

THE IMPACT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON CONSUMER MOTIVATION AND AWARENESS IN THE DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS MARKET – EXPLORATORY RESEARCH



AZ INFLUENCER MARKETING HATÁSA A FOGYASZTÓI MOTIVÁCIÓRA ÉS TUDATOSSÁGRA AZ ÉTREND-KIEGÉSZÍTŐK PIACÁN – FELTÁRÓ KUTATÁS



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This study explores the impact of influencer marketing on consumer motivation and awareness in the dietary supplements market. The increasing prevalence of social media and its integration into daily life has positioned influencer marketing as one of the most dynamic and influential tools in targeting younger generations, particularly the Y and Z generations. This study examines how influencer marketing affects purchasing behavior, with an emphasis on the health-conscious lifestyle trend. Through a combination of secondary and primary research, the study identifies key trends and motivations driving consumer behavior in the dietary supplements sector. Six qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with participants from the Y and Z generations. These interviews highlighted the importance of health consciousness, social media influences, and individual trust in influencers' credibility. Participants' motivations for using dietary supplements include health maintenance, energy boosts, and convenience, though skepticism towards influencer-promoted products persists. The findings suggest that while influencer marketing holds significant sway over generation Z consumers, authenticity, scientific backing, and the influencers' credibility play critical roles in determining their effectiveness. Conversely, generation Y consumers demonstrated a greater degree of skepticism towards influencers and placed more emphasis on staff research and expert opinions. The study concludes that responsible influencer marketing practices and better consumer education are essential. These include transparent, scientifically grounded communication to mitigate potential misinformation. The insights gained contribute to a deeper understanding of how generational differences shape consumer engagement with dietary supplements and highlights the need for regulated marketing practices to ensure ethical promotion in this growing market.

KEYWORDS: Generation Z, Generation Y, consumer awareness, dietary supplements, influencer marketing

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1. INTRODUCTION

In our study, we examined the impact of influencer marketing on consumer motivation and awareness in the dietary supplement market.

With the rise of social media platforms in recent decades, influencer marketing has become the most dynamically developing and spreading branch of marketing (PAPP-VÁRY, 2020), the marketing tool that most influences generation Y and even more so generation Z, which also carries a serious responsibility, since if members of the generation consider someone to be a credible influencer, they are more likely to buy the product promoted by them (HOLBNÉ NÁBRÁDI, 2021).

It is also important to mention that the megatrend of health awareness and healthy lifestyle has spread to our country and is becoming increasingly popular (HOLBNÉ NÁBRÁDI, 2022, TÖRÓCSIK and SZÜCS, 2022). Consumers are becoming more aware and more concerned with their health and well-being. Regular physical exercise, as one of the pillars of health preservation, is becoming an increasingly motivating force.

In addition, the importance of the topic is given by the fact that the number of dietary supplements is constantly increasing in Hungary as well; according to some research, in 2015, more than 15,000 dietary supplements were available on the market (LEHOTA et al., 2015), today this number is approaching 30,000, in February 2024 there were 27,015 registered dietary supplement products on the market (OGYÉI, 2024), and there are numerous companies distributing and manufacturing dietary supplements on the market.

The topic is also important because the number of illnesses related to food consumption and often poor eating habits is on the rise (LEHOTA et al., 2015), and in Hungary people's health is worse than the European average (OECD, 2022). As a result of improper eating habits, almost a quarter of adults in our country are obese (24%), while this number is 16% in the EU, 45% of the population does not consume fruit on a daily basis, and 55% responded that they do not consume vegetables on a daily basis.

Fatness and obesity pose a serious threat to our health, as they are responsible for, among other things, diabetes, high blood pressure and cardiovascular diseases. And if all this were not serious enough, our society stigmatizes our obese fellow human beings. Considering all this, it is not at all surprising that people spend huge amounts of money on diets and consumer products (ATKINSON et al., 2005).

Health-conscious lifestyles, and in particular health-conscious nutrition, are therefore a priority today. In our fast-paced world, we are under a lot of stress, and we often consume convenience foods, fast food or junk food, which are extremely low in nutrients. The low percentage of people who eat fruit and vegetables on a daily basis is taking its toll on our bodies and our health, so it is necessary to introduce supplements into our daily routine. All this leaves a mark on our bodies and our health, so it is necessary to introduce dietary supplements into our daily routine.

