A Comparatives Study of How Social Media Influences The Buying Motivation of Gen Y and Gen Z

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Abstract

This study primarily conducted an in-depth investigation to obtain information about factors that make the young generation purchase smartphones influenced by social media. The analysis focused on the millennial or the 'Me' generation (Gen Y) and the 'True' generation (Gen Z). These two generations represent the present-day dominant youth cohort. This qualitative study utilized the technique of conducting semi-structured interviews for data collection. No differences were found in Gen Z's and Y's smartphone purchasing motivations. The buying decisions of both generations were equally and materially influenced by genuine reviews on social media, especially content in the form of social media live streams such as YouTube and TikTok videos, especially when well-known influencers conveyed pertinent information. The interviews revealed the distinctive features of the two generations studied: they are rational in making purchase decisions and consider both quality and price. Unlike Gen Y, Gen Z does not like to compare new products against other or previous products because it takes advantage of its proximity to the manufacturing company to obtain adequate information about a product. Practically, it can be a reference for smartphone retailers to better understand youth purchase behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Technology advancements have exerted a global impact on many existential elements. It is widely acknowledged that social media has become a critical component of the retail industry, influencing consumer purchase behaviors. Social media has now spread from developed countries to developing countries (Ramadan & Aita, 2018). Young people are trendy; they seek updated information about new products from numerous sources and are likely to share this knowledge with their peers. Brand awareness and image are thought to influence consumer decision-making (Zhang & Su, 2011). The Internet assists the human desire to look for and purchase new items and services (Ganesh et al, 2010).

Online media channels allow connections to be forged between brands and customers. Therefore, they could represent effective strategies for retailers to enhance their profits and simultaneously amplify customer delight (Yazdanparast et al, 2016). Customer involvement is essential for the sustenance of effective company-customer connections and, ultimately, for inviting consumers to purchase products (Challagalla et al, 2009). Online promotions effected through online product reviews could disseminate product-related information and persuade customers to seek a product innovation. As elucidated by the diffusion of innovation theory, online reviews help customers attain experience and knowledge about a product, deliver credible reassurance, reduce risk, and mitigate the uncertainty of customers about adopting a new brand (Apanasevic & Arvidsson, 2010).

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The present study investigates the different perceptions of two cohorts, Gen Y and Gen Z, to determine the factors driving the social-media-influenced smartphone purchasing decision processes of young consumers (Guan et al, 2022). The comprehensive findings obtained by this study bridge the gaps in the existing literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Social Media

In a practical sense, social media is a collection of software-based digital technologies presented as applications and websites that provide a digital environment for users. Social media is used to send and receive digital content or information through several types of online social networks. In short, social media are platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. For marketers, social media is used as a digital marketing channel to communicate with consumers through advertising (Appel et al, 2020).

Social media has become a major domain in social and cultural life because consumers receive a lot of information, share content and aspects of their lives with others, and receive information about the world around them (Appel et al, 2020 ; Zhang et al, 2023). Conduct research aimed at exploring and examining why and how consumers have purchase intentions.

in online social media marketing, especially TikTok. The research highlights the dual effects of consumer flow and emotions in this context and deeply uncovers the underlying mechanisms. The research findings showed that hedonic value and utilitarian value each have a positive effect on purchase intention. Emotional enjoyment mediates the relationship between utilitarian value and purchase intention as well as between hedonic value and purchase intention. Flow experience positively moderates the relationship between hedonic value and emotional pleasure and between the emotional value of pleasure and purchase intention.

Along with the development of social media, Social Media Celebrities (SMC) are exist and contribute some pivotal things for social media marketing. The research examines the influence of Social Media Celebrities on followers' purchase intentions and the moderating influence of Social Media Platform use on the relationships between (a) SMC and followers' purchase intentions, (b) para-social relationships (PSR) and purchase intentions, and (c) identification and purchase intentions. The findings reveal that SMC has no significant effect on followers' purchase intentions directly. The research finds that this influence is exerted through PSR and identification. The results further indicate that the use of SMP moderates the influence of PSR and identification on purchase intent.

Young Generation
Z Generation

Generation Z are individuals born in the decade after the advent of the World Wide Web, from 1997 to 2012. Currently, Generation Z is mostly made up of children or adolescents (Databoks.katadata, 2023). As consumers, Gen Z has unique characteristics, namely: 1) Focus on innovation, 2) Insistence on comfort, 3) Basic desire for security, and 4) Tendency to escape. Generation Z has an innate comfort with cyberspace and the Internet. Gen Z is also called the digital native generation (Liu et al., 2021). Several experts confirm that Generation Z is superior in carrying out their roles both in the real and virtual world. Generation Z also has various characteristics specific to information such as having the ability to search, evaluate, and share information easily. Then, the processing of this communication takes place continuously due to the continuous use of communication devices and social media (Suzianti et al, 2023).

Most of Gen Z's daily life (56%) involves using the internet n takes place continuously due to the continuous use of communication devices and social media (Suzianti et al, 2023). So, this generation has high

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expectations for technology products, and innovation is something that must be provided (Mason et al., 2022); (Wood n.d.). Generation Z has experienced many things in their short lives that have been influenced by political, social, technological, and economic changes (Mason et al., 2022) . Then, this technology greatly influences Gen Z's social life as well as other aspects such as physical well-being, the learning process, and social and professional identity (Mason et al., 2022). For Gen Z, social media is the main method for maintaining connectivity with other people for Gen Z users, especially during the lockdown due to COVID-19 (Liu et al, 2021).

Liu et al. (2021) Highlighting Gen Z behavior in understanding the potential dark side of social media use in the UK during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. Research findings reveal that excessive COVID-19 information via social media harms psychological well-being. Then, the perception that information overload increases fatigue and fear of COVID-19 on social media, which in turn increases users' intention to stop using social media.

Generation Y (The Millennial)

The millennial generation was born between 1982 and 2000 according to the United States Census Bureau. The millennial generation is synonymous with seeking information through the media (Bahfiarti & Arianto, 2022). Generation Y and Generation Z are often combined and have many characteristics in common, especially an understanding of technology and a level of comfort with the global world. However, Generation Z will likely show some strong differences in consumer orientation from Generation Y as these individuals come of age during a period of economic recession (Wood, n.d.). Millennial are described as individuals who are selfish, technologically savvy, environmentally conscious, and spend a lot of money to meet their needs (Gurău, 2012). With the awareness that the millennial generation is an important geo-demographic segment to target, marketers

have tried to understand the attitudinal and behavioral characteristics of this millennial generation (Purani et al., 2019).

The role of social media in consumer purchase decisions

Social media can increase brand engagement, emotional responses, and word-of-mouth (WOM) communication (Hudson et al, 2015). Online channels are more accessible, educational, and appealing than offline channels, and retailers can create relationships with their customers notwithstanding geographical distances (Chen et al, 2011).

In the early stages, consumers know there is a new product, but they have little information, and in this phase, they are not interested in looking further. When they have the information, they enter the "persuasion stage"; they start to be interested in finding out more, comparing features, functions, and experiences of other users (testability). Next, in the decision-making stage, they consider the changing concept of the innovation, its advantages and disadvantages, and decide whether to adopt or reject the innovation. Social media is very important as a medium for conveying information to marketers and potential, actual, and end users. The use of social media will continue to be a sustainable trend for young consumers (Guan et al, 2022).

METHODS

In-depth interviews were conducted with participants based on their behaviors, perceptions, and traits. The interviews aimed to more intensively grasp the ideas of the respondents vis-à-vis the research questions. The social perceptions of the respondents and the intrinsic meanings they assigned to items were ascertained through the qualitative research techniques of observation and participant discussions. Fontana, A., & Frey (2000) state that interviews represent one of the most common and successful approaches to studying societies. Varied types of interviews may be conducted and can

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Table 1. Description of Participants

Gen-Y

Ref	*Gender*	*Income Level (mio)*	*Occupation*	*Social media time (hours)*	*Type of smartphone*	*Purchase channel*	*Motivation To use*	*Information source*
I1	*Male*	*4-5*	*Employee*	*2-3*	*Android*	*Offline*	*Quality, price*	*Ig & Yuotube*
I2	*Female*	*9-15*	*Employee*	*2-3*	*Iphone*	*Offline*	*Quality, price, pride*	*Ig & Yuotube*
I3	*Female*	*4-5*	*Employee*	*3-4*	*Iphone*	*Offline*	*Quality, price, pride*	*Ig & Yuotube*
I4	*Female*	*4-5*	*Employee*	*3-4*	*Iphone*	*Offline*	*Quality, price, pride*	*Ig & Yuotube*
I5	*Male*	*4-5*	*Employee*	*> 4*	*Android*	*Offline*	*Quality, price*	*Google, Youtube*

Gen-z

Ref	*Gender*	*Income Level (mio)*	*Occupation*	*Social media time (hours)*	*Type of smartphone*	*Purchase channel*	*Motivation To use*	*Information source*
I1	*Female*	*< 1*	*Student*	*5-10*	*Android*	*Online*	*Features Quality,*	*Parents, social media*
I2	*Female*	*< 1*	*Student*	*6-10*	*Android*	*Offline*	*Quality (storage)*	*Ig & tik tok*
I3	*Female*	*< 1*	*Student*	*< 5*	*Android*	*Offline*	*Quality (storage*	*Ig & tik tok*
I4	*Female*	*< 1*	*Student*	*< 5*	*Android*	*Offline*	*Quality (storage)*	*X & tik tok*
I5	*Female*	*< 1*	*Student*	*< 5*	*Android*	*Offline*	*Quality , features*	*Youtube*

Source: Researcher processed (2023)

render discrete effects based on the objectives, objects, and scales of specific studies. In-depth interviews require the selection of suitable respondents through intentional sampling to elicit the motives, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and opinions of the target cohort (Barbie, 2001). The present study investigated the perspectives of informants classified into two generational groups, Gen Y and Gen Z. In so doing, it purposed to understand the smartphone-buying motivations of these cohorts and aimed to investigate whether social media channels influenced their purchasing decisions. This study enabled the discovery of similarities and differences in the purchasing decisions of young consumers belonging to two different generations. The interview questions were categorized into three parts:

1. Screening questions and background information, including brands, reasons for purchasing, sources of information, and where the respondents purchased the product.

2. Factors influencing smartphone purchasing behaviors through different distribution channels.

3. Demographic information. Data were collected in September 2023 through semi-structured interviews conducted in Surabaya.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study's respondents comprised individuals who actively use social media and can be classified as Gen Z or Gen Y. Gen Y denotes the generation of people born between 1981 and 1996; Gen Z individuals are born between 1997 and 2012 (Dimmock, 2019).These two generational groups are considered to represent the younger generation and are specifically identified as potential buyers of smartphone products. Gen Y and Z exhibit distinct purchasing behaviors.

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The millennial generation, or Gen Y, is also known as the "Me" generation. This generation comprises individuals born amidst globalization, economic stability, the information age, and the Internet. As consumers, members of this group are self-oriented and use their personal experiences as their primary purchasing references. They attempt to seek comparative information to determine their best option. Gen Z, or the "true" generation, comprises youngsters born amidst technological advances and the proliferation of the Internet. They are accustomed from birth to advanced technology. In terms of their purchase decisions, they denote true consumers who are not easily influenced. They can attain the actual meaning of a product because their exhaustive knowledge of goods makes them more rational. This consumer cohort is described as unique, unlimited, and ethical (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

Discussion

The discussion and findings noted in this section are based on a survey of two generational groups, Gen Z and Gen Y, which are deemed to represent the youth.

Brand image and interaction

The interview results revealed several unique phenomena for evaluation: for instance, young consumers find it very difficult to remain loyal to one brand because they care about the assessments of other people who influence them (Leeraphong & Mardjo, 2013). Companies can stimulate generational purchases by youth through social media activities (Rehman et al., 2017) designed to increase the popularity or awareness of their brands (Yazdanparast et al., 2016).

"A genuine review on social media, especially on TikTok or Twitter, can convince me and make me intend to buy a product." (Informant 4, Gen Z).

"Live reviews of smartphones can convince me more than other reviews" (Informant 5, Gen Z).

"I consider the features, functions, and prices of smartphones as important for my buying intentions" (informant 1, Gen Z).

"Intense interactions between companies, especially smartphone manufacturers, can increase my knowledge about their products, and affect my willingness and buying intentions." (informant 2, Gen Z).

Young customers classified as Gen Z are glued to social media platforms and prefer purchasing goods and services online (Ng et al., 2019). Young consumers are screen junkies: social media platforms are as important to them as breathing because they live in a world that accords them with constant and instant access to social media and the Internet (Duffett, 2017).

