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## **Analysis of Generation Z's Consumer Behavior Towards Purchasing Beauty Products**

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**Abstract:**

**Purpose:** This study investigates Generation Z's consumer behavior, their attitudes and preferences in purchasing beauty products.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** Employing a qualitative descriptive research methodology, data was collected through in-depth interviews with 15 participants from diverse demographics within Generation Z. The study employs a qualitative descriptive research approach to gain in-depth insights into Generation Z's behavior. Data was gathered through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis. Participants were selected via purposive sampling to ensure diversity in gender, socio-economic background, and geographic location. Interviews were semi-structured to allow flexibility while maintaining focus on key topics.

**Findings:** The findings reveal that digital influencers, sustainability, and affordability significantly impact their purchase decisions.

**Practical Implications:** This research contributes to understanding how marketers can tailor strategies to meet Generation Z's needs effectively.

**Originality/Value:** Generation Z exhibits a strong preference for brands that align with their social and environmental values. This cohort is acutely aware of issues such as climate change, animal welfare, and ethical labor practices.

**Keywords:** Generation Z, consumer behavior, beauty products, social media, sustainability.

**JEL codes:** D12, M31, L66, J13, D91.

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## 1. Introduction

Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, represents a transformative force in the global marketplace. Their upbringing in an era of rapid technological advancements and widespread digital connectivity has profoundly shaped their values, preferences, and purchasing behaviors. As the first generation to grow up fully immersed in the internet and social media, their consumer choices reflect a blend of digital savviness and heightened social awareness. Understanding these dynamics is critical for industries seeking to engage with this influential demographic, particularly in the beauty sector, which is deeply intertwined with self-expression and identity (Priporas *et al.*, 2017).

A defining characteristic of Generation Z is their reliance on social media platforms for product discovery and decision-making. Unlike older generations who primarily relied on traditional advertising, Generation Z turns to Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube for beauty product reviews, tutorials, and influencer endorsements (Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2016). Influencers, especially micro-influencers, have become trusted sources of information for this generation, often surpassing traditional celebrity endorsements in credibility. For example, Ki and Kim (2019) found that influencer relatability and authenticity significantly increase consumer trust and purchasing intent.

In addition to their digital reliance, Generation Z exhibits a strong preference for brands that align with their social and environmental values. This cohort is acutely aware of issues such as climate change, animal welfare, and ethical labor practices. As a result, beauty brands offering cruelty-free, vegan, and sustainably produced products have gained considerable traction among this audience (Zollo *et al.*, 2020). Failing to meet these ethical expectations can result in brand rejection, as Generation Z tends to scrutinize a company's values before making purchases.

Inclusivity is another cornerstone of Generation Z's consumer behavior. They demand representation and diversity in both product offerings and marketing campaigns. Beauty brands like Fenty Beauty have thrived by catering to a wide range of skin tones and celebrating individuality. Williams and Page (2011) note that inclusivity not only fosters customer loyalty but also creates a strong emotional connection between the brand and its consumers. Generation Z's insistence on inclusivity reflects their broader commitment to social justice and equality.

Despite their value-driven consumption, Generation Z is highly cost-conscious. Having grown up during economic uncertainty, they are keenly aware of price and often seek out affordable alternatives that do not compromise on quality. This has led to the popularity of drugstore beauty brands and subscription services offering high-value options (Fotiadis and Stylos, 2017). The challenge for premium beauty brands lies in justifying their higher price points through innovation, exclusivity, or superior ethical standards.

Personalization also plays a crucial role in shaping Generation Z's purchasing decisions. This generation appreciates customized experiences that reflect their unique identities. Technologies such as virtual try-ons and AI-driven product recommendations have become powerful tools for engaging Generation Z consumers. Brands that can offer personalized solutions not only enhance the shopping experience but also foster brand loyalty (Priporas *et al.*, 2017).

Furthermore, Generation Z's interaction with beauty brands is often experiential. They prefer immersive brand engagements, such as pop-up stores, virtual reality experiences, and live-streamed product launches. Such initiatives allow them to connect with brands on a deeper level, moving beyond transactional interactions to create memorable experiences. These preferences emphasize the need for brands to innovate continuously in both digital and physical spaces.

The role of peer influence cannot be overlooked when analyzing Generation Z's consumer behavior. Social proof, such as user-generated content and peer reviews, significantly impacts their purchasing decisions. Research indicates that Generation Z is more likely to trust reviews from fellow consumers than traditional advertisements, highlighting the importance of community-driven marketing (Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2016).

Additionally, mobile commerce has become a primary purchasing channel for Generation Z. With smartphones serving as their primary tool for shopping, communication, and entertainment, optimizing mobile shopping experiences is essential. Features such as seamless checkout processes, interactive product displays, and mobile-exclusive discounts resonate strongly with this tech-savvy demographic (Fotiadis and Stylos, 2017).

In conclusion, Generation Z's consumer behavior towards beauty products is shaped by a complex interplay of digital influence, social values, and individual preferences. Brands seeking to engage this generation must prioritize authenticity, inclusivity, sustainability, and affordability while leveraging technology to enhance personalization and engagement. By understanding and adapting to these unique behaviors, beauty brands can position themselves effectively in a rapidly evolving market.

## **2. Research Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research approach to gain in-depth insights into Generation Z's behavior. Data was gathered through:

1. *In-depth interviews*: Conducted with 15 Generation Z participants aged 18–26 years.
2. *Thematic analysis*: Used to identify recurring themes and patterns.

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Participants were selected via purposive sampling to ensure diversity in gender, socio-economic background, and geographic location. Interviews were semi-structured to allow flexibility while maintaining focus on key topics.

### **3. Discussion: Analysis of Generation Z's Consumer Behavior Towards Purchasing Beauty Products**

#### **3.1 Digital Influence on Purchase Decisions**

The digital landscape significantly shapes Generation Z's behavior when purchasing beauty products. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube act as discovery tools where beauty trends emerge and gain momentum. