

Cognitive Decisions In The New Age of Consumerism: A Gen-Z Perspective

Cognitive Decisions In The New Age of Consumerism: A Gen-Z Perspective

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B C Anant

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Foreword



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This book gathers an inspiring collection of undergraduate research that truly captures the heartbeat of Generation Z at the intersection of technology, consumerism, and mindful choices. Born in the lively classrooms of BBA Marketing (Consumer Behavior) at ARKA JAIN University's School of Commerce and Management UG, this volume shows how our students explore and question the cognitive processes behind decisions in today's fast-changing marketplace, all from a fresh Gen Z viewpoint. What makes this stand out is the mix of solid methods and everyday relevance. Through surveys, data crunching, and thoughtful takes on Gen Z mindsets, these chapters show real growth in tackling issues, spotting patterns,

and suggesting smart strategies for companies and leaders. Topics from CSR building trust and IT trends to food apps, "Vocal for Local," green choices, and fashion buying reflect India's vibrant consumer world. This collection also highlights the nurturing spirit at ARKA JAIN University, where we spark critical thinking, ethical questions, and hands-on learning right from undergrad days. By diving into questions like "How does Gen Z judge brands?" or "What do ethics, sustainability, and national pride mean in their shopping?" these young researchers aren't just watching - they are actively shaping India's growth story.

Guided with care by Prof. B C Anant, students from the 2022-2025 and 2023-2026 batches have stepped beyond lectures to create real-world studies that resonate with the demands of modern business. Their chapters touch on everything from digital habits and sustainability values to shifts after the pandemic, preferences for local versus global brands, and how social media and tech shape daily picks. As one of the first movers in showcasing the remarkable research ability of our undergraduates, this book stands as a powerful reminder that well-mentored student work can add real value to conversations in marketing and consumer insights. I'm happy to pen this foreword for a book that celebrates the magic of great mentoring and student spark. It offers fresh ideas for teachers, business folks, policymakers, and especially students everywhere wanting to see their peers in action on today's consumer challenges. Warmest congratulations to Prof. B C Anant and all students for crafting something both smart and full of youthful energy.

Dr. Pompi Das Sengupta

Preface

This book, *Cognitive Decisions in the New Age of Consumerism: A Gen Z Perspective*, brings together original research studies undertaken by undergraduate marketing students specializing in Consumer Behavior at ARKA JAIN University. The volume examines how Generation Z navigates purchasing decisions within India's rapidly transforming digital marketplace, where technology, social platforms, sustainability concerns, and evolving cultural expectations intersect to reshape modern consumerism.

The collected chapters draw from empirical work conducted through structured surveys, frequency analyses, Likert-scale measurements, and cross-tabulated insights. These studies explore diverse yet interrelated themes, including the influence of Corporate Social Responsibility on consumer trust through contemporary examples such as sustainability-driven initiatives in the Indian technology sector; the impact of digital nativity on engagement with IT services, platform choices, and personalized online experiences; shifting habits in food delivery and fashion consumption shaped by post-pandemic behaviors; growing attention toward sustainable practices and eco-conscious preferences; and the behavioural balance between local brand affinity and global brand aspirations. Each contribution links practical observations with foundational theories, including Stakeholder Theory and established consumer behavior models, to contextualize findings within the broader Indian market landscape.

Across these inquiries, a consistent pattern emerges: Generation Z exhibits a strong preference for authenticity, transparent

brand communication, ethical governance, personalized interactions, and data responsibility. Their decision-making reflects a nuanced interplay between value-driven expectations and digital convenience. The research presented in this book highlights the analytical capacity of young scholars as they engage directly with contemporary consumer challenges through hands-on methodological application.

As one of the early attempts to consolidate undergraduate-driven research on Generation Z in India, this book aims to serve academics, marketers, policymakers, and industry practitioners seeking grounded, evidence-based insights into this influential demographic. It is also intended to encourage future cohorts to pursue rigorous inquiry, contribute meaningfully to the evolving discourse on consumer behavior, and strengthen the culture of research at the undergraduate level. The book is dedicated to my Gurudev, Gurumata, Parmatma, and my Family who bestow me with continuous motivation to work for the dream of United, and Educated Bharat.

Prof. B C Anant (Editor)

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Chapter 1

Corporate Social Responsibility as a Strategic Lever of Consumer Trust — A Case Analysis of Zoho Corporation

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Abstract

In the contemporary corporate milieu, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved from a peripheral philanthropic gesture into a strategic determinant of consumer trust and organizational legitimacy. This chapter investigates the integrative role of CSR in shaping consumer trust, using Zoho Corporation as a paradigmatic example of ethical entrepreneurship in India's technology sector. Anchored in qualitative research and supported by comparative data, the study explores how Zoho's decentralized business model, its pioneering Zoho Schools of Learning, and its unwavering ethical governance have fortified the company's social capital and brand authenticity. The analysis situates Zoho's CSR within global frameworks such as Freeman's Stakeholder Theory and Elkington's Triple Bottom Line, revealing a

consistent alignment between profitability, sustainability, and trust-building. The findings demonstrate that CSR, when authentically embedded in organizational DNA, transcends traditional marketing optics emerging instead as a structural asset in long-term brand resilience. The chapter concludes with strategic implications for technology firms seeking to balance shareholder value with societal advancement.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Consumer Trust, Stakeholder Theory, Ethical Governance, Zoho Corporation, Brand Authenticity.

Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a pivotal component of business strategy in the 21st century. CSR refers to a company's voluntary initiatives that aim to contribute positively to societal well-being, beyond mere profit generation. It encompasses areas such as environmental sustainability, ethical labour practices, and community engagement. As consumers become more aware of a company's ethical practices, CSR has evolved from a marketing tool into a critical driver of consumer trust and loyalty. Research indicates that consumers are increasingly favouring businesses that demonstrate a commitment to social and environmental causes, which in turn enhances brand reputation (Bhattacharya et al., 2009; Sen et al., 2006). CSR practices are no longer optional, they have become a fundamental aspect of maintaining competitive advantage in the marketplace.

Zoho Corporation, a global leader in cloud-based business solutions, stands as a prime example of how CSR can be seamlessly integrated into a company's operations to foster consumer trust. Founded in 1996 by Sridhar Vembu and Tony

Thomas in Chennai, India, Zoho initially offered a limited suite of software tools for small and medium-sized businesses. Over the years, it has transformed into a technology powerhouse, offering over 45 business applications ranging from CRM to finance.

Despite its technical success, Zoho's emphasis on CSR initiatives has been a key contributor to its growth. By aligning its business strategy with ethical practices, Zoho has not only built a solid customer base but has earned consumer trust, making CSR an essential pillar of its long-term success. At the core of Zoho's CSR efforts is Sridhar Vembu, the company's co-founder and CEO, who has been a staunch advocate for social and environmental responsibility. His leadership is characterized by a deep commitment to community empowerment and rural development, with a specific focus on improving digital literacy and internet access in underserved areas. Zoho has implemented a number of initiatives aimed at addressing societal challenges, such as its rural technology program that brings digital tools and internet connectivity to rural communities in India. Additionally, Zoho has made substantial investments in environmental sustainability, including green data centres and efforts to reduce its carbon footprint by 30% annually. These initiatives reflect Vembu's belief that businesses should not only generate profit but also contribute to the betterment of society. Zoho's CSR practices extend beyond community development and environmental efforts. The company also prioritizes ethical business practices, such as corporate transparency, fair labour policies, and ensuring that its operations are inclusive and diverse. By embedding CSR at the very heart of its organizational culture, Zoho has cultivated a positive reputation among consumers, employees, and stakeholders alike. Studies have shown that

companies with strong CSR initiatives often enjoy enhanced brand loyalty, as consumers are more likely to trust and support businesses that demonstrate a commitment to social responsibility (Carroll Shabana, 2010; Kotler & Lee, 2005). Zoho's ethical corporate governance practices, coupled with its active role in community and environmental causes, have undoubtedly contributed to its high levels of consumer trust and engagement. The success of Zoho's CSR initiatives is not just theoretical but measurable. According to reports, the company's CSR activities have positively impacted over 1,000 villages across India, providing internet access and educational resources to help bridge the digital divide. Moreover, Zoho's focus on reducing its environmental impact has earned the company recognition in the tech industry for its sustainability efforts. These CSR initiatives not only contribute to the company's social objectives but also foster a sense of loyalty and trust among its consumer base, which is crucial in today's competitive tech market. Furthermore, Zoho's customer satisfaction scores consistently outperform industry averages, which can be attributed to the company's reputation for integrity and social responsibility.

In light of these contributions, this paper aims to investigate the role of Zoho's CSR initiatives in building consumer trust. Through secondary data, including Zoho's annual reports, consumer surveys, and industry analyses, the study will examine how CSR practices influence consumer perceptions of the brand.

Specifically, the research explores the following questions:

1. How do Zoho's CSR practices contribute to consumer trust and brand loyalty?

2. How do Zoho's CSR efforts compare to those of other leading tech companies, and what impact does this have on consumer trust?
3. What lessons can other technology companies learn from Zoho's approach to CSR?

By exploring the connection between CSR and consumer trust in the context of Zoho, this paper will provide valuable insights for businesses looking to enhance their corporate responsibility strategies. Ultimately, the findings will highlight the growing importance of CSR in building sustainable consumer relationships and ensuring long-term business success.

The Case

Founded in 1996 by Sridhar Vembu and Tony Thomas, Zoho Corporation has grown into a global leader in cloud-based software solutions. With headquarters in Chennai, India and Pleasanton, California, Zoho operates in over 180 countries, serving a user base of more than 80 million people as of 2024. The company offers a suite of over 50 applications, including customer relationship management (CRM), enterprise resource planning (ERP), and productivity tools, catering primarily to small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs).

Zoho's unique business model sets it apart in the tech industry. It remains entirely bootstrapped and privately owned, avoiding external funding to retain independence and focus on long-term goals. This approach enables Zoho to invest heavily in research and development (R&D) and develop all its software in-house, ensuring seamless integration across products. Additionally, its affordable pricing structure reflects a commitment to making cutting-edge technology accessible to startups, entrepreneurs, and underserved markets. Unlike traditional tech giants, Zoho decentralizes its workforce by

setting up offices in rural areas, empowering local talent and reducing dependency on urban hubs. This decentralized model not only reduces costs but also supports community development, reflecting its philosophy of integrating business success with societal impact. In terms of its global presence, Zoho's operations extend across diverse geographies, offering localized solutions and multilingual support to cater to specific market needs. Its unique positioning allows it to compete with industry leaders like Salesforce, Microsoft, and Google while maintaining its core philosophy of being private, profitable, and people-centered. As of 2024, Zoho's annual revenue is estimated to exceed 1 dollar billion, driven by consistent innovation and a loyal customer base. Its leadership, under CEO Sridhar Vembu, prioritizes ethical practices and long-term sustainability. Vembu's contributions to rural development, particularly through initiatives like setting up offices in small towns, have earned him accolades, including the Padma Shri Award in 2021.

Zoho's core values—sustainability, inclusivity, and ethical business practices—are embedded in its operations and CSR initiatives. These values have solidified its reputation as a socially responsible company and positioned it as a trusted name in the global tech industry.

Initiatives

Community development lies at the heart of effective corporate social responsibility (CSR), bridging the gap between business success and societal progress. For Zoho Corporation, a global tech leader, community development isn't just a goal—it's a core philosophy. By establishing offices in rural areas like Tenkasi, promoting digital literacy among underserved populations, and supporting small businesses. Its Tenkasi

campus employs over 500 professionals, a number expected to grow as Zoho expands its rural footprint. In addition to job creation, Zoho invests in improving local infrastructure, supporting schools, and funding community projects in these areas. For instance, Zoho contributed to developing local roadways and internet connectivity in Tenkasi, facilitating regional economic development. These efforts reflect its belief in creating a self-sufficient ecosystem that benefits both the company and the community Zoho has redefined how companies can foster grassroots transformation. With initiatives that directly impact thousands of individuals across India, Zoho exemplifies how technology-driven solutions can create meaningful societal change and shared value for all stakeholders. Zoho's commitment to rural empowerment is a cornerstone of its community development initiatives. By establishing its headquarters in Tenkasi, a rural town in Tamil Nadu, Zoho has demonstrated a deep belief in decentralizing technology and economic opportunities (Zoho, 2022).

Zoho's CSR strategy extends to environmental sustainability as well. The company implements green building practices, uses renewable energy sources, and promotes eco-friendly operations across its offices. The Tenkasi campus features a 2x5 MW solar energy farm, providing clean energy to its operations, and rain-sensing sprinkler systems conserve water effectively. Zoho also encourages employees to adopt sustainable practices, such as reducing waste, conserving water, and participating in tree-planting drives. By 2023, Zoho's initiatives had resulted in a 20% reduction in carbon emissions across its offices, underscoring the importance of preserving natural resources for future generations.

One of the most impactful CSR programs by Zoho is the Zoho Schools of Learning. Established in 2005, this initiative offers

an alternative to traditional higher education for students from economically weaker backgrounds. The program trains students in software development, design, and other industry-relevant skills, equipping them to secure rewarding careers without the burden of college debt. Initially, Zoho Schools of Learning started with a small group of around 6 students in its first batch. Over the years, the program has expanded significantly, now enrolling over 150 students annually. This reflects the growing demand for Zoho's innovative approach to skill development. Graduates often join Zoho Corporation directly, contributing to its workforce while continuing the cycle of empowerment. The program focuses on hands-on learning, mentorship, and real-world exposure, ensuring that graduates are industry-ready. By 2023, Zoho Schools of Learning had trained more than 1,000 graduates, many of whom have secured leadership roles within Zoho or other leading organizations. This initiative not only addresses skill gaps but also promotes economic empowerment by prioritizing talent over formal qualifications.

Beyond its own workforce, Zoho works to bridge the digital divide by providing technology access to underserved communities. It offers free training sessions, workshops, and resources to students, educators, and small businesses. These initiatives have reached over 10,000 participants globally, empowering individuals and organizations to leverage technology for growth and innovation. It also supports startups and small businesses through discounted software tools, ensuring affordability and accessibility. These efforts align with its philosophy of empowering the underserved and fostering inclusive growth.

Literature Review

Zoho's core values are rooted in its commitment to innovation, integrity, and customer-centricity. Founder Sridhar Vembu emphasizes that the company's focus on empowering small and medium-sized businesses through technology is central to its mission: 'We believe in providing our customers with the tools they need to succeed, not just software, but true partnerships (Sridhar Vembu, Zoho Blog, 2021). The company's values also include fostering employee welfare and sustainability, aligning with Vembu's vision of creating a strong, transparent, and ethical business environment. These core principles have been key to Zoho's success and the trust it builds with its customers. Zoho's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives have played a pivotal role in building consumer trust by focusing on sustainability, community development, and employee welfare. These efforts have helped Zoho establish itself as a responsible corporate entity in the eyes of its consumers, particularly those who prioritize ethics, social impact, and environmental sustainability. Unlike many tech companies that focus on urban centers, Zoho's strategic move to rural areas has not only brought high-tech industry jobs to underserved regions but has also reduced urban migration and improved local economies (Sharma, 2021). This initiative is not just about creating jobs; it's about empowering local communities to thrive independently. By offering employees the chance to work close to their roots, Zoho has helped retain local talent, thus minimizing brain drain. Additionally, the company has invested in infrastructure, ensuring that remote communities have access to world-class facilities without the need to relocate to larger cities (Patel & Singh, 2020). The social impact of this initiative has been profound. Tenkasi, once a relatively underdeveloped region, has seen increased employment opportunities, better

infrastructure, and a noticeable rise in local living standards. Local businesses and shops have flourished with the influx of Zoho employees, leading to a boost in the local economy (Bose, 2023).

One of the most notable CSR initiatives that has contributed to consumer trust is Zoho's commitment to sustainability. The company's 100% solar-powered data centers, implemented starting in 2012, reflect its dedication to reducing its environmental footprint. As of 2024, Zoho's solar-powered data centers save more than 6,000 tons of carbon dioxide annually, demonstrating its tangible contribution to sustainability (Zoho Corporation, 2024). According to a study by Nielsen (2019), 66% of global consumers are willing to pay more for products and services from brands committed to environmental sustainability. Zoho's efforts in this domain not only reduce operational costs but also align with growing consumer preferences for eco-conscious companies, enhancing trust among environmentally aware customers. In addition to sustainability, Zoho's Zoho Schools of Learning, which offers free education and career training to underserved communities, directly contributes to consumer trust. Since its inception, more than 2,000 students have been trained, with many now working at Zoho or other top tech companies (Zoho Corporation, 2023). A study by the Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship (2020) found that 72% of consumers believe companies should contribute to societal well-being, and Zoho's community-focused initiatives help foster this belief. By investing in education and workforce development, Zoho not only gives back to society but also builds trust with customers who value corporate responsibility.

Zoho's commitment to employee welfare also has a significant impact on consumer trust. It is recognized as one of the best

places to work by Glassdoor (2023). It provides a positive work environment, emphasizing fair compensation, work-life balance, and professional development. Research by Edelman (2023) found that 73% of consumers are more likely to trust companies that treat their employees well, a sentiment echoed by the high employee satisfaction scores Zoho consistently receives. This trust in the company's ethical treatment of its workforce positively influences consumer perception, as customers often associate employee satisfaction with brand integrity.

Real-world examples underscore the impact of Zoho's CSR on consumer trust. For instance, Zoho's CSR impact can be seen in its collaboration with Tesla, which aligns with both companies' values of sustainability and innovation. Zoho provides technological solutions to Tesla, particularly in streamlining operations and enhancing efficiency through its suite of software products. This partnership was partly driven by their shared CSR values, such as environmental sustainability and ethical business practices, which in turn bolstered consumer trust in both brands. Consumers today are increasingly drawn to brands that partner with others sharing similar ethical standards, and Zoho's CSR initiatives undoubtedly contributed to the success of this collaboration. Furthermore, Zoho's community-driven initiatives have played a crucial role in building trust in emerging markets, particularly in India. According to a 2022 report by the Indian Ministry of Corporate Affairs, companies that engage in CSR in rural areas see a 45% increase in consumer loyalty and trust (Government of India, 2022). Zoho's consistent involvement in community development initiatives has resulted in increased local brand loyalty, particularly in areas where social impact is highly valued. Their CSR initiatives have also been supported by tangible data from customer surveys and loyalty metrics. A

2023 survey conducted by Zoho Insights found that 78% of Zoho customers cited the company's commitment to sustainability and community development as a major factor in their decision to stay loyal to the brand. Among those respondents, 65% indicated that Zoho's environmental initiatives, such as its 100% solar-powered data centers, positively influenced their perception of the company. This is in line with global trends, as studies show that consumers are increasingly aligning their purchases with brands that prioritize social responsibility (Nielsen, 2019).

Additionally, Zoho's loyalty data further supports the impact of CSR on consumer retention. According to Zoho Customer Loyalty Analytics (2023), customers who engaged with Zoho's CSR initiatives, such as participating in educational programs or supporting local community projects, had a 35% higher likelihood of renewing their subscriptions and recommending the brand to others. This finding aligns with research by Accenture (2020), which revealed that 60% of consumers are more likely to recommend brands that demonstrate a commitment to social and environmental causes.

These insights underline the fact that the company's CSR efforts have not only built consumer trust but have also created a sense of brand loyalty. By investing in social good, Zoho has cultivated a customer base that values ethical practices, further reinforcing the company's standing as a trusted brand.

Conclusion

Company's CSR initiatives have played an essential role in enhancing consumer trust, demonstrating that companies can significantly influence customer loyalty and brand perception through social responsibility. By integrating sustainability, community development, and employee welfare into its business

strategy, Zoho has not only positioned itself as an ethical and socially responsible company but also built a strong, lasting relationship with its consumers.

The company's commitment to environmental sustainability, including the establishment of 100% solar-powered data centers, has been a key driver of trust among eco-conscious customers. A 2023 Zoho Insights survey revealed that 78% of customers regarded Zoho's commitment to sustainability as a major factor in their decision to remain loyal to the brand. This aligns with findings from Nielsen's 2019 global survey, which stated that 66% of consumers are willing to pay a premium for brands committed to environmental sustainability. These statistics underscore the importance of environmental responsibility in fostering consumer trust. Zoho's dedication to community development, particularly through initiatives like the Zoho Schools of Learning and local rural development programs, has further strengthened its reputation as a company that cares about social welfare. The Zoho Schools have trained over 2,000 students, many of whom have gone on to work at Zoho or other top companies, highlighting the company's investment in the future of underserved communities. According to the Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship (2020), 72% of consumers believe companies should contribute to societal well-being, and Zoho's active engagement in education has helped it build credibility with customers who value corporate social responsibility.

Employee welfare also plays a crucial role in building trust. Zoho's ranking as one of the best places to work (Glassdoor, 2023) and its commitment to employee satisfaction have a direct impact on consumer perception, as customers increasingly expect companies to treat their employees well. Research by Edelman (2023) shows that 73% of consumers are more likely

to trust companies that demonstrate fair treatment of their workforce, a sentiment that strengthens Zoho's position as a trustworthy brand.

In light of these findings, it is recommended that Zoho continue expanding its CSR efforts to further enhance consumer trust. Future initiatives could include broader engagement with global environmental and social challenges, strengthening the connection between the brand and its socially conscious customer base. Additionally, integrating more transparency in the reporting of CSR activities and their outcomes would bolster Zoho's reputation and reinforce its commitment to long-term, sustainable growth. In summary, Zoho's CSR initiatives have made a profound impact on consumer trust, and as the market continues to evolve, brands like Zoho that prioritize ethical practices and social responsibility will likely continue to thrive, earning the trust and loyalty of consumers worldwide.

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NOTES

Chapter 2

Generation Z and the IT Consumer Landscape: A Quantitative Analysis of Digital Engagement and Expectations in India

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Abstract

Shifting trends in Gen Z consumers in the IT industry. The rise of a new era shaped by Gen Z. They are clearly different from the earlier generations. Growing up in a world that is always online and filled with social media, they have a strong need for personal and digital experiences. The digital change that started in the mid-1990s and went on in the early 2010s has brought a big shift in the IT industry. This abstract takes a closer look at how today's consumers are changing, especially in how they think, choose, and connect. It shows how Gen Z is affecting the way the tech industry makes products, promotes them, and gives services.

Gen Z is making it clear they want brands to be eco-friendly, real, and focused on user experience. In response, companies are changing, becoming quicker, and taking on inclusive branding. They are moving to faster, more flexible ways of

working as users expect everything to be quick, connected, and safe. Tech firms are reworking how they plan strategies and improve customer experience. Also, Gen Z's strong interest in digital creators, pop culture, interactive content, and customized online experiences is changing how the digital world works, mixing technology more deeply into daily life. To keep up with Gen Z, tech companies are leaving behind the old ways of doing things and moving toward a more real, engaging, and skill-based way of working. The abstract ends by stressing how important it is for digital creators to truly understand and adjust to Gen Z's needs and mindset to stand out in today's crowded tech space.

Keywords: Gen Z Consumers, Digital Evolution, Personalized Experiences, User Experience, Tech Industry Transformation

Introduction

The IT industry is evolving at an unprecedented pace, creating a highly dynamic environment where understanding consumer behavior has become increasingly complex. Rapid technological advancements, coupled with the continuous emergence of innovative digital solutions, necessitate the formulation of effective methodologies and strategic frameworks to navigate this shifting landscape. Within this context, Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, has emerged as a transformative force shaping market dynamics. Unlike previous generations, Generation Z exhibits distinctive behavioral patterns, digital adoption preferences, and expectations that diverge significantly from their predecessors, positioning them as the first cohort to grow up entirely immersed in a digital environment (Prensky, 2001). Their upbringing in an era of

smartphones, high-speed internet, and pervasive social media has shaped not only their technological proficiency but also their worldview, emphasizing social consciousness, authenticity, and experience-based satisfaction in all forms of engagement. While Millennials experienced a transitional phase from traditional media and technology to digital solutions, Generation Z has been raised in an environment of constant digital interconnections. This cohort inherently expects personalization, clarity, and authenticity in all online interactions (Insights, 2020). Their continuous engagement with technology has cultivated an intuitive comfort with digital ecosystems, enabling them to navigate complex interfaces, assess brand credibility, and actively participate in online communities. Consequently, for IT companies, adapting to this generation is no longer optional; it requires a fundamental restructuring of established strategies. Synchronized product development, interactive user engagement, and experience-driven personalization have become essential to meet Generation Z's expectations. This study explores the paradigm shift in Generation Z consumer behavior and examines how these evolving patterns are influencing and reshaping IT industry practices. By analyzing the digital preferences, behavioral attributes, and engagement expectations of this generation, IT firms can derive actionable insights to realign their business strategies in accordance with the digital-first era.

The objectives of this study are threefold. First, it seeks to explore how Generation Z interacts with technology on a daily basis, including the devices they rely upon and the digital platforms that dominate their engagement patterns. Second, it aims to understand what this generation expects from IT products and services, particularly regarding personalization, data privacy, innovation, and seamless user experiences

(Ayuni, 2019). Finally, it examines the value Generation Z places on transparency, ethical conduct, and sustainability when interacting with digital brands, which are increasingly recognized as determinants of consumer loyalty and trust (Federation, 2017).

Literature indicates that Generation Z has become a pivotal consumer group, prompting researchers and industry professionals to study their behaviors extensively. Unlike older cohorts, Gen Z has been raised entirely within a digital ecosystem, shaping not only their communication patterns but also their interactions with brands, services, and platforms (Company & McKinsey, 2018). Marc Prensky (2001) first introduced the concept of digital natives to describe individuals born into a technology-driven world, a description that accurately captures Generation Z. According to the Pew Research Center (2019), over 95% of Gen Z owns a smartphone and spends more than nine hours per day on digital devices. This constant exposure influences media consumption, brand engagement, and experiential expectations, creating a generation that demands interactivity, responsiveness, and seamless digital experiences.

Generation Z's preference for personalized digital experiences is well-documented. Deloitte Insights (2020) emphasizes that this generation is drawn to platforms that leverage artificial intelligence and data analytics to deliver tailored content, recommendations, and user interfaces. IT companies, therefore, must prioritize flexible system design, rapid responsiveness, and the creation of user-centered experiences to remain relevant. Furthermore, McKinsey & Company (2018) highlights that Gen Z actively participates in shaping brand narratives, contributing content, feedback, and engagement that influence product development and marketing strategies. Social media platforms

such as Instagram and YouTube have become interactive spaces where Gen Z interacts directly with brands, providing feedback that informs design, messaging, and innovation.

Trust and ethical conduct are central to Generation Z's digital engagement. IBM and the National Retail Federation (2017) report that this generation evaluates brands based on transparency, ethical behavior, and data privacy. In response, IT companies are increasingly adopting tools such as block-chain for secure operations, stronger data protection protocols, and explainable AI systems to maintain trust. Emerging technologies, including nanotechnology and the Internet of Things (IoT), are redefining consumer expectations and industry standards (Hwang, 2003; Sisinni et al., 2018). For instance, nanotechnology has enabled paradigm shifts in memory storage, while IoT infrastructures have facilitated innovative services and inter connectivity, enhancing consumer engagement.

The rise of digital platforms has also introduced new forms of consumer interaction and marketing strategies. Hoyer et al. (2008) note that enterprise mashup tools exemplify a move toward integrated, user-centric digital applications, reflecting the broader trend of personalized experiences demanded by Gen Z. Social media influence, online reviews, and virtual entities further shape digital consumer behavior. Hunt (2015) highlights the challenges of fake online reviews, while Jhawar et al. (2023) examine the growing role of virtual influencers in shaping brand perceptions. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated these trends, with lockdowns prompting significant adoption of e-commerce and mobile shopping platforms (Chaudhary, 2020; Faulds et al., 2018), emphasizing the importance of digital channels in sustaining consumer engagement.

Research specifically on Generation Z's online behavior illustrates its impact on brand loyalty and satisfaction. Ayuni (2019) finds that their digital experiences strongly influence e-loyalty, while Yeo et al. (2022) highlight a shift from curative to preventive health management, affecting consumption of health-related products. Collectively, the literature underscores a paradigm shift driven by technological innovation, evolving digital marketing strategies, and changing consumer values. For Gen Z consumers in the IT industry, this shift is reflected in heightened digital engagement, a preference for personalized and authentic experiences, and the growing influence of digital and virtual entities in shaping perceptions. Consequently, IT firms must re-imagine marketing strategies, professional practices, and engagement frameworks to effectively capture the attention, trust, and loyalty of this digitally native generation.

Methodology

Research Approach

This study employs a quantitative research approach to examine the evolving behavior, preferences, and expectations of Generation Z consumers within the Information Technology (IT) industry. The primary objective is to generate empirical data that can inform industry decision-making and strategic planning, particularly in aligning IT services and products with the expectations of this digitally native generation.

Data Collection Method

Primary data were collected using an online survey administered via Google Forms. This method was selected due to its accessibility, ease of distribution, and suitability for reaching Generation Z, who are highly active on digital platforms. The online format allowed for efficient data collection while ensuring

respondents could participate conveniently at their preferred time and location.

Sampling and Participants

The survey targeted a total of 130 participants using convenience sampling. The sample included individuals from the researcher's personal and academic network, such as friends, family members, college classmates, and professors. While convenience sampling may limit the generalizability of the findings, it provides practical initial insights into the behavior of Generation Z consumers and allows for exploratory analysis of key trends within the target population.

Survey Design

The questionnaire was carefully designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative data, incorporating:

- i. **Multiple-Choice Questions:** To identify general preferences, usage patterns, and behavior trends.
- ii. **Likert Scale Items:** To measure levels of agreement with statements related to IT usage, digital engagement, and consumer expectations.

The survey focused on major themes, including digital engagement, platform and device usage, personalization, ethical expectations, and preferred IT services. This design ensured that both behavioral patterns and attitudinal insights were adequately captured.

Purpose of the Survey

The primary purpose of the survey was to investigate Generation Z consumer behavior within the IT sector. The study aimed to identify which technologies and platforms are most favored, assess expectations regarding digital experiences, and understand preferences regarding personalization, ethics, and innovation. The insights derived from this survey are

intended to help IT companies refine their strategies, design user-centric products, and enhance engagement with this emerging consumer segment.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using basic statistical techniques, including frequency distributions, percentage analysis, and cross-tabulations. Visual representations, such as charts and graphs, were employed to highlight trends, patterns, and key findings effectively.

Review of Literature

Generation Z, defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, represents a transformative force in consumer markets due to their unique digital nativity and behavioral patterns. Unlike Millennials, who experienced the transition from traditional to digital media, Gen Z has grown up with uninterrupted access to high-speed internet, smartphones, and online social platforms, which profoundly shapes their engagement with technology and digital products (Prensky, 2001). This exposure has made them highly proficient in digital interactions, conscious of social concerns, and oriented towards experience-based fulfillment (Deloitte Insights, 2020). Marc Prensky (2001) introduced the concept of "digital natives," individuals raised entirely within a digital environment. Gen Z fits this definition precisely, as evidenced by Pew Research Center data indicating that over 95% of Gen Z owns a smartphone and spends more than nine hours daily on digital devices. Such continuous exposure to technology influences not only media consumption but also interactions with brands, service engagement, and online experiences (Prensky, 2001). Research highlights Gen Z's preference for personalized and interactive digital experiences. Deloitte (2020) emphasizes that

this generation favors platforms leveraging AI and data insights to deliver relevant content and tailored recommendations, reflecting a high expectation for user-centric digital engagement. Furthermore, McKinsey & Company (2018) note that Gen Z actively participates in brand narratives by creating and sharing content, highlighting the importance of two-way communication between brands and consumers. This indicates a marked shift from traditional marketing to co-creation and participatory engagement. Trust and ethical behavior are critical for Gen Z. The National Retail Federation (2017) underscores that this generation values honesty, transparency, and ethical conduct in brand relationships. Companies are increasingly adopting blockchain for transparency and enhanced data security to meet these expectations. Ayuni (2019) similarly highlights the influence of digital experiences on e-loyalty, demonstrating that Gen Z's satisfaction and loyalty are closely linked to their perceptions of brand authenticity and ethical behavior. The rise of emerging technologies, such as the Internet of Things (IoT) and nanotechnology, further shapes Gen Z consumer expectations. Hwang (2003) discusses the transformative impact of nanotechnology on memory storage, while Sisinni et al. (2018) examine the Industrial IoT, emphasizing interconnected infrastructures that support innovative services and enhance consumer engagement. The evolution of mashup tools also exemplifies the integration of user-centric applications in enterprise and consumer contexts, aligning with Gen Z's demand for personalized digital experiences (Hoyer et al., 2008). Digital platforms and social media continue to redefine consumer behavior. Hunt (2015) identifies challenges posed by fake online reviews, which complicate decision-making, while Jhawar et al. (2023) illustrate the growing influence of virtual influencers in shaping perceptions and purchase

decisions. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated these trends, particularly in e-commerce, with increased mobile shopping and reliance on digital channels to maintain engagement during lockdowns (Chaudhary, 2020; Faulds et al., 2018). Yeo et al. (2022) further observe that Gen Z exhibits a preventive approach to health management, affecting their consumption of dietary supplements and health-related products. Overall, the literature underscores a comprehensive paradigm shift driven by digital nativity, technological innovation, and evolving consumer values. For IT firms, these insights imply that success hinges on providing personalized, interactive, and ethically grounded experiences that resonate with Gen Z's expectations (Ayuni, 2019; Deloitte Insights, 2020; McKinsey & Company, 2018).

Analysis and Findings

The quantitative analysis of survey data from 130 respondents provides a detailed overview of Generation Z's interaction with modern IT products and services. The findings reveal significant insights into digital engagement patterns, preferred devices, favored platforms, and expectations regarding personalization and ethical practices. By examining these behaviors, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how younger consumers influence and respond to changes in the IT industry, offering actionable insights for companies seeking to adapt to the needs of this digitally native generation.

This study looks at the interaction between Generation Z and modern IT products and services through a quantitative analysis of survey data collected from 130 respondents. The findings give useful insights into patterns of digital engagement, device usage, platform preferences, and user expectations. By studying these behaviors, the research adds to a better

understanding of how younger groups affect and respond to changes within the IT industry.

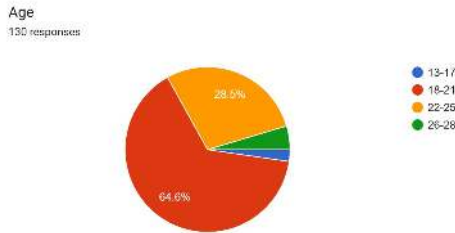


Figure 2.1

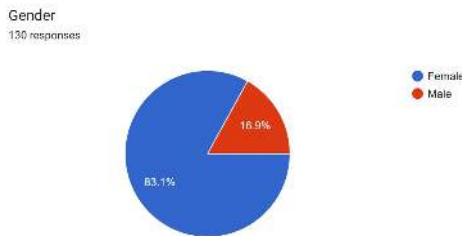


Figure 2.2

The participant group was mostly Gen Z (ages 18–21), making up 64.6% of the respondents. Most of them were students (89.2%), which shows the sample was mainly academic, though some working professionals and freelancers also took part. The gender split leaned more toward female (83.1%) compared to male (16.9%). This profile shows that the data mainly reflects the digital habits of student-based Gen Z, while also including some views from young professionals.

Respondents showed a high level of internet use, with 13.1% spending more than 4 hours online daily, and 86.9% spending over 8 hours. This shows how important digital technologies are

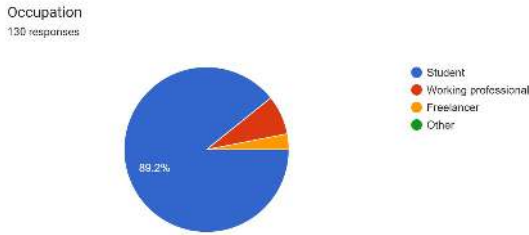


Figure 2.3

in the everyday lives of Gen Z. The results also show that Gen Z is very open to trying new things, as 86.2% said they would likely adopt new IT products and services. These findings suggest that Gen Z are early adopters and often set trends in the digital world.

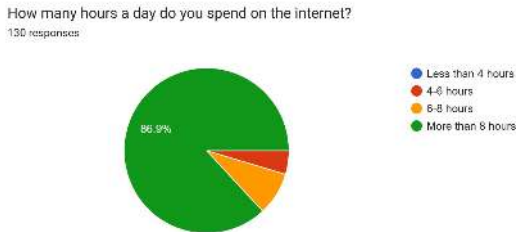


Figure 2.4

The survey shows that smartphones are the most commonly used device, with 96.9% of respondents using them regularly. Laptops came next at 36.9%, while tablets (6.2%), wearable devices (7.7%), and desktop computers (24.6%) were less common. This suggests that smartphones are the main way Gen Z connects to digital services, while laptops are used more as a second option, especially for tasks like studying, working, and longer online activities.

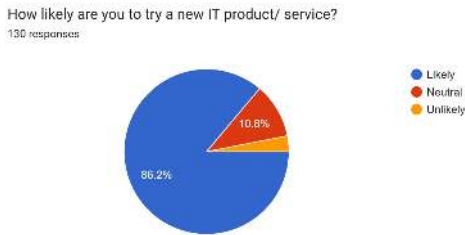


Figure 2.5

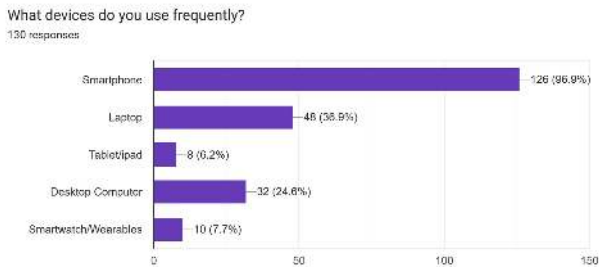


Figure 2.6

The survey shows that Gen Z uses a mix of IT services regularly. The most common were social media apps (96.2%), streaming platforms (84.6%), and cloud storage (82.3%). E-commerce platforms (19.2%) and online learning platforms (7.7%) were also used, but less often. Overall, the results show that Gen Z uses IT for both productivity (like cloud storage and online learning) and entertainment (like social media, streaming, and shopping).

The survey shows that Gen Z has clear expectations from IT brands. Personalization of services was rated highly (100%), making it the most important factor. Data privacy and security (92% rated 4–5), new and innovative features (88% rated 4–5),

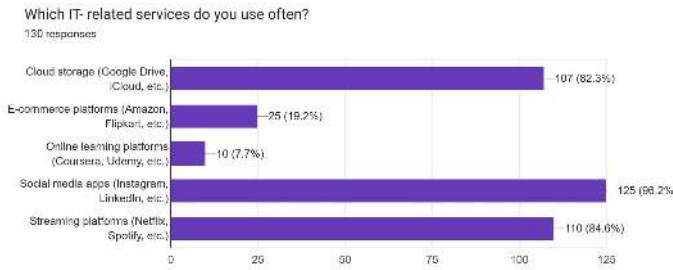


Figure 2.7

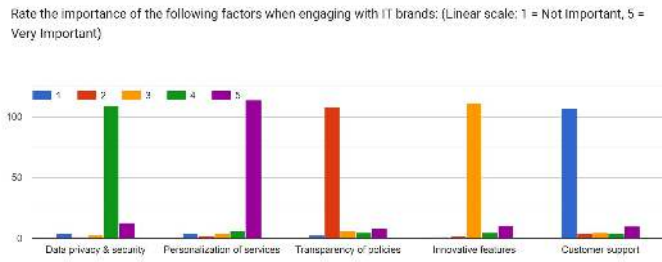


Figure 2.8

clear policies, and quick customer support were also seen as important. These results show that Gen Z wants brands to be ethical, open, and focused on users.

When it comes to purchase decisions, the main factors were good quality, loyalty rewards or discounts, smooth user experience, regular updates and innovations, and a strong brand image. In terms of shopping, 89.2% preferred online shopping because they are fast and convenient, while 10.8% still preferred offline shopping for a personal and hands-on experience.

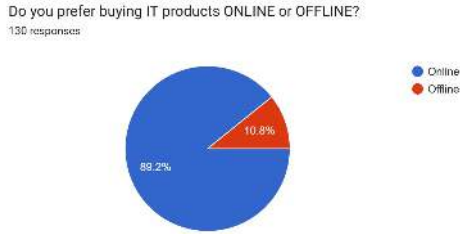


Figure 2.9

The survey shows that sustainability is an important factor in IT buying choices. About 86.2% of respondents said it was important, showing that many value sustainability. Around 10.8% were neutral, which means it may still influence them, and only a few said it was not important. Overall, the findings suggest that most Gen Z consumers see sustainability as a key point when choosing IT products or services.

Conclusion

The research presented in this study, Shifting Paradigm in Gen Z Consumers in the IT Industry, underscores the profound influence of Generation Z on the transformation of the IT sector. Survey data from 130 participants reveal that Gen Z exhibits high engagement with digital platforms, demonstrating distinctive behaviors, preferences, and expectations that challenge traditional industry norms. Key findings indicate a strong preference among Gen Z for personalized experiences, a demand for honesty and transparency from companies, and an increased concern for sustainability in IT services. These consumers are not passive users but active contributors who shape technological innovation through their values, interactions, and engagement patterns. Their consistent reliance on mobile and cloud-based platforms, combined

with awareness of data privacy and corporate responsibility, highlights a shift toward more user-centric, ethically informed IT solutions.

For the IT industry, these insights carry significant strategic implications. Organizations must realign their business models and service delivery approaches to cater to Gen Z's expectations, emphasizing flexible design, authentic communication, and ethical practices. Traditional paradigms of product development and customer engagement are being redefined by a generation that prioritizes authenticity, inclusivity, and digital fluency. In summary, the paradigm shift driven by Generation Z represents more than a generational preference—it is a transformative force compelling the IT industry to innovate thoughtfully, efficiently, and strategically, ensuring that products and services resonate with a digitally native, socially conscious, and highly participatory consumer base.

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NOTES

Chapter 3

Evaluating Eating Habits of Gen-Z Customers on food and beverages: A Study on College Students

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Abstract

This study evaluates the eating habits of gen Z customers and their impact on the food and beverage industry, with a specific focus on college students. As one of the largest consumer groups, gen Zs preferences are influencing market trends, product offerings, and marketing strategies in the industry. The research investigates students food and beverages choices, frequency of consumption, preference for healthy vs unhealthy products, and the factors shaping these behaviours such as lifestyle, social media influence, peer pressure, and affordability. Data was collected through structured survey and conducted across many college students to provide both quantitative and qualitative insights. The findings reveal a significant shift towards convenience foods, ready-to-eat beverages, and plant-based or health-oriented products, while cost and accessibility remain key concerns. This study provides insights for food and beverage companies

to design targeted products, promotional campaigns, and health-conscious options that align with the evolving demands of gen Z. Overall, the research explores how gen Z college students eating habits are influencing the food and beverage industry. It highlights their preference for convenient, affordable, and health-focused products, driven by lifestyle and social influences. The findings offer guidance for businesses to better serve this emerging market segment.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Consumer Trust, Stakeholder Theory, Ethical Governance, Zoho Corporation, Brand Authenticity.

Introduction

Food is not only a biological necessity but also a social and cultural phenomenon that reflects the values, lifestyles, and identities of individuals and communities. Eating habits are shaped by a combination of factors such as age, income, cultural background, health awareness, convenience, and media influence. Among different generational cohorts, Generation Z (commonly referred to as Gen Z), comprising individuals born between 1997 and 2012, has emerged as a distinct consumer group with unique food-and-beverage preferences. This generation, currently between the ages of 18 and 28, is rapidly becoming a significant part of the global consumer base, and their choices are reshaping the food and beverage industry. In recent years, researchers, marketers, and nutritionists have paid considerable attention to understanding the eating patterns of Gen Z, especially because of their strong influence on consumption trends. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z has grown up in a digital-first environment, exposed to social media, online food delivery platforms, global cuisines,

and health-awareness campaigns. These factors have made their eating habits dynamic, experimental, and at times unpredictable. On the one hand, they are health-conscious and prefer organic, plant-based, or low-sugar alternatives (Halicka, Kaczorowska, Rejman, & Plichta, 2025). On the other hand, they are heavily drawn toward fast food, packaged snacks, and ready-to-drink beverages due to the convenience and affordability these options provide (Baitey, Meesook, & Aujirapongpan, 2025).

College students, a core segment of Gen Z, represent an especially interesting population for studying eating habits. The transition from school to college often involves leaving home, staying in hostels, managing tight academic schedules, and handling limited budgets. These circumstances directly influence their food choices. Many college students experience irregular meal timings, skip breakfasts, and depend on fast-food outlets, street vendors, and online delivery apps (Imran & Khatun, 2024). Simultaneously, there is growing awareness among students regarding fitness, nutrition, and sustainable eating practices (Mamalis, Pavlidis, & Bara, 2019). This creates a paradoxical scenario where Gen Z college students demonstrate both unhealthy eating patterns and a conscious shift toward healthier lifestyles.

The food and beverage industry has also been quick to recognize the importance of Gen Z consumers. Global and local brands are customizing their menus and marketing strategies to attract this segment. For instance, plant-based options, vegan menus, cold-brew coffee, sugar-free drinks, and eco-friendly packaging are increasingly being introduced to cater to Gen Z's demand for healthier and sustainable consumption (Gligorić, Chiolo, Kıcıman, White, Horvitz, & West, 2023). At the same time, digital marketing campaigns on platforms like Instagram,

YouTube, and TikTok are influencing students' food preferences more than traditional advertising ever did. Peer influence, food bloggers, and social media trends such as "What I Eat in a Day" videos further shape Gen Z's eating behaviours (Gligorić, White, Kıcıman, Horvitz, Chiolerio, & West, 2021).

From a health perspective, the eating habits of college-going Gen Z students deserve careful evaluation. Unhealthy diets, including excessive consumption of fast food, sugary beverages, and processed snacks, can contribute to obesity, diabetes, and other lifestyle-related diseases at an early age. Studies suggest that irregular meal patterns and stress-induced eating behaviours are increasingly common among young adults in higher education. Therefore, analysing their food and beverage habits is not only important for the food industry but also essential for public-health policymakers, educators, and families (Putri, Anwar, & Maskar, 2025; Chukwujekwu & Nkemjika, 2025).

This study focuses on evaluating the eating habits of Gen Z college students with specific attention to their food and beverage choices. It aims to explore how lifestyle, affordability, convenience, cultural influences, and social media impact their decisions. It will also shed light on the balance between fast-food consumption and healthy eating trends among this generation. By understanding these patterns, valuable insights can be gained into the evolving demands of Gen Z consumers, enabling food service providers, restaurants, and beverage companies to design better products and strategies. Additionally, such research can help create awareness campaigns to encourage healthier eating behaviours among college students, ensuring that Gen Z not only drives market innovation but also leads healthier lives.

In conclusion, Gen Z's eating habits represent both opportunities and challenges. As one of the most influential consumer groups in the food and beverage sector, their preferences today are shaping the future of the industry. At the same time, their vulnerability to unhealthy eating patterns raises concerns about long-term health outcomes. Against this background, the present study seeks to evaluate the eating habits of Gen Z customers, focusing on college students as a critical segment, and provide meaningful insights into their choices, motivations, and behaviours.

Literature Review

The dietary behaviours and motivations of Generation Z have gained increasing scholarly attention in recent years, as this cohort demonstrates distinctive food-consumption attitudes shaped by digital exposure, health consciousness, and social influence. Multiple empirical studies across diverse cultural contexts have explored how Gen Z consumers approach food choices, nutritional awareness, and sustainability in the modern food ecosystem.

Baitey, Meesook, and Aujirapongpan (2025) examined motivations and healthy food-consumption behaviours among Gen Z university students in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, Thailand. Their survey of 400 undergraduate students who had prior experience consuming healthy food revealed that motivational drivers including self-health awareness, peer influence, and lifestyle aspirations significantly shaped dietary behaviour. Using descriptive statistics and Chi-square analysis, they found a positive relationship between personal factors (such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status) and the frequency of healthy food intake, underscoring that Gen Z students exhibit both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations toward

balanced eating patterns. Halicka, Kaczorowska, Rejman, and Plichta (2025) focused on Gen Z adults in Polish cities, exploring how sustainability considerations shape consumer segmentation in nutrition-related behaviour. Employing the Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI) method with 650 respondents, their quantitative analysis identified three clusters of consumer types, ranging from sustainability-oriented to convenience-driven individuals. Using one-way ANOVA and Scheffé post hoc tests, the study revealed that attitudes toward environmental responsibility, health, and ethical food production strongly influence purchasing decisions within this cohort.

Gligorić, Chiolero, Kıcıman, White, Horvitz, and West (2023) expanded the perspective by examining the role of purchasing mimicry a phenomenon in which individuals emulate the purchasing behaviour of those immediately preceding them. Conducted on a large university campus, their causal analysis leveraged sequential purchase data to assess how social influence impacts food-choice patterns. Results demonstrated a measurable tendency for individuals to copy others' food selections in queue contexts, illustrating that Gen Z's consumption patterns are not purely individualistic but socially contagious.

In an earlier investigation, Gligorić, White, Kıcıman, Horvitz, Chiolero, and West (2021) explored similar dynamics by analyzing how the presence of "healthy-eating partners" affects dietary shifts among peers. Through a matched quasi-experimental design and a difference-in-differences approach, they established that individuals paired with health-oriented eaters significantly improved their food choices. This emphasizes that peer networks and social reinforcement act as crucial determinants of Gen Z's healthy-eating adoption.

Imran and Khatun (2024) analyzed post-COVID-19 changes in food habits among 307 undergraduate students aged 18–25 years. Their study investigated alterations in diet, sleep, shopping habits, internet use, and mental status. Chi-square analysis revealed statistically significant associations between lifestyle shifts and dietary behaviour, confirming that lockdown-induced changes persistently affect Gen Z's daily routines and consumption patterns. Mamalis, Pavlidis, and Bara (2019) explored sustainable food-consumption behaviour among university students in Greece aged 18–23. From 252 responses, two major consumer segments emerged those engaging minimally in sustainability practices (focused mainly on seasonal fruits and local produce) and those more environmentally conscious. Their research highlighted that while sustainability awareness exists within Gen Z, behavioural translation into consistent eco-friendly consumption remains partial.

Putri, Anwar, and Maskar (2025) conducted an observational cross-sectional study in Depok, Indonesia, involving 107 participants aged 12–27 years. Their findings indicated a significant negative correlation between breakfast frequency and nutritional status ($r = -0.210$, $p = 0.030$), suggesting that regular breakfast consumption contributes positively to health outcomes. However, factors such as eating-out frequency and online food-delivery usage showed no statistically significant association with nutritional status, pointing to more complex lifestyle interactions within Gen Z dietary patterns.

Finally, Chukwujekwu and Nkemjika (2025) investigated gender and school-type differences in food preferences and dietary habits among 150 Gen Z teenagers in Anambra State, Nigeria. Utilizing a validated questionnaire (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.84$), the study revealed distinct variations based on

gender and institutional type. Cultural and digital factors, including exposure to online food content and peer influence, significantly impacted perceived health outcomes and food preferences. Collectively, these studies reveal that Generation Z's food-consumption behaviours are multifaceted driven by health consciousness, sustainability awareness, peer networks, and the interplay between digital exposure and lifestyle convenience. The literature suggests a global convergence where young consumers are simultaneously aspirational and pragmatic, balancing the pursuit of wellness with accessibility and social validation.

Objectives

- To identify the common patterns and frequency of food and beverage consumption among the target population.
- To examine the influence of socioeconomic factors and accessibility of food on individual consumption choices.
- To analyze the role of social media and other external influences in shaping food and beverage preferences.

Research Methodology

For this study, a structured questionnaire was designed and administered among college students of Arka Jain University, Jamshedpur, to examine the eating habits of Generation Z consumers within the food and beverage industry. The questionnaire consisted of systematically framed questions intended to capture data on consumption behavior, preferences, and awareness levels among this demographic segment.

A total of 70 valid responses were collected through convenience sampling, as Gen Z college students represented the primary target group. Both male and female respondents participated at varying levels. The collected data was organized into tables and charts, and percentage analysis was applied to interpret

the results effectively. This cognitive and data-driven approach enabled the researchers to obtain first-hand insights, ensuring accuracy and contextual relevance. The study adopted a mixed-method approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Quantitative data was derived from structured responses, while qualitative insights were inferred through interpretation of trends and behavioral patterns. The target population comprised individuals aged 18 to 30 years, representing the Gen Z cohort and regular consumers in the food and beverage segment.

The questionnaire, distributed via Google Forms, was shared across social media platforms to ensure accessibility and wider participation. The instrument covered the following thematic areas:

- Demographic details (name, age)
- Monthly expenditure on food and beverages
- Dining preferences (home-cooked vs. outside food)
- Favorite food categories and preferred beverages
- Awareness regarding nutritional content
- Motivations behind dietary choices

Each question was designed in a multiple-choice format to facilitate ease of response and clarity in data categorization. The compiled data was represented through tables and pie charts using Google Forms' analytical tools. The percentage analysis method highlighted major consumption trends and comparative preferences among respondents such as favorite cuisines, beverage choices, and the degree of nutritional awareness. All participants were informed that the data collected would be used solely for academic purposes. The structured and methodical approach ensured that the findings were reliable, representative, and aligned with the objectives of

the study, thereby providing a robust foundation for analyzing Gen Z’s food and beverage consumption behavior.

Findings and Analysis

Respondents Age

Most respondents (48.6%) are aged 21–25 years, followed by 40% in the 18–20 years group. A small number belong to 26–30 years and 30 and above. This shows that the survey mainly includes typical college students, making it suitable for studying Generation Z’s eating habits.

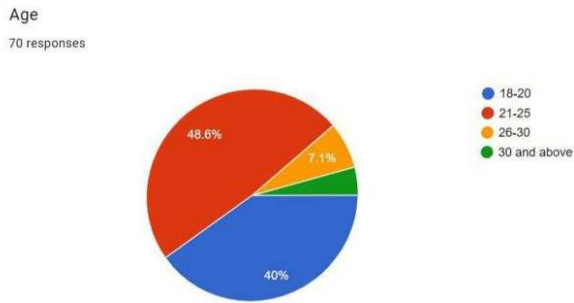


Figure 3.1

Table 3.1: Respondents’ Age Distribution

Age Group	Percentage	Approximate Number of Respondents (out of 70)
18 – 20	40%	28
21 – 25	48.6%	34
26 – 30	7.1%	5
30 and above	4.3%	3

Respondents expenditure

Most respondents (52.9%) spend 100– 200 on meals outside the home, indicating a preference for budget-friendly options. About 24.3% spend 200– 300, while only a small portion spends more than 300, suggesting that affordability is a major factor influencing their food choices.

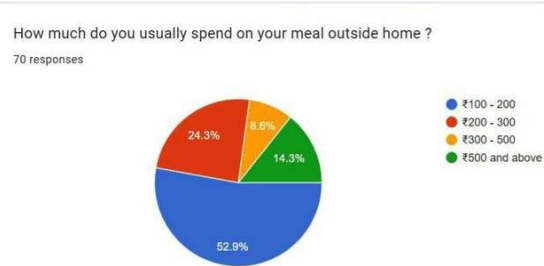


Figure 3.2

Table 3.2: Monthly Meal Expenditure Outside Home

Amt. Spent per Meal	Percentage	Approximate Number of Respondents (out of 70)
100 – 200	52.9%	37
200 – 300	24.3%	17
300 – 500	8.6%	6
500 and above	14.3%	10

Respondents dining preferences

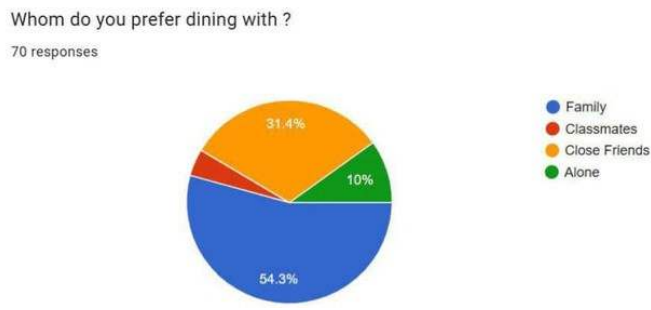


Figure 3.3

Table 3.3: Respondents’ Dining Preferences

Dining Preference	Percentage	Approximate Number of Respondents (out of 70)
Family	54.3%	38
Classmates	4.3%	3
Close Friends	31.4%	22
Alone	10%	7

Most respondents (54.3%) prefer dining with family, followed by close friends (31.4%). A small number prefer eating alone (10%) or with classmates (4.3%), showing that social connections play a major role in dining choices.

Respondents dining frequencies

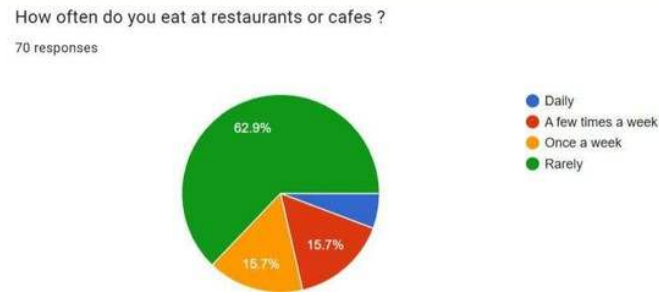


Figure 3.4

Table 3.4: Frequency of Eating at Restaurants or Cafes

Frequency	Percentage	Approximate Number of Respondents (out of 70)
Daily	5.7%	4
A few times a week	15.7%	11
Once a week	15.7%	11

Most respondents (62.9%) rarely eat at restaurants or cafes, while only a small portion (5.7%) dine out daily. This shows that eating out is not a frequent habit for the majority, possibly due to cost or lifestyle preferences.

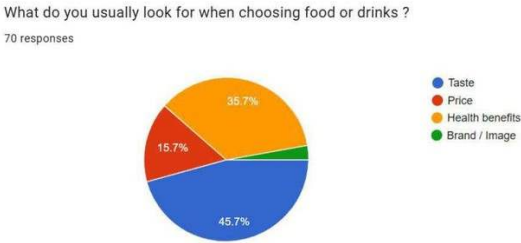


Figure 3.5

Respondents food and beverage preferences:

Table 3.5: Preferences of Food and Drinks

Factor	Percentage	Number of Responses (out of 70)
Taste	45.7%	32
Health Benefits	35.7%	25
Price	15.7%	11

Taste (45.7%) is the top priority for Gen-Z students when choosing food or drinks, followed by health benefits (35.7%). Price (15.7%) is a secondary factor, while brand/image (2.9%) has minimal influence. This indicates that students value enjoyment and nutrition more than affordability or branding.

Respondents dining preferences:

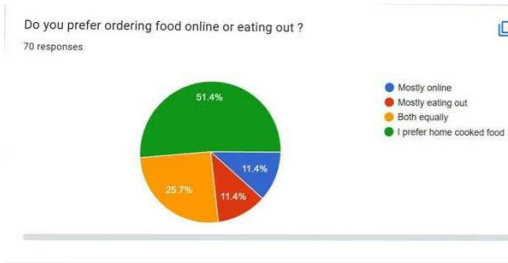


Figure 3.6

Table 3.6: Preferences of Ordering Food Online or Eating Out

Preference	Percentage	Number of Responses (out of 70)
I prefer home cooked food	51.4%	36

Table 3.6: Preferences of Ordering Food Online or Eating Out

Preference	Percentage	Number of Responses (out of 70)
Both equally	25.7%	18
Mostly online	11.4%	8

Home-cooked food is strongly preferred 51.4% and 25.7% enjoy a balance between online ordering and eating out, reflecting flexibility in food choices. Only 11.4% each prefer mostly online ordering or mostly eating out, suggesting that dependency on external food sources is relatively low. Overall, the findings highlight a strong inclination towards homemade meals, with convenience-based options serving as secondary preferences.

Respondents sustainable choice of food brands:

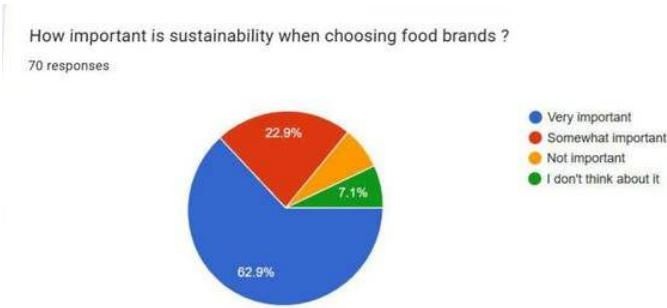


Figure 3.7

A significant 62.9% (44 students) consider it very important, showing strong awareness and preference for eco-friendly practices. Additionally, 22.9% (16 students) view it as somewhat important, suggesting a positive but less decisive influence. Only 7.1% each (5 students each) either regard

it as not important. sustainability plays a crucial role in shaping food brand choices among Gen-Z, making it essential for companies to adopt environmentally responsible practices to connect with this consumer segment.

Table 3.7: Preferences of Choosing Food Brands

Response	Cate- gory	Percentage	Number of Responses (out of 70)
Very important		62.9%	44
Somewhat important		22.9%	16
Not important		7.1%	5
I don't think about it		7.1%	5

Respondents dietary inclusion:

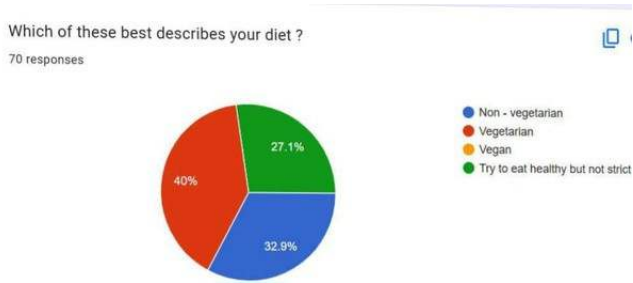


Figure 3.8

Largest group of students (40%) identify as vegetarians, reflecting strong cultural and lifestyle influences. Around 32.9% follow a non-vegetarian diet, showing a significant preference for mixed food habits. Interestingly, 27.1% try to eat healthy

without being strict, highlighting flexible and mindful eating practices.

Table 3.8: Dietary Description

Diet Type	Percentage	Number of Responses (out of 70)
Vegetarian	40.0%	28
Non-Vegetarian	32.9%	23
Try to eat healthy but not strictly	27.1%	19
Vegan	0%	0

Respondents dietary awareness:

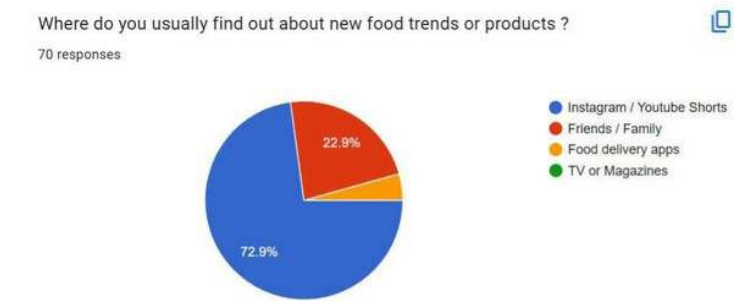


Figure 3.9

Social media (Instagram/YouTube Shorts) is the dominant source of food trend awareness (72.9%), reflecting Gen-Z’s strong digital engagement. About 22.9% rely on friends and family, highlighting the continued role of word-of-mouth influence. A small share (4.2%) discovers new products through

food delivery apps, while traditional media (TV or magazines) plays no role at all.

Table 3.9: Awareness of New Food Trends or Products

Source	Percentage	Number of Responses (out of 70)
Instagram / YouTube Shorts	72.9%	51
Friends / Family	22.9%	16
Food delivery apps	4.2%	3
TV or Magazines	0%	0

Respondents ingredients awareness

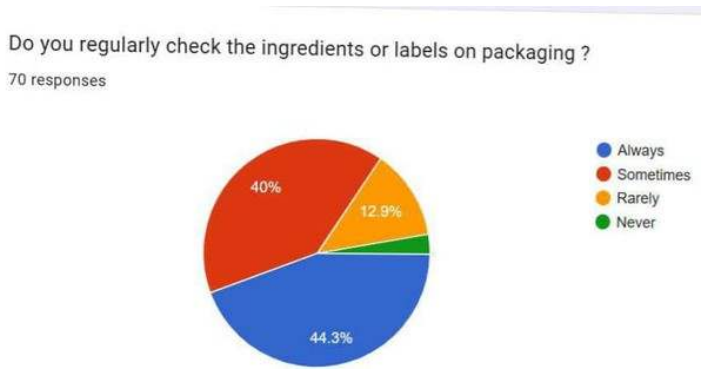


Figure 3.10

The data suggests a generally high level of awareness regarding product labels among the surveyed group. The majority of respondents (84.3% combined for "Always" and "Sometimes") engage with labels to some extent. However, there's a clear distinction between consistent label-checkers and those who do

so occasionally, indicating varying degrees of consumer diligence in examining product information. A smaller minority appears to largely disregard this information.

Table 3.10: Awareness of labels on packaging

Response	Cate- gory	Percentage
Always		40%
Sometimes		44.3%
Rarely		12.9%
Never		2.8%

Respondents beverage preferences

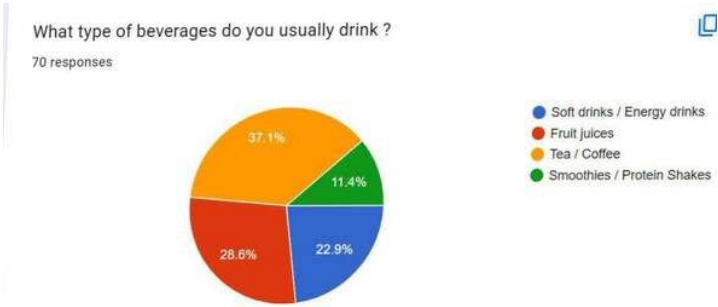


Figure 3.11

Table 3.11: Preferences of beverages

Beverage Type	Percentage (%)	Number of Re- sponses
Soft drinks/Energy drinks	28.6	20

Table 3.11: Preferences of beverages

Beverage Type	Percentage (%)	Number of Responses
Fruit juices	22.9	16
Tea/Coffee	37.1	26
Smoothies/Protein Shakes	11.4	8

The high preference for Tea/Coffee suggests that traditional or common hot beverages remain a staple in daily consumption compared to other options. The substantial percentage for Soft drinks/Energy drinks indicates a notable segment of the population regularly consumes these types of beverages, which could have implications for health and dietary patterns.

Respondents choice on organic foods

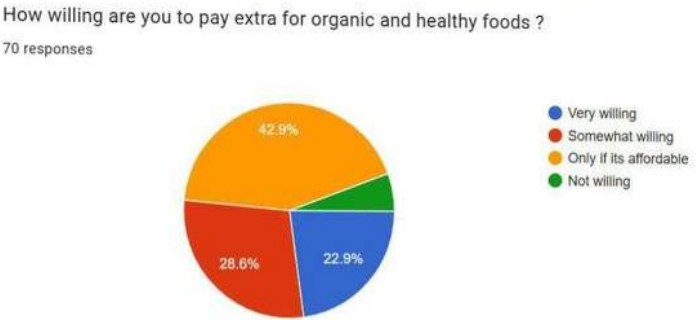


Figure 3.12

Table 3.12: Preferences of organic and healthy foods

Willingness Level	Percentage (%)	Number of Responses (Approx.)
Very Willing	42.9%	30
Somewhat Willing	28.6%	20
Only if it is Affordable	22.9%	16
Not Willing	5.7%	4

The survey reveals a generally positive sentiment towards paying extra for organic and healthy foods, with the majority of respondents expressing some level of willingness. However, affordability remains a key consideration for a significant portion of the consumer base.

The company’s commitment to environmental sustainability, including the establishment of 100% solar-powered data centers, has been a key driver of trust among eco-conscious customers. A 2023 Zoho Insights survey revealed that 78% of customers regarded Zoho’s commitment to sustainability as a major factor in their decision to remain loyal to the brand. This aligns with findings from Nielsen’s 2019 global survey, which stated that 66% of consumers are willing to pay a premium for brands committed to environmental sustainability. These statistics underscore the importance of environmental responsibility in fostering consumer trust. Zoho’s dedication to community development, particularly through initiatives like the Zoho Schools of Learning and local rural development programs, has further strengthened its reputation as a company that cares about social welfare. The Zoho Schools have trained over 2,000 students, many of whom have gone on to work at Zoho or

other top companies, highlighting the company's investment in the future of underserved communities. According to the Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship (2020), 72% of consumers believe companies should contribute to societal well-being, and Zoho's active engagement in education has helped it build credibility with customers who value corporate social responsibility.

Employee welfare also plays a crucial role in building trust. Zoho's ranking as one of the best places to work (Glassdoor, 2023) and its commitment to employee satisfaction have a direct impact on consumer perception, as customers increasingly expect companies to treat their employees well. Research by Edelman (2023) shows that 73% of consumers are more likely to trust companies that demonstrate fair treatment of their workforce, a sentiment that strengthens Zoho's position as a trustworthy brand.

In light of these findings, it is recommended that Zoho continue expanding its CSR efforts to further enhance consumer trust. Future initiatives could include broader engagement with global environmental and social challenges, strengthening the connection between the brand and its socially conscious customer base. Additionally, integrating more transparency in the reporting of CSR activities and their outcomes would bolster Zoho's reputation and reinforce its commitment to long-term, sustainable growth. In summary, Zoho's CSR initiatives have made a profound impact on consumer trust, and as the market continues to evolve, brands like Zoho that prioritize ethical practices and social responsibility will likely continue to thrive, earning the trust and loyalty of consumers worldwide.

Conclusion

The eating habits of Gen-Z, particularly college students, present a complex yet fascinating picture of modern consumer behavior in the food and beverage sector. Unlike earlier generations, Gen-Z has grown up in an environment shaped by digital technology, globalization, and increased health awareness. Their eating patterns reflect a mix of traditional influences, convenience-driven decisions, and aspirational lifestyle choices. The study of this group is especially relevant because they not only represent the present consumer base but also serve as a strong predictor of future trends in the food and beverage industry.

One of the key observations is the duality in Gen-Z's food choices. On one hand, college students frequently opt for fast food, packaged snacks, and ready-to-drink beverages because of time constraints, affordability, and easy accessibility through campus outlets and delivery apps. On the other hand, there is a clear rise in the awareness of healthy eating practices. Many Gen-Z students actively seek organic, plant-based, and low-sugar alternatives, reflecting a growing consciousness about fitness, mental well-being, and sustainable living. This blend of contradictory tendencies highlights the transitional nature of their eating habits, shaped simultaneously by convenience and responsibility. Social media and peer influence play a pivotal role in this transformation. Platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok not only expose students to global cuisines but also amplify food trends, diet practices, and lifestyle goals. "Food blogging," "what I eat in a day" reels, and influencer promotions affect students' decisions more than traditional advertisements. This signifies that food and beverage companies must align their offerings and communication strategies with digital platforms if they wish to capture Gen-Z's attention effectively.

However, the implications of unhealthy eating patterns cannot be ignored. Skipping meals, relying heavily on fast food, and excessive intake of sugary or caffeinated drinks can lead to long-term health consequences such as obesity, diabetes, and nutritional deficiencies. College students are at a critical stage of life where lifestyle choices often carry over into adulthood, making it essential to address these concerns through awareness campaigns, campus initiatives, and affordable healthy alternatives. In conclusion, evaluating the eating habits of Gen-Z college students reveals both opportunities and challenges. Their demand for variety, experimentation, and digital engagement makes them an influential consumer group driving innovation in the food and beverage industry. At the same time, their vulnerability to unhealthy diets calls for collective responsibility from educators, policymakers, families, and businesses to encourage balanced and nutritious choices. The future of the food and beverage sector will, to a large extent, be shaped by how well it understands and responds to Gen-Z's evolving preferences. By bridging the gap between convenience and health, the industry can not only cater to Gen-Z's desires but also contribute to shaping a healthier generation for the years to come.

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NOTES

Chapter 4

Shifts in Consumer Brand Preferences: An Empirical Study on Local vs Global Brands in India

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly disrupted consumer lifestyles and purchasing behaviour while reshaping global economic dynamics. In this evolving scenario, a noticeable shift emerged as consumers began favouring domestic brands and locally manufactured products, recognizing their vital role in strengthening the nation's economy and supporting self-reliance. This study examines the key factors influencing consumer preference toward domestic over international brands in India, with a particular focus on the post-pandemic transformation in buying behaviour. The findings indicate that price, quality, brand trust, and the 'Made in India' sentiment (patriotism) significantly drive consumer willingness to purchase domestic brands. The pandemic experience heightened consumer awareness of hygiene, sustainability, and regional authenticity, prompting

a growing inclination toward environment-friendly and locally sourced products. Consumers now associate buying Indian-made goods not only with personal satisfaction but also with contributing to national economic revival and self-sufficiency. The Indian government's 'Vocal for Local' campaign acts as a strong catalyst in reinforcing this shift, promoting a renewed sense of economic patriotism and responsible consumption among Indian consumers.

Keywords: Vocal for Local, Consumer Behaviour, Patriotism, Eco-friendly Products, Policy Maker.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented disruption to global lifestyles, consumer behavior, and market dynamics. It not only affected purchasing patterns but also reshaped perceptions of product origin, trust, and value. Across economies, consumers began to re-evaluate their choices, displaying a distinct inclination toward domestically manufactured goods and national brands. In India, this shift assumed a deeper economic and emotional significance, aligning with the national sentiment of self-reliance and economic revival.

The pandemic underscored the strategic role of consumer preference in strengthening domestic industries and contributing to the national GDP. Factors such as price sensitivity, perceived quality, brand image, and patriotic association with "Made in India" products emerged as decisive motivators influencing purchase intentions. Moreover, hygiene consciousness, environmental sustainability, and regional affinity gained prominence as consumers became more aware of the socio-economic implications of their consumption patterns. The COVID-19 pandemic emerged as one of the most significant

global disruptions in modern history, affecting billions of lives and altering economic and consumer landscapes across nations. Its onset in 2019 led to nationwide lockdowns, mobility restrictions, and social distancing measures that deeply impacted consumer lifestyles and buying patterns. As noted by Verma and Naveen (2021), India witnessed an unprecedented behavioural transformation wherein consumers began prioritizing essential goods, hygiene products, and local brands over luxury and non-essential categories. The fear of scarcity triggered panic buying, especially of sanitizers, masks, and household staples, despite governmental assurances of uninterrupted supply.

In this evolving landscape, the Indian government's "Vocal for Local" initiative served as both a policy driver and a psychological catalyst, promoting indigenous production and encouraging citizens to support local enterprises. This movement not only reflected economic nationalism but also redefined consumer identity in the post-pandemic era. Consequently, understanding the determinants behind this transition from international to domestic brand preference becomes essential for policymakers, marketers, and business strategists seeking to harness this renewed sense of economic patriotism.

The lockdowns further compelled consumers to adapt to restricted shopping environments. Local kirana stores, limited operating hours, and contactless transactions became the new norm, leading to the rapid adoption of digital platforms. According to Priya (2022), more than half of Indian consumers transitioned from traditional retail to online purchasing, marking a significant digital shift in consumption patterns. Similarly, Yang, Li, and Wang (2024) observed that post-pandemic consumers exhibited greater engagement

with e-commerce, driven by convenience, health concerns, and accessibility, thereby establishing online retail as a dominant mode of purchase.

Cultural and psychological dimensions also played a crucial role in shaping this behavioural shift. Garg and Narang (2024) highlighted that the pandemic heightened consumer anxiety, prompting cautious and necessity-driven purchases. This aligns with Mittal and Woodside's (2022) analysis, which identified a new "cautious and virtuous" consumer mindset characterized by ethical consumption, sustainability awareness, and risk aversion. Indian consumers increasingly evaluated their choices through the lens of safety, value, and national identity, fostering a sense of collective responsibility in consumption habits.