It is worth clarifying first which products are classified as dietary supplements. According to EU regulations, which are also valid in our country, this includes any "food or vitamin that serves to supplement the traditional diet and contains nutrients or other substances with nutritional and physiological effects in concentrated form, individually or in combination. It is marketed in a dosed or doseable form (e.g. capsule, lozenge, tablet, sachet containing powder, doseable powder, ampoule, dropper bottle or other similar powder or liquid form, which is suitable for dosing small quantities" (JOGTÁR, 2022; OGYÉI, 2019). According to the regulation, this includes products containing vitamins, minerals, as well as all products used by hobby and elite athletes that can increase stamina, regeneration and sports performance. The latter is most commonly referred to as food supplements. It is important to mention that consumer awareness, as a theory and trend, has also become a fashionable term, consumers like to think and show themselves to be conscious, whether it is about food, skin care or environmental protection. When we talk about health preservation, healthy nutrition, and healthy lifestyle, the examination and analysis of consumer awareness is a particularly

important segment (SZŰCS and SZAKÁLY, 2020). All the more so because research has shown that the more health-conscious a person is, the more likely they are to purchase at least one dietary supplement (NÁBRÁDI, 2019), and as we age, we consume more and more dietary supplements (HUDÁCSKÓ, 2020).

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

In our exploratory research, we looked at the issue of dietary supplement consumption and healthy lifestyle, consumer awareness and motivation, and the trends behind the rise of dietary supplements: why do we consume dietary supplements, what is the motivation behind it, and how much do consumers benefit from marketing communication on social media platforms and influencer marketing activities? Does this type of marketing activity influence consumers in a positive or negative way? How aware are Hungarian consumers regarding the choice and consumption of dietary supplements? We would like to know whether consumers follow influencers on social media platforms, what are the characteristics of the influencer they follow, what makes an influencer good for the consumer? In particular, does the influencer they follow influence the consumer in their choice of dietary supplement?

Our target groups are members of Generation Y and Z: consumers born between 1980 and 1995 and between 1996 and 2012 were thus the focus of our exploratory qualitative research. Influencer marketing is most effective with these two generations.

Six subjects were interviewed face-to-face in spring 2024, considering that the subjects were selected from generations Z and Y. We chose the in-depth interview technique because it allows us to explore the individual stories and mindsets of each person, we were talking to people during the interviews, not consumers, and the contact is personal (VERES et al, 2009). During the in-depth interviews, we provided a relaxed environment, building trust between the interviewee and ourselves in order to get honest answers, let the interviewee let us into their world, tell us

about their feelings and thoughts on the topic. The qualitative data collection took the form of semi-structured, targeted interviews. The interviews lasted between 40 and 50 minutes and the sampling took place between February and the end of April 2024, with up to one participant per week. The interviews were audio-recorded and verbatim transcripts were made. These interview transcripts formed the basis of the analysis and served as the main source of primary research for this study. The in-depth interview is always an observation, as it often takes place in the interviewee's home, which allows us to collect a lot of visual information that can be incorporated into our work (VERES et al., 2009). To conduct the in-depth interview, we used a guide of 19 open-ended questions, based on previous research, our personal interests and the relevant chapter of the book *Introduction to Market Research*. In the exploratory qualitative research, we wanted to know whether consumers were aware of dietary supplements, their possible side effects, their dosage and their experience of their consumption so far. Another important question is: what sources do consumers use to inform themselves before buying, who do they consider credible, are they influenced by the content and promotions shared by opinion leaders? The results of the present exploratory research provide some of the answers to the 19 questions examined. The answers to the remaining questions, grouped by different themes, and their analysis will be presented in other publications. The results obtained have helped to lay the foundations for a subsequent quantitative study. The results of the quantitative research have been completed and will be presented in detail in a future study.

3. RESULTS

In-depth interviews were conducted with six Generation Z and Y graduates currently studying at university, three men living in Budapest, two women living in Budapest and one woman living in the countryside. Purposive sampling was used, selecting a sample of individuals who care about health, healthy lifestyles and consume dietary supplements.

