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Impact of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Decisions of Gen-Z Consumers

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Abstract: The evolution of digital technologies has changed the way in which businesses relate to their consumers. Social media sites such as Instagram, YouTube, and so on have not only been a means of communication but have also become a marketing tool for businesses. This has affected the manner in which consumers behave and react to products. Generation Z (Gen Z), comprising individuals born between 1997 and 2012, is a generation that has been affected by digital technologies. Unlike previous generations, their purchase decisions are largely affected by the opinions of other consumers and online content. This study aims to explore the extent to which social media marketing affects the purchase decisions of Gen Z consumers and the factors that influence their purchase decisions.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Gen Z, Purchase Decisions, Consumer Behaviour, e-WOM, Digital Marketing

Introduction

The rapid growth of digital technologies has significantly transformed the way consumers interact with brands and make purchase decisions. In today's digital environment, social media platforms act as powerful channels through which users access product-related information, engage with content, and form opinions about brands. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and others present a continuous stream of content, where marketing

messages are integrated with user-generated content, making them highly influential in shaping consumer behaviour.

When consumers engage with social media, they are exposed to various forms of content, including influencer recommendations, peer reviews, advertisements, and brand-generated posts. This exposure is not random. Consumers often rely on the credibility, relatability, and authenticity of the content as indicators of trust and relevance. As a result, content that appears more genuine and engaging is more likely to influence users' perceptions and ultimately their purchase decisions, while overly promotional or less credible content may be ignored.

This creates a situation where social media marketing becomes a key factor influencing consumer decision-making. For businesses, this phenomenon is highly important, as effective use of social media can directly impact customer engagement, brand perception, and sales performance. Therefore, organizations increasingly invest in social media marketing strategies, including influencer collaborations, user-generated content, and targeted advertising, to enhance their reach and influence.

However, despite the growing importance of social media marketing, there is still a need to clearly understand how different

aspects of social media influence actual consumer behaviour, particularly among Generation Z. Many studies have examined digital marketing or consumer behaviour independently, but limited attention has been given to the direct relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions in this specific demographic group.

In this context, the present study aims to examine the impact of Social Media Marketing (SMM) on the Purchase Decisions (PD) of Generation Z consumers. By analysing this relationship, the study seeks to provide a better understanding of how social media influences consumer behaviour and how businesses can use these insights to improve their marketing strategies and online presence

Literature Review

Previous studies have consistently highlighted the growing importance of social media marketing in influencing consumer behaviour, particularly among Generation Z consumers. Social media platforms have transformed the traditional decision-making process by enabling interactive and user-driven communication, which significantly affects consumer perceptions and purchase decisions (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

It has been observed that consumers tend to rely more on information shared by other users rather than brand-generated content. This concept, known as electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), includes online reviews, ratings, and discussions that influence consumer decisions. Since such information is perceived as more authentic and unbiased, it has a strong impact on purchase behaviour (Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

Influencer marketing has also emerged as a key component of social media marketing. According to the Two-Step

Flow Model, information from the media is transmitted through opinion leaders who influence consumer decisions (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). On social media platforms, influencers act as these opinion leaders by creating relatable and engaging content. However, studies suggest that excessive promotional content may reduce credibility and negatively affect consumer trust (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

The Theory of Planned Behaviour explains how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control influence consumer behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Social media affects these factors by shaping consumer attitudes, creating social pressure through peer interactions, and providing easy access to product-related information. As a result, consumers develop stronger purchase intentions based on social media exposure.

Furthermore, trust and authenticity play a crucial role in influencing consumer decisions. Research indicates that consumers are more likely to engage with brands that are transparent and authentic in their communication (Kim & Ko, 2012). User-generated content (UGC), such as reviews and testimonials, helps build trust, whereas highly promotional content is often viewed with skepticism.

Additionally, the amount of time spent on social media significantly affects consumer behaviour. Increased exposure to content leads to higher engagement, which in turn increases the likelihood of purchase decisions (Duffett, 2017).