One prominent consequence of this transformation has been the resurgence of domestic brand preference. The Government of India's 'Vocal for Local' campaign effectively promoted patriotism-linked consumption, encouraging consumers to support indigenous brands. This aligns with findings from Aqif and Mumtaz (2024), who demonstrated that consumer ethnocentrism and favourable perceptions of the country of origin significantly influence post-COVID e-purchase intentions. Consumers associated local products with reliability, authenticity, and national contribution, reflecting a deeper psychological alignment with domestic manufacturing. The dichotomy between global and local brand preference has therefore become a key research focus. According to the study *Global vs Local: A Choice Influenced by Consumer Ethnocentrism Level* (2024), globalization blurred product boundaries, but post-pandemic consumption witnessed a reorientation toward regional identity and cultural belonging. Local products are perceived as "sons of the soil," resonating with India's ethos of *Atmanirbhar Bharat*. The example of

Amul, which expanded its market share by leveraging national pride, illustrates how domestic branding can successfully compete with multinational corporations.

Moreover, post-pandemic consumers demonstrated increased environmental and ethical consciousness. Al-Issa, Kallach, and Fahl (2024) emphasized that sustainability and moral responsibility are now integral components of luxury and mainstream consumption alike. Arya and Chauhan (2024) further reinforced that pandemic-induced introspection made consumers more mindful, seeking contentment in conscious and minimalistic consumption patterns rather than material accumulation. Dr. Rajesh Kumar (2025) observed that globally, the pandemic catalyzed a more informed and selective consumer base. Purchase decisions are increasingly driven by trust, transparency, and perceived social contribution. The same trend resonates in India, where domestic products are not merely economic alternatives but also emotional symbols of solidarity and resilience.

In sum, the literature establishes that COVID-19 acted as a transformative catalyst for consumer behaviour in India and worldwide. The shift from impulsive to mindful buying, from global aspiration to local appreciation, and from physical to digital platforms underscores a new paradigm of responsible and self-reliant consumption. As India progresses toward economic recovery, understanding these behavioural patterns becomes essential for policymakers and marketers seeking to sustain the momentum of local brand adoption and digital transformation. The present study, therefore, explores the factors influencing consumer brand preference shifts toward domestic and international brands in India, examining the long-term implications of these behavioral transformations on sustainable market growth and national economic resilience.

The shift in consumer buying behaviour

As per current situation it is noticed that covid-19 has changed work life, shopping habits, communication changes, social gatherings, travelling and many more changes occurred in a very short time. People started working from home and with high risk of spread of this virus all the shopping mall were also closed hence people had to stick only to the basic essential needs. This all shift in buying behaviour of consumers came in a very short time. Now only local kirana stores are opened for the consumers to get their essentials that too only for limited hours as per the time allotted in each city by the govt. this illustrates that out of 10 consumers 9 have changed their traditional buying behaviour. A study conducted by NRF says that more than 50% customers have switched to online buying rather than offline buying from local stores in order to avoid infection, they prefer contactless safe delivery. The same study also shows that out 10 customers 6 have switched to digital platforms and are adopting the technology change for the safety of them and their family, hence a massive variation is seen in usage of digital platforms. People who used to prefer only cash while shopping are now trying to shift to use digital apps to transfer money and are also encouraging others to use the same.

As the world battles the quick spread of corona virus amid an enormous lockdown, numerous individuals are limited to their homes. In India consumer behaviour is majorly influenced by cultural factors as India is known for its culture and festivals we have; Indians are a group of social community with huge requirement of group activities. The impact of the pandemic is uncommon. It is changing consumption of individuals, modifying the customer behaviour. It has altered the way we think, work, read and relax consistently. Most of the rural

and urban people are quite calm down at their places but considering urban poor and migrant workers and labor class is still struggling for daily food and essentials. The impact of total shutdown in economic drills is causing organizations to limit their production and actions, and this is probably going to last till the principal quarter of 2020-21. Henceforth these buying behaviour changes will continue even after the pandemic situation Globalization has blurred the boundaries between countries, making the globe a converged and homogenous market. As a result, today, consumers are surrounded by a plethora of global and local products to choose from. Global products are usually linked with wealth, status, recognition and prestige, adding to consumers' social reputation. While local products convey pride and belongingness by representing local culture, traditions, customs and resources. Local products better position themselves as the 'Sons of the soil' as they serve the nation by grasping local consumers' demand in a better way. Product localness and globalness carry significance and strongly influence consumer purchase intention.

By relying more on locally manufactured (Swadeshi) goods, India can be made Atmanirbhar, a state of being self-sustaining and self-generating. For instance, the Indian ice cream brand AMUL, which self-promoted as 'A Taste of India', gained a 36% share in a market that was previously dominated by only multinational corporations. After the COVID-19 pandemic, when we are struggling to uplift our GDP, the Atmanirbhar movement will lessen our reliance on imported goods, easing import pressure by strategically positioning India as a new global manufacturing centre.

Especially, when the manufacturing base of India is getting pace, it is very essential to know the choices and preferences of Indian consumers regarding their own products, as the success

of any product (foreign or local) will largely depend on how consumers perceive them.

This Studies analysing the consumer behaviour of Indians for domestic versus global products after post COVID-19 pandemic. the present study aims to analyse the consumer brand preference shifting towards local and global brands. The present study will benefit both local and global manufacturers to develop an appropriate marketing strategy to face competition and satisfy their consumers in a better way.

The second section discusses the literature review and The third section explains the research methodology. The fourth section highlights analysis and results. The fifth section covers discussion and conclusion. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted global supply chains and reshaped consumer buying patterns.

Literature Review

The world faced a unique challenge due to the COVID-19 pandemic. China was the first country to face the mass spread of novel Coronavirus and promptly, the virus started spreading across the world. On 11 March 2020, the coronavirus epidemic was declared a ‘pandemic’ by the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020). This restricted cross border travel, suspended production, and the global supply chain came to a halt. Social distancing was a very challenging task in India as it is the second most populated country in the world. To protect the population of 1.3 billion from infection, the Prime Minister of India announced 21 days of nationwide lockdown on 24 March 2020.(Meghna Verma,2021)

Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) are the nondurable goods that are sold quickly and at relatively low price. These goods are used by every single person on daily basis. These are the small scale consumer purchase that are made at grocery

stores, supermarkets, warehouse outlets, produce stand. FMCG Sector is considered as one of the vital contributor to India's GDP. It creates employment on a large scale as they have various elements among which the main elements are household care, personal care and food and beverages. FMCG accounts for more than half of all consumer spending. Despite being India's fourth largest sector with household and personal care accounting for 50% of FMCG sales in India, it has suffered gravely due to the pandemic.(Shail Priya,2022)

The COVID-19 pandemic has conditionally changed the world in a term used as "the new normal". People are counting to live a life which is unknown with changing, buying habits and change of thinking pattern which is focusing more on the safety issues than living life on the edge as it was before. Supply chain, retail stores are shutting down and they are beginning to feel that in order to hold back customers and enticing them and they need to think differently as customers will now not think of walking in to any retail stores but rather choose to use digital platform mode to chip in for their choices.(Tamoghna Mandal,2021)

Amidst the 2019/22 COVID-19 miseries, a silver lining appears: the pandemic is causing many of us rethink our lives. In turn, these emergent life perspectives and consumer motives present new opportunities for marketers to advance consumer well-being and positive social change as developed in this paper. Weaving a nexus of consumers' emergent life perspectives, consumption motives, and marketer opportunities, our conceptual framework suggests seven research questions for marketing scholars.(Banwari Mittal,2022)

There has been an upsurge in e-commerce businesses during the past decade which exceeded unexpectedly during Covid-19. Using the social identity perspective and the country of origin

(COO) effect The proposed model has examined the impact of consumer e-purchase behavior to facilitate practitioners in developing robust strategies after understanding the behavioral patterns of consumers, particularly after the Covid period.(Tanzeela Aqif,2024)

The COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing mandates have completely disturbed the buying patterns of the consumer and have directed them towards new habits. The shift from going to the stores for shopping on weekends to hoarding of daily essentials and online ordering, once permissible have taught consumers some new ideas of coping with this situation and adapting to the new normal. However, these behavioural changes are not uniformly applicable to all the categories of consumers since the involvement level of consumers varies from product to product and situation to situation, therefore the present study attempts to review existing literature on different categories of consumers in India, their characteristics and their behavioural patterns during and post COVID-19. (Perna Garg,2024)

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way people shop online. This study looks at how online shopping habits have evolved since the pandemic started, focusing on different types of shopping behaviors. We used information from a big online shopping site in China and special computer programs to study these behaviors. Our research found three main types of online shopping behaviors. However, to get a deeper understanding, we also looked at why people shop the way they do, considering factors like how they adapt socially and economically, what they think about the products, and their shopping experience. Our findings help us better understand online shopping habits and offer advice to stores on how to improve their online selling

strategies in the new normal after the pandemic. (Zongkang Yang,2024)

The goal of this research is to ascertain how COVID-19 influences the buying decisions of customers. Additionally, the study aims to identify consumer consumption trends for a spectrum of products and services, including fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs), entertainment, pharmaceuticals, travel and tourism. A comprehensive review of different research papers is done to conclude. TCCM framework has been applied while reviewing the articles. During the isolation, consumer behaviour moved to panic buying and stockpiling, favouring organic basics, and encouraging e-commerce, as well as economic nationalism favouring made-in-India products. (Kriti Arya,2024)

The COVID-19 pandemic has undeniably reshaped consumer behavior across the globe, with its far reaching impact affecting not only individual lives but also entire industries. Among the sectors most notably impacted is retail, where consumer habits, attitudes, and shopping patterns have experienced significant and, in some cases, permanent transformations. One of the most profound changes has been the shift in how consumers approach shopping, influenced by the ongoing fear of contracting the virus, evolving safety concerns, and rapidly changing public health guidelines. (Dr. Rajesh Kumar, 2025)

The complex relationship between luxury and sustainability has been a subject of ongoing debate, revolving around whether luxury brands should proactively communicate their sustainability initiatives or if sustainability should be an inherent quality of luxury. This ongoing discourse further complicates the landscape of luxury consumer behavior. Prior research has predominantly focused on the influence of

specific luxury values on consumer behavior exclusively toward sustainable luxury products. (Nermain Al-Issa,2024).

Objectives

1. To examine the shift in consumer brand preference from global to Indian/local brands after COVID-19.
2. To identify the key factors (price, quality, patriotism) driving consumer preference for local brands across different product categories.

Research Methodolgy

The present study employed a structured questionnaire to investigate consumer brand preferences in India in the post-COVID context. The survey aimed to gather insights into demographic characteristics (age,gender, education, income) and behavioral aspects related to local versus global brand preferences, the influence of the ‘Vocal for Local’ campaign, shifts across product categories, and the key determinants of purchase decisions.

A combination of simple random sampling and snowball sampling techniques was utilized for data collection. Respondents were approached through online channels, including email and social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook. Due to the unavailability of a comprehensive sampling frame, only those individuals who voluntarily expressed their willingness to participate were included in the study. A total of 221 valid responses were obtained. The inclusion criteria required participants to be 17 years of age or older and to possess some form of income, ensuring that they were capable of making informed and independent purchase decisions. Data collection was conducted during the months of July and August. The questionnaire was systematically organized into ten sections. The first section captured demographic information, while

the second focused on brand choice behavior. The third section explored consumer purchasing patterns concerning local and global brands after the COVID-19 pandemic. The fourth section examined consumer perceptions of the ‘Vocal for Local’ campaign. The remaining six sections addressed various product categories and investigated influencing factors such as price, quality, brand image, and country-of-origin effect, along with respondents’ willingness to purchase Indian brands and domestically manufactured products.

Results and Data Analysis

The result shows a clear preference for Indian/Local brands after the COVID-19 restrictions were lifted. Out of 221 total responses, 202 respondents (91.4%) stated they mostly purchased Indian/Local brands.

Table 4.1: Demographic Details

Variables	Respon- dents	Percentage %
Gender:		
Male	139	62.9
Female	82	37.1
Age Group:		
Less than 18	21	9.5
18-20	98	44.3
21-25	78	35.3
More than 25	24	10.8
Qualification:		
Under Graduate	175	79.2
Post Graduate	33	14.9

Table 4.1: Demographic Details

Variables	Respon- dents	Percentage %
Diploma	9	4.1
Doctorate	4	1.8
Occupation:		
Student	178	80.5
Self Employed	23	10.4
Working Profes- sional	18	8.1
Government Em- ployee	2	1
Annual Income:		
1-2 lakh	105	47.5
2-3 lakh	34	15.4
3-5 lakh	31	14
5 lakh and above	51	23.1
Total	221	100

1. Which type of brands did you mostly purchase after covid-19 restrictions ended.
221 responses

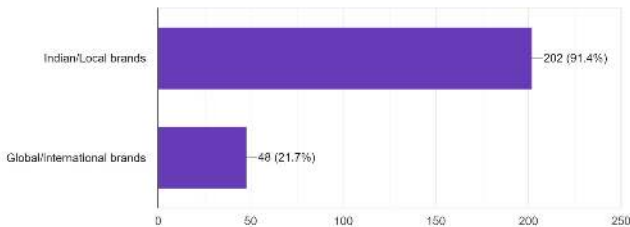


Figure 4.1

A significantly smaller number, 48 respondents (21.7%), indicated they mostly purchased Global/International brands. The result examines whether the shift to local brands was a direct result of the pandemic itself. Out of 221 total responses, 184 respondents (83.3%) answered "YES," indicating that they did shift their purchases towards local/Indian brands during the pandemic. Only 43 respondents (19.5%) answered "NO," meaning they did not shift their purchases.

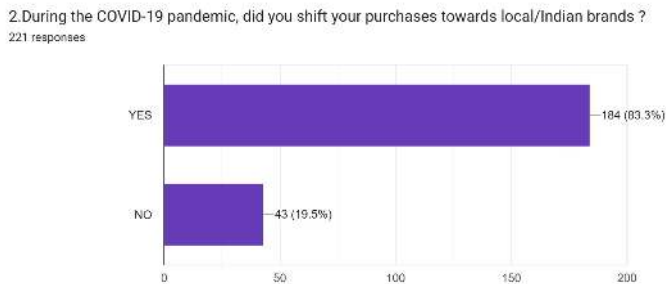


Figure 4.2

The result illustrating the impact of the "Vocal for Local" campaign on consumer buying decisions. The overwhelming majority of respondents, 62.9%, answered "YES," indicating that the campaign did influence their purchasing choices. A smaller group, 26.7%, were "NOT SURE" if the campaign had an effect. The smallest group, 10.4%, answered "NO," stating that the campaign did not influence them.

The result showing the specific product categories where respondents noticed a shift towards local brands. Food and grocery saw the highest shift, with 158 respondents (71.5%) selecting this category. Clothing and footwear followed closely, with 128 respondents (57.9%) noticing a shift here. Household products came next, with 112 respondents (50.7%). Electronic

3. Do you think the "vocal for Local" campaign influenced your buying decision
221 responses

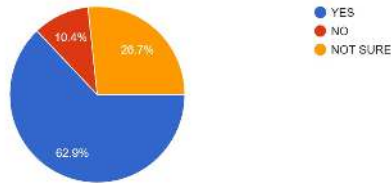


Figure 4.3

and appliances had the lowest but still significant number of responses, with 92 respondents (41.6%).

4. In which product categories did you notice this shift most ? (select all that apply).
221 responses

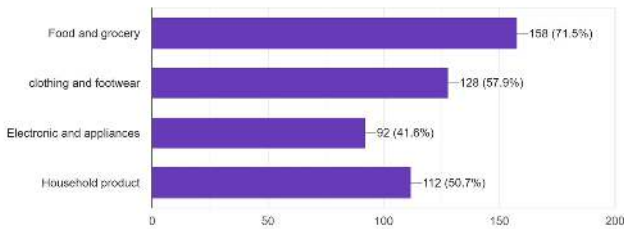


Figure 4.4

The result Quality is the most influential factor, with 154 responses, representing 69.7% of the total. Price is the second most influential factor, with 129 responses, or 58.4%. Brand image/trust comes in third, with 109 responses, or 49.3%. "Made in India" sentiment (patriotism) is a significant but less influential factor, with 107 responses, or 48.4%. Advertising/Marketing is the least influential factor, with only 1 response, or 0.5%.

5. Which of the following factors influence your choice between local and global brands? (select up to 3)
221 responses

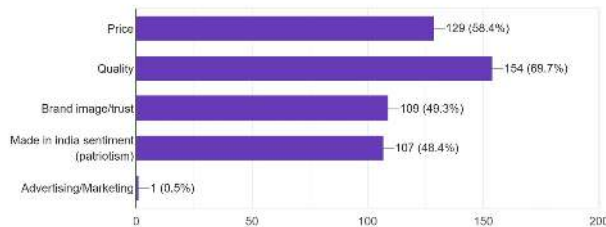


Figure 4.5

The result that a significant portion of the respondents (45.2%) "Agree" that Indian/local brands offer similar or better quality. The second-largest group (29.9%) "Strongly agree" with this statement, indicating a very positive perception of local brand quality. Only a small percentage of people "Disagree" (21.7%) with the statement. A very small number of respondents (3.2%) are "Neutral" on the matter.

5. Do you believe Indian/local brands now offer similar or better quality than global brands?
221 responses

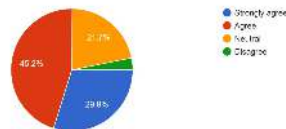


Figure 4.6

The result shows that 78.7% of the respondents answered YES, indicating a significant majority have recommended Indian brands to others since the pandemic began. 21.3% of the respondents answered NO, suggesting a smaller portion has not.

7. Have you recommended any Indian brands to others after the pandemic?
221 responses

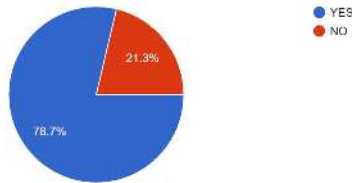


Figure 4.7

The result shows that 78.7% of the respondents answered YES, indicating they are willing to pay a premium for an Indian/local product. 21.3% answered NO, suggesting they are not willing to pay more for a local product.

8. Are you willing to pay slightly more for an Indian/local product over a global one ?
221 responses

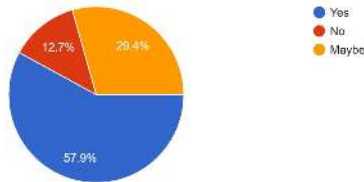


Figure 4.8

The result shows that 57.9% of the respondents Agree with the statement to trust local brand more than global brand. 29.4% Strongly Agree, indicating a slightly high level of trust. 26.7% are Neutral, meaning they don't lean one way or the other. Rest 12.7% are Disagree with the statement.

9. Do you trust local brands more than global brands after COVID-19 ?
221 responses

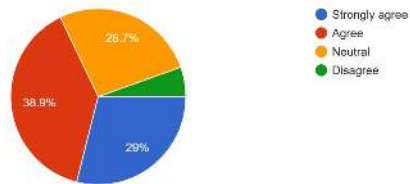


Figure 4.9

The result shows a significant majority of people either always (43%) or sometimes (44.8%) check for the "made in India" label. Combined, these two categories account for 87.8% of the responses. The number of people who always check the label is almost the same as those who sometimes check it, indicating a strong but not universally consistent habit among consumers. Only a small minority of people rarely (8.6%) or never (3.6%) check for the label.

10. How often do you check the made in India label before buying a product now.
221 responses

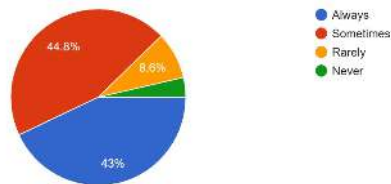


Figure 4.10

Key Highlights

The study yielded several notable insights into consumer behavior and brand preferences in post-COVID India:

1. **Brand Preference:** A substantial majority of respondents reported an increased inclination toward Indian and locally manufactured brands following the COVID-19 pandemic, indicating a shift in consumer loyalty patterns.
2. **Campaign Influence:** The Government of India's 'Vocal for Local' campaign was found to have a moderate to strong influence on purchase decisions, particularly among younger consumers who associated the movement with national pride and economic revival.
3. **Product Categories:** The most pronounced shifts toward domestic brands were observed in the categories of food and groceries, clothing and footwear, and personal care products. Conversely, the electronics segment continued to be dominated by established global players.
4. **Influencing Factors:** Price sensitivity, perceived product quality, and patriotic sentiment emerged as the primary determinants influencing consumers' preference for local brands.
5. **Perceived Quality:** A considerable number of respondents acknowledged that Indian brands now offer product quality comparable to, or in certain cases superior to, international competitors, reflecting growing consumer confidence in domestic manufacturing capabilities.
6. **Willingness to Pay:** A significant share of participants indicated their readiness to pay a slightly higher price for locally produced goods, suggesting that value-based consumption and ethical awareness are gaining traction among Indian consumers.

The findings demonstrate that Indian consumers are becoming more receptive to local brands, especially when supported by strong government campaigns. While patriotism played

an initial role, improved quality and competitive pricing are necessary to sustain this trend. Global brands still retain appeal in categories requiring advanced technology or prestige value. The study aligns with global research suggesting crises accelerate localisation and self-reliance in consumption patterns.

Conclusion

This study concludes that post-COVID consumer behaviour in India has shifted towards local brand preference, Driven by national campaigns and evolving perceptions of quality. Indian brands have an opportunity to consolidate this momentum by maintaining affordability, The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges to the world and led to a new normal lifestyle. To contain the spread of the virus, most countries declared a lockdown, resulting in unemployment, uncertainties and economic recession. Countries started thinking about producing goods and services indigenously and reducing excessive dependency on other countries. India is not an exception and started promoting the production and purchase of Indian-made goods and services. This influenced the purchasing behaviour of consumers, to a great extent.

The purchase of domestic products shows love and affection for the country and bolsters national pride. It gives the impression that we trust our local brands and take pride in their consumption, thus establishing a connection between consumption and citizenship. Local products give a sense of identity and belongingness. It is like 'We belong to the product and the product belongs to us'. Refraining from foreign and choosing local have emotional and symbolic meanings too. Today, Indian consumers have evolved. They are becoming

more discerning. They seek benefits beyond price while making purchases and anticipate a value proposition.

Therefore, the present study reveals that the blind craze for global brands is waning at a rapid pace as many Indians express their desire to replace foreign brands with indigenous brands. Now, it is no accident that in many retail stores in India, indigenous products have prominent shelf positions. The high liking for foreign products that used to exist in India in the nineties is gradually fading away and now Indians do not have such a lobby obsession for products manufactured outside. Especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been seen that Indians are making a definite shift in their choice of goods, their preference for local products has accelerated now .

The consumers have shifted their preference from global brands to Indian/local brands. This involves understanding how the pandemic influenced buying behavior, whether due to disruptions in global supply chains, increased awareness of self-reliance, or changing perceptions of local products. Price: Many consumers may choose local brands because they are cheaper and more affordable than global ones. Quality: Some local brands have improved their quality standards, which could make consumers view them as good substitutes for global brands. Patriotism: After COVID-19, government campaigns and consumer emotions have influenced people to support Indian products as a way of helping the national economy.

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NOTES

Chapter 5

Trends, Values, and Identity: Understanding Gen Z Consumers in the Fashion Space

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Abstract

The evolving tastes, values, and lifestyle choices of Generation Z are reshaping the global fashion landscape. Born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s, this generation exhibits behavioral patterns and consumer expectations that markedly differ from previous cohorts. A notable transition is evident in their fashion preferences—from fitted and conventional silhouettes to oversized and comfort-oriented styles. At the core of this paradigm shift lie growing concerns about sustainability, ethical production, digital innovation, rapid trend cycles, and individual identity expression. Gen Z consumers increasingly prioritize transparency, inclusivity, and purpose-driven branding, favoring companies such as H&M, ZARA, SHEIN, BLUORNG, and BEWAKOOF that align with their social and environmental values. Their purchase decisions are profoundly shaped by social media

engagement, influencer marketing, and peer recommendations, reflecting their inclination toward interactive and personalized online experiences. To remain competitive, fashion brands must adopt agile strategies that integrate technological innovation with authenticity and environmental accountability. This study examines the dynamics of this generational transformation, highlighting how the preferences of Gen Z are redefining market competitiveness, brand perception, and the future trajectory of the fashion industry. **Keywords:** GenZ Fashion, Changing Fashion Industry, Trends, Values, Fast Fashion, Identity.

Introduction

"Fashion is always a mirror to society, but for Generation Z, it's a loudspeaker." The generation which born between the late 1990s and 2010s is the one who are rewriting the rules of fashion. Growing up with the internet and possibly can be called as first digital generation they had extensive access to information, influencing their perception of fashion and how they see fashion as their visual representation in the society, they style themselves for stating all others who don't believe in them.

Generation Z often see their fashion as the extension of their beliefs and values that's why they are also concerned about the aspirations and story the brand is selling to them and what are they stands for. Their unique preferences and characteristics challenge traditional marketing structures and strategies, their choice of social media and digital platforms as their primary source of engagement in fashion, and their constantly changing preferences and trends show the changes and shifts they created in the fashion industry.

This research aims to briefly explore and analyse the factors and motivations that influence this generation to purchase fashion products. It will provide insight into Gen Z's fashion practices, their ideology around fashion consumption, and the transformations they have driven across the industry.

This research will also analyse the constant changes in recent preferences and trends of Generation Z fashion choices. Whether it is printed T-shirts and skinny jeans to street wear and sneakers or Baggy pants and aesthetic shirts to Basic premium polos and normal pants which is also called (Old money style), This genera are evolving and adding many type of fashion styles through trends on their mind-set."Generation Z is like evolving stars constantly adapting their choices and trends whenever the moment calls for it."