"The Internet and smartphones are everything to me. I can't survive for a day without gadgets and online access. I like to play games online and I am addicted to this pursuit."

"I use gadgets not only for games but also to support my digital drawing hobby. That is why I need a super smartphone to support all my needs."

"For me, the quality of a smartphone is more important than its style." (Informant 5, Gen Z).

"…and to avoid my previous mistake, I will first search Google for as much information as possible. Then, to learn more about its performance and specifications, I look for brands or product reviews on YouTube." (Informant 5, Gen Y).

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"An honest review by the influencer will influence me and motivate my intentions to buy the product" (Informant 2, Gen Z).

"Watching an online review on YouTube grants me knowledge and experience about the brands from the You Tuber, which makes me less uncertain and more prepared in deciding about the product that I will buy in the future." (Informant 5, Gen Z).

"I don't necessarily buy the brand that I currently use, I will consider other brands too, if there is one that has better quality and the price is right." (Informant 5, Gen Y).

New product pre-announcements

Young people are interested in new products when they are introduced, but this attention doesn't always turn into a purchase. The interview results indicate that when it comes to buying gadgets, both Generation Z and Generation Y remain making rational choices. They take consideration of the new device's needs and cost.

"Having initial information regarding the launch of a new product can influence my intentions to buy, but I also consider my needs and financial conditions before buying a product." (Informant 1, Gen Z).

"When the announcement of the launch of a smartphone product coincides with my needs, I plan to buy it. Hence, I will consider it." (Informant 4 Gen Y)

"If my favorite brand launches a new product, I can become interested but will not necessarily buy it as long as my present smartphone can still be used" (informant 1, Gen Z).
"If I have to buy a new smartphone, I will repurchase the same brand of smartphone that I currently use, but things will be different once I have enough money to buy a better quality smartphone. Then, maybe I will buy the superior product." (Informant 4, Gen Z).

"The new product launch makes me want to compare the smartphone with the product I currently use from that brand, but I usually do this exercise whenever I plan to buy a new smartphone." (Informant 5, Gen Y).

The technology-savvy younger generation is intimately acquainted with the available devices. They have access to numerous options to expand their awareness of new brands. They can personalize the looks and styles of products. They would like to spend more money on products that match their preferences. In addition to experiential consumption, they advocate for quality and value excellence during decision-making (Guan et al, 2022).

According to the interviews, advertisements in electronic media or on social media do not always impact consumers' decisions to buy, but surprisingly, we also discovered that influencers play a big role in persuasion, especially when it comes to younger consumers. Thus, the ideal approach to guide young people's decisions may be through the use of influencers. Therefore, retailers must find and invite the best influencers to communicate the qualities of their products.

Conclusion

This study compared the purchasing behaviors of the youth, as represented by Gen Z and Gen Y. The study's results revealed that both Gen Y and Z consider information obtained from social media in the form of reviews. Both generations trust live-streamed reviews found on YouTube or TikTok more than written reviews posted on social media. Reviews delivered directly by well-known influencers certainly influence

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decisions, especially the selections made by Gen Z. Surprisingly, this study found that the smartphone-buying behaviors of Gen Y are as rational as Gen Z. Both generations consider price as well as quality, contrary to the reports of a previous study conducted by Francis and Hoefel (2018). The purchasing behaviors of these two generations differed in a manner reported by Francis and Hoefel (2018) survey-based study. Gen Y is flagship-oriented and seeks excellence. Therefore, millennial like to compare new products with those they have used. However, Gen Z has access to another way of understanding products and takes advantage of its proximity to the manufacturing company to attain additional information about products that pique its interest.

Social media, including e-WOM and brand interactions, influence young generations during the information-collection stage of their decision-making processes (Hennig-Thurau et al, 2015). Social media can alter brand perceptions and impact young consumers' smartphone purchasing decisions.

Limitation & Future Research

The small sample of this study is attributed to the nature of qualitative research but can be cited as a limitation of this study. Future researchers should conduct empirical investigations and enlarge sample sizes to ensure that their results become more measurable and can be generalized. The theoretical contribution of this study broadens the scope of the scholarship on digital marketing, particularly about online customer purchase behaviors. The results of the present study can also help organizations devise more relevant strategies by better comprehending the behaviors exhibited by young consumers in the digital world.

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