However, despite extensive research, there is still limited focus on understanding how various elements of social media marketing collectively influence the purchase decisions of Generation Z. Therefore, this study aims to examine this relationship in a structured and measurable manner.

Objectives and Research Methodology

The present study is analytical in nature and focuses on examining how Social Media Marketing influences Purchase Decisions of Generation Z consumers. In today's digital environment, users are continuously exposed to various forms of social media content such as influencer promotions, peer reviews, advertisements, and user-generated content. These interactions play a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions and decision-making behaviour. This study attempts to understand this behaviour in a structured and measurable manner.

The main objective of the study is to analyse the impact of Social Media Marketing (SMM) on Purchase Decisions (PD) of Gen Z consumers. In addition, the study also aims to understand how different elements of social media, such as trust, authenticity, and engagement, influence consumer attention and purchasing behaviour while interacting with digital platforms.

To examine this relationship, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H₀: Social Media Marketing has no significant impact on Purchase Decisions of Gen Z consumers.

H₁: Social Media Marketing has a significant impact on Purchase Decisions of Gen Z consumers.

The data for the study has been collected through primary sources using a structured questionnaire. A total of 62 responses were collected using a convenience sampling method, based on the accessibility of respondents. The questionnaire consists of multiple statements related to Social Media Marketing factors and Purchase Decision behaviour. These responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree, to capture the perceptions

and behaviour of respondents in a systematic manner.

Before conducting further analysis, the reliability of the measurement scale was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. A value of $\alpha \geq 0.70$ is considered acceptable for internal consistency. The obtained Cronbach's Alpha value indicates that the data is reliable and suitable for further statistical analysis.

For the purpose of data analysis, statistical techniques such as reliability analysis and regression analysis have been used. Regression analysis helps in examining the relationship between Social Media Marketing and Purchase Decisions and in testing the proposed hypothesis. The analysis has been carried out using SPSS software.

However, the study has certain limitations. The data is collected from a limited number of respondents, which may not fully represent the entire population. The study focuses only on selected aspects of social media marketing and does not include all possible variables that may affect consumer behaviour. In addition, the responses are based on individual perceptions, which may vary from person to person and may influence the results.

Data Analysis & Interpretation

To analyse the relationship between Social Media Marketing and Purchase Decisions of Generation Z consumers, a set of statements related to both variables was used to capture respondents' perceptions. These statements were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The details of the statements are presented in the table below.

Factor	Statements
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Consumer Purchase Behaviour (CB)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I am likely to purchase products influenced by social media content. 2. I consider recommendations before making purchase decisions. 3. I often buy products after seeing them on social media. 4. Social media plays a role in shaping my buying decisions.
Social Media Marketing (SMM)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I am likely to buy a product if an influencer recommends it. 2. I trust peer reviews and comments on social media. 3. Paid advertisements influence my purchase decisions. 4. User-generated content increases my likelihood of purchase.

Table 1: Factor Statements

The analysis begins by ensuring the quality of the collected data, where all 62 responses were found to be valid and complete, indicating suitability for further analysis. The reliability of the

measurement scale, consisting of 4 items, was then assessed.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.739	4

The results show a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.739, which exceeds the acceptable threshold of 0.70, confirming good internal consistency among the

items. Thus, the scale is reliable and the data is appropriate for further statistical analysis.

Coefficients											
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error				Beta	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance
1	(Constant)	1.463	.610		2.400	.020					
	SMM	.031	.054	.074	.577	.566	.074	.074	.074	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Pur_inf

Table 3: Model Summary

To examine the impact of Social Media Marketing (SMM) on Consumer Purchase

Behaviour (CB), a simple linear regression analysis was conducted. The independent

variable SMM was entered into the model using the enter method, with no variables removed, ensuring a direct assessment of the relationship between the two variables.