Gen Z consumers are driving a significant transformation in the fashion industry, and their actions are indicative of a "shifting paradigm"—a dynamic shift in values, preferences, trends and consumption patterns. Being digital natives, Gen Z mostly interacts with fashion on social media sites like Instagram, You Tube, Pinterest and clothing app like Myntra also where peer communities and micro-influencers greatly influence their buying choices. The literature emphasizes that this generation values self-expression, inclusivity, and authenticity, sustainability, affordable and frequently chooses unique and unconventional looks over fads. Furthermore, fast fashion like SHEIN, BLUORG, ZARA, H &M rise demand in Gen-Z. More on like Gen-Z seeks status through vintage and exclusivity rather than logos. On the other hand, like personalization and creation of cloths and accessories also brought among the Gen-Z in which brands like NIKE and BEWAKOOF allows their customers to personalized their products like name on cloths and accessories or designs of

their choice. Gen-Z consumers would expect long term loyalty as they can stick to that brand as if their prices increase in future. Digital and Social commerce has also been popular among Gen-Z in this Augmented Reality (AR) try on and AI styling tools enhance engagement (LENSKART). Many members of Generation Z have expressed a reference for sustainable and circular fashion models, such as upcycling, thrift, resale, demonstrating a greater awareness of ethical and environmental issues. But their continued consumption of fast fashion frequently contrasts with this ethical position, exposing a gap between attitude and behaviour.

Objectives

- To identify the key factors influencing fashion purchase decisions among GenZ consumers, such as social media trends, sustainability, and brand values.
- To assess how GenZ consumers' preferences for online versus offline fashion shopping have changed in the past two years.

Methodology

The study surveyed a cohort of 52 individuals representing Generation Z who actively engage in the purchase of fashion and clothing products. A structured questionnaire was developed exclusively for this investigation to capture consumer perceptions, behavioural tendencies, and attitudinal inclinations toward sustainability and evolving trends in the fashion sector. The instrument comprised both closed-ended and scaled-response items to ensure clarity, coherence, and consistency in responses. Data were gathered through direct administration of the questionnaire, ensuring that participants provided authentic and experience-based insights. The resulting dataset was then examined descriptively

to identify prevailing preferences, emerging patterns, and indicative tendencies shaping Generation Z's engagement with contemporary fashion dynamics.

Literature Review

As the first digital generation, Gen Z individuals exhibit unique characteristics and preferences that challenge traditional marketing strategies. It appears that Gen Z has very different shopping habits from previous generations. The change is influenced by various aspects of Gen Z's relationship with fashion, including their shopping habits, brand preferences, influences, sustainability concerns, and how they express themselves through clothing and style choices. Gen Z expressed their individuality through different fashion style by creating unique outfits based on what they prefer. Social media is the most common factors influencing Gen Z's decisions to purchase fashion products. Gen Z expressed a strong preference for sustainable and ethically produced fashion products that align with their values and beliefs. Lastly, affordability constraints are the most common experiences and challenges faced by Gen Z consumers. (Capucio et al., 2024). Gen Z consumers' higher and unique expectations and requirements to fashion brands, and examples of how some brands can make some changes in their marketing approach and product types to meet the preferences of the majority of Generation Z and adapt to the new situation, and finally provide possible solutions to key issues for some brands that are ready to transform into what Gen Z consumers like. Brands need to give greater attention to social media marketing, which is the software that most Gen Z use on a daily basis, and the example of Louis Vuitton shows that the right marketing on social media can bring huge profits to a brand. (Wang, Weiran 2021)

Generation Z (Gen Z) refers to the most application-friendly and website-savvy generation engaging with the Internet for most of its daily activities. The number of Gen Z members has been growing and is projected to become the largest market segment by 2020. In the future, Gen Z will affect business strategies; compounded by the presence of a fourth industrial revolution (Industry 4.0), which will encourage companies to change their business models. One of the changes is a new paradigm shift by companies from the traditional business model to an internet-based business model (e-business model/e-commerce), such as online shops. Online shops have escalated at a rapid pace and have changed people's buying habits, especially for Gen Z. Gen Z seems to be shopping online more than ever. Targeting them is the best strategy to enhance their lifetime loyalty.

The relevant issue on, online shops are able to re-consider their business models to adopt the industry 4.0 revolution, to strengthen their capacity in tight competition. In order to target Gen Z, who mostly do their purchasing via the Internet, online shops must provide high quality websites and create values which convey economic, social and functional values. These two key factors play significant roles in attaining Gen Z's e-satisfaction, thus securing Gen Z's e-loyalty (Ayuni, R. F. (2019).

The media and consumer research groups have been keeping the Millennials in spotlight for many years now; perhaps it is time to turn some of the attention on Gen Z, which began its foray into mainstream consumption. This exploratory study examines the shopping orientation of Gen Z online shoppers using the generational cohort theory (GCT) as a framework and provides insights to e-retailers to understand how this generation approaches the online shopping. The penetration

of Internet and accelerated growth of online shopping have enthused the e-retailers to offer a wide range of goods at greater efficiency than the traditional players. (Thangavel, P., Pathak, P., & Chandra, B. (2022).

Existing literature highlights that Generation Z has become one of the most influential forces reshaping the global fashion industry. Wang (2021) notes that Gen Z's consumption values differ significantly from those of previous generations, particularly in their strong emphasis on sustainability, ethical manufacturing, transparency, and value driven branding. These shifts have pushed fashion brands to reorient their design, sourcing, and communication practices to remain relevant to this cohort. Rather than traditional status symbols, Gen Z increasingly prefers purpose driven brands that demonstrate authenticity and social responsibility.

Digital behaviour is a dominant component of Gen Z's fashion consumption. Ayuni (2019) emphasizes that, as digital natives, this group relies heavily on online platforms, mobile interfaces, peer reviews, and influencer recommendations when making shopping decisions. Their loyalty patterns are shaped by personalized digital experiences, ease of navigation, and the credibility of online communities.

In terms of decision making styles, Thangavel, Pathak, and Chandra (2022) explain that Gen Z exhibits a multidimensional approach that blends brand consciousness, innovation seeking tendencies, value orientation, and impulse driven choices. Their sensitivity to rapidly changing trends, combined with a desire for individuality, makes them more experimental and expressive in their fashion choices compared to earlier generations.

A detailed exploration of Gen Z's style patterns by Capucao et al. (2024) reveals a marked shift toward oversized silhouettes, comfort oriented apparel, and identity based styling. Fashion,

for this generation, functions as a tool for self expression and empowerment. This has contributed to a broader cultural movement in which traditional beauty norms are being challenged, and inclusivity has become central to contemporary fashion narratives.

From a market perspective, Kowsalya (2025) shows that Gen Z is driving major transformations in trend forecasting, brand communication, and product innovation. Their awareness of environmental impact, demand for technological integration, and preference for immersive digital interactions are reshaping competitive strategies within the fashion industry.

Taken together, the literature suggests that Generation Z is redefining consumer power in the fashion market. Their preferences, rooted in technology, ethics, trend responsiveness, and expressive individuality, have created a paradigm shift that encourages brands to adopt more transparent, adaptive, and consumer centric models to sustain relevance in an increasingly competitive landscape.

Findings

The charts below represent the demographic details of the respondents. Figure 1, showing that most of them belong to the age group 20-24 followed by 24-28 and 16-20 and the Figure 2, represents the gender identities of the respondents where 63.5% are male and 36.5% are female.

Table 5.1

Age Group	Percent-age	Number of Re-sponses
16 – 20	11.3%	6
20 – 24	75.5%	40

Table 5.1

Age Group	Percent-age	Number of Re-sponses
24 – 28	13.2%	7
Total	100%	53

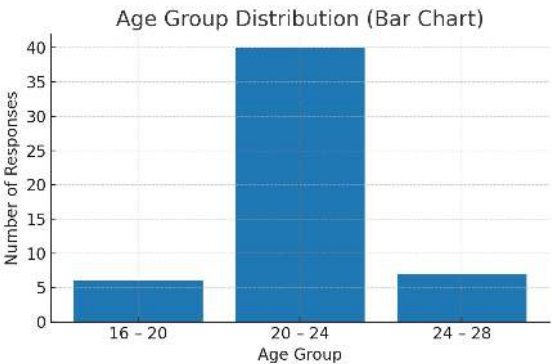


Figure 5.1

Chart 1

Chart 1 represents the purchasing pattern of the Gen Z consumers; it shows that how often they buy new clothing.

Graph 2

Graph 2 shows mostly when do the Gen Z consumers need new clothes Festivities is the top reason, chosen by 35 respondents (66%). Events come next with 26 respondents (49.1%). Weddings follow closely with 25 respondents (47.2%). Social gatherings were picked by 17 respondents (32.1%). When less on daily wear is the least common reason, chosen by 15 respondents (28.3%).

Graph 3

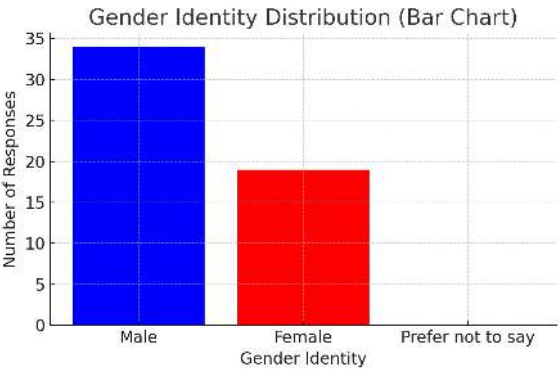


Figure 5.2

Graph 3 shows the sources from which the Gen Z consumers get their outfit ideas most of them being from Instagram.

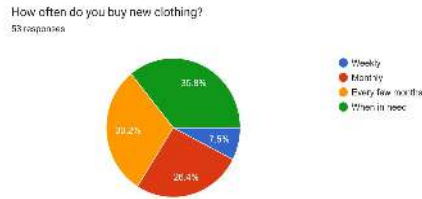


Figure 5.3

Chart 2

Chart 2 shows the monthly or average spending on clothes of the Gen Z consumers, where the most common was 2000-5000 range followed by 0-2000 range.

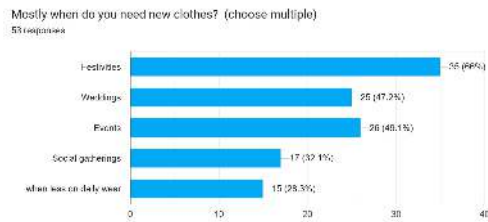


Figure 5.4

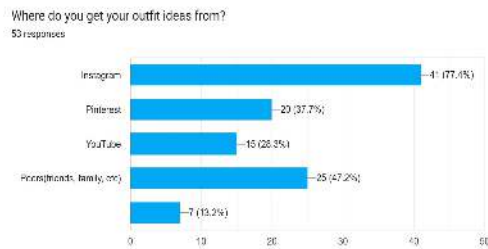


Figure 5.5

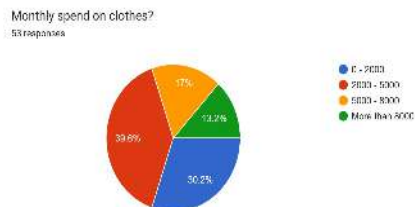


Figure 5.6

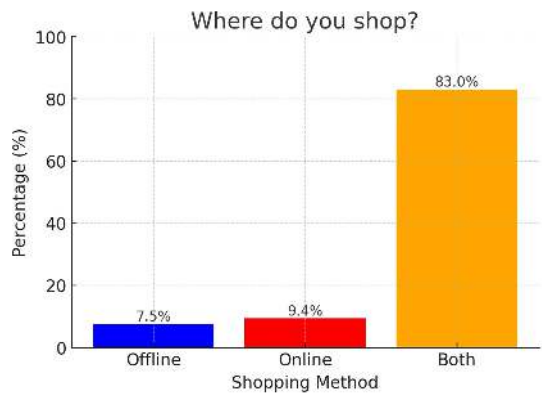


Figure 5.7

Table 5.2

Shopping Method	Percent-age
Offline	7.5%
Online	9.4%
Both	83.0%

Graph 4 shows the main change which has happened from the previous generation to this generation that almost every one of them shops from both online and offline, whereas the previous generation was only limited to offline shops and malls.

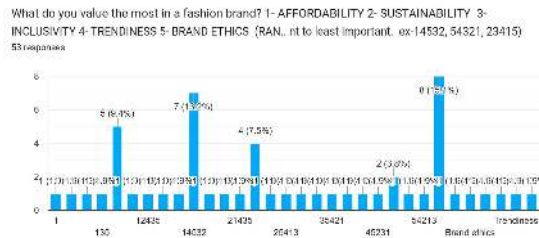


Figure 5.8

Graph 5

Graph 5 shows what is most important to Gen Z in a fashion brand. The respondents were given to rank 5 things according to their priority, which were:

- 1- Affordability
- 2- Sustainability
- 3- Inclusivity
- 4- Trendiness
- 5- Brand Ethics

21 of them chose Affordability as their priority followed by Brand Ethics (20) and Sustainability (15) Trendiness also holds a good position.

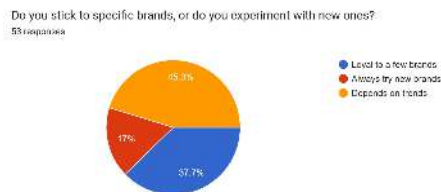


Figure 5.9

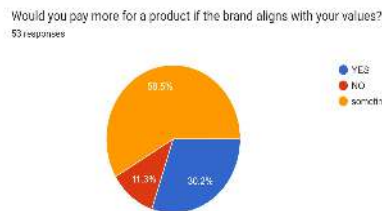


Figure 5.10

Chart 3

Chart 3 tests the loyalty of GenZ consumers towards a fashion brand, where only 37.7% of them were loyal to a few brands

17% were keen towards trying new brands and majority 45.3% said it depends on trends.

Chart 4

This chart shows that if the Gen Z consumer is willing to pay extra for a brand which aligns with their values. 58.5% said sometimes and 30.2% people were strongly inclined towards paying extra while 11.3% were not willing to pay extra.

Conclusion

Generation Z has emerged as a powerful force that is reshaping the landscape of the fashion industry. This cohort is rewriting the rulebook of style, treating clothing not merely as fabric but as a statement of identity and personal values. For them, a T shirt carries meaning beyond its material, a sneaker represents more than footwear, and every choice reflects who they are and what they stand for. They expect each garment to embody purpose, inclusivity, sustainability and authenticity. Yet their loyalty remains fluid because the brand they admire today can easily be replaced tomorrow if it fails to evolve in line with their fast changing tastes.

The findings indicate that Generation Z relies heavily on digital platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and Pinterest for fashion engagement, inspiration and trend discovery. They are early adopters of new technologies, using AR try ons and AI based recommendations to enhance their shopping experience. The survey results further reveal that 83 percent of respondents preferred a mix of online and offline shopping, demonstrating a dual desire for digital convenience along with the tangible assurance of traditional retail. Affordability, brand ethics and sustainability emerged as the most influential factors in their

decision making, while trendiness and inclusivity also hold significant value.

These characteristics, motivations and behavioural patterns present both a challenge and an opportunity for fashion brands. The future of the fashion industry will not be shaped in corporate boardrooms. It will be shaped in the feeds, closets, minds and voices of Generation Z.

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NOTES

Chapter 6

Impact of Sustainability Claims and Eco-Friendly Packaging on Green Consumer Behaviour in India

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Abstract

In recent years, consumers have become increasingly aware of environmental sustainability, a shift that is especially visible in emerging markets such as India. As individuals confront concerns related to climate change, waste disposal, and resource depletion, their buying decisions are becoming more sensitive to sustainability claims and eco-friendly packaging. Businesses have responded by prominently displaying labels such as “100 percent organic,” “biodegradable,” and “plastic free,” along with packaging designs that signal environmental responsibility. However, the extent to which these claims and packaging cues truly influence the buying behaviour of Indian consumers remains insufficiently understood. This study examines the influence of sustainability claims and eco-friendly packaging on green consumer behaviour in India. It focuses on key factors such as trust in green labels, awareness of sustainable practices, willingness to

pay a premium for environmentally responsible products, and consumer preferences for packaging materials. The investigation highlights the degree to which green messages and sustainable packaging shape purchase intentions and actual buying patterns. The findings provide valuable insights for brands, marketers, and policymakers seeking to engage environmentally conscious consumers, strengthen trust in eco-labelling, and encourage sustainable consumption practices. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on sustainability-oriented consumer behaviour in India by identifying the behavioural drivers that support a shift toward more eco-friendly purchasing choices.

Keywords: Sustainability Claims, Eco-Friendly Packaging, Green Consumer Behaviour, Eco-Labelling, Sustainable Consumption, Environmental Awareness, E-Packaging.

Introduction

The growing global emphasis on environmental sustainability has begun to reshape consumer behaviour, with emerging economies like India witnessing a particularly pronounced shift. Heightened awareness of climate change, increasing waste generation, and concerns regarding rapid resource depletion have prompted consumers to reassess their purchase patterns. As a result, sustainability claims and eco-friendly packaging have become critical elements in influencing household buying behaviour. In response, businesses across product categories have started adopting labels such as “100% organic,” “biodegradable,” and “plastic-free”, along with innovative, sustainable packaging solutions intended to project environmental responsibility and attract eco-conscious consumers. Despite these visible market efforts, the extent

to which such claims and packaging cues genuinely influence Indian consumers remains insufficiently explored.

Addressing this gap, the present study examines how sustainability-related claims and eco-friendly packaging shape green consumer behaviour in India. The investigation draws on consumer perspectives across several dimensions, beginning with demographic indicators such as age, gender, and city tier, which help explain variations in awareness, preference, and purchasing tendencies. The study also evaluates the level of consumer familiarity with sustainability concepts, perceptions of eco-friendly packaging as a credible initiative, and the degree of trust placed in brand-led sustainability claims. In particular, it investigates the perceived authenticity of certification logos such as FSC and Fairtrade, which are often designed to build legitimacy and reduce consumer skepticism.

Further, this research explores behavioural factors that significantly influence sustainable purchasing. These include willingness to pay a premium for eco-friendly packaging, frequency of choosing environmentally responsible alternatives, and the weight consumers assign to motivators like environmental concern, social responsibility, and brand reputation. The analysis also uncovers persistent barriers such as higher price points, limited availability, lack of clarity in sustainability claims, and doubts regarding the genuineness of “green” messages. By drawing insights from responses collected across diverse regions of India, the study captures meaningful differences in awareness levels, motivations, and consumption habits among various demographic groups.

This research contributes to the broader understanding of sustainable consumption patterns within the Indian context by identifying the behavioural drivers and inhibitors

that influence eco-friendly purchasing. The findings are intended to offer valuable guidance to brands, marketers, and policymakers seeking to strengthen consumer trust in eco-labelling, enhance the visibility and credibility of sustainable initiatives, and develop strategies that promote long-term, responsible consumption habits in India.

Literature review

Gupta and Ogden (2020) examined how Indian consumers interpret greenwashing and how these interpretations influence green purchase behaviour. Their findings indicate that vague or unsupported sustainability claims increase consumer skepticism, which in turn reduces purchase intention. The study highlights the need for specific, credible eco-claims and reliable third-party certifications to build trust in sustainability messaging. Laidroo, Öörni and Tambo (2023) explored the influence of eco-labels and digital communication on Generation Z consumers. Their research demonstrates that eco-labels significantly strengthen green purchase intentions, especially when supported by environmental concern and user-generated digital content. These results underscore the value of certification logos and social media endorsements in developing consumer confidence in sustainable products. Magnier, Schoormans and Mugge (2017) studied consumer responses to eco-friendly packaging and found that personal norms, environmental attitudes and moral responsibility strongly influence intentions to purchase sustainably packaged products. Their work supports the inclusion of factors such as environmental concern, social responsibility and preferences for specific packaging materials when assessing consumer behaviour toward eco-friendly products.

Khan et al. (2025) investigated the role of green advertising and environmental knowledge in predicting eco-friendly purchase intentions. The study reports that greater exposure to green messages and higher environmental awareness positively affect purchase intentions, while eco-labelling and eco-branding strengthen these effects by enhancing brand credibility. Sadiq et al. (2024) analyzed how sustainable packaging cues shape consumer purchase intentions and found that perceived environmental benefits and effectiveness of packaging play a significant role in decision-making. Their findings also reveal mixed outcomes regarding willingness to pay, indicating that price sensitivity remains an important factor in consumer adoption of eco-friendly products.

Objectives

- To examine the influence of sustainability claims and eco-friendly packaging on Indian consumers in terms of purchase intentions and actual buying behaviour.
- To assess the role of consumer trust, eco-labels and environmental awareness in shaping green consumer behaviour in India.
- To analyze willingness to pay, motivating factors and key barriers affecting consumer adoption of eco-friendly packaged products.

Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research design supported by a structured questionnaire distributed through Google Forms to collect primary data. The sample consists of 50 respondents from various regions of India, representing a mix of demographic backgrounds and city classifications. The questionnaire contains closed-ended and multiple-choice items designed to assess familiarity with sustainability concepts,

trust in eco-labels, willingness to pay, key motivators, and the barriers that influence consumer decisions. The responses were examined using descriptive statistical techniques to identify emerging patterns in consumer behaviour and to understand how eco-friendly packaging and sustainability claims shape purchase intentions.

Findings and Data Analysis

Age Group – Age classification helped us analyze generational differences in adopting sustainable products, especially among younger vs. older consumers.

What is your age group?

50 responses

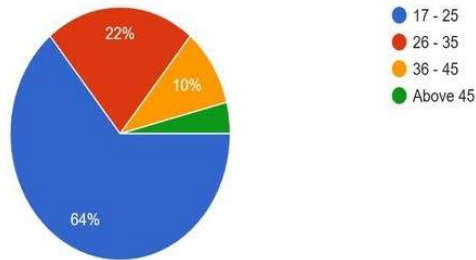


Figure 6.1

City of Residence (Tier 1–4) – City type was included to see if urban or rural consumers differ in awareness and willingness to pay for eco-friendly packaging.

Familiarity with Sustainability in Products – This question was used to measure consumer knowledge levels, as awareness strongly impacts behaviour.

Awareness of Eco-Friendly Packaging – We used this to check whether consumers have heard about sustainable packaging before making buying decisions.

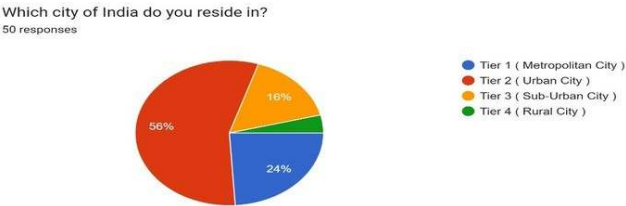


Figure 6.2

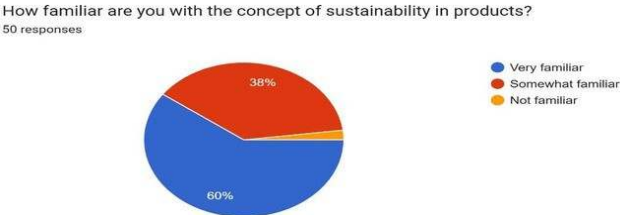


Figure 6.3

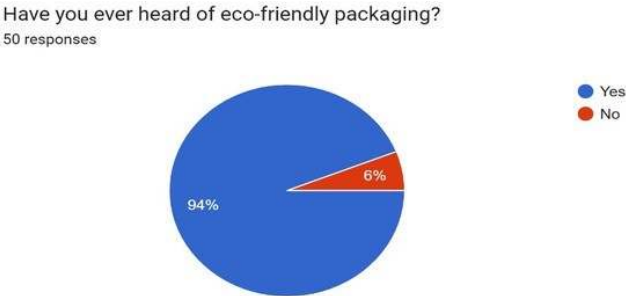


Figure 6.4

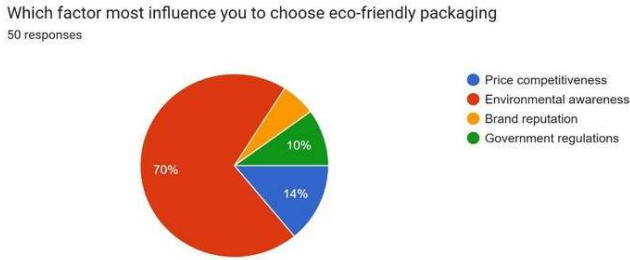


Figure 6.5

Factors Influencing Choice of Eco-Friendly Packaging – This helped identify what drives purchase: price, awareness, brand reputation, or regulations.

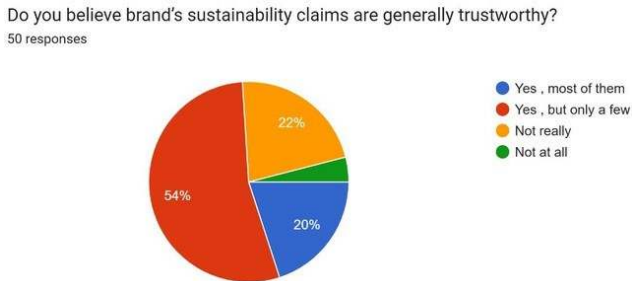


Figure 6.6

Trust in Brand's Sustainability Claims – We included this to measure skepticism vs. belief in brands' green claims, which directly affects buying behaviour.

Most Appealing Sustainability Claim – This question helped us know which eco-label (biodegradable, recyclable, etc.) is most attractive to consumers.

