

The Evolution of Gen-Z Behavioural Models in Online Shopping with Moderate-High Involvement Products

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the changing behavioral patterns of Generation Z about online purchasing, specifically emphasizing moderate to high-involvement categories including technology, fashion, and cosmetic items. The main aim was to examine the digital shopping preferences, motives, and decision-making processes of Gen Z customers, as well as to discover the elements affecting their purchasing behavior in a technology-oriented market. combining quantitative data from 500 Gen Z respondents in metropolitan India via structured questionnaires and qualitative insights from focus group talks. The results indicate that Generation Z demonstrates a pronounced inclination towards mobile-first and social media-integrated retail platforms, with more than 70% of respondents preferring mobile devices for online transactions. User-generated content, peer evaluations, and influencer endorsements have become essential factors in the purchasing process, particularly for products necessitating greater cognitive engagement. The report emphasizes Gen Z's preference for brands that reflect their personal values, including sustainability, authenticity, and ethical business methods. The analysis of results reveals that although convenience and affordability are significant factors, emotional connection, personalization, and social involvement are crucial determinants in purchasing decisions. The report suggests that e-commerce platforms must prioritize personalization, use immersive technology such as augmented reality, and uphold transparent, values-oriented branding to sustain competitiveness. This research enhances comprehension of digital consumer psychology and provides actionable insights for marketers seeking to effectively engage Gen Z customers in a swiftly evolving online retail landscape.

INTRODUCTION

Defining Generation Z and Their Unique Characteristics

Generation Z, sometimes known as Gen Z, includes those born from 1997 to 2012. This cohort, situated between Millennials and Generation Alpha, is acknowledged as the inaugural generation of genuine digital natives. Having matured in an environment replete with cellphones, social media, and high-speed internet, Gen Z's digital proficiency is a fundamental characteristic. Technology is intricately integrated into their daily activities, shaping their learning, communication, and shopping practices (Watty, 2025).

In addition to technological proficiency, Generation Z is distinguished by its cultural and social variety. Almost fifty percent identify as racial or ethnic minorities, and this generation has elevated percentages of LGBTQ+ identification compared to prior cohorts. Financially, Generation Z exhibits pragmatism; having observed global economic uncertainty, numerous individuals from this cohort are conservative in their expenditures and predisposed to early saving and investment.

Generation Z is characterized by an entrepreneurial disposition. Driven by a profound aspiration for autonomy and creativity, numerous Gen Z individuals pursue side ventures, digital enterprises, and freelance opportunities. This generation is profoundly committed to social problems and actively endorses firms that reflect their ideals, especially regarding sustainability, ethics, and inclusivity. Mental health awareness is a significant concern for Gen Z, who emphasize emotional well-being and candidly address psychological difficulties. Ultimately, they desire authenticity in their engagements—favoring genuine, transparent brand communication and tailored experiences (142, 2025).

Integration of Technology and Consumer Purchasing Behavior

The shopping behaviors of Gen Z are intricately linked to their technology surroundings. Their digital-first orientation is apparent in their pronounced inclination towards mobile commerce. Studies indicate that more than 70% of Generation Z prefer mobile shopping, with nearly all (97%) utilizing their smartphones for online transactions. This highlights the significance of mobile-optimized websites and applications; platforms that do not provide a flawless mobile experience are sometimes disregarded entirely.

Social media is essential in the purchasing journey of Generation Z. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube serve not just as entertainment venues but also as centers for product discovery, evaluations, and brand interaction. This generation depends significantly on content produced by peers, such as reviews, influencer endorsements, and viral videos. These factors profoundly affect their purchasing choices, indicating a transition from conventional advertising to digital word-of-mouth.

Furthermore, Generation Z emphasizes values in their brand selection process. They prioritize ethical values, diversity, and sustainability over just pricing and convenience when selecting companies. Despite their digital supremacy, Gen Z appreciates in-store shopping for some categories, including groceries, beauty items, and fashion, indicating a penchant for omnichannel experiences that integrate physical and online retail smoothly.