The study covered aspects of what it means to have a healthy lifestyle, the concept and forms of dietary supplements, the interviewees' consumption habits and motivations for consuming dietary supplements, and who consumers consider to be an authoritative source before purchasing. To explore this, we asked about the frequency with which they consume the products, their motivations for buying the products and the products they consume.

During the interview, we also asked the subjects about the importance they attach to the opinions of others before making a purchase, namely the opinions and recommendations of influencers on social media platforms. We were also interested in why consumers consider the influencer they follow as credible and, finally, to what extent the discount coupon offered by the influencer encourages them to buy.

The focus of the interview was to explore consumer motivations and awareness of dietary supplements, during which we discussed a range of topics with the interviewees, only the following are reported in this research:

- Concept and forms of dietary supplements,
- Whose opinion is important before making a purchase?
- Influencer marketing impact on purchase; credible influencers, importance of discounts

The interviewees:

Subject 1: female, born in 1989, resident in the capital, dental hygienist, OKJ degree

Subject 2: female, born 1996, resident of the capital, dental hygienist and dietician, graduate

Subject 3: male, born 1998, resident of the capital, premium banker, university student

Subject 4: male, born 2000, resident of the capital, personal trainer and nutritionist, OKJ degree

Subject 5: male, born 1989, resident of Budapest, Head of Department Line and Project Manager, graduate

Subject 6: female, born 1988, rural resident, social worker and addiction counsellor, graduate

The sampling procedure was based on purposive sampling, whereby individuals who place a high priority on health and healthy lifestyles, and who are familiar with and/or

consume dietary supplements were selected for the sample. Following online opinion leaders was not included in the selection criteria, but all subjects in the study know and/or follow influencers on the topic of interest.

3.1. General Observations on Influencers, Dietary Supplements and Related Consumer Motivations Based on Interviews

Health and a healthy lifestyle as a megatrend are a dominant phenomenon in the lives of all six interviewees, and valuable insights were gained from their individual life situations about the way they think about dietary supplements and health in general, as well as about the influencers that are increasingly entering our lives today, their perception and their impact on consumption.

The interviewees were all very honest and self-reflective in their participation and spoke in great detail about what it means to them to be healthy, where they think they are in the process, and who influences them to buy supplements.

All six interviewees are strongly influenced, for example, by the possibility of buying at a discount, even if the influencer and the values and messages they represent are otherwise irrelevant or even repulsive. All six interviewees mentioned a healthy diet as the basis for a healthy lifestyle and life, and all six interviewees are convinced that a healthy diet alone is not enough to get the vitamins and minerals you need, and that the consumption of dietary supplements is essential.

Also common to the interviewees is that they admit that they are not really influenced by influencer marketing, they all follow influencers who encourage a healthy lifestyle on their platforms, but they are not influenced at all by the content produced by opinion leaders in terms of which products they buy. They don't buy a dietary supplement product just because an influencer recommends it on their social media platform, they all expressed that they are not interested in the brand in these advertisements, but in the active ingredient. If they find a particular active ingredient interesting and useful, they will

research it and choose a product based on the information they find. For the first, third and fourth interviewees, a credible influencer is someone who has a professional background and a competitive track record that predestines him or her to be a credible influencer, while for the second, third and fourth interviewees, it is also important to have research to back up what they say. So, we can see that all of our interviewees are conscious about their choice of dietary supplement products, they do not follow the marketing activities on social media, they prefer to research the products and active ingredients themselves before buying them.

Five out of the six interviewees consume dietary supplements on a daily basis, with vitamins being the most commonly consumed, followed by protein powder, and one interviewee knows that he/she should consume these products on a daily basis to get results, yet regularly forgets to consume the product. We can therefore say that our interviewees are also conscious in their consumption of the products.

There was only one interviewee who was not active on any social media platform, apart from him, all five interviewees have Facebook and Instagram pages, although they show different levels of activity on the different platforms and follow different content on these platforms due to their different interests. The majority of our interviewees (4 interviewees) like to spend their free time actively, they like hiking, travelling, sports, excursions and they follow sites with these types of activities and themes, and only two interviewees said that they prefer to spend their free time reading, watching films, cultural activities and they follow sites with these types of activities.