The significance of the model was tested through ANOVA results, which indicate that the regression model is not statistically significant ($F = 0.333$, $p = 0.566$). Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternative hypothesis is rejected, indicating that Social Media Marketing

does not have a statistically significant impact on Consumer Purchase Behaviour in this model.

The coefficient analysis further reveals that although Social Media Marketing shows a positive relationship with Consumer Purchase Behaviour, the effect is weak and not statistically significant.

Model Summary ^b										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. Change	
1	.074 ^a	.006	-.011	1.027	.006	.333	1	60	.566	1.712

a. Predictors: (Constant), SMM

b. Dependent Variable: Pur_inf

Table 4:Model Summary

The model summary indicates a very weak relationship between Social Media Marketing (SMM) and Consumer Purchase Behaviour (CB), with a correlation coefficient of $R = 0.074$. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.006$) shows that only 0.6% of the variation in Consumer Purchase Behaviour is explained by Social Media Marketing,

indicating very low explanatory power of the model.

The Adjusted R^2 value (-0.011) further confirms the weak predictive ability of the model.

The Durbin–Watson value (1.712) suggests that there is no issue of autocorrelation in the data.

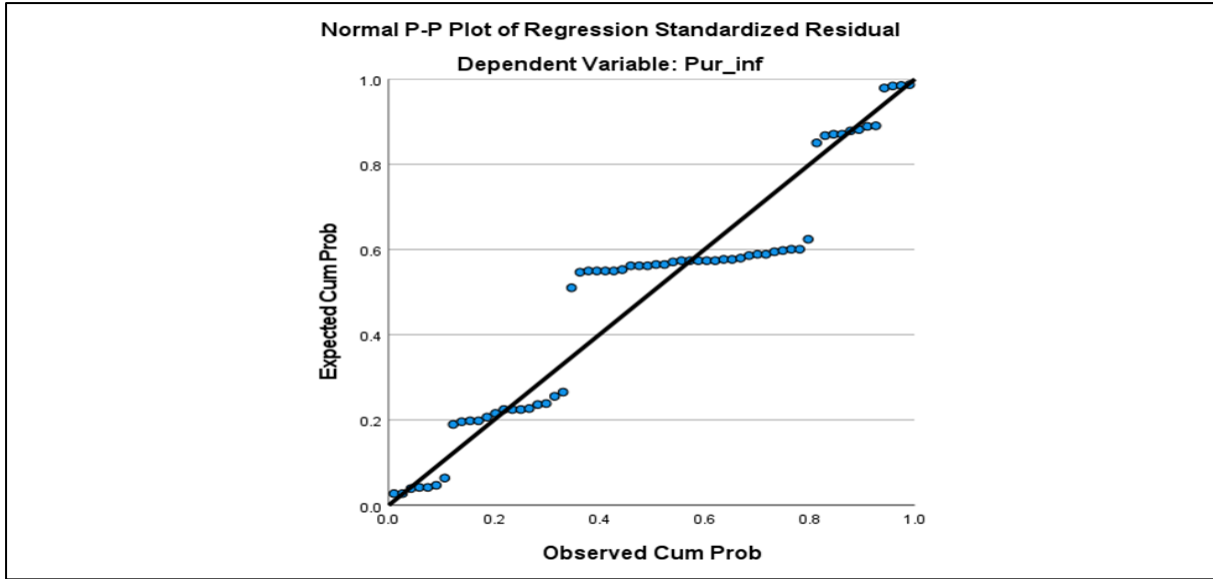


Figure 1: Normal P-P Plot

The Normal P-P Plot of regression standardized residuals is used to check the assumption of normality. In the graph, the points are approximately aligned along the diagonal line, which indicates that the residuals are normally distributed. This suggests that the normality assumption of

regression analysis is satisfied. Therefore, the regression model is appropriate for further interpretation.

