopping malls, fitness centres and gyms, and online communities on TikTok and Instagram. These settings were purposively selected because they represent key physical and digital environments where Generation Z consumers interact with health and wellness brands.

Data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire consisting of demographic questions and multi-item scales measuring five dimensions of digital brand storytelling authenticity, emotional appeal, interactive storytelling, user-generated content, and influencer storytelling and three dimensions of customer engagement: cognitive, emotional, and behavioural engagement. All measurement items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed using purposive, intercept, and online sampling techniques, yielding 262 valid responses (response rate = 87.3%). Prior to the main survey, a pilot study involving 30 respondents was conducted to refine the questionnaire. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, while construct validity was evaluated through the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure, Bartlett's test of sphericity, and exploratory factor analysis.

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 30. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) summarized respondent characteristics and study variables. Pearson correlation analysis examined relationships among the constructs, while multiple linear regression analysis was employed to determine the influence of the five digital brand storytelling dimensions on customer engagement. Statistical significance was evaluated at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$).

4. Results and Discussion

A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed to Generation Z consumers sampled from private universities, wellness and beauty retail stores, fitness centres, and online social media communities. Of these, 262 questionnaires were completed and returned, representing an overall response rate of 87.3%, while 38 questionnaires (12.7%) were not returned.

Table 1 Response Rate

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Questionnaires Distributed	300	100.0
Questionnaires Returned	262	87.3
Questionnaires Not Returned	38	12.7

The response rate of 87.3% is considered excellent for survey research and demonstrates a high level of respondent participation. Such a response rate substantially reduces the likelihood of non-response bias and enhances the representativeness of the sample. Consequently, the returned questionnaires provided sufficient data for subsequent descriptive and inferential statistical analyses.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics

The analysis provides an overview of the respondents' gender, age, education level, employment status, monthly income, preferred social media platform, frequency of interaction with health and wellness brands, and frequently purchased wellness products. Understanding these characteristics is important because they provide context for interpreting respondents' perceptions regarding digital brand storytelling and customer engagement.

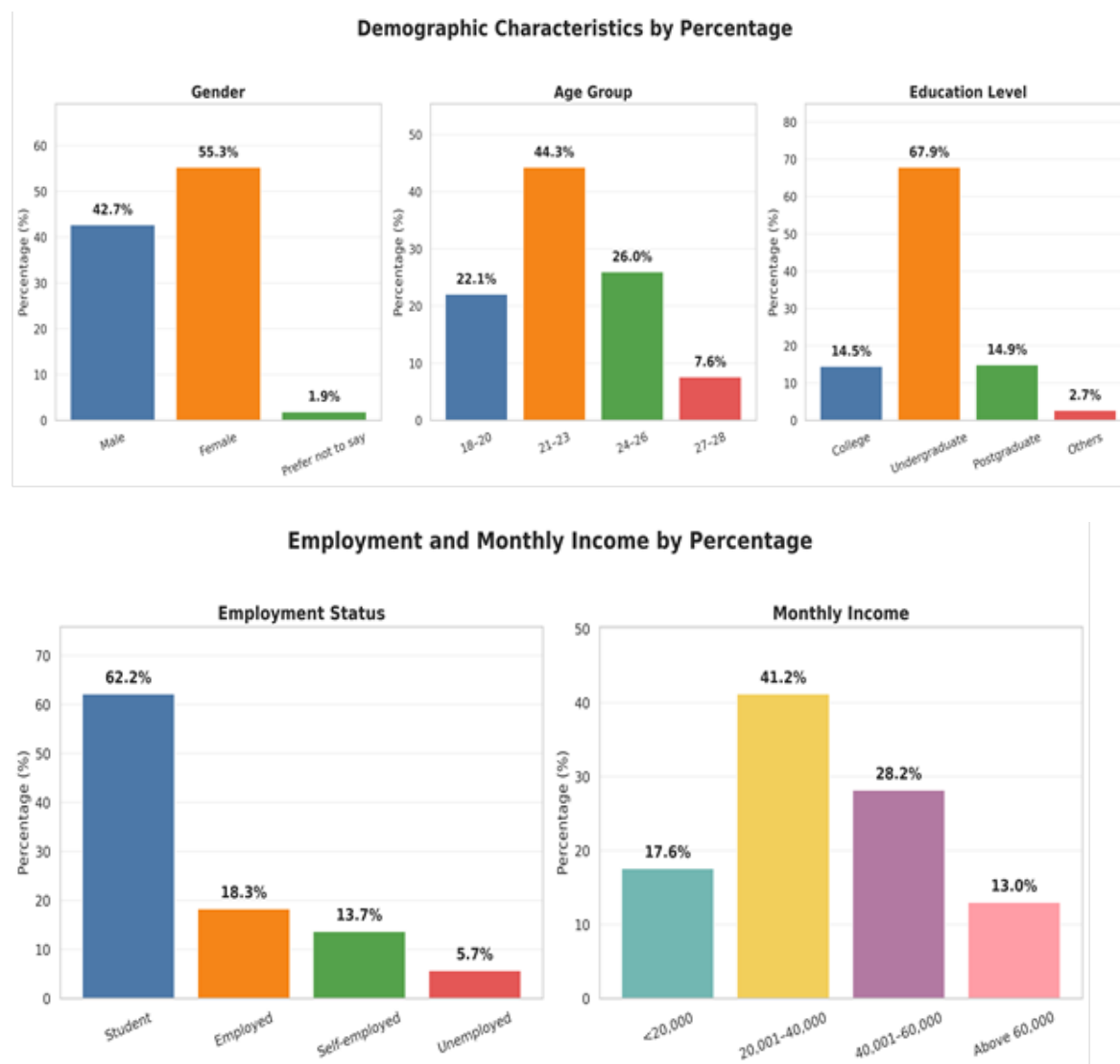


Figure1 indicates that female respondents constituted the majority of the study sample, accounting for 55.3% (145 respondents), while males represented 42.7% (112 respondents). A small proportion (1.9%) preferred not to disclose their gender. The predominance of female respondents may reflect greater interest and participation in the health and wellness products market, particularly in product categories such as skincare, nutritional supplements, and personal care. Nevertheless, the relatively balanced gender composition suggests that the study adequately captured perspectives from both male and female Generation Z consumers.

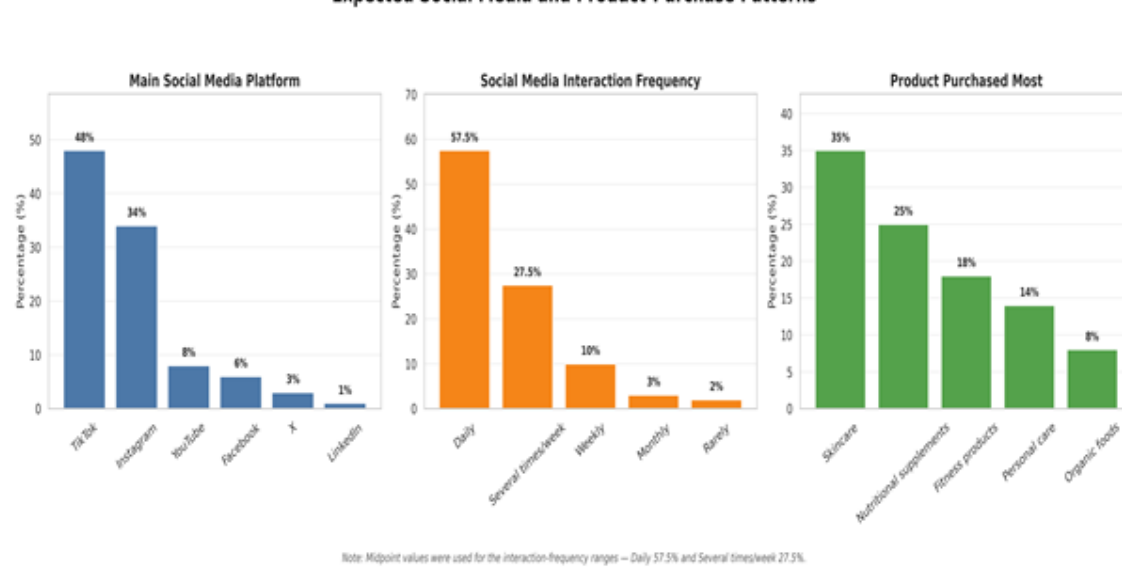
The results further show that, respondents aged 21–23 years constituted the largest proportion (44.3%), followed by those aged 24–26 years (26.0%). Respondents aged 18–20 years accounted for 22.1%, while only 7.6% were aged 27–28 years. These findings indicate that the study successfully captured the core Generation Z population, particularly young adults who are highly active on digital platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. This demographic profile strengthens the relevance of the study because these consumers are among the primary audiences for digital brand storytelling within the health and wellness products market.

Nearly seven out of every ten respondents (67.9%) possessed undergraduate education. This finding reflects the sampling strategy that targeted private universities. Respondents with university education are generally more knowledgeable about digital media, online marketing, and social networking platforms. Consequently, they are more likely to critically evaluate brand stories and distinguish authentic storytelling from purely promotional content.

On employment status student respondents constituted 62.2% of the sample. This finding is expected because the study purposely targeted university students. Students represent one of the largest Generation Z consumer segments. Although many are not fully employed, they actively purchase wellness products including skincare products, gym supplements, nutritional products and healthy foods. Moreover, students spend considerable time on digital platforms, making them highly exposed to digital storytelling campaigns.

As far as monthly income is concerned, the largest proportion (41.2%) reported monthly income between KES 20,001 and KES 40,000, while 28.2% earned between KES 40,001 and KES 60,000. The income distribution indicates that respondents possessed moderate purchasing power. Since many respondents came from private universities and fitness centres, the findings support the assumption that the sample comprised consumers capable of purchasing discretionary health and wellness products rather than only essential commodities. Income is therefore likely to facilitate rather than constrain engagement with premium wellness brands.

Expected Social Media and Product-Purchase Patterns



On preferred social media platform TikTok emerged as the dominant platform followed by Instagram. This finding confirms that TikTok and Instagram are the primary digital environments where Generation Z discovers health and wellness products. The result supports the study's decision to recruit online respondents through hashtags on these platforms. It also suggests that marketers should prioritize short-form videos, reels, influencer collaborations, and interactive storytelling when targeting Generation Z consumers.

The results on frequency of social media interaction indicated that nearly 60% interacted with health and wellness brands daily. Daily interaction indicates that Generation Z consumers are continuously exposed to brand-generated content. Such frequent exposure increases opportunities for brands to influence perceptions, attitudes, purchase intentions, and engagement behaviours through consistent storytelling. The findings further

imply that digital storytelling is not an occasional marketing activity but an ongoing communication strategy.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Digital Brand Storytelling

Variable	Mean	SD
Authenticity	4.23	0.61
Emotional Appeal	4.17	0.67
Interactive Storytelling	4.05	0.73
UGC	4.28	0.58
Influencer Storytelling	4.31	0.64

The mean scores range from 4.05 to 4.31, indicating that respondents generally agreed or strongly agreed with the statements measuring digital brand storytelling. The relatively low standard deviations (0.58–0.73) indicate that respondents' opinions were fairly consistent, suggesting broad agreement regarding the importance of storytelling elements.

Authenticity had (Mean = 4.23). The high mean indicates that respondents believe authenticity is one of the most important characteristics of digital storytelling. Generation Z appears to value honest communication, genuine customer experiences, and transparent brand messages. Brands perceived as authentic are therefore more likely to earn consumer trust.

Emotional Appeal had (Mean = 4.17). Respondents generally agreed that emotional stories enhance their interest in brands. This finding suggests that storytelling capable of evoking hope, inspiration, confidence or personal transformation increases consumer attention and strengthens emotional attachment to wellness brands.

Interactive Storytelling had (Mean = 4.05). Although interactive storytelling recorded the lowest mean among the storytelling dimensions, the score still reflects positive agreement. This indicates that consumers appreciate opportunities to participate in discussions, live sessions, polls, and Q&A sessions, although interaction alone may not be sufficient without authentic and meaningful content.

User-Generated Content had (Mean = 4.28). This variable received one of the highest ratings. The result suggests that Generation Z places considerable trust in customer reviews, testimonials, and experiences shared by fellow consumers. Compared with traditional advertising, peer-created content appears more credible and persuasive.

Influencer Storytelling had (Mean = 4.31). Influencer storytelling recorded the highest mean. This indicates that respondents strongly value influencers who genuinely use wellness products and communicate authentic experiences. Generation Z therefore appears to rely heavily on influencer narratives when evaluating brands.

Table 2: Customer Engagement

Variable	Mean	SD
Cognitive	4.18	0.63
Emotional	4.22	0.60
Behavioural	4.09	0.69

The high means demonstrate that respondents actively engage with digital health and wellness brands cognitively, emotionally and behaviourally. Overall customer engagement averaged 4.16, indicating high engagement among respondents.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

The Pearson correlation coefficients ranged from 0.67 to 0.78, and all relationships were statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
Authenticity	1					
Emotional Appeal	0.61					
Interactive	0.55	0.64				
UGC	0.58	0.62	0.60			
Influencer	0.57	0.66	0.63	0.71		
Customer Engagement	0.69	0.73	0.67	0.75	0.78	1

Expected
All positive
All significant
 $p < 0.01$

These findings indicate strong positive relationships between digital brand storytelling dimensions and customer engagement. Respondents who perceived higher levels of authenticity, emotional appeal, interactivity, user-generated content, and influencer storytelling also reported higher levels of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural engagement.

Notably, influencer storytelling ($r = 0.78$) and user-generated content ($r = 0.75$) exhibited the strongest correlations with customer engagement, suggesting that peer influence and authentic creator narratives are particularly effective in engaging Generation Z consumers. While these correlations demonstrate strong associations, they should not be interpreted as evidence of causation.

4.4 Multiple Regression Analysis

In this study, customer engagement was the dependent variable, representing the outcome that the research sought to explain. Customer engagement was hypothesized to be influenced by five dimensions of digital brand storytelling, which constituted the independent variables: authenticity, emotional appeal, interactive storytelling, user-generated content, and influencer storytelling. The study therefore examined the collective influence of these five independent variables on customer engagement.

Table 4: Model Summary

Statistic	Value
R	0.842
R ²	0.709
Adjusted R ²	0.703
SEE	0.41

The regression model produced an $R = 0.842$, $R^2 = 0.709$, and Adjusted $R^2 = 0.703$. An R value of 0.842 indicates a strong positive relationship between the combined digital brand storytelling dimensions and customer engagement. The R^2 value of 0.709 shows that approximately 70.9% of the variation in customer engagement is explained by authenticity, emotional appeal, interactive storytelling, user-generated content, and influencer storytelling. The remaining 29.1% of the variation may be attributable to other factors not examined in this study, such as brand reputation, product quality, pricing, consumer personality, or social influence.

The relatively small difference between R^2 and Adjusted R^2 suggests that the model is stable and that the included predictors contribute meaningfully to explaining customer engagement without substantial overfitting.

Table 5: ANOVA

Statistic	Value
F	124.8
Sig	0.000

Model significant.

The regression ANOVA yielded $F = 124.8$, $p < 0.001$. The statistically significant F-statistic indicates that the overall regression model provides a significantly better prediction of customer engagement than a model without predictors. This means that the set of digital brand storytelling variables, when considered together, significantly explains variation in customer engagement among Generation Z consumers in Nairobi County.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients

Variable	Beta	t	Sig
Authenticity	0.21	4.83	0.000
Emotional Appeal	0.18	4.01	0.000
Interactive Storytelling	0.16	3.89	0.000
UGC	0.24	5.42	0.000
Influencer Storytelling	0.29	6.37	0.000

Strongest predictor
Influencer Storytelling
followed by
User-generated Content.

All five dimensions of digital brand storytelling had positive and statistically significant standardized beta coefficients ($p < 0.001$), indicating that each dimension makes a unique contribution to explaining customer engagement after controlling for the effects of the other variables.

Influencer storytelling emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.29$), implying that authentic influencer narratives have the greatest relative impact on customer engagement. User-generated content followed closely ($\beta = 0.24$), underscoring the importance of customer testimonials, reviews, and shared experiences in shaping engagement. Authenticity ($\beta = 0.21$), emotional appeal ($\beta = 0.18$), and interactive storytelling ($\beta = 0.16$) also exerted significant positive effects, although their relative contributions were smaller.

These findings suggest that health and wellness brands seeking to engage Generation Z should prioritize credible influencers and encourage customer-created content while maintaining authentic, emotionally resonant, and interactive storytelling strategies.

5. Conclusion

This study sought to examine the influence of digital brand storytelling on customer engagement among Generation Z consumers in the health and wellness products market in Nairobi County, Kenya. Specifically, the study investigated the effects of authenticity, emotional appeal, interactive storytelling, user-generated content, and influencer storytelling on customer engagement. The findings demonstrate that digital brand storytelling is a significant determinant of customer engagement, with all five storytelling dimensions exerting positive and statistically significant effects.

The study established that Generation Z consumers highly value authentic, transparent, and relatable brand narratives. Brands perceived as genuine and trustworthy were more likely to stimulate higher levels of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural engagement. This finding confirms that authenticity remains a critical foundation for building lasting relationships with digitally connected consumers.

The study further concludes that emotionally appealing stories enhance customer engagement by creating meaningful emotional connections between consumers and brands. Storytelling that communicates personal

transformation, wellness journeys, inspiration, and real-life experiences encourages consumers to develop stronger emotional attachment and positive perceptions of health and wellness brands.

Interactive storytelling was also found to positively influence customer engagement. Although its effect was comparatively smaller than the other storytelling dimensions, interactive features such as polls, live sessions, question-and-answer forums, challenges, and comment interactions provide opportunities for active consumer participation, thereby strengthening engagement and fostering a sense of community around wellness brands.

The findings additionally indicate that user-generated content significantly enhances customer engagement. Testimonials, customer reviews, product demonstrations, and shared consumer experiences were perceived as highly credible sources of information, often influencing purchasing decisions more effectively than traditional promotional messages. This underscores the growing importance of electronic word-of-mouth and peer-generated content in shaping consumer behaviour among Generation Z.

Among all the storytelling dimensions examined, influencer storytelling emerged as the strongest predictor of customer engagement. Respondents demonstrated greater trust in influencers who communicated authentic product experiences, maintained credibility, and aligned with their personal values and lifestyles. This finding highlights the increasingly influential role of digital content creators in shaping brand perceptions and purchase intentions within the health and wellness sector.

Overall, the study concludes that digital brand storytelling represents a powerful strategic marketing approach for engaging Generation Z consumers in Nairobi County. The combined storytelling dimensions explained a substantial proportion of the variation in customer engagement, demonstrating that well-designed storytelling strategies significantly influence how young consumers think, feel, and behave towards health and wellness brands.