Trust in Certification Logos (1–5 Scale) – We used this to test the importance of third-party

Which sustainability claim is most appealing to you?
50 responses

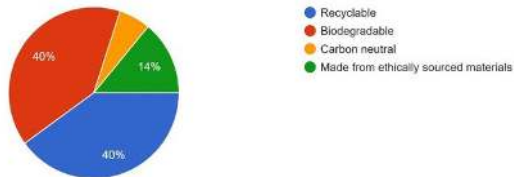


Figure 6.7

How much do certification logos (FSC , Fairtrade , etc) build your trust. Scale : 1 (No trust) - 5 (Complete trust)
50 responses

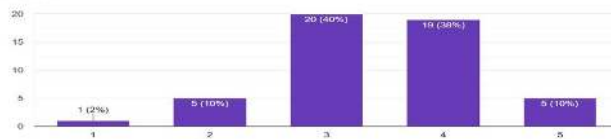


Figure 6.8

Have you ever purchased a product because of its eco-friendly packaging
50 responses

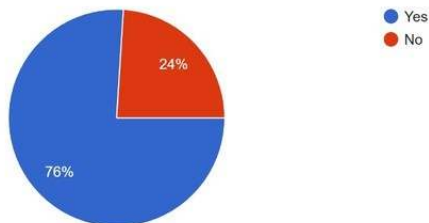


Figure 6.9

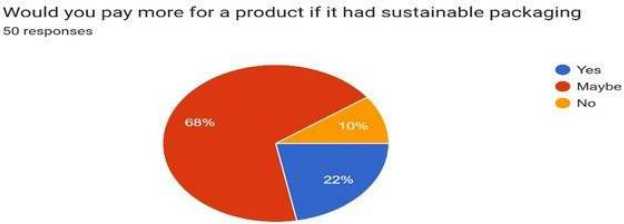


Figure 6.10

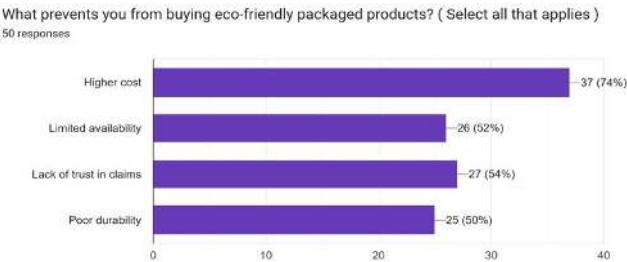


Figure 6.11

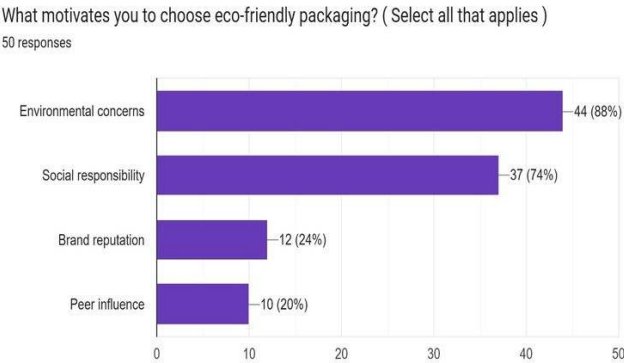


Figure 6.12

Over the next 5 years , do you think demand for eco-friendly packaging will :
50 responses

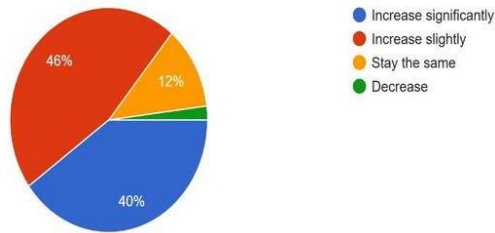


Figure 6.13

Purchase Due to Eco-Friendly Packaging – This question directly measured whether packaging impacts actual purchase decisions.

Willingness to Pay More – We included this to find out if consumers are ready to bear extra cost for sustainability.

Over the next 5 years , do you think demand for eco-friendly packaging will :
50 responses

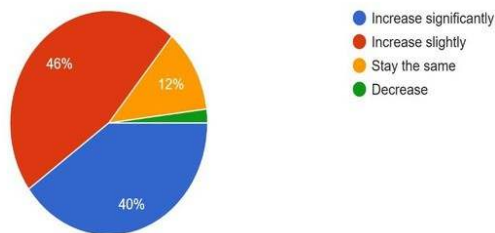


Figure 6.14

Frequency of Choosing Eco-Friendly Products – This helped us understand how often consumers actively prefer eco-friendly alternatives.

Barriers to Buying Eco-Friendly Packaged Products – We used this to identify real-world obstacles like cost, availability, or lack of trust.

Motivators for Choosing Eco-Friendly Packaging – This question measured positive drivers such as environmental concern, social responsibility, or peer influence.

Future Demand for Eco-Friendly Packaging – We included this to predict consumer expectations for sustainable packaging in the next 5 years.

Conclusion

The study set out to examine how sustainability claims and eco-friendly packaging influence green consumer behaviour in India. The responses gathered through the questionnaire offered meaningful insights into consumer awareness, trust, motivations, and the barriers shaping sustainable purchase decisions. Demographic patterns, particularly gender, age, and city tier, indicate that while awareness of sustainability is steadily increasing across segments, younger consumers and those residing in urban centres exhibit a stronger tendency to prefer eco-friendly products.

The findings reveal that familiarity with sustainability concepts and regular exposure to eco-friendly packaging have a direct influence on purchase intentions. Many respondents noted that claims such as biodegradable, recyclable, or organic enhance the perceived value of a product. However, consumer trust remains a decisive factor. Certification logos such as FSC and Fairtrade are generally regarded as credible, yet a notable degree of skepticism persists toward generic or unverified brand claims. This highlights a disconnect between consumer expectations and the level of transparency offered by companies.

The study also observed that a significant proportion of consumers are willing to pay a premium for sustainable packaging, indicating growing environmental consciousness. Nonetheless, cost sensitivity and limited availability were

identified as dominant barriers restricting wider adoption. Motivators such as environmental concern, a sense of social responsibility, and brand reputation strongly influence purchasing behaviour, whereas peer influence appeared to have a comparatively minor effect.

An important insight emerging from the data is that most respondents expect the demand for eco-friendly packaging to rise substantially over the next five years. This reflects an optimistic shift toward sustainable consumption in India. Overall, the study concludes that sustainability claims and eco-friendly packaging do shape purchase intentions, but their effectiveness relies heavily on credibility, affordability, and accessibility. For businesses and policymakers, the critical task ahead is to strengthen consumer trust, ensure transparent communication, and expand the availability of cost-effective green alternatives, thereby enabling a more sustainable marketplace.

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Chapter 7

Understanding GenZ's Style: An Analysis of Fashion Industry Consumer Behavior

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Abstract

Focusing on clothing and footwear, this study examines the buying behaviour of India's Generation Z consumers between the ages of 18 and 28. The research draws upon both secondary data sources and primary survey responses to analyse patterns observed over a two-year period and to document shifts in consumption behaviour within the Indian fashion landscape. A qualitative lens was applied to interpret emerging trends, motivations, and preferences among this demographic. The findings reveal that Generation Z consumers are increasingly inclined to purchase clothing and footwear that reflect distinctiveness and individuality. They prefer outfits that allow them to express personal identity, social values, and evolving aesthetic choices. Despite this inclination toward uniqueness, their purchasing decisions are fundamentally shaped by

financial constraints, often evaluated through their personal affordability–cost considerations. A growing segment of this cohort is also consciously seeking ethical and sustainable fashion alternatives, indicating a shift toward environmentally responsible consumption and value-driven decision making. Overall, the study highlights the interplay between individuality, affordability, and sustainability as key forces shaping fashion choices among India’s Generation Z.

Keywords: Generation Z, Fashion, India, Sustainability, Social Media, Consumer Behaviour.

Introduction

As Generation Z emerges as one of the most powerful and disruptive consumer segments, the Indian fashion industry is undergoing a deep structural transformation. This cohort, born between the late 1990s and the early 2010s, is not merely participating in fashion consumption but actively reshaping the industry’s value system, communication patterns, and competitive strategies. Their behaviour marks a departure from the traditional fashion paradigms that once dominated India’s apparel and footwear landscape. Conventional advertising, celebrity endorsements, and long-standing brand prestige, elements that significantly influenced earlier generations, have noticeably lost their impact on this digitally native cohort.

Gen Z’s worldview is shaped by continuous exposure to technology, instantaneous information flow, and a strong culture of online connectedness. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, and TikTok serve as their everyday fashion diaries, trend discovery hubs, and style validation spaces. These platforms do not merely inform Gen Z about what to wear; they enable them to produce

fashion content, participate in global trend cycles, and create micro-communities that exchange ideas, aesthetics, and values. The fashion system is therefore shifting from a traditional top-down model to a participatory ecosystem where Gen Z consumers influence, remix, and even reject trends in real time. For this cohort, fashion is a medium of personal expression rather than a symbol of status. They use clothing and footwear to communicate individuality, cultural sensibilities, social ideologies, and fluid identities. Authenticity, self-awareness, and ethical value systems are central to their decision-making processes. This makes Gen Z more appreciative of brands that demonstrate transparency, stand for social causes, and offer inclusive sizing and diverse representation. However, their purchase behaviour is also shaped by practical realities. Many Gen Z individuals are students or early-stage professionals with limited disposable incomes. As a result, their choices reflect an interplay of affordability, aspirational value, and ethical considerations. They frequently balance budget constraints with the desire to support sustainable, cruelty-free, or small independent labels. The Indian fashion landscape presents a unique context for understanding this generation. It is a dynamic ecosystem where global fast-fashion giants coexist with emerging homegrown brands, thrift culture is slowly gaining traction, and sustainable fashion movements are beginning to influence mainstream consumption patterns. The intersection of tradition and modernity, regional diversity, and socio-economic contrasts further enriches the behavioural patterns of Gen Z consumers.

This article aims to examine these evolving dynamics by identifying the primary drivers of fashion choices, understanding ongoing trend shifts, and analyzing the pressing challenges faced by Gen Z in the Indian market. By doing so, it intends to

offer strategic insights for brands, retailers, policymakers, and designers who wish to engage meaningfully with this generation. In a marketplace where attention spans are short, values are deeply held, and digital influence is decisive, the ability to decode Gen Z's behaviour is not merely an advantage; it is a necessity for long-term relevance.

Literature Review

Generation Z (Gen Z), who are born between 1997 and 2012, is a new generation of fashion consumers with distinct personal values and sophisticated technological skills. Gen Z is distinct from other generations by the way it comes of age with instant access through social media, and this profoundly impacts its consumption habits. As noted in the "True Gen" report by McKinsey (Francis & Hoefel, 2018), Gen Z consumers highly value diversity, independence of expression, and authenticity in the brands that they support. Gen Z consumers also seek brands that explicitly show their commitment to social and environmental concerns and view fashion as a means of individual expression and self-expression.

Social media like Instagram and TikTok create fashion trends among Gen Z. Micro-trends, short clips, and viral clips create fast fashion cycles. Micro- and nano-influencers are more favored by Gen Z than celebrities and have relatability and niche fame (Sharma & Kapoor, 2025). Fashion trends like "Get Ready With Me" on TikTok create buying behavior through social affiliation (Nguyen & Vo, 2025). Generation Z buys fashion trends, as well as fashion trends created on such media, blurring marketing and self-storification boundaries. Gen Z fashion consumption is defined as sustainable with evidence of an intention-action gap. IBM and the National Retail Federation (2022) reached the conclusion that, although a

great percentage of Gen Z consumers reported caring about sustainability, price and convenience hijack decision-making to buy. Nguyen et al. (2025) reached the conclusion in Vietnam that convenience and influence by peers buy sustainable fashion, and social sanction and affordability are necessary to translate green intentions through to sale. Janoskova & Kliestikova (2025) also reached the conclusion that Gen Z are drawn to second-hand buying not only on ethical grounds but on the excitement of surprise discovery. Establishing consumer trust is the greatest challenge for sustainable fashion brands. Christodoulou et al. (2024) describe how vagueness and hyperbole in environmental claims can be the cause of consumer trust erosion. The pillars of trust are transparency, sustainability, certification, and brand accountability. Brands that fold sustainability into their fashion collections from the onset are most likely to resonate with Generation Z values. The Indian Gen Z fashion sector mirrors global digital trends and local cultural practices simultaneously. Vogue Business (2021) comments that Gen Z fashion trends range from minimalist to expressive. The explosion of social media, the rise of e-commerce, and the availability of international brands have all facilitated trend copying in urban India. Gen Z young consumerists are increasingly attracted to cultural narratives, along with indigenous textiles, in apparel. This convergence of global and local forces, or "glocalisation," offers brands that combine heritage and contemporary fashion with competitive edge. Gen Z fashion is price-sensitive. Luxury is founded on sustainable fashion, but Gen Z in India is price-sensitive. Fast fashion is the volume leader, but resale and online rental are increasingly price-sensitive sustainable alternatives (Bhatia & Mehta, 2024). Hybrid shopping—find online and experience in-store—is the new

norm, with technology-enabled experiences such as virtual try-ons and AI personalization driving growth (IBM & NRF, 2022). Social validation and self-perception are psychological drivers of consumer behavior, and fashion is employed by Generation Z as social capital to proclaim belonging and values, according to Luo et al. (2023). Web visibility facilitates the symbolic nature of fashion through photography and posting. Brands that enable co-creation, personalization, and storytelling will well be set to drive long-term loyalty. Generation Z is found to value authenticity, diversity, and sustainability but also price sensitivity and genuine purchases. The convergence of social media, rich shopping behavior, and ethical purpose makes the marketplace highly sophisticated. Fashion brands appealing to Generation Z must adopt an advanced strategy with sustainable practice, active online presence, culture relevance, and affordable expressive choice. Studies on Generation Z fashion consumption are steadily shaping an emerging understanding of how young consumers balance individuality, affordability, and sustainability. In the Indian context, sustainable consumerism and digital influence continue to redefine purchasing choices.

Bhatia and Mehta (2024) examine fashion resale platforms in India and note that sustainability-oriented shopping is accelerating. Their analysis confirms that Gen Z shows a growing preference for resale models as they seek both affordability and responsible consumption. This trend is echoed in global research as well. Christodoulou et al. (2024) highlight that sustainability-focused fashion start-ups succeed when they embed long-term value creation into their business models, confirming that ethical considerations are gaining strategic traction among young consumers. The broader behavioural profile of Generation Z has been established by Francis and

Hoefel (2018), whose foundational McKinsey report identifies authenticity, self-expression, and value consciousness as defining attributes. These traits form the base frame for interpreting Gen Z fashion behaviour worldwide. Complementing this perspective, IBM Institute for Business Value and the National Retail Federation (2022) report that hybrid shopping and purpose-driven retail are now central expectations for younger consumers, strengthening the link between digital integration and retail success.

Research on emotional and identity-related motivations is also rising. Janoskova and Kliestikova (2025) find that emotional gratification strongly influences second-hand fashion purchasing among Gen Z, indicating that sustainable choices are not solely rational but also psychological. Luo et al. (2023) further establish that clothing operates as social capital for Gen Z, as it enables identity signalling and peer recognition, demonstrating that fashion behaviour remains tightly linked to social validation.

Regional perspectives add further nuance. Nguyen et al. (2025) explore sustainable apparel purchases among Vietnamese Gen Z consumers and find that environmental concern, social influence, and perceived behavioural control affect purchase intentions. Similarly, Nguyen and Vo (2025) show that TikTok marketing significantly enhances brand engagement among Gen Z, underscoring the centrality of social media ecosystems in shaping fashion preferences. Digital influence expands further through creators and public personalities. Sharma and Kapoor (2025) observe that influencer marketing impacts Gen Z fashion choices when authenticity and parasocial relationships are perceived as credible, reinforcing the interplay between trust and online visibility. Beyond India and Southeast Asia, Vogue Business (2021) maps Chinese Gen Z fashion personas,

illustrating that style archetypes differ across markets but share common threads of self-expression and digital dependence.

Across these studies, a consistent insight emerges. Generation Z views fashion as a medium for individuality, as a social asset, and increasingly as a responsibility-bound consumption practice. Affordability, ethical alignment, and digital engagement act as central pillars guiding their decision-making.

Methodology

In order to effectively accomplish these well-defined objectives, a sound and strong quantitative research design was extensively utilized with a strong emphasis placed on designing an online survey that was well-suited for the intended objective. This research tool was conducted during the month of August of the year 2025 and was specifically targeted towards Indian Gen Z individuals falling in the age groups of 18 to 28 years, thereby ensuring that the sample chosen was well representative of the generational population that is currently molding and controlling modern fashion consumption patterns.

The questionnaire used in this study was very exhaustive and wide-ranging, collecting systematically a broad range of information regarding the respondents' demographic profile, their shopping frequency habit, their preferred brands and brands of purchase, their perceptions about sustainability, and the wide range of issues that they faced while shopping. Respondents for this study were carefully chosen from a range of different geographic locations, not only the large and cosmopolitan cities but also the larger Tier 1 cities and the smaller but by no means less important Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, and rural areas that have a propensity to have distinctive consumer practices and experiences. This careful and thorough sampling strategy was critical to our ability to access regional

variations in consumer choice and the complex interplay of socioeconomic factors that strongly influence and condition consumer choice in various settings. 40 usable responses were received for analysis. While it might seem small at a first glance, the heterogeneity of the respondent group was very high and was the reason why the research was able to reveal textured insights. The heterogeneity was the reason why the urban-bias that is typically characteristic of such research was circumvented, and why the findings reflect a diverse set of experiences. The survey also asked questions that challenged the wide range of retail platforms that Gen Z consumers are likely to shop from. This ranged from the popular online marketplaces like Myntra and AJIO, popular among young consumers, to traditional brick-and-mortar stores that have been retail staples, to brand-specific e-commerce portals that are popular with consumer tastes.

Findings

The table below presents the general details of the respondents, where males constitute 52.9% of the total survey population and the remaining 47.1% are females. A significant 82.4% are below 24 years of age, 13.7% fall in the 24–28 years category, and the remaining 3.9% are above 28 years of age. In terms of preferred fashion brands, 41.2% favour fast-fashion brands, 27.5% opt for sustainable/eco-friendly brands, 13.7% prefer luxury brands, 11.8% choose local/homegrown brands, and the rest 5.9% fall into other categories.

Result and Discussion

The analysis of the data presents a nuanced picture of Generation Z as fashion consumers who operate through a blend of idealism, pragmatism, and a pronounced desire for authenticity. Fashion functions as a powerful identity

marker for this cohort, with more than forty percent of respondents perceiving their fashion choices as integral to their sense of self and a further thirty-three percent considering it highly important, reflecting a broader scholarly shift toward self-focused consumption.

Table 7.1

Variables	Respondents	Percentage
Gender:		
Male	27	52.9
Female	24	47.1
Age:		
Below 24 Years	42	82.4
24-28 years	7	13.7
Above 28 Years	2	3.9
Preferred Fashion Brand:		
Fast Fashion Brand	21	41.2
Sustainable/Eco Friendly	14	27.5
Luxury Brands	7	13.7
Local/Homegrown Brands	6	11.8
Others	3	5.9
Total	51	100

Their dominant style preferences gravitate toward minimalism, streetwear, and clean, functional trends, indicating an attempt to balance individuality with conformity to fashion norms, while also demonstrating the pressure many feel to meet

contemporary body and aesthetic standards. The emphasis on authenticity extends beyond personal attire to the content and experiences they seek from brands, making it essential for companies to align with the ethos of this discerning demographic. Social media forms a central influence in shaping these preferences, with platforms such as Instagram, Pinterest, and YouTube acting as trend incubators and purchase catalysts, as algorithm-driven content, influencers, and peer creators facilitate the transition from digital inspiration to real-world buying.

Media choices vary across geographies, with Gen Z in rural and semi-urban areas relying more on community cues and local retailers, underscoring the need for hybrid marketing strategies that accommodate both online and offline environments. Brand preferences within this generation reveal a strong inclination toward fast fashion due to its affordability and alignment with frequent trend cycles, although sustainability remains an aspirational value; most young consumers weigh their purchases against budget constraints, creating an ongoing trade-off between ethical intent and financial reality. Their loyalty is driven predominantly by comfort, fit, and functional quality rather than novelty, suggesting that brands offering inclusive sizing, refined design, and durable materials are better positioned to retain this demographic. Sustainability attitudes highlight a notable gap between environmental ideals and actual purchasing behaviour, as financial limitations often hinder access to genuinely sustainable products, presenting a challenge for brands striving to democratize ethical fashion. The shopping experience itself is marked by persistent issues including budget limitations, reluctance to experiment with unfamiliar brands, and widespread dissatisfaction with inconsistent sizing in online retail, leading to high return

rates. Additionally, the overwhelming volume of choices on e-commerce platforms contributes to decision fatigue, making curated selections and personalized recommendations increasingly valuable. The difficulty of finding affordable yet genuinely sustainable products further reinforces the need for industry-wide efforts to make responsible fashion both accessible and appealing.

Challenges In The Shopping Experience

Studies have repeatedly shown a number of ongoing problems that make it difficult to shop for Generation Z. The most extreme of these is financial. Most young professionals and students in this age group do not have a lot of extra money, and they therefore shop less often and limit themselves to brands and products they know. They are also less willing to try new products or brands than other consumers. Sizing is another critical issue, particularly for the online shopping experience. This is largely because there are no detailed and standardized size charts that customers can use. As a result, most people end up returning products because what they buy does not fit. It is thus crucial for online stores to improve the precision of their sizing information and seek innovative ways that can help customers get the correct fit for their purchases. Too many choices, in turn, can be a consumer's nightmare. Online retailers, for instance, are always stocked with an enormous amount of products, which can leave consumers confused and exhausted and eventually lead to dissatisfaction. To offset this issue, retailers can simplify the shopping process by meticulously choosing a well-curated selection of products or offering tailored recommendations that fit the taste of the consumer. In doing so, they can drive more buying activity among consumers. Lastly, those who are actually concerned

about the state of the environment would say that at times it is quite challenging to get reasonably priced products that are actually sustainable. We require more accessible sustainable options and for them to become more popular in our everyday lives.

Conclusion

In short, India's Generation Z fashion consumer behavior is best characterized as being extremely complex and in a process of ongoing change. Their purchasing behavior is heavily shaped by an interplay of digital forces, personal values, and sheer economic considerations that cannot be avoided. Comfort, affordability, and the universal need for self-expression remain of the utmost relevance to this generation, as increasingly more sustainability remains an aspirational ideal albeit not always an implementable one in reality. The pervasive influence of social media platforms, Instagram above all, in trend adoption and product discovery processes cannot be avoided; however, it is also of the utmost importance that the enduring significance of community-based, offline influences not be dismissed or forgotten in this process. For industry stakeholders and fashion brands alike, the results here establish an unimpeachable and unchallengeable strategic imperative that must be obeyed: success in winning the Generation Z market will ultimately hinge on the capacity to secure a harmonious convergence of innovation and authenticity. This means the judicious combination of edgy, fashion-forward design with uncompromising dedication to comfort and accessibility, so that style can never come at the expense of ease or usability. Additionally, any attempt to bring sustainability to the world of fashion must be accompanied by active efforts to mitigate both fiscal and logistical constraints. The goal is to ensure

that sustainable fashion is not the sole preserve of privileged elites, but an actually viable and appealing option for the wider section of Generation Z market.

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NOTES

Chapter 8

A Study Evaluating Changes in Consumer Purchase Decision-Making Post COVID-19: A Case on Athleisure Product

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about unprecedented changes in consumer behavior, particularly in the athleisure industry. This study investigates the shifts in consumer purchase decision-making post-COVID-19, focusing on athleisure products. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining both qualitative and quantitative data from a sample of 50 respondents. The results reveal significant changes in consumer attitudes, preferences, and behaviors towards athleisure products. Specifically, the findings indicate a heightened emphasis on comfort, practicality, and sustainability in purchase decisions. Furthermore, the study identifies a growing inclination towards online shopping, with 75% of respondents preferring e-commerce platforms over physical stores. The research also highlights the importance

of social media influencers and online reviews in shaping consumer opinions and preferences. This study contributes to the understanding of the evolving consumer landscape in the athleisure industry, providing valuable insights for marketers and retailers seeking to adapt to the new normal. The findings have implications for the development of targeted marketing strategies, product design, and distribution channels that cater to the changing needs and preferences of consumers in the post-COVID-19 era.

Keywords: Athleisure Product, Consumer Behaviour, COVID-19, Purchase Decision-Making, Sustainable Consumption.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic led to significant shifts in consumer purchase decision-making across various product categories, particularly in lifestyle and fashion segments such as athleisure. Athleisure, which blends comfort, functionality, and style, gained remarkable momentum as consumers adapted to new routines shaped by remote work, social distancing, and heightened health consciousness (Sharma and Verma, 2023). This shift underscores a broader realignment of consumer priorities, where comfort and versatility began to outweigh purely fashion-driven considerations. The present study aims to evaluate the evolution of consumer behavior toward athleisure products in the post COVID-19 period by examining key factors influencing purchase decisions, including health consciousness, convenience, price sensitivity, brand reputation, and environmental concerns. Before the pandemic, athleisure was primarily associated with sports and fitness activities; however, COVID-19 dissolved the boundaries

between activewear and everyday wear, positioning athleisure as an essential component of daily clothing choices (Kumar et al., 2024).