In terms of generations, none of the members of Generation Y (3) reported fatigue, poor sleep or sleep problems, while all 3 members of Generation Z mentioned fatigue as a motivation for taking dietary supplements, sleep problems and poor sleep (HOLBNÉ NÁBRÁDI, 2021).

As for the Generation Z interviewees, all three are very conscious about buying dietary supplements, they research the products before they buy them and do not get their information from social media (HOLBNÉ

NÁBRÁDI, 2021). All three Generation Z interviewees are looking for expert opinions, not influencers to inform them about products. They also have in common that all three of them follow bodybuilding influencers on social media platforms, while only two of the Generation Y members are active on social media platforms and none of them follow bodybuilding influencers, they just check these sites sometimes.

No correlation between education and consumer awareness was found in the present research, the interviewees who did not have a university degree are just as aware of the consumption of dietary supplements in terms of pre-consumption research, nor can we confirm with the participants of the present research that there is a correlation between education and consumption and non-consumption of dietary supplements (LOVAS, 2018).

3.2. Concepts and Forms of Food Supplements

The results of the interviews revealed that the definition of a dietary supplement varies widely among the respondents. While the interviewees with a professional background - personal trainers and dieticians - gave a precise definition of the term 'dietary supplement', lay respondents gave significantly different interpretations.

According to the personal trainer: "Dietary supplements are products that are used to supplement the diet, mainly containing vitamins, minerals and proteins." A similar approach was taken by the dietician who put the definition on a scientific basis. However, lay interviewees were less precise in their definition. According to one of them, "A dietary supplement gives an extra to the body, helping it to achieve the expected result."

For lay respondents, two distinctive attitudes emerged. One group identified dietary supplements mainly with vitamins, as the third interviewee put it: "Dietary supplements are vitamins, amino acids and protein, all things that complement the diet." The other group saw dietary supplements as a form of supplementation to compensate for deficiencies in the diet. In the words of one

interviewee: "You go to the shop, there's the salad, there's the zero, and then next to that there's vitamin C, and then that's the plus, that's the extra."

All this suggests that the perception of the concept of dietary supplements depends partly on the professional background and partly on the purposes for which individuals use these products. While professionals have a systematic approach, lay users have a simplistic, practical approach.

The interviewees' views on the forms of dietary supplements varied considerably. Those with a professional background gave detailed and precise answers, while lay interviewees also showed uncertainty and misinterpretations.

For example, the interviewee with a degree in dietetics gave a precise list: "Dietary supplements are available in capsule, tablet, liquid, gel, jelly." The personal trainer and consultant further elaborated on the categorisation of products by function: "It is also important to differentiate by sport, because an endurance athlete needs a different active ingredient than a bodybuilder."

However, some of the lay interviewees were less informed. For example, one of them linked the concept of dietary supplements exclusively to the already known forms: "Vitamins, amino acids and proteins - they are all dietary supplements." Another interviewee expressed uncertainty: "Is a chocolate bar a food supplement? And what about protein puddings?"

Sceptical respondents were critical of the forms of dietary supplements. One said, "Look, they put them in everything! They're even in pancake mix!" Another stressed that such products are made in laboratories and therefore not considered natural: "They are artificial foods that we can't make at home."

These findings show that opinions on the forms of dietary supplements range across a wide spectrum, with the level of professional knowledge being a determining factor in how accurately an individual knows the variations and functions of these products.

3.3. Whose Opinion is Important Before Making a Purchase?

We investigated whose opinions interviewees listen to before buying dietary supplements and whether there are people in their lives who influence their decisions. The results show different patterns, with generational and attitudinal differences.

The first interviewee mainly gives the opinion of her family and her partner, but also mentions some bodybuilding competitors, such as Béla Kathi and Virág Kiss, as credible sources. At the same time, he is distanced from today's fashionable influencers, for example Norbert Schobert and Réka Rubint, stating that for them they are "absolutely discredited" because their communication is stilted and not backed up by their athletic achievements.