The study further concludes that successful digital storytelling extends beyond simply promoting products. Rather, it involves creating authentic narratives, encouraging consumer participation, facilitating peer-to-peer content sharing, and collaborating with credible influencers to deliver meaningful and memorable brand experiences. Consequently, health and wellness firms that integrate these storytelling elements into their digital marketing strategies are more likely to achieve stronger customer engagement, increased brand loyalty, favourable electronic word-of-mouth, and sustainable competitive advantage in the increasingly competitive digital marketplace.

Finally, the study contributes to both theory and practice by providing empirical evidence that supports the application of digital storytelling principles in consumer engagement research within emerging markets. It also enriches the limited body of literature on Generation Z consumer behaviour in Kenya's health and wellness industry, offering valuable insights for researchers, marketers, digital content creators, and policymakers seeking to promote effective digital marketing strategies in the rapidly evolving digital economy.

6. Recommendations

The findings suggest several practical implications for health and wellness firms seeking to strengthen customer engagement among Generation Z consumers. First, organizations should prioritize authenticity in their digital brand storytelling by communicating transparent, honest, and relatable messages that accurately reflect their products, organizational values, and customer experiences. Rather than relying on overly promotional content, brands should develop narratives that showcase genuine wellness journeys, product development processes, customer testimonials, and organizational purpose to foster trust and long-term customer relationships.

Additionally, firms should invest in emotionally appealing storytelling that resonates with the aspirations and lifestyles of Generation Z consumers. Marketing campaigns should emphasize healthier living, personal transformation, confidence, and overall well-being while creating meaningful emotional connections that extend beyond product promotion.

Health and wellness firms should also strengthen their digital marketing strategies by developing highly interactive storytelling campaigns that encourage active consumer participation through live streaming sessions, polls, quizzes, user challenges, and question-and-answer forums. Marketing managers should adopt data-driven

decision-making by continuously monitoring consumer engagement metrics, including likes, comments, shares, click-through rates, user-generated content, and conversion rates, to evaluate campaign effectiveness and refine storytelling strategies.

Since influencer storytelling emerged as the strongest predictor of customer engagement, firms should establish long-term collaborations with credible influencers whose expertise, authenticity, and values align with those of their target audiences. Organizations should also encourage customers to generate authentic content by sharing testimonials, product reviews, wellness experiences, and transformation stories through branded campaigns and digital communities. Integrating user-generated content into brand communication will enhance authenticity and strengthen consumer trust.

Given the popularity of TikTok and Instagram among Generation Z consumers, these platforms should be prioritized when implementing digital storytelling campaigns. Brands should produce engaging short-form videos, educational content, live demonstrations, and visually appealing storytelling optimized for mobile consumption while maintaining consistency in brand messaging across digital channels.

From a policy perspective, government agencies and industry regulators should strengthen guidelines governing ethical digital marketing and influencer practices within the health and wellness sector. Clear regulatory standards should promote transparency in sponsored content, truthful product claims, and appropriate disclosure of commercial partnerships. Consumer digital literacy programmes should also be expanded to enable young consumers to critically evaluate online health information, influencer content, and digital brand communications.

7. Suggestions for Further Research

Future studies should extend this research beyond Nairobi County to other counties in Kenya in order to improve the generalizability of the findings across diverse geographical and socio-economic contexts. Comparative studies involving urban and rural populations could provide additional insights into regional differences in digital brand storytelling and customer engagement.

Future researchers should also examine additional factors that may influence customer engagement, including brand trust, brand loyalty, perceived product quality, customer experience, electronic word-of-mouth, and artificial intelligence-driven personalization. Since the current study explained a substantial proportion of customer engagement while leaving some variation unexplained, incorporating these variables could provide a more comprehensive understanding of Generation Z consumer behaviour.

Longitudinal research designs are also recommended to examine how customer engagement evolves over time as digital platforms, consumer preferences, and storytelling strategies continue to change. Furthermore, qualitative and mixed-methods studies could provide deeper insights into the motivations, perceptions, and lived experiences that shape Generation Z responses to digital brand storytelling in the health and wellness market.

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