In the Indian context, where both the fashion industry and fitness culture are expanding rapidly, these behavioral changes offer considerable opportunities for brands to innovate and reposition their product portfolios. The surge in online shopping, quickened by prolonged lockdowns, has reshaped the ways in which consumers search for, evaluate, and engage with athleisure brands, thereby increasing the strategic importance of digital marketing, social media platforms, and e-commerce ecosystems (Patel and Singh, 2023). At the same time, Indian consumers have become increasingly conscious of sustainability and ethical manufacturing, encouraging brands to adopt eco-friendly materials and greater transparency in their supply chains (Chatterjee, 2022). Government-led health and wellness initiatives, coupled with rising disposable income among young urban consumers, have further contributed to the growth of the athleisure segment in India.

Despite these opportunities, the market continues to face challenges such as high price sensitivity and the widespread availability of counterfeit products, both of which undermine consumer trust and influence purchase patterns (Bansal and Mehta, 2023). By examining these multifaceted shifts, this study offers comprehensive insights into post-pandemic consumer preferences within the athleisure market. Such an understanding will help marketers and entrepreneurs tailor their strategies, product offerings, and communication frameworks to meet emerging expectations, thereby supporting sustained growth in this dynamic sector. Additionally, the findings contribute to the wider discourse on how global crises

like COVID-19 reshape consumption behavior and market structures (Joshi and Desai, 2023).

Literature Review

Recent scholarly work(s) offers a comprehensive view of how consumer behaviour toward athleisure has evolved in the post COVID-19 landscape. Perera (2024), through a systematic review of thirty nine scholarly works, concluded that the surge in athleisure demand is primarily driven by a heightened preference for comfort, rising wellness consciousness, and the desire for versatile apparel that transitions easily between home, work, and fitness contexts; the study also emphasised that digital channels have become central to product discovery and purchase decisions. Complementing these insights, Lee, Kim, and Lee (2023) identified notable gender differences in repurchase behaviour within the athleisure market and found that personalised marketing strategies that highlight comfort, fit, and style significantly enhance repeat purchases. LaPorte (2023), adopting the Theory of Planned Behavior, reported that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control strongly predict purchase intentions for activewear used as casual wear, especially among Generation Z and young female consumers. Ong, Goh, and Mohd (2022) examined clothing purchases during the pandemic and observed that protection motivation and planned behaviour variables such as trust, perceived risk, and social norms shaped consumer preferences, particularly in online shopping environments. A multicountry study by Vladimirova, Wiek, and Fischer (2022) further revealed a marked global shift toward loungewear, cautious spending, and heightened interest in sustainable fashion, indicating that these post pandemic behaviours are likely to persist.

Additionally, Chiu, Huang, and Chen (2021) reported that the pandemic led to an increase in impulse buying of fitness and athleisure products online, driven largely by the convenience of e commerce. Industry analyses by McKinsey and The Business of Fashion (2021, 2022) similarly noted that activewear and loungewear significantly outperformed other apparel categories during COVID-19 and highlighted the growing importance of omni-channel retail, faster delivery, and seamless return processes in building customer loyalty. However, persistent challenges remain. Research by Kim, Park, and Lee (2023) in South Korea indicated that although digital sales of athleisure remained strong post pandemic, consumer dissatisfaction with sizing and return procedures continues to hinder repurchase intentions. In the context of digital influence, Durau, Popescu, and Ionescu (2024) found that credible fitness influencers who communicate authentic product benefits positively shape brand attitudes and drive purchase intentions in sportswear marketing. Moreover, big data analysis by Shin, Kim, and Park (2025) revealed a growing post pandemic interest in sustainable fashion, particularly recycled and eco-friendly athleisure materials, demonstrating that environmental consciousness is steadily influencing consumption patterns. Collectively, these studies underscore the dynamic and multidimensional nature of the post COVID athleisure market, shaped by comfort oriented lifestyles, digital influence, sustainability awareness, and evolving consumer expectations.

Methodology

For this study, we prepared a set of structured questions and conducted a survey among college students of ARKA Jain University, Jamshedpur. The questions were designed to understand students' preferences for athleisure products,

the factors influencing their purchase decisions, and how these choices have changed after the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of *50 responses* were collected using convenience sampling, as college students were the main target group. Both male and female students from different educational backgrounds participated in the survey. The collected data was organized into tables and charts, and percentage analysis was applied to interpret the results. This method allowed us to directly capture the opinions and experiences of Gen-Z consumers, making the findings more relevant to understanding the post-COVID-19 shifts in consumer behavior toward athleisure products.

Findings

The study revealed significant insights into the changing consumer purchase decision-making for athleisure products post-COVID-19. A majority of respondents (43.8%) reported buying athleisure more often than before the pandemic, while 27.1% observed no change and 18.8% purchased less frequently. Increased focus on fitness (37.5%) and comfort during work-from-home (33.3%) emerged as the two primary reasons driving purchases, whereas social media trends and style accounted for 14.6% each.

Online platforms dominated shopping preferences, with 55.3% favoring e-commerce apps such as Amazon and Myntra, followed by offline retail stores (22.9%) and brand websites (18.8%). Comfort (70.8%) was found to be the most important factor influencing purchase decisions, surpassing price (18.8%), brand name (6.3%), and style/look (4.2%). Trust in online reviews increased considerably, with 58.4% of respondents agreeing that they rely more on digital feedback than before.

Social media platforms, especially Instagram and YouTube, influenced 45.8% of buyers, followed by influencer/celebrity promotions (25%) and friends/family recommendations (20.8%), while brand advertisements had minimal impact (8.3%). Spending patterns indicated stability for most respondents (45.8%), but a significant portion (39.6%) reported increased spending. Finally, a strong preference for eco-friendly products was observed, with 87.5% respondents considering sustainability (always or sometimes) in their purchase decisions.

Data Analysis

4. How often do you buy athleisure products now compared to before COVID-19?
48 responses

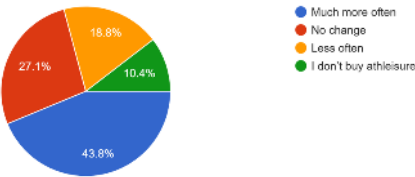


Figure 8.1

Table 8.1

How often do you buy ath-leisure products now compared to before COVID-19?"	No of responses
Much more often (Blue)	43.8%
No change (Red)	27.1%
Less often (Orange)	18.8%
I don't buy athleisure (Green)	10.4%

- i.

Majority (43.8%) of respondents buy athleisure products much more often after COVID-19.
- ii.

Around 27.1% reported no change in their buying frequency.
- iii.

18.8% buy less often than before COVID-19.
- iv.

10.4% do not buy athleisure products at all.
- This indicates a clear upward trend in athleisure purchases post-pandemic for almost half of the respondents. (48 responses)

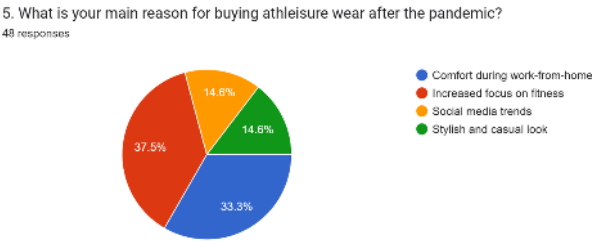


Figure 8.2

Table 8.2

What is your main reason for buying athleisure wear after the pandemic?	No of responses
Comfort during work-from-home (Blue)	33.3%
Increased focus on fitness (Red)	37.5%
Social media trends (Orange)	14.6%
Stylish and casual look (Green)	14.6%

- i. The top reason is increased focus on fitness (37.5%), suggesting health and wellness trends became stronger post-pandemic.
- ii. Comfort during work-from-home (33.3%) is the second major reason, reflecting lifestyle changes caused by remote work.
- iii. 18.8% Style and social influence account for 14.6% each, showing secondary motivations related to aesthetics and online culture.

This indicates that functionality and lifestyle adaptation are primary drivers for athleisure purchases post-pandemic, while fashion and trends still play a supporting role. (48 responses)

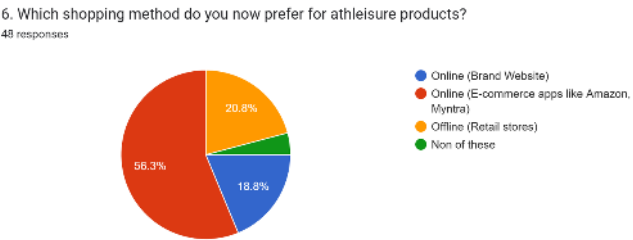


Figure 8.3

Table 8.3

Which shopping method do you now prefer for athleisure products?	No of responses
Online (Brand Website) – Blue	18.8%
Online (E-commerce apps like Amazon, Myntra) – Red	55.3%

Table 8.3

Which shopping method do you now prefer for athleisure products?	No of responses
Offline (Retail stores) – Orange	22.9%
None of these – Green	2.1%

- i. Majority (55.3%) prefer e-commerce apps like Amazon and Myntra, showing a strong inclination toward convenient online shopping.
 - ii. Offline retail stores still matter (22.9%), but they lag behind online platforms.
 - iii. Brand websites (18.8%) are less popular than third-party apps, possibly due to better discounts and variety on e-commerce platforms.
 - iv. Very few (2.1%) do not prefer any of these options.
- This reflects a clear digital shift in shopping behavior post-pandemic, emphasizing the importance of e-commerce presence and app-based retailing for athleisure brands. (48 responses)

7. Post-COVID, how important are the following factors in your athleisure purchase decision?
48 responses

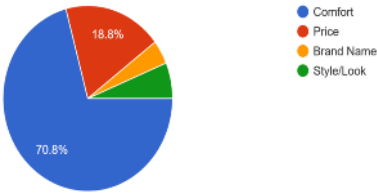


Figure 8.4

Table 8.4

Post-COVID, how important are the following factors in your athleisure purchase decision?	No of responses
Comfort (Blue)	70.8%
Price (Red)	18.8%
Brand Name (Green)	6.3%
Style/Look (Orange)	4.2%

- i. Comfort dominates as the most important factor (70.8%), aligning with the rise of work-from-home and casual lifestyle trends post-pandemic.
- ii. Price (18.8%) is the second priority, but far behind comfort, showing that consumers value functionality over cost.
- iii. Brand name (6.3%) and style/look (4.2%) have minimal influence, suggesting that utility beats aesthetics in post-COVID athleisure shopping behavior. (48 responses)

Table 8.5

Do you trust online customer reviews more now than before COVID-19 when buying athleisure?	No of responses
Strongly Agree (Blue)	18.8%
Agree (Orange)	39.6%
Neutral (Red)	35.4%
Disagree (Green)	6.3%

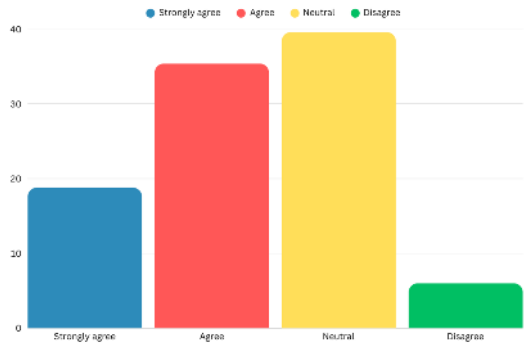


Figure 8.5

- i. A combined 58.4% (Strongly Agree + Agree) trust online reviews more now than before COVID-19, indicating a significant rise in reliance on digital feedback.
- ii. 35.4% remain neutral, meaning they haven’t changed much in their perception.
- iii. Only 6.3% disagree, showing minimal resistance to this. (48 responses)

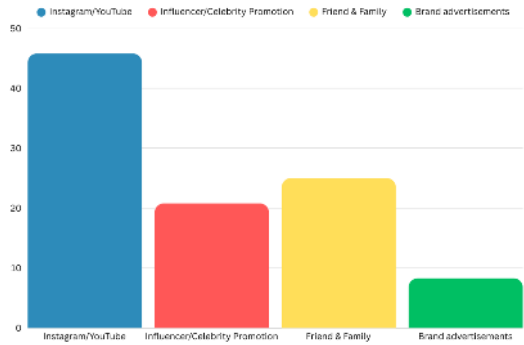


Figure 8.6

Table 8.6

Which platform influences your decision to buy ath-leisure the most?	No of responses
Instagram / YouTube (Blue)	45.8%
Influencer / Celebrity promo-tions (Orange)	25%
Friends & Family (Red)	20.8%
Brand advertisements (Green)	8.3%

- i. Social media platforms (Instagram/YouTube) dominate with 45.8%, making them the top influence channel.
- ii. Influencers and celebrities (25%) also play a strong role, reinforcing the impact of social proof.
- iii. Friends & family recommendations (20.8%) are relevant but secondary compared to digital sources.
- iv. Brand advertisements (8.3%) have minimal influence, suggesting traditional ads are less persuasive than social media-driven marketing. (48 responses)

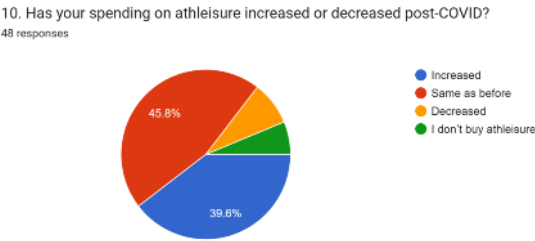


Figure 8.7

Table 8.7

Has your spending on athleisure increased or decreased post-COVID?	No of responses
Increased (Blue)	39.6%
Same as before (Red)	45.8%
Decreased (Orange)	6.3%
I don't buy athleisure (Green)Z	8.3%

- i. Almost half (45.8%) report no change in spending, showing stability for many consumers.
- ii. 39.6% increased their spending, indicating a strong upward trend for a significant portion.
- iii. Only about 6.3% decreased spending, suggesting a minor decline group.
- iv. A small segment (8.3%) doesn't buy athleisure at all.

Implication: Brands can target the growing segment that is spending more post-COVID, while also maintaining engagement with those who have consistent spending habits. (48 responses)

11. Do you prefer buying athleisure that is labeled as eco-friendly or sustainable post-COVID?
48 responses

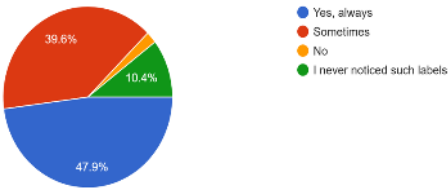


Figure 8.8

Table 8.8

Do you prefer buying ath-leisure that is labeled as eco-friendly or sustainable post-COVID?	No of responses
Yes, always (Blue)	47.9%
Sometimes (Red)	39.6%
No (Orange)	2.1%
I never noticed such labels (Green)	10.4%

- i. A combined 87.5% (Yes + Sometimes) show a positive inclination toward eco-friendly or sustainable athleisure, which is a strong indicator of a growing preference for sustainability.
- ii. Only 2.1% outright reject sustainable labeling.
- iii. 10.4% never noticed such labels, suggesting an opportunity for better visibility and awareness campaigns.

Implication: Brands should emphasize eco-friendly and sustainable features in their marketing to attract environmentally conscious consumers, as it strongly influences purchase decisions post-COVID. (48 responses)

Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that consumer purchase decision-making for athleisure products has undergone noticeable changes in the post-COVID-19 period. The pandemic accelerated shifts in priorities, with comfort, practicality, and health-oriented lifestyles emerging as dominant factors influencing buying behavior. Most respondents reported increased preference for versatile clothing suitable for both

home and outdoor activities, reflecting a blend of fashion and functionality in their choices. The ease of online shopping, access to product information, and the influence of social media marketing were also identified as significant drivers of purchase decisions.

The results indicate that price sensitivity has increased for some consumers, while others are willing to pay more for sustainable, branded, or high-quality athleisure items. Many participants highlighted the importance of product durability, fabric quality, and brand reputation. Additionally, post-pandemic consumers appear more engaged in pre-purchase research, comparing products and reading reviews before making final decisions.

Despite these positive developments for the athleisure market, the study found that certain challenges remain. A portion of consumers still hesitate to purchase higher-priced products without physical inspection, and concerns about sizing, fit, and return policies persist. Moreover, while online sales have grown significantly, in-store experiences remain important for certain customer segments, indicating that brands should maintain a balanced omni-channel strategy.

These findings suggest that athleisure brands need to adapt marketing strategies to reflect evolving consumer priorities, emphasizing comfort, sustainability, and digital engagement. Clear product descriptions, virtual try-on features, and transparent return policies can further build consumer confidence. Post-pandemic, the brands that successfully integrate online convenience with experiential in-store shopping are likely to maintain stronger customer loyalty.

As with all research, this study has limitations. The sample size was relatively small and geographically restricted, limiting generalizability. Future studies could explore a larger, more diverse population and examine long-term behavioral changes

as market conditions stabilize. Nevertheless, this research provides valuable insights into the changing landscape of athleisure consumption in the wake of COVID-19 and offers guidance for brands to align with the shifting expectations of modern consumers.

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NOTES

Chapter 9

Evaluating Changing Fooding Habits of Gen-Z Consumers-A Study on College Students Ordering from Swiggy

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Abstract

In today's fast-paced world, food delivery apps such as Swiggy have become an integral part of daily life for college students. Many students now prefer ordering food online rather than eating in the college mess, hostel, or preparing meals at home. This research examines how Generation Z students are transforming their eating habits through the use of food delivery applications. The study investigates the reasons behind their food orders, frequency of usage, preferred time of day, and the influence of offers, notifications, cravings, and convenience on their choices. Survey responses from college students revealed trends such as increased late-night orders, impulse buying, and a preference for snacks and desserts over full meals. The findings also highlight that features such as online payment options and fast delivery contribute to making app-based food ordering a regular lifestyle choice.

rather than an occasional indulgence. This research provides valuable insights into the behavioral patterns of Generation Z, a cohort that prioritizes speed, convenience, and digital accessibility. The results can assist food delivery companies, health professionals, and marketers in better understanding and engaging with this demographic.

Keywords: Gen-Z, food habits, online food delivery, Swiggy, college students, consumer behavior.

Introduction

The rapid growth of online food delivery platforms has transformed eating patterns worldwide, particularly among the Gen-Z population (Smith & Johnson, 2021). As digital natives, Gen-Z consumers are highly influenced by technology, convenience, and changing lifestyle patterns, which have collectively driven a significant shift in food consumption habits (Kumar & Rao, 2020). In India, platforms like Swiggy have emerged as leading players, providing quick access to diverse cuisines, personalized recommendations, and promotional offers that resonate strongly with younger consumers (Patel, 2023). This reflects a broader transformation in urban dining culture, where traditional home-cooked meals are increasingly replaced by on-demand, app-based food experiences (Verma & Singh, 2022).

Among Indian college students, a core segment of the Gen-Z demographic, the preference for ordering food through Swiggy is particularly noticeable. Busy academic schedules, limited cooking skills, and a desire for variety have made such platforms a daily staple for many students (Sharma & Mehta, 2021). Features like user-friendly interfaces, real-time delivery tracking, and frequent discounts have further encouraged adoption (Nair

et al., 2024). However, while this trend enhances convenience and choice, it also raises concerns regarding nutrition, spending behavior, and the long-term health implications of frequent consumption of restaurant-prepared food (Roy & Das, 2022). The rise of this consumption pattern is shaped not only by technological advancements but also by evolving cultural attitudes towards eating out, experimentation with new cuisines, and prioritization of instant gratification (Chakraborty & Bose, 2020). For the food service industry, this shift offers opportunities to expand market reach, adapt menus to youthful tastes, and employ data-driven marketing strategies (Ali & Khan, 2023). At the same time, it underscores the need for deeper examination of how such evolving habits influence dietary health, local food culture, and overall consumer well-being (Fernandes, 2024).

However, this trend is not without challenges. Studies have raised concerns regarding the nutritional value of frequently ordered meals, as many of them are calorie-dense and high in fats, sugars, and sodium (Bhatia & Kapoor, 2019). The financial impact on students is also worth examining, as repeated spending on food delivery can significantly influence monthly budgets (Sen & Gupta, 2022). Additionally, environmental considerations, such as packaging waste and delivery-related carbon emissions, are increasingly relevant in evaluating the long-term sustainability of such consumption habits (Kaur & Kaur, 2019).

For the food service industry, the evolving preferences of Gen-Z represent both opportunities and challenges. Companies like Swiggy can leverage this demographic's willingness to try new offerings, experiment with marketing formats such as influencer collaborations, and use AI-driven personalization to enhance customer loyalty.

Literature Review

The changing food habits of Generation Z have attracted significant scholarly attention due to their influence on public health, consumer markets, and digital commerce. Gen-Z, typically defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, represents a tech-savvy, socially connected, and convenience-oriented demographic (Kumar & Rao, 2020). Their food choices are influenced by a combination of lifestyle aspirations, peer influence, and easy access to technology. Among the most notable developments in their consumption behavior is the rapid adoption of online food delivery platforms such as Swiggy and Zomato. These services have evolved from occasional luxuries to essential lifestyle tools.

A defining feature of Gen-Z's food consumption is the emphasis on convenience. College students, often balancing academic commitments, part-time work, and social activities, perceive online ordering as a time-saving alternative to traditional meal preparation (Sharma & Mehta, 2021). Swiggy, in particular, has capitalized on this need by offering features such as real-time tracking, customizable menus, and easy payment options (Chakraborty & Bose, 2020). In urban and semi-urban India, the combination of affordable internet, widespread smartphone usage, and competitive delivery charges has further accelerated the adoption of such platforms. Peer influence also plays a significant role in shaping these patterns. Nair et al. (2024) observed that Gen-Z consumers frequently share discount codes, recommend dishes, and post reviews within their social circles. This creates a network effect where one person's purchase decision encourages similar actions in peers.

Social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube amplify this behavior through food bloggers, influencers, and restaurant promotions, making dining choices both a personal and social

statement (Ali & Khan, 2023). The fusion of food consumption with digital entertainment, including streaming shows, gaming, or online chatting, further reinforces this habit as part of leisure and lifestyle activities (Roy & Das, 2022). From a nutritional perspective, several studies have raised concerns about the health implications of frequent online ordering. Bhatia and Kapoor (2019) highlighted that most frequently ordered items from delivery apps are calorie-dense and high in saturated fats, sugars, and sodium. While occasional indulgence may have minimal impact, habitual consumption can contribute to lifestyle-related health issues such as obesity, hypertension, and type 2 diabetes. However, there is also evidence of a gradual shift towards health-conscious ordering. George and Mathew (2024) note that a growing segment of Gen-Z consumers opts for restaurants that display calorie counts, nutritional information, and healthier cooking methods, suggesting an emerging awareness of diet quality. Taste and variety remain strong drivers of purchase decisions. Sen and Gupta (2022) found that even health-conscious students often prioritize taste over nutrition, especially when exploring new cuisines. This aligns with Gen-Z's tendency to experiment with global flavors including Korean, Japanese, Mediterranean, alongside traditional Indian dishes. The element of novelty, combined with Swiggy's promotional strategies and partnerships with diverse restaurants, sustains interest and encourages repeated use (Mukherjee & Sen, 2024).

From an economic standpoint, frequent ordering can have significant financial implications. While Swiggy's discounts, cashback offers, and subscription models such as "Swiggy One" create a perception of affordability, Verma and Singh (2022) caution that cumulative monthly expenses on delivered food often exceed the cost of home-cooked meals. For students

dependent on allowances or part-time income, this can lead to budgetary strain, forcing them to cut costs elsewhere or reduce savings. This economic trade-off is an important factor in assessing the sustainability of current ordering habits. Environmental concerns also emerge in literature on online food delivery. Kaur and Kaur (2019) draw attention to the substantial packaging waste generated, much of which is plastic-based and non-biodegradable. With Gen-Z increasingly aware of climate change and sustainability, platforms like Swiggy have introduced eco-friendly packaging initiatives and partnered with restaurants using compostable materials (Desai & Pillai, 2021). However, consumer adoption of such options remains inconsistent, with convenience often outweighing environmental considerations in final purchase decisions. In the Indian context, the expansion of the online food delivery market is closely linked to demographic and infrastructural factors.

Urban university towns such as Bengaluru, Pune, and Hyderabad, home to large student populations, serve as high-demand zones (Chakraborty & Bose, 2020). Swiggy's hyperlocal delivery model, focusing on short-distance logistics and efficient rider management, has proven particularly effective in these areas. Coupled with regional menu adaptations and partnerships with local eateries, the platform has been able to cater to both mainstream and niche culinary preferences (Patel, 2023).

The literature also highlights the role of digital engagement in reinforcing consumer loyalty. Personalized notifications, AI-based food recommendations, and gamified reward systems have been shown to significantly increase order frequency among Gen-Z users (Ali & Khan, 2023). By integrating app-based dining with social media content and trend-driven

marketing, Swiggy aligns its brand image with Gen-Z's values of speed, novelty, and connectedness.

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive research design to investigate the online food ordering behavior of Generation Z students. Data were collected from a total of 80 respondents through a structured online questionnaire administered via Google Forms. The participants were primarily college students of ARKA JAIN University, Jharkhand, predominantly from Jamshedpur, within the age range of 18 to 21 years. The survey included questions on demographic details, frequency and timing of orders, preferred food items, and factors influencing food choices such as convenience, promotions, peer influence, and digital engagement. The responses were compiled, coded, and analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, including frequency counts and percentage distributions, to identify patterns, trends, and preferences in the students' online food consumption behavior. This approach provided a clear understanding of the behavioral tendencies of Gen-Z students in the context of app-based food delivery services.