The second interviewee, on the other hand, rejects the content shared by opinion leaders and conducts thorough research before making a purchase. He mentions one exception, a dietician who promotes products of a famous British company, but whose content he can identify with and therefore finds credible. He states his principle: "Just because a lot of people say something doesn't automatically make it good."

The third interviewee is dominated by expert opinions. Although he listens to others, his final decision is always based on expert sources. He mentions Béla Kathi, whom he considers credible, but adds, "He's with Scitec, so he'll push their products." This suggests that while he acknowledges his professionalism, he is also aware of the underlying business interests.

The fourth interviewee, despite having the right qualifications, seeks the opinion of several people. He highlights his old tutor, whom he considers a credible authority, and his coach, whose suggestions he automatically accepts. This attitude shows that, despite a professional background, professional relationships based on emotion and trust can be of great importance.

The fifth interviewee radically rejects the influence of others in his purchasing

decisions. He puts it, "I am sceptical about someone telling you to try a product because it's god-awful." He further notes that while he is resistant to recommendations, "it's more effective in a negative direction for me!". This suggests that bad experiences have a stronger influence on her purchasing decisions than positive recommendations.

The sixth interviewee listens exclusively to the opinions of professionals, doctors and dieticians. In his opinion, it is important to have a competent person to "guide you in this world, otherwise you would be in the dark." For her, the filtering between information sources is entirely professional and she rejects content from social media.

Some clear patterns emerge from the cases studied:

The difference between the first two interviewees is that while the first tends to rely on the opinions of acquaintances and certain sportspeople, the second is a fully independent decision-maker and only accepts information from trusted professionals.

The third, fourth and sixth interviewees put the emphasis on professional knowledge. The third interviewee listens exclusively to experts but also incorporates his or her individual opinion into the decision-making process. The fourth interviewee sticks to his professional environment and relies on the opinion of his coach and instructor, while the sixth relies entirely on the guidance of professionals.

The fifth interviewee is a unique case: he rejects the opinions of others and bases his decisions solely on his own experience.

Based on these different consumer attitudes, we also looked at who interviewees listen to when they are encouraged or discouraged to try a product. In the case of the first three interviewees, the opinion of friends and acquaintances plays a significant role in the final decision. The first interviewee, for example, mentions "A friend of mine recommended this protein bar to me and I have been eating it ever since, I have not tried anything else." The second interviewee also admits that she is influenced by her friends, while the third interviewee also takes her friends' opinions into account.

For the fourth interviewee, this influence

is reduced as only his coach can influence him, while the fifth interviewee is completely resistant to external stimulation. As he explains, "Nobody tells me what to take." This may be due to the fact that he has had many bad experiences with recommendations in the past. The sixth interviewee also does not allow himself to be influenced by lay opinion, relying exclusively on experts.

The results suggest that both emotional and professional influences play a significant role in the decision to consume dietary supplements. Although some of the respondents consider themselves to be independent decision-makers, most of them are under some degree of external influence, whether from friends, family members, coaches or professionals. An exception to this pattern is the fifth interviewee, who radically rejects any outside influence, but it is questionable whether this attitude is based on sound professional knowledge or is simply the result of previous negative experiences. Future research should investigate the impact of increased professional knowledge on the autonomy of consumer decisions and openness to external opinions (HOLBNÉ NÁBRÁDI, 2021).

3.4. Influencer Marketing Impact on Purchasing; Credible Influencers, Importance of Discounts

One of the most interesting questions of our research was the impact of influencer marketing on the interviewees' purchasing of dietary supplements based on their recommendations. We also looked at what factors make an influencer credible to the interviewees.

The results showed significant differences in the consumer behaviour and attitudes of the interviewees. The first interviewee has not yet purchased a product on the recommendation of an influencer, although she occasionally follows the social media content of Béla Kathi and Virág Kiss. For her, the results achieved and the physical appearance ensure the credibility of the influencer. In contrast, the second interviewee has already bought from such an influencer, but by her own admission she was more interested in the product than the influencer herself. He stresses that a

credible influencer is someone who backs up his claims with scientific research and is not just an advertising puppeteer: "He is not just a puppet who says things because he benefits from them."