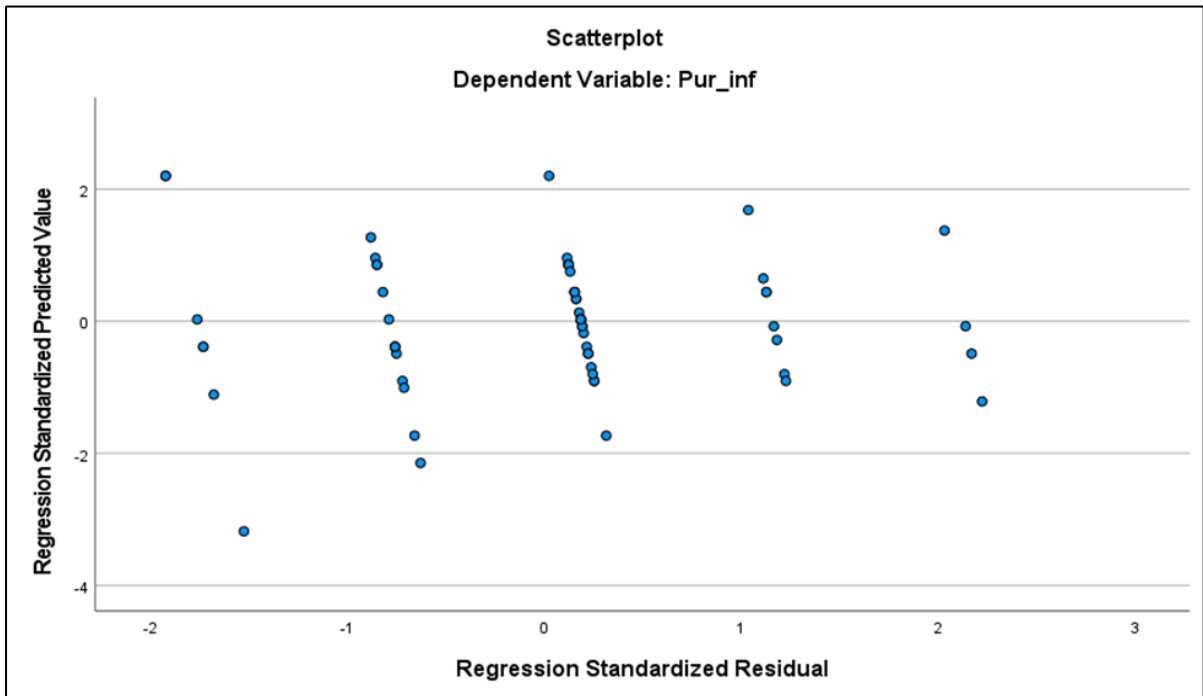


Figure 2: Scatter Plot

The scatter plot between standardized residuals and predicted values is used to check the assumption of homoscedasticity.

The points in the graph are randomly scattered around the horizontal axis without forming any clear pattern. This

indicates that the variance of residuals is constant across all predicted values. Hence, there is no issue of heteroscedasticity, and the regression model assumptions are satisfied.

The analysis confirms that the data is reliable (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.739) and suitable for further examination. However, the regression results show that Social Media Marketing does not have a statistically significant impact on Consumer Purchase Behaviour ($p = 0.566$). The model demonstrates very low explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.006$), indicating that other factors beyond social media play a more important role in influencing purchase decisions.

Overall, the findings suggest that while social media may influence consumer perceptions, it is not a strong predictor of actual purchase behaviour in this study.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study examines how social media marketing has influenced buying behaviours of Generation Z. The impact of social media marketing on purchase behaviour is not just based on the amount of exposure a person receives to a brand's content, but also on the level of trust created and authenticity associated with that brand, as well as the level of engagement with the brand.

Gen Z are heavily influenced by their peers and other users of a product or a brand, and as such, brands must develop relationships with their audience rather than rely solely on traditional advertising to attract customers to their product.

The shift in power from brands to consumers and the increasing importance of being perceived as authentic by consumers has made authenticity the newest and most valuable form of currency in contemporary marketing.

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