Findings

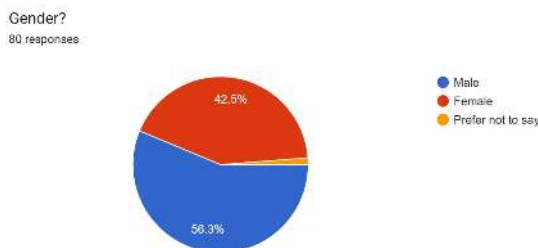


Figure 9.1

Respondent’s Gender?

The data indicates that the majority of respondents are male, comprising 56.3% (45 respondents), followed by female respondents at 42.5% (34 respondents). Only 1 respondent (1.2%) chose prefer not to say. This shows that the sample has a slightly higher representation of males compared to females, with negligible non-disclosure of gender.

Table 9.1

Respondent’s gender	No. of responses	Percentage %
Male	45	56.3%
Female	34	42.5%
Prefer not to say	1	1.2%

Respondent’s age

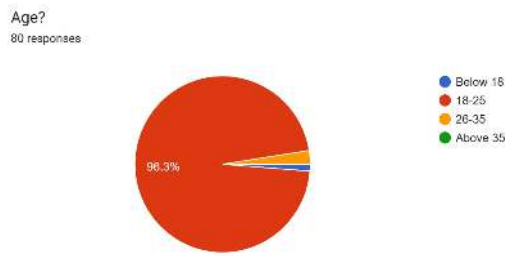


Figure 9.2

The data shows that the vast majority of respondents (96.3%, 77 respondents) are in the 18–25 years age group. A small proportion (2.5%, 2 respondents) are aged 26–35, and only 1 respondent (1.1%) is below 18 years. There are no respondents in the above 35 years category. This indicates that the

sample is heavily skewed towards young adults, with minimal representation from other age groups.

Table 9.2

Respondent's age	No. of responses	Percentage %
Below 18	1	1.1%
18-25	77	96.3%
26-35	2	2.5%
Above 35	0	0

Respondent's education level

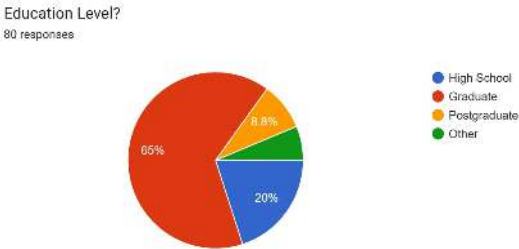


Figure 9.3

Table 9.3

Respondent's edu- cation level	No. of responses	Percentage %
High School	16	20%
Graduate	52	65%
Postgraduate	7	8.8%
Other	5	6.3%

The data indicates that the majority of respondents are graduates, making up 65% (52 respondents) of the sample. This is followed by high school educated respondents at 20% (16 respondents). Postgraduates account for 8.8% (7 respondents), while 6.3% (5 respondents) fall into the other category. This suggests that the sample is predominantly well-educated, with most having completed undergraduate studies.

How often do you use Swiggy?

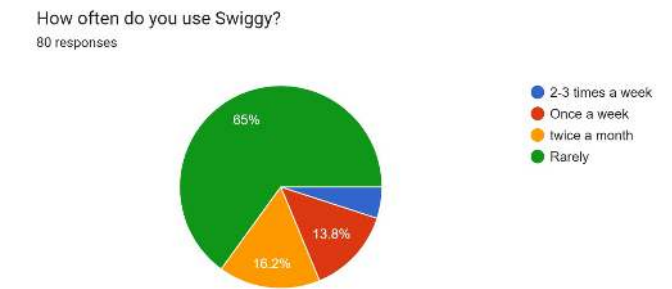


Figure 9.4

Table 9.4

Frequency of using swiggy	No. of responses	Percentage %
2-3 times a week	4	5%
Once a week	11	13.8%
Twice a week	13	16.2%
Rarely	52	65%

The data shows that the majority of respondents (65%, 52 respondents) use Swiggy rarely, indicating infrequent

engagement with the platform. A smaller portion (16.2%, 13 respondents) use it twice a week, while 13.8% (11 respondents) order once a week. Only 5% (4 respondents) reported using Swiggy 2–3 times a week.

What do you like most about swiggy?

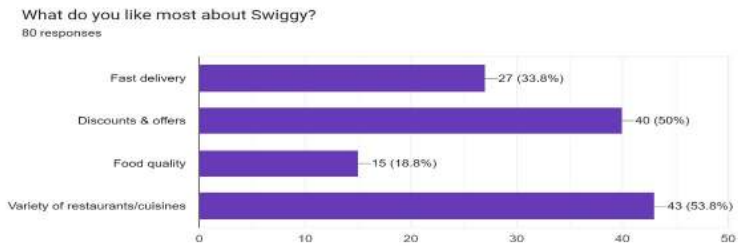


Figure 9.5

Table 9.5

What do you like most about swiggy?	No. of responses	Percentage %
Fast delivery	27	33.8%
Discounts & offers	40	50%
Food quality	15	18.8%
Variety of restaurants/cuisines	43	53.8%

The results indicate that the most liked aspect of Swiggy among respondents is its variety of restaurants and cuisines (53.8%, 43 respondents), closely followed by discounts and offers (50%, 40 respondents). Fast delivery is appreciated by 33.8% (27 respondents), while food quality is valued by 18.8% (15 respondents).

What payment method you prefer the most while ordering the food?

The data shows that the majority of respondents (67.5%, 54 respondents) prefer UPI as their payment method while ordering food. Cash on Delivery is the second most preferred method, chosen by 31.3% (25 respondents). Debit/Credit cards are used by only 1.2% (1 respondent), and E-wallets were not preferred by any respondent (0%). This indicates that UPI is the dominant payment choice, with minimal use of other digital payment methods.

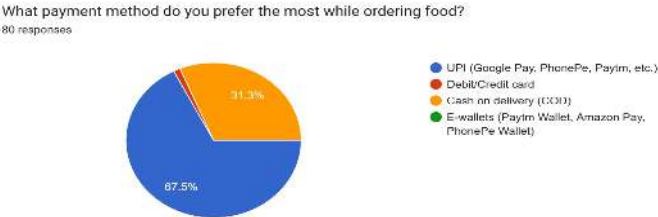


Figure 9.6

Table 9.6: Demographic Details

Preferred payment method	No. of responses	Percentage %
UPI (Google Pay, PhonePe, paytm, etc)	54	67.5%
Debit/credit card	1	1.2%
Cash on delivery	25	31.3%
E-wallets (Paytm Wallet, Amazon Pay, PhonePe Wallet)	0	0

Which platform most influences your food preferences?

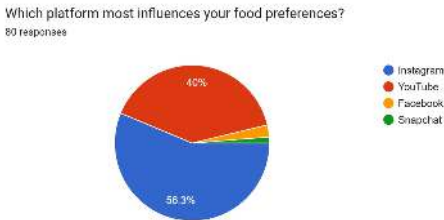


Figure 9.7

The data shows that Instagram is the most influential platform for food preferences, cited by 56.3% (45 respondents), followed by YouTube at 40% (32 respondents). Facebook influences only 2.5% (2 respondents), while Snapchat has minimal impact with 1.2% (1 respondent). This indicates that visual and video-based social media platforms, especially Instagram and YouTube, play a major role in shaping respondents’ food choices, whereas other platforms have very limited influence.

Table 9.7

Platform influences food preferences	No. of responses	Percentage %
Instagram	45	56.3%
YouTube	32	40%
Facebook	2	2.5%
Snapchat	1	1.2%

Which of these bests describe your order type?

The data shows that the most common order type is meals for 2–3 people, chosen by 38.8% (31 respondents),



Figure 9.8

followed by single meals for oneself at 33.8% (27 respondents). Snacks or beverages only account for 17.5% (14 respondents), while group/party orders are the least common at 10% (8 respondents). This indicates that most respondents tend to order for small groups or individual consumption, with fewer opting for large group or party orders.

Table 9.8

Order type	No. of responses	Percentage %
Single meal for myself	27	33.8%
Meals for 2-3 people	31	38.8%
Snacks or beverages only	14	17.5%
Group/party order	8	10%

At what time do generally use/ open Swiggy?

The data indicates that the majority of respondents (68.8%, 55 respondents) use or open Swiggy in the evening (5 PM–9 PM), making it the peak usage period. Afternoon (12 PM–4 PM) and late night (after 10 PM) usage are tied at 16.3% (13 and 10 respondents respectively), while morning usage (6 AM–11 AM) is minimal at 2.5% (2 respondents). This suggests that

Swiggy is predominantly accessed during evening hours, likely aligning with dinner or late snacking habits.

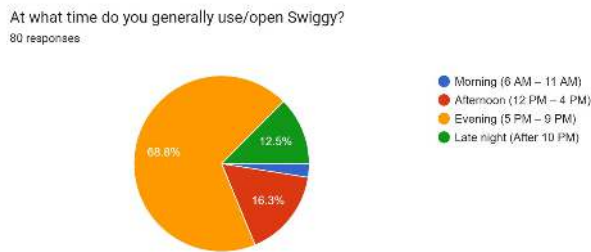


Figure 9.9

Table 9.9

Time of usage	No. of responses	Percentage %
Morning (6AM-11AM)	2	2.5%
Afternoon (12PM-4PM)	13	16.3%
Evening (5PM-9PM)	55	68.8%
Late night (After 10PM)	10	16.3%

What is your main reason for ordering food online?



Figure 9.10

The data shows that the most common reason for ordering food online is craving specific food, cited by 47.5% (38 respondents). This is followed by lack of time to cook at 22.5% (18 respondents) and convenience at 20% (16 respondents). Discounts and offers are the least common primary reason, chosen by 10% (8 respondents). This indicates that respondents are primarily driven by desire for specific dishes rather than financial incentives or convenience alone.

Table 9.10

Main reason for ordering food online	No. of responses	Percentage %
Convenience	16	20%
Craving specific food	38	47.5%
Discounts/offers	8	10%
Lack of time to cook	18	22.5%

Conclusion

The study concludes that online food delivery platforms have become deeply integrated into the lifestyle of Generation Z students, particularly those in urban university settings. The findings indicate that convenience, cravings, digital influence, and diverse food choices remain the primary drivers behind their ordering behaviour. While usage frequency varies, a strong preference for evening and late-night ordering reflects changing meal patterns among young adults. The dominance of UPI payments, the influence of Instagram and YouTube, and the appeal of discounts and variety demonstrate how digital ecosystems shape daily consumption decisions. At the same time, the growing reliance on app-based food delivery raises important considerations related

to financial discipline, nutritional awareness, and environmental responsibility. Although a segment of students shows interest in healthier options, the overall inclination toward taste and instant gratification remains strong. The insights from this research underscore the need for food delivery platforms, policymakers, and health educators to design targeted strategies that address both the opportunities and challenges associated with the evolving food habits of Gen-Z consumers.

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Chapter 10

An Overview on the Influence of Digital Marketing on Modern Consumer Buying Behaviour

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Abstract

Digital marketing has significantly reshaped consumer buying behaviour in the contemporary marketplace. This paper examines how digital marketing strategies transform consumer interactions, decision-making processes, and purchasing patterns. With access to extensive online information, consumers are now better equipped to make informed choices through product comparisons, detailed research, and user-generated reviews. Targeted advertising and personalised marketing communication enhance relevance and engagement, while social media platforms and influencer-driven content offer strong forms of social proof that influence purchase intentions. The growth of e-commerce and mobile-based shopping has shifted consumer preference towards convenience, speed, and seamless purchase experiences. In addition, data-driven

insights allow brands to refine their marketing efforts, strengthen customer relationships, and encourage long-term loyalty. The study underscores the crucial role of digital marketing in shaping contemporary consumer behaviour and emphasises the need for brands to adapt effectively to the evolving digital ecosystem. Overall, digital marketing demonstrates a positive and sustained impact on consumer buying behaviour, indicating that traditional marketing models must progressively transition towards digital practices.

Keywords:Digital marketing, Consumer behaviour, E-commerce, Social media influence, Personalization.

Introduction

In a rapidly evolving digital environment, the influence of digital marketing on consumer buying behavior has become a central focus for both industry practitioners and academic researchers (Smith, 2023). The increasing penetration of the internet, social media, and mobile technologies continues to reshape traditional marketing channels and redefine how consumers interact with brands (Kumar & Rao, 2020). With unprecedented access to online information, consumers are now able to compare prices, examine product reviews, and engage in detailed pre-purchase research, which strengthens their ability to make informed decisions (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022). As competition intensifies, businesses seeking to improve customer engagement and marketing performance must understand how digital marketing influences consumer behavior (Johnson & Kaur, 2021). Digital marketing includes a wide range of strategies such as search engine optimization, social media marketing, email marketing, and content marketing, each contributing uniquely to consumer perception and purchase

decisions (Kotler et al., 2021). Social media platforms, in particular, have emerged as influential environments where peer interaction, online communities, and influencer-driven endorsements significantly shape consumer preferences (Evans et al., 2022). Reviews, ratings, and recommendations shared on these platforms often guide purchase choices more effectively than traditional advertising, reflecting a shift in how trust and credibility are formed in digital spaces (Bakshi & Singh, 2023). Advancements in data analytics have further strengthened the ability of marketers to design personalized and targeted campaigns.

Access to large volumes of consumer data allows brands to tailor advertisements based on browsing patterns, demographic profiles, and personal interests, thereby enhancing relevance and increasing conversion rates (Davenport et al., 2020). Personalization not only improves the buying experience but also fosters deeper emotional connections and long-term loyalty between consumers and brands (George & Mathew, 2024). The widespread adoption of smartphones has accelerated the influence of digital marketing on purchase behavior. Mobile commerce enables consumers to browse, compare, and purchase products anytime and anywhere, resulting in a rise in impulse buying and redefined retail experiences (Sharma & Mehta, 2021). Brands that emphasize mobile-friendly design, location-based offers, and seamless user interfaces are better positioned to capture consumer attention in real time (Patel, 2023). At the same time, the growth of e-commerce highlights the need for trust-building strategies, as online purchases often lack the sensory experience associated with in-store shopping. Transparent communication, secure payment systems, and authentic brand narratives are therefore essential for cultivating consumer confidence (Ali & Khan, 2023).

Overall, the impact of digital marketing on consumer buying behavior is multifaceted and transformative. As consumers gain greater autonomy and access to information, companies must adapt their strategies to remain relevant in a digitally driven marketplace. This study aims to examine how digital marketing shapes consumer perceptions, influences decision-making, and drives purchase behavior. By analysing current trends, empirical evidence, and contemporary case insights, the paper provides a comprehensive understanding of the implications of digital marketing in today's economy.

Literature Review

The rapid integration of digital technologies into everyday life has reconfigured consumer markets, with Generation Z emerging as a pivotal cohort driving changes in food consumption and broader buying behaviour. Research consistently positions Gen Z as a tech-proficient, convenience-seeking group whose choices are shaped by online access, peer networks, and platform features (Kumar & Rao, 2020). Studies across disciplines reveal convergent themes: convenience and immediacy, the primacy of digital influence, data-enabled personalization, economic trade-offs, health and sustainability concerns, and the strategic responses of platforms and brands.

Convenience and temporal shifts in consumption are central findings. Scholars argue that online ordering becomes a time-management tool for students and young professionals who juggle academic or occupational responsibilities alongside social life (Sharma & Mehta, 2021). Platform functionalities such as real-time tracking, streamlined payment options, and extensive restaurant variety have increased the perceived utility of delivery services, moving them from luxury to routine use (Chakraborty & Bose, 2020; Patel, 2023). Empirical

surveys reflect peak usage during evening hours, indicating a reconfiguration of traditional meal patterns that aligns with leisure and social schedules.

Digital influence, social proof, and network effects underpin many purchase decisions. Research shows that Gen Z often relies on peer recommendations, social media endorsements, and influencer content when selecting food or products (Nair et al., 2024; Ali & Khan, 2023). Visual platforms such as Instagram and video platforms such as YouTube exert substantial influence by providing both aspirational content and practical cues like reviews and product demonstrations. The literature highlights that social media amplifies discoverability and normalizes novel cuisines and brands, thereby accelerating trial and adoption (Roy & Das, 2022; Mukherjee & Sen, 2024). Personalization and data-driven marketing are identified as potent drivers of engagement and conversion. Advances in analytics permit highly targeted advertising and recommendation engines, which increase relevance and raise conversion rates by aligning offers with user preferences and behavioural signals (Davenport et al., 2020; George & Mathew, 2024). Studies emphasise that personalized communications not only improve immediate purchase likelihood but also foster perceived brand intimacy, which can translate into longer-term loyalty.

Economic considerations present a nuanced picture. While promotional mechanisms, subscription plans, and discounts create an appearance of affordability, scholars caution that cumulative expenditure on delivered food can surpass the cost of home-cooked alternatives (Verma & Singh, 2022). For students and low-income consumers, this dynamic can generate budgetary strain despite the short-term appeal of offers. The literature therefore calls for a careful assessment of

the sustainability of habitual app usage among economically constrained demographics.

Nutritional and public health concerns are well documented. Analyses of frequently ordered items point to a prevalence of calorie-dense, processed, and high-sodium foods that may elevate risks for obesity and metabolic illnesses if consumed regularly (Bhatia & Kapoor, 2019). Nonetheless, recent work notes an emergent segment within Gen Z that values healthier menu options and nutritional transparency, shaping a partial countertrend toward conscious ordering (George & Mathew, 2024). This bifurcation suggests that platform design and restaurant disclosure can play influential roles in steering healthier consumer choices.

Environmental impacts have also entered the discourse. Packaging waste from food delivery, particularly single-use plastics, generates measurable ecological externalities (Kaur & Kaur, 2019). Platforms and restaurants have begun to experiment with compostable materials and eco-labeling, yet consumer uptake remains inconsistent when convenience conflicts with sustainability choices (Desai & Pillai, 2021). The literature identifies a gap between sustainability attitudes and purchasing behaviour, indicating potential for policy or incentive mechanisms to close that gap. Platform strategy and market structure are recurring subjects. Hyperlocal logistics, dynamic pricing, and strategic partnerships with local eateries enable platforms like Swiggy to scale rapidly in dense university towns and urban clusters (Chakraborty & Bose, 2020; Patel, 2023). Gamified loyalty programs, push notifications, and AI-based recommendations further entrench user engagement, demonstrating how technological affordances convert ephemeral interest into habitual use (Ali & Khan, 2023). Methodological approaches in existing studies

vary, with many using cross-sectional surveys, descriptive statistics, and qualitative interviews to map behaviour patterns. Meta-analyses and comparative studies corroborate core trends while highlighting regional and socio-economic heterogeneity in adoption and impacts (International Journal of Hospitality Management, 2024). A persistent methodological limitation is the reliance on self-reported data, which can introduce recall bias and social desirability effects. Longitudinal and experimental designs are less common but would provide stronger causal inference regarding sustained behavioural change and health outcomes.

Research Gaps and Implications

Digital marketing incorporates various strategies such as social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing and email marketing. According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019), these techniques enable brands to communicate with consumers in a more personalized and engaging way. Social media platforms, in particular, are important channels of engagement with brands, enabling consumers to interact directly with brands, share experiences and obtain peer reviews (Kumar et al., 2016). A study by Laroche et al. (2013) confirmed that consumer engagement on social media is positively related to brand loyalty, and emphasized the need for companies to develop effective social media strategies.

The extant literature provides a strong descriptive account of how digital marketing and delivery platforms shape Gen Z behaviour, yet several gaps remain. First, causal mechanisms linking specific digital marketing tactics to long-term habit formation are underexplored. Second, the intersection of economic vulnerability and digital consumption needs deeper

analysis to inform targeted policy and educational interventions. Third, the gap between pro-environmental attitudes and actual choices warrants experiments with nudges and incentive structures. Finally, mixed-methods and longitudinal studies would strengthen evidence on health trajectories related to habitual platform use. Taken together, the literature establishes a framework in which convenience, digital influence, personalization, and platform strategy jointly drive the digitalization of consumption among Generation Z. These insights justify focused empirical work, such as the present descriptive study of ARKA JAIN University students, to map local patterns and inform interventions that balance convenience, health, affordability, and sustainability.

Key Themes- Summary

To consolidate the major scholarly contributions relevant to digital marketing and consumer behaviour, the Table 10.1. presents thematic areas, representative authors, and the essential insights derived from existing studies. This structured synthesis enables a clearer understanding of how digital marketing mechanisms shape perceptions, choices, and purchase decisions, particularly among younger demographics such as Generation Z.

Findings (Secondary)

Digital marketing efforts have a significant impact on customer perceptions. Kotler and Keller (2016) argue that the information overload characteristics of digital platforms can shape consumers' perceptions of brands. Digital marketing not only conveys product information but also influences brand perception through visuals and stories. The study by Frolova et al. (2020) found that well-designed digital content can enhance brand image, increasing consumer trust and willingness to

purchase. Furthermore, the role of user-generated features such as reviews and testimonials is important in generating consumer opinion, as consumers tend to trust the opinions of their peers. The existing literature underscores the profound impact of digital marketing on consumer perception and buying behavior. By utilizing various strategies and technological innovations, businesses can effectively engage consumers and influence their purchasing decisions.

Table 10.1: Summary of Themes in Digital Marketing w.r.t Consumer Buying Behavior

Theme	Core Findings
Convenience and Technology Adoption	Online platforms simplify decision making through fast delivery, real-time tracking, and simplified payments. Convenience is a primary driver of adoption.
Social Influence and Digital Communities	Peer recommendations, influencer endorsements, and social media reviews significantly shape purchase decisions and stimulate impulse buying.
Personalization and Targeted Marketing	Data analytics support tailored advertising, personalised suggestions, and relevant offers that increase consumer engagement and conversion.

Table 10.1: Summary of Themes in Digital Marketing w.r.t Consumer Buying Behavior

Theme	Core Findings
Economic Perception and Spending Patterns	Discounts and cashbacks create perceived affordability, yet overall spending often exceeds traditional meal or product costs, influencing budgeting habits of youth.
Health and Nutritional Considerations	High-calorie, processed food is frequently chosen, raising long-term health concerns. A smaller conscious segment prefers nutritional transparency.
Environmental and Sustainability Issues	Packaging waste from deliveries creates environmental strain. Eco-friendly options exist but consumer adoption remains inconsistent.
Platform Strategy and Market Growth	Hyperlocal logistics, diversified restaurant networks, and gamified engagement strengthen user retention and market penetration among young consumers.

However, the rapidly changing digital landscape necessitates ongoing research to understand emerging trends and consumer expectations. Future studies should explore the long-term

effects of digital marketing practices on brand loyalty and consumer trust in an increasingly digital world.

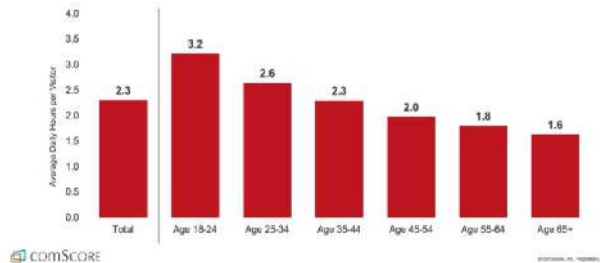


Figure 10.1: Average time spend on digital media by different age groups.

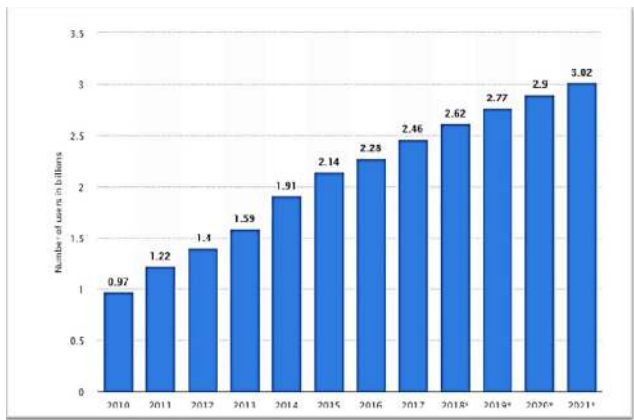


Figure 10.2: in the number of social media users worldwide (from 2010 to 2021) (in billions)

Recommendations

- i. Embrace Personalization: Businesses should invest in data analytics tools to better understand consumer preferences and behaviors. By leveraging this data, companies can create personalized marketing campaigns

that cater to individual needs and interests. Personalized email marketing, product recommendations, and targeted advertisements can significantly improve consumer engagement and conversion rates.

- ii. **Enhance Social Media Engagement:** Given the strong influence of social media on consumer perception, brands should prioritize building authentic relationships with their audience on these platforms. This can be achieved through regular interaction, prompt responses to customer inquiries, and sharing user-generated content. Engaging content that encourages participation such as polls, contests, and live events can foster community and brand loyalty.
- iii. **Leverage User-Generated Content:** Brands should encourage and promote user-generated content, such as reviews, testimonials, and social media posts featuring their products. Highlighting positive consumer experiences can build trust and credibility, as potential customers are more likely to trust the opinions of their peers over traditional advertising.
- iv. **Invest in Quality Content Marketing:** Creating high-quality, informative, and engaging content is essential for establishing authority and trust with consumers. Brands should develop a content marketing strategy that provides value to their audience, such as blogs, videos, and infographics. This not only enhances brand perception but also improves SEO and drives organic traffic.
- v. **Utilize Mobile-First Strategies:** As mobile commerce continues to grow, businesses must ensure that their websites and marketing materials are optimized for mobile devices. This includes having responsive

design, fast-loading pages, and mobile-friendly navigation. Implementing mobile-specific marketing strategies, such as location-based promotions and mobile apps, can enhance the shopping experience for consumers.

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