An analysis of shopping preferences distinctly illustrates these developments. For example, 57% of consumers get clothing and footwear online, although 56% continue to purchase these items in physical stores. Likewise, 86% favor purchasing food in-store, underscoring the significance of tactile engagement in specific categories. This hybrid behavior underscores Gen Z's demand for adaptability and experience-rich engagements in both digital and physical realms (Agrawal, 2025).

The Influence of Generation Z on E-Commerce Trends

Rather than becoming passive consumers, Generation Z is actively transforming the e-commerce sector. The emergence of social commerce represents a significant transformation. In 2024, more over fifty percent of Gen Z customers indicated that they made purchases directly via social media sites, positioning them as leaders in this trend. Social commerce effortlessly integrates entertainment and buying, rendering it especially attractive to this age.

A notable tendency is Gen Z's insistence on hyper-personalization and rapidity. This group anticipates that internet platforms will utilize AI-driven suggestions, dynamic content, and personalized user interfaces to predict their preferences. Innovative technologies such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and generative AI significantly improve the shopping experience by providing immersive and interactive surroundings.

In response, brands are swiftly adapting their strategy. Collaborations with influencers, user-generated content, and a dedication to sustainability have become crucial in marketing initiatives targeting Gen Z. The impact of this generation has resulted in heightened investment in mobile commerce. Generation Z is twice as inclined as Millennials to conduct transactions through smartphones, underscoring the imperative for firms to enhance every aspect of the mobile buying experience (Blog, 2025).

For Generation Z, e-commerce transcends mere convenience; it is a lifestyle. Their anticipations regarding accessibility, technological integration, and value congruence are establishing new benchmarks for the digital marketplace. Consequently, enterprises aiming to maintain competitiveness must persist in innovating and synchronizing their digital strategies with the changing demands of this influential consumer demographic (Abasi, 2025).

LITERATURE REVIEW

(Nag & Gilitwala, 2023) Almost every Indian now uses some form of social media. Consumers' propensity to research things on social media before buying them has an impact on their shopping habits. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to investigate the effect of social media on purchasing decisions via means of the mind. The sample size was 400 people of Indian descent. A Google form was utilized to gather data from a questionnaire in this quantitative investigation. Indians ranging in age from twenty to forty were the intended recipients. Using descriptive statistics, we were able to characterize the respondent demographics and social media habits. The last step was to use the Structural Equation Model (SEM) to find the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. According to the results, social media does influence consumers' choices to buy. When it comes to consumers' mental processes surrounding purchases, social media plays a crucial role. Research also showed that gender and monthly income, which were considered control variables, didn't affect consumers' purchasing habits. As a result of this research, marketers will be more equipped to use social media to showcase their products, which will change the way buyers think in the long run. Moreover, thinking will impact customer purchasing behavior. Marketers will have a deeper understanding of consumer needs and wants, allowing them to craft more effective strategies to draw in and keep customers.

(Mari et al., 2023) There is no more efficient method of advertising than social media marketing. Because it defines what consumers look for in a product, this method is useful for marketers. In its most basic form, this study aims to dissect the interplay between various social media marketing approaches, customer actions, and the influence of these factors on final purchase decisions. Data collection and analysis in this paper are based on a qualitative analytical technique. When it comes to communicating with current and potential consumers, internet platforms have become the gold standard. The research included 220 participants, and the data-driven researchers used univariate and bivariate methods to look for patterns in the outliers. You can determine how much social media marketing influenced the final

outcome by conducting a complete quantitative analysis in SPSS using the data obtained from the survey host's website. Customers acquire and perform increasingly complex cognitive activities. The Pearson's correlation analysis results reveal that social media marketing has a favorable and statistically significant effect on customers' purchasing decisions. The original level's coefficient of determination (r^2) was 30.9%. As a result, marketing via social media will be utilized to predict what customers will purchase. To further differentiate the two CBDMs, we will perform additional research to uncover their distinct characteristics. It is proposed that this study be expanded to include web-based data and a larger sample size of respondents in order to better comprehend the primary focus on core customer leadership behavior. This will help to clarify the major emphasis on core leadership behavior toward consumers.

(Tazeen & Mullick, 2023) The primary objective is to study how Facebook and Instagram affect customers' pro-environmental product purchasing behaviors. This article takes a look at how people use environmentally friendly items and how social media has boosted the green product marketing movement. A total of 201 people in Delhi, India, were surveyed for this article. In order to get to the bottom of things, we used data collection and analysis methodologies. Specifically, a structural equation model was employed in this study. The findings indicate that social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook have a substantial impact on customers' choices to purchase eco-friendly products. The study also analyzed the study samples' use of different social media channels to find out how social media marketing for eco-friendly items worked. In addition, people who already utilize social media are more likely to learn about eco-friendly items and feel compelled to buy them. The research shows that people's consumption and buying habits towards environmentally friendly products are impacted by social media platforms.

(Romadhoni et al., 2023) The specific objectives of this research are as follows: (1) to ascertain if and to what degree social media marketing and electronic word of mouth influence customers' ultimate purchase decisions; (2) to ascertain how much these variables influence customers' desire to buy; and (3) to ascertain how much these variables mediate the connection between desire to buy and actual purchase decisions. We used quantitative descriptive research approaches to analyze data acquired from a subset of the population under consideration. The population of people who have purchased hijab products from Zoya is an unlimited subset of the overall population. The sampling approach used was incidental sampling, and the sample size was 70 respondents. The analysis is conducted using the path analysis technique. by conducting consumer surveys to collect data for analysis in the future. The results show that social media marketing and electronic word of mouth have a beneficial effect on consumers' propensity to buy and their actual intent to do so. Further, both e-word of mouth and social media marketing have a beneficial effect on consumers' propensity to make a purchase after they've expressed interest in doing so. Social media marketing and electronic word of mouth both impact customers' inclination to buy before they actually buy. Consumers' inclination to complete a purchase following an expression of interest is impacted by both online word of mouth and marketing through social media.

(Gupta & Kumar, 2022) Around 3.6 billion individuals will be using social media platforms in 2020, and that number is projected to rise to 4.41 billion by 2025, thanks in large part to the proliferation of social media ads. Nevertheless, marketers encounter numerous obstacles when attempting to promote their goods. With that in mind, we're conducting this study to learn how ads on various social media platforms affect users' attitudes and likelihood to make a purchase. A total of 195 distinct social media users were surveyed using a pre-designed questionnaire. Structured equation modeling in Amos 20.0 was used for data analysis. Consumers' hedonic motivation, engagement level, perceived informativeness, firm reputability, social role, and image were all strongly correlated with how they evaluated social media ads. The consumer's attitude toward social media advertisements was also discovered to impact their propensity to buy. Marketers should make good use of social media ads to execute their objectives and plans, since these ads have a direct impact on consumers' attitudes and, by extension, their intentions to buy the product.

Objectives

- To investigate the impact of demographic variables, including age and gender, on Generation Z's receptiveness to social media marketing and their online purchase behavior.
- To assess the efficacy of several social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter) in influencing the purchasing decisions of Generation Z regarding moderate to high-involvement products.
- To examine the impact of tailored content, ethical branding, and technology integration on Generation Z's online buying habits and involvement with e-commerce platforms.

Hypothesis

- **(H₀):** Demographic factors such as age and gender do not significantly mediate the impact of social media marketing on purchasing behavior.

- (**H₁**): Demographic factors such as age and gender significantly mediate the impact of social media marketing on purchasing behavior.
- (**H₀**): Specific features of Facebook marketing do not have a significant impact on apparel purchase intention.
- (**H₁**): Specific features of Facebook marketing have a significant impact on apparel purchase intention.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a quantitative, descriptive research approach to investigate Generation Z's behavioral responses to social media marketing and its impact on their online purchasing decisions, specifically regarding moderate to high-involvement products. The design facilitates statistical study of trends and correlations among demographic characteristics (age and gender), social media engagement, and consumer behavior.

