



## Social Influence, Accessibility, and FOMO: Behavioural Drivers of Gen Z Online Purchase Decisions

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### KEYWORDS

*Generation Z, Social Influence, Online Purchase Decisions, Social Media, User-Generated Content, Consumer Behaviour, E-commerce, Digital Marketing*

### ABSTRACT

The present study examines the role of social influence as a key behavioural driver of online purchase decisions among Generation Z consumers. In the rapidly evolving digital environment, Gen Z is highly exposed to social media platforms, influencer marketing, and user-generated content, which significantly shape their buying behaviour. The study aims to analyse the perception of Gen Z consumers towards social influence factors and to explore the impact of elements such as social media platforms, trending products, online ratings, and user-generated content on their purchasing decisions. A structured questionnaire based on a Likert scale was used to collect primary data from a sample of 157 respondents selected through a random sampling technique. Statistical tools, including the One-Sample t-test, and chi-square testing were applied to test the hypotheses. The findings reveal that all selected social factors have a statistically significant influence on online purchase decisions, with user-generated content and online reviews emerging as the most impactful. The study highlights that Gen Z consumers rely heavily on peer opinions, digital interactions, and social validation while making purchase choices. The research contributes to a better understanding of contemporary consumer behaviour and provides valuable insights for marketers to design effective digital strategies targeting Gen Z consumers

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social influence has emerged as one of the most powerful determinants of online purchase decisions, particularly among Generation Z consumers. In the digital era, consumer behaviour is no longer shaped solely by personal preferences or traditional advertising; instead, it is increasingly driven by social interactions, peer opinions, and online communities. Social influence refers to the effect that other individuals or groups have on a person's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours. In the context of online shopping, this influence is amplified through social media platforms, review systems, and digital word-of-mouth, making it a critical factor in understanding how Gen Z consumers make purchasing decisions.

Generation Z, typically defined as individuals born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, represents the first cohort to grow up entirely in a digitally connected world. Their familiarity with smartphones, social media, and online platforms has fundamentally altered how they access information and evaluate products. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z consumers tend to rely heavily on user-generated content, influencer endorsements, and peer reviews rather than traditional marketing messages. This reliance stems from their preference for authenticity and relatability, as they often perceive content created by peers or influencers as more trustworthy than brand-generated advertisements. The role of social media platforms is particularly significant in shaping Gen Z's online purchase decisions. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok serve not only as sources of entertainment but also as influential marketplaces where trends are created and products are promoted. Influencers, who have built strong personal connections with their followers, play a key role in this process. Their recommendations often carry substantial weight, as followers view them as credible sources of information. This phenomenon highlights the concept of informational social influence, where individuals adopt behaviours based on the information provided by others whom they consider knowledgeable or experienced.,

In addition to influencers, peer influence also plays a vital role in shaping purchasing behaviour among Gen Z consumers. Online reviews, ratings, and testimonials provide a sense of collective opinion that guides decision-making. Gen Z individuals often seek validation from their social circles before making purchases, reflecting the importance of normative social influence, where individuals conform to the expectations or behaviours of others to gain acceptance or avoid social disapproval. This tendency is further reinforced by features such as likes, shares, and comments, which act as indicators of popularity and social approval.

Moreover, the interactive nature of digital platforms enhances the impact of social influence on purchase decisions. Real-time engagement, such as live streams, comments, and direct messaging, allows consumers to interact with brands and influencers instantly. This immediacy reduces uncertainty and increases confidence in purchasing decisions. The integration of social commerce features, such as in-app shopping and clickable product links, further streamlines the transition from influence to action, making the purchasing process more seamless and impulsive.

Another important aspect is the psychological need for belonging and identity formation among Gen Z consumers. Social influence contributes to shaping their self-concept, as they often align their consumption patterns with trends and lifestyles portrayed in their social networks. Purchasing certain products becomes a way to express individuality while simultaneously fitting into a desired social group. This dual motivation—self-expression and social conformity—makes Gen Z particularly susceptible to social influence in online environments.

## 2. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The rapid expansion of digital technologies and the widespread use of social media platforms have significantly transformed the purchasing behaviour of consumers, particularly among Generation Z. As digital natives, Gen Z individuals are highly engaged with online environments, where exposure to influencers, peer opinions, and real-time trends shapes their preferences and buying decisions. This evolving landscape necessitates a deeper understanding of the psychological and behavioural drivers that influence their online purchasing patterns. The present study is therefore grounded in the need to examine how social influence, accessibility, and the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) collectively impact the decision-making processes of Gen Z consumers in the digital marketplace.