The third interviewee is not influenced by influencers, but he gives his opinion to well-known athletes and elite sportsmen and women and has bought supplements as a result. In his approach, professional knowledge and competitive history are key credibility factors: "A competitor usually tries many products before finding the right one." A fourth interviewee, who, although he read about an active ingredient in an influencer's guide, did not end up buying the recommended product but decided after doing his own research, has a similar view. He also cites a competitive track record and scientific backing as credibility criteria.

The most striking rejection came from the fifth interviewee, who distanced himself completely from the influence of influencer marketing. In his view, influencers are not credible sources as they lack a professional background behind them: "He has not spent years getting a biochemist's degree." The sixth interviewee is also clearly sceptical, neither taking influencers into account in his purchasing decisions nor in his credibility assessment.

In terms of generational differences, although Generation Z members follow influencers, they prefer to use scientifically backed information in their consumption decisions. Generation Y is more polarised: while two people completely reject the credibility of influencers, a third interviewee considers achievements and physical appearance as the determining factors.

In conclusion, the sample suggests that the influence of influencers on dietary supplement consumption is limited and that scientific credibility, professional background and personal achievements play a key role in determining credibility.

Finally, the interviewees were also asked whether they follow credible influencers on social media platforms and how important it is

for them to have access to discounted shopping opportunities offered by influencers, such as coupons.

The role of discount coupons is dominant for all interviewees, but with different motivations and usage patterns. One recurrent pattern is that coupons are used to increase affordability and to try new products. According to the first interviewee, it is "a great way to get the products you like and consume", while the second interviewee said "I can try products that capture my imagination, but I wouldn't buy them at full price otherwise."

Another pattern observed was the emotional attachment to influencers and its impact on purchasing decisions. For a third interviewee, it is not only the discount that is important, but also the fact that the influencer is offering the coupon: "it is particularly inspiring when there is a discount with someone I follow, it makes me feel enthusiastic." The fourth interviewee approached it from a different angle: he believes that by buying with a coupon, he is indirectly supporting the influencer because "they are essentially doing a sales job."

However, the convenience of the buying process also plays a different role among interviewees. For the fifth interviewee, for example, it would be ideal to receive coupons directly, for example by email: "That's good! But if you sent it out by email, we would be ahead of you because then I wouldn't have to check your site." This attitude suggests that coupon use alone is not enough of a motivator; the ease of the redemption process may also be a factor.

There are sharp generational differences in influencer following. Members of Generation Y follow few or no influencers (one interviewee) and often do not even know exactly what the term "influencer" itself means. In contrast, Generation Z members all follow influencers who they consider to be credible. This difference suggests that the effectiveness of influencer marketing can vary from generation to generation, and that for younger generations, the discounts and recommendations offered by influencers are much more likely to encourage purchase.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

Our research was qualitative, exploratory and involved in-depth face-to-face interviews with six health-conscious young people from Generations Y and Z who use dietary supplements. Three of the subjects were men from Budapest, two were women from Budapest and one was a woman living in the countryside. The semi-structured interviews took place between February and April 2024 in a relaxed, confidential atmosphere, lasting on average 40–50 minutes. An interview guide consisting of 19 open-ended questions was used to collect data, and the audio transcripts of the interviews were converted into verbatim transcripts and formed the basis of the analysis. The qualitative method allowed for a deeper exploration of participants' individual stories, motivations and mindsets, with a particular focus on attitudes towards the consumption of dietary supplements and influence through social media.

The research suggests that young adults of Generation Y and Z are aware of dietary supplements and that their consumption is part of a commitment to a healthy lifestyle. At the same time, their hunger for information is high: they are mainly informed by online sources and influencers but are critical about the authenticity of content. For interviewees, it is important that opinion leaders are credible, transparent and self-identified - long-term followership and expertise are prerequisites for building trust.

Influencers were found to play not only an informative role, but also an incentive role - especially when they offer promotional discounts. However, the decision is not based on these alone: participants also weigh up the ingredients, the mechanism of action and personal experience of the products. Authentic communication thus plays a key role in the purchasing decision (HOLBNÉ NÁBRÁDI, 2021).

We recommend that dietary supplement brands more consciously incorporate credible influencer marketing and education into their communication strategy. Professionally based

content and simple, visually supportive formats (e.g. short videos, infographics) can help to reach the target audience more effectively.

Due to the qualitative, exploratory nature of the present research, the main aim was to gain a deeper understanding of individual attitudes, motivations and consumer thinking, rather than to draw general conclusions. The study was conducted with a small sample size of only six participants, which allowed for a more in-depth exploration of the content but does not allow for statistical generalisations.

A further limitation is that the participants were all health-conscious young adults with tertiary education, so that the sample did not include other social groups, consumers with different levels of education or lower incomes, who may also be relevant target groups for the dietary supplements market. In addition, the research was Budapest-centric, with minimal rural representation.

The semi-structured list of questions used in the interviews provided flexibility in the data collection, but some topics may not have been explored in the same depth in all interviews. Subjectivity of responses and bias due to interview situation, such as compliance pressures, may also have influenced the results.

The research did not investigate longer-term behavioural change or the decay of influencers' influence over time, nor did it cover attitudes towards specific brands. This led to further quantitative research, the results of which will be presented in a forthcoming paper.

In light of these findings and limitations, our qualitative study has laid the groundwork for a better understanding of young adults' attitudes toward dietary supplements and the role of influencers in shaping these attitudes. While our recommendations primarily focus on the importance of credibility, transparency, and education in influencer marketing, a more detailed synthesis of participant responses and generational differences provides further insights. The following summary section recaps the key patterns observed during the interviews and highlights commonalities and distinctions between Generation Y and Z respondents.

5. SUMMARY

Due to the exploratory nature of our research, we cannot establish general, representative conclusions. However, our findings provide meaningful insight into the perceptions, motivations, and consumer behavior of young adults in relation to dietary supplements. The participants—health-conscious individuals from Generations Y and Z—showed a basic awareness of the concept and forms of dietary supplements. Nonetheless, some products were misclassified, which reflects a common confusion among consumers about what qualifies as a dietary supplement. A noteworthy finding is that all six interviewees believe that a healthy diet alone is insufficient to meet the body's vitamin and mineral needs; in their view, supplement intake is essential.

The interviewees also commonly stated that they are not significantly influenced by influencer marketing, particularly regarding brand choices. Instead of purchasing a product based solely on influencer recommendations, they focus on the active ingredients and conduct their own research before making decisions. This highlights a high degree of consumer consciousness in the decision-making process. However, price promotions were found to be highly influential—even among participants who claimed not to be impacted by influencer content—suggesting that discount-based influencer campaigns may effectively stimulate purchases despite limited brand trust.

The results also revealed generational differences. Generation Y participants are less present and less active on social media platforms compared to their Generation Z counterparts. While Generation Z interviewees actively follow influencers and value their professional credentials and achievements (especially in the case of athlete influencers), Generation Y respondents were generally skeptical of influencers' credibility.

These patterns align with findings in the Hungarian literature. For instance, HOLBNÉ NÁBRÁDI (2021) and HOLBNÉ NÁBRÁDI (2022) emphasize the conscious nature of supplement consumption among young adults, shaped by socio-cognitive and psychosocial

drivers. Our participants' emphasis on information credibility supports conclusions drawn by SZÚCS and SZAKÁLY (2020) regarding the growing consumer awareness in the dietary supplements market. While HUDÁCSKÓ (2020) identified influencers as key sources of product information, our study found that their influence tends to be more indirect, often tied to discount offers—a point also noted by Papp-Váry (2020) in his analysis of influencer marketing strategies.

The generational differences observed echo the work of TÖRŐCSIK and SZÚCS (2022), especially in the context of digital engagement and credibility assessment. In line with LEHOTA et al. (2015), our findings confirm that health-conscious consumers prioritize ingredient efficacy and product benefits over branding or influencer promotion.

In summary, although limited in sample size and generalizability, this qualitative study offers valuable insights into the attitudes and purchasing behaviors of young adults regarding dietary supplements. The findings underscore the importance of credible communication and education in marketing strategies aimed at these generations, and provide a basis for further quantitative research.

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