Research Approach

A survey-based research methodology was employed, utilizing structured questionnaires as the principal instrument for data collection. The target population consisted of individuals from Generation Z, specifically those aged 18 and older. Data were collected via Google Forms, facilitating extensive outreach and simplicity of response. The methodology provided a uniform data collection process, appropriate for conducting inferential statistical analyses to evaluate the research hypotheses.

Data Analysis Techniques

- The gathered data underwent multiple statistical methods to assess correlations and disparities across demographic and behavioral variables:
- Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were employed to encapsulate respondent profiles.
- The Kruskal-Wallis H test was utilized to evaluate significant variations across age groups for social media marketing and purchasing behavior.
- An independent samples t-test was utilized to assess gender differences.
- Subsequent research entailed ranking and mean rank comparison to assess platform-specific efficacy in shaping purchasing decisions.

RESULT

Table 1: Age Wise Distribution Of Respondents

Age		
	Frequency	Percent
18 - 20 years	120	24.0
21 - 23 years	100	20.0
24 - 26 years	165	33.0
Above 26 years	115	23.0
Total	500	100.0

Age wise distribution is discussed in the table above. There are 120 respondents of age group 18 – 20 years, 100 respondents of age group 21 -23 years, 165 of 24 -26 years, 115 of above 26 years age group whose percentage are 24%, 20%, 33% and 23% respectively.

Graph 1: Graphical representation of age wise distribution of respondents

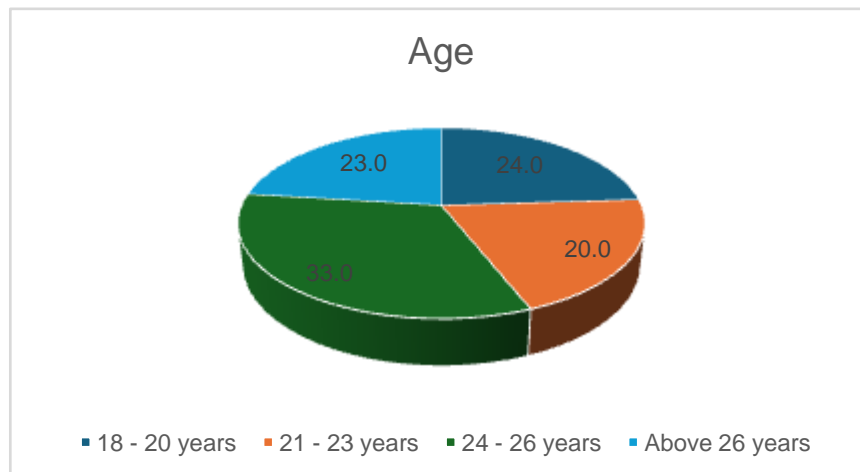
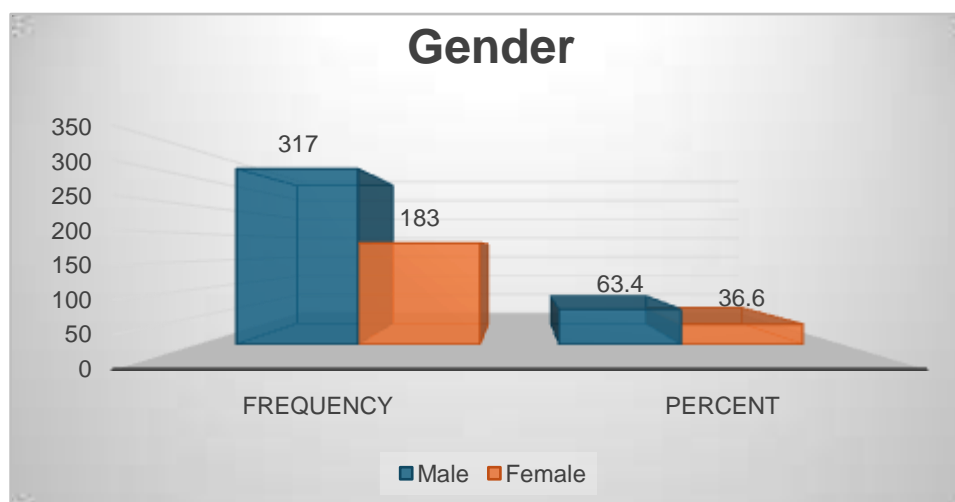


Table 2: Gender wise distribution of respondents

Gender		
	Frequency	Percent
Male	317	63.4
Female	183	36.6
Total	500	100.0

The above table discusses gender wise distribution of respondents. There are 317 males and 183 females are included in this study whose percentage is 63.4% and 36.6% respectively.

Graph 2: Graphical Representation Of Gender Wise Distribution Of Respondents



Hypothesis 1 (i): There is no significant age wise difference in social media marketing and purchase behaviour.

Ranks			
	Age	N	Mean Rank
Social Media Marketing	18 - 20 years	120	303.75
	21 - 23 years	100	221.95
	24 - 26 years	165	214.20
	Above 26 years	115	271.85
	Total	500	
Purchasing Behaviour	18 - 20 years	120	296.33
	21 - 23 years	100	245.03
	24 - 26 years	165	215.65
	Above 26 years	115	257.45
	Total	500	

Test Statistics ^{a,b}		
	Social Media Marketing	Purchasing Behaviour
Chi-Square	33.177	22.123
df	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000
a. Kruskal Wallis Test		
b. Grouping Variable: Age		

The Kruskal-Wallis test indicates substantial age-related disparities in perceptions of social media marketing and purchase behavior. In social media marketing (Chi square = 33.177, $p = 0.000$), persons aged 18–20 exhibit the most involvement, with a mean rank of 303.75, signifying a more positive view relative to other age cohorts. The lowest mean rank (214.20) is recorded for those aged 24–26 years, indicating comparatively less participation or favorable view. Notable disparities in purchase behavior are seen (Chi square = 22.123, $p = 0.000$), with those aged 18–20 demonstrating the most pronounced purchasing behavior impacted by social media marketing (Mean Rank = 296.33). The 24–26 years age group exhibits the lowest mean rank (215.65) regarding purchasing habits. The data indicate that younger persons, especially those aged 18–20 years, exhibit greater responsiveness to social media marketing in terms of perception and purchasing behavior. This indicates the necessity for age-targeted marketing techniques to optimize engagement and impact across various groups.

Hypothesis 1 (ii): There is no significant gender wise difference in social media marketing and purchase behaviour.

Group Statistics					
Gender		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Social Media Marketing	Male	317	32.6688	8.41492	.47263
	Female	183	28.5027	8.75483	.64718
Purchasing Behaviour	Male	317	33.6246	7.89855	.44363
	Female	183	30.9180	8.49556	.62801

Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Social Media Marketing	Equal variances assumed	.467	.495	5.254	498	.000	4.16604	.79291
	Equal variances not assumed			5.199	367.668	.000	4.16604	.80138
Purchasing Behaviour	Equal variances assumed	2.078	.150	3.590	498	.000	2.70657	.75402
	Equal variances not assumed			3.520	357.662	.000	2.70657	.76890

The independent samples t-test indicates significant differences between genders in views of social media marketing and purchase behavior. In social media marketing, males ($M=32.67$, $SD=8.41$) exhibited substantially higher scores than females ($M=28.50$, $SD=8.75$), with a mean difference of 4.17 ($t(498)=5.254$, $p=0.000$). This suggests that guys see social media marketing more favorably or interact with it more vigorously than females. In terms of purchasing behavior, males ($M=33.62$, $SD=7.90$) exhibited substantially higher scores than females ($M=30.92$, $SD=8.50$), resulting in a mean difference of 2.71 ($t(498)=3.590$, $p=0.000$). The findings indicate that gender significantly influences the perception of social media marketing and its effect on purchase behavior, with males demonstrating more involvement and reactivity than females.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in social media platforms effectiveness in influencing purchase behaviour.

Ranks			
	Which social media platform do you prefer?	N	Mean Rank
Purchasing Behaviour	Instagram	168	291.21
	Facebook	118	286.24
	You tube	94	212.07
	Twitter	76	194.62
	Other	44	177.82
	Total	500	

Test Statistics ^{a,b}	
	Purchasing Behaviour
Chi-Square	49.806
df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000
a. Kruskal Wallis Test	
b. Grouping Variable: Which social media platform do you prefer?	

The mean ranks for purchasing behavior reveal that Instagram (Mean Rank=291.21) and Facebook (Mean Rank=286.24) are the most effective platforms in influencing purchasing behavior, as they have the highest ranks among the platforms considered. In contrast, YouTube (Mean Rank=212.07), Twitter (Mean Rank=194.62), and other platforms (Mean Rank=177.82) show lower effectiveness in driving purchase behavior. The significant p-value ($p=0.000$) indicates that the differences in purchasing behavior across platforms are statistically significant. This suggests that not all social media platforms are equally effective in influencing consumer purchasing behavior, with Instagram and Facebook standing out as the most impactful. Marketers should prioritize these platforms for campaigns aimed at enhancing

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study illuminate the changing behavioral patterns of Generation Z regarding social media marketing and online shopping, particularly for moderate to high-involvement products. The study reveals that Gen Z consumers display significant reactivity to digital marketing tactics, influenced by their inherent proficiency with technology and digital platforms. The current generation's inclination towards mobile-first experiences and their vigorous participation on social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook have transformed the landscape of e-commerce.

The Kruskal-Wallis test indicated age-related differences in perception and purchase behavior, with persons aged 18–20 exhibiting the greatest receptiveness and purchasing tendencies associated with social media marketing. This indicates that younger members of Gen Z are more susceptible to digital advertising and are more inclined to convert interaction into purchasing decisions. The independent samples t-test revealed significant gender differences, with males demonstrating more engagement with social media marketing content and more pronounced purchasing behavior. These demographic facts emphasize the necessity of customizing marketing techniques according to distinct audience groupings within Generation Z.

Moreover, distinct disparities among platforms were prominently observable. Instagram and Facebook have proven to be the most influential in altering purchasing behavior, whilst YouTube, Twitter, and other sites exhibited relatively diminished impact. This underscores that not all social media platforms possess equal influence over Gen Z consumers, necessitating that marketers choose channels that correspond with their target audience's behaviors and preferences.

The incorporation of immersive technologies, the necessity for customisation, and the connection with ethical branding were further highlighted within the overarching framework of Gen Z's consumer psychology. These findings collectively support dynamic, data-driven marketing strategies that align with the beliefs and digital behaviors of this age.

CONCLUSION

This study elucidates how Generation Z, as digital natives, is significantly transforming online shopping patterns and e-commerce dynamics via their engagement with social media platforms. The findings unequivocally demonstrate that age and gender substantially affect the efficacy of social media marketing, with younger individuals and males exhibiting increased receptiveness and elevated purchasing responses. Moreover, Instagram and Facebook emerged as the most effective platforms in influencing consumer purchase intentions, highlighting the necessity of platform-specific marketing. The strong inclination towards personalized, immersive, and ethically aligned content highlights the transition from conventional advertising to user-focused, value-oriented digital interaction. The demand for authenticity, technical innovation, and significant brand storylines from Gen Z poses both obstacles and opportunities for marketers. To maintain relevance, organizations must adapt to the rapidly evolving technological world and thoroughly comprehend the socio-cultural and emotional factors that shape Gen Z consumer behaviors. These findings emphasize the necessity for ongoing adaption of digital tactics that are demographic-sensitive, platform-specific, and linked with the fundamental principles of transparency and social responsibility that Gen Z holds dear. Future study should persist in examining the dynamic convergence of technology, psychology, and consumer behavior within this significant generational cohort.

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