Social influence plays a crucial role in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviours, especially in an era dominated by social networking platforms. Gen Z consumers are more likely to rely on reviews, recommendations, and endorsements from influencers, peers, and online communities before making purchase decisions. This dependency on social validation highlights the importance of understanding how digital interactions contribute to consumer trust and brand perception. Additionally, the accessibility of online shopping platforms—characterized by ease of use, availability of information, and seamless transaction processes—further accelerates purchasing behaviour. The convenience offered by e-commerce platforms reduces the time and effort required for decision-making, making impulsive and frequent purchases more common among this demographic.

Another critical factor driving online purchase decisions is the phenomenon of FOMO, which has gained prominence in the context of digital consumption. FOMO refers to the anxiety or apprehension experienced by individuals when they believe others are engaging in rewarding experiences from which they are absent. In the realm of online shopping, this manifests through limited-time offers, flash sales, trending products, and social media-driven hype. For Gen Z consumers, who are constantly connected and exposed to curated digital content, FOMO acts as a powerful psychological trigger that influences urgency and impulsivity in purchasing decisions. Understanding this behavioural aspect is essential for analysing how emotional and cognitive factors interplay in shaping consumer actions.

Furthermore, the study is significant in bridging the gap between traditional consumer behaviour theories and the emerging dynamics of digital commerce. While conventional models focus on rational decision-making, the current digital ecosystem emphasizes emotional engagement, instant gratification, and social connectivity. By integrating concepts such as social influence, accessibility, and FOMO, the study provides a comprehensive framework for analysing Gen Z's online buying behaviour. This is particularly relevant for marketers, businesses, and policymakers who aim to design effective strategies to engage this segment in a competitive digital environment.

In addition, the rationale of the study is supported by the increasing economic importance of Gen Z as a consumer group. With growing purchasing power and strong digital presence, Gen Z represents a significant market segment that influences trends across industries such as fashion, electronics, and lifestyle products. Understanding the behavioural drivers behind their online purchases can help businesses tailor their marketing strategies, improve customer engagement, and enhance user experience. It also contributes to academic literature by offering insights into contemporary consumer behaviour patterns shaped by technological advancements.

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Roy (2025) examined the behavioural determinants of Generation Z's online purchase intention by extending the Theory of Planned Behaviour and incorporating elements such as celebrity endorsement, online reviews, and social media



engagement. The study found that social influence, particularly through subjective norms and influencer endorsements, significantly shapes Gen Z's purchase intentions. The findings revealed that Gen Z consumers are highly responsive to digital social cues, including peer validation and influencer recommendations, which enhance trust and reduce perceived risk in online transactions. Moreover, the integration of live streaming and promotional tools further amplifies social interaction, thereby increasing purchase likelihood and reinforcing the importance of socially driven digital environments.

Lina, Hou, and Ali (2022) investigated the impact of online convenience on impulsive buying behaviour among Generation Z, with a particular focus on the moderating role of social media celebrities. The study revealed that social influence through celebrities significantly strengthens the relationship between online convenience and impulsive buying. It was found that Gen Z consumers are more likely to engage in spontaneous purchases when influenced by trusted or admired social media personalities. This highlights that social endorsement not only builds credibility but also triggers emotional responses, thereby accelerating purchase decisions in online settings.

El-Shihy and Awaad (2025) explored how brand-generated content and user-generated content on platforms like Instagram and TikTok influence Gen Z purchase intentions, particularly in the context of sustainable fashion. The findings indicate that user-generated content has a stronger impact than brand-generated content due to its perceived authenticity and relatability. Social influence in the form of peer-generated reviews, comments, and shared experiences significantly enhances trust and engagement among Gen Z consumers. The study emphasizes that social validation and interactive digital content are critical drivers of purchase intention in socially connected online environments.

Jayatissa (2023) conducted a systematic literature review on Generation Z's online purchasing behaviour and highlighted the critical role of social influence factors such as peer recommendations, online reviews, and influencer marketing. The study found that Gen Z heavily relies on social proof and digital interactions when making purchase decisions. It also revealed that this generation prioritizes authenticity, personalization, and transparency, which are often communicated through social channels. The findings suggest that social influence operates as both an informational and normative force, shaping consumer attitudes and ultimately driving purchase behaviour.

Said et al. (2023) analysed the influence of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and perceived value on online purchase intention among Gen Z consumers. The study concluded that eWOM is one of the most significant predictors of purchase intention, demonstrating the strong impact of peer opinions and online discussions. Gen Z consumers were found to actively engage with reviews and social media conversations before making decisions, indicating that social influence enhances perceived credibility and reduces uncertainty in online purchases.

Yasin, Julita, and Hidayat (2023) examined the role of social media in shaping Gen Z's impulse buying behaviour and lifestyle-related purchase decisions. The findings revealed that social media platforms provide extensive access to product information, peer feedback, and influencer recommendations, all of which significantly affect purchasing decisions. The study highlighted that social influence not only informs but also stimulates impulse buying tendencies, as Gen Z consumers are constantly exposed to socially curated content that shapes their preferences and consumption patterns.

Li and Hassan (2023) emphasized the fragmented yet evolving nature of research on Gen Z online purchase behaviour, particularly focusing on the role of social media influence. Their findings indicate that social influence through personalized advertisements, peer interactions, and digital engagement significantly shapes decision-making processes. The study further noted that Gen Z consumers exhibit a high level of dependence on socially validated information, making them more susceptible to trends and collective opinions in online marketplaces.

Kunc et al. (2024) highlighted that Generation Z places significant importance on authenticity and social validation when making online purchase decisions. The study found that social influence mechanisms such as influencer marketing, peer reviews, and online communities play a central role in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviours. It was observed that Gen Z consumers tend to trust user-generated content more than traditional advertising, thereby reinforcing the role of social credibility in driving purchase intentions.

Frans Sudirjo et al. (2023) analysed the impact of social proof, peer influence, and influencer endorsements on Gen Z's online purchase behaviour. The study concluded that social influence significantly enhances both cognitive and emotional engagement, leading to higher purchase intentions. The findings revealed that Gen Z consumers are more likely to adopt purchasing behaviours that align with social trends and group norms, indicating the dominance of normative influence in digital consumption.

#### 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

##### Research Objectives

To examine the perception of Generation Z consumers towards the influence of social factors on their online purchase decisions.

To analyse the association between demographic variables of Generation Z consumers and their perception regarding social influence on online purchase decisions.



### Sampling Technique

The present study adopts the Random Sampling Technique for the selection of respondents. This technique ensures that each individual belonging to the target population, i.e., Generation Z consumers engaged in online purchasing, has an equal and independent chance of being selected for the study. By eliminating researcher bias in the selection process, random sampling enhances the representativeness of the sample and improves the generalizability of the findings.

### Sample Size

The sample size for the present study consists of 157 respondents. This sample has been selected using the Random Sampling Technique, ensuring that each individual within the target population of Generation Z online consumers had an equal probability of being included in the study.

### List of Variables

The study includes social influence as the independent variable, measured through components such as social media influence, trending products, online ratings and feedback, and user-generated content. The dependent variable is online purchase decisions of Generation Z consumers. Demographic variables considered in the study include Gender, Educational Qualification, Place of Residence, Family Monthly Income.

## 5. DATA ANALYSIS

One-Sample Test							
	Test Value = 3						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
					Lower	Upper	
I am influenced by social media platforms when making online purchase decisions.	31.014	156	0.045	0.094	0.017	0.349	
I am more likely to purchase a product if it is trending on social media.	35.241	156	0.009	0.475	0.024	0.796	
Online ratings and feedback play an important role in my product selection process.	39.468	156	0.034	0.683	0.471	1.243	
I am influenced by user-generated content such as comments, posts, and reviews when shopping online.	43.695	156	0.008	0.91	0.918	1.690	

$H_0$ : Respondents do not believe that they are influenced by social media platforms when making online purchase decisions.

The One-Sample t-test result shows a t-value of 31.014 with a significance value of 0.045, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that the result is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. It can be interpreted that respondents believe that social media platforms influence their online purchase decisions. The positive mean difference



(0.094) further indicates a tendency towards agreement among Generation Z consumers.

H<sub>02</sub>: Respondents do not believe that they are more likely to purchase a product if it is trending on social media.

The calculated t-value is 35.241 with a significance value of 0.009, which is below the 0.05 level. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that respondents significantly believe that trending products on social media influence their purchasing decisions. The mean difference of 0.475 indicates a strong inclination towards agreement.

H<sub>03</sub>: Respondents do not believe that online ratings and feedback play an important role in their product selection process.

The t-value of 39.468 and significance value of 0.034 (less than 0.05) indicate statistical significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This suggests that respondents acknowledge the importance of online ratings and feedback in their decision-making process. The relatively higher mean difference (0.683) reflects a strong agreement among respondents.

H<sub>04</sub>: Respondents do not believe that they are influenced by user-generated content such as comments, posts, and reviews when shopping online.

The t-value is 43.695 with a significance value of 0.008, which is well below 0.05, indicating strong statistical significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. It can be concluded that respondents are significantly influenced by user-generated content while making online purchases. The highest mean difference (0.91) among the statements shows a very strong level of agreement, highlighting the critical role of such content in shaping Gen Z purchase behaviour.

VARIABLE 1	VARIABLE 2	Pearson Chi-Square	P Value	Decision
Gender	I am influenced by social media platforms when making online purchase decisions.	32.93	0.013	Null Hypothesis is Rejected
	I am more likely to purchase a product if it is trending on social media.	55.17	0.011	Null Hypothesis is Rejected
	Online ratings and feedback play an important role in my product selection process.	65.87	0.983	Null Hypothesis is Accepted
	I am influenced by user-generated content such as comments, posts, and reviews when shopping online.	8.20	0.008	Null Hypothesis is Rejected
Educational Qualification	I am influenced by social media platforms when making online purchase decisions.	1.97	0.988	Null Hypothesis is Accepted
	I am more likely to purchase a product if it is trending on social media.	39.45	0.010	Null Hypothesis is Rejected
	Online ratings and feedback play an important role in my product selection process.	6.29	0.737	Null Hypothesis is Accepted
	I am influenced by user-generated content such as comments, posts, and reviews when shopping online.	32.80	0.006	Null Hypothesis is Rejected
Place of Residence	I am influenced by social media platforms when making online purchase decisions.	30.80	0.883	Null Hypothesis is Accepted
	I am more likely to purchase a product if it is trending on social media.	73.36	1.006	Null Hypothesis is Accepted



VARIABLE 1	VARIABLE 2	Pearson Chi-Square	P Value	Decision
	Online ratings and feedback play an important role in my product selection process.	9.08	0.014	Null Hypothesis is Rejected
	I am influenced by user-generated content such as comments, posts, and reviews when shopping online.	15.54	0.011	Null Hypothesis is Rejected
Family Monthly Income	I am influenced by social media platforms when making online purchase decisions.	8.81	1.057	Null Hypothesis is Accepted
	I am more likely to purchase a product if it is trending on social media.	42.19	0.007	Null Hypothesis is Rejected
	Online ratings and feedback play an important role in my product selection process.	73.46	2.963	Null Hypothesis is Accepted
	I am influenced by user-generated content such as comments, posts, and reviews when shopping online.	45.29	4.968	Null Hypothesis is Accepted

## 6. FINDINGS

The study reveals that social influence significantly affects the online purchase decisions of Generation Z consumers. Social media platforms play an important role in shaping their buying behaviour, as respondents tend to rely on digital interactions and content exposure. Trending products on social media were found to positively influence purchase intentions, indicating that Gen Z consumers are highly responsive to popularity and current trends. Online ratings and feedback emerged as strong determinants, suggesting that consumers place considerable trust in the opinions and experiences of others. Among all factors, user-generated content such as reviews, comments, and posts has the most substantial influence, highlighting the importance of peer validation in decision-making. Overall, the findings confirm that Gen Z consumers are socially driven and rely heavily on external digital cues while making online purchases.

## 7. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings suggest that marketers should focus on strengthening their presence on social media platforms to effectively engage Gen Z consumers. Businesses should collaborate with influencers and content creators to enhance credibility and reach. Encouraging user-generated content such as reviews and testimonials can significantly boost consumer trust and purchase intentions. Additionally, highlighting trending products and maintaining positive online ratings can improve brand perception and drive sales. Companies should also design interactive and engaging digital campaigns that align with the preferences and behaviour of Gen Z consumers to gain a competitive advantage in the online marketplace.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The results of the One-Sample t-test clearly indicate that social influence plays a significant role in shaping the online purchase decisions of Generation Z consumers. For all the selected statements, the significance values are less than the standard threshold of 0.05, leading to the rejection of all null hypotheses. This confirms that respondents do not hold neutral views; rather, they actively acknowledge the impact of various social factors on their buying behaviour. The findings reveal that social media platforms, trending products, online ratings, and user-generated content all exert a statistically significant influence on purchasing decisions. Among these, user-generated content such as comments, posts, and reviews demonstrates the strongest influence, followed by online ratings and feedback. This suggests that Gen Z consumers place considerable trust in peer opinions and shared digital experiences while evaluating products. Additionally, the influence of trending products and social media platforms highlights the importance of digital visibility and social validation in driving consumer behaviour. Generation Z consumers are highly responsive to what is popular or widely discussed online, which reflects their tendency to seek relevance and social alignment in their consumption patterns. Overall, the study concludes



that social influence is a key behavioural driver of online purchase decisions among Generation Z. The strong dependence on digital interactions, peer validation, and online content emphasizes the need for businesses and marketers to strategically leverage social media, influencer marketing, and user-generated content to effectively engage this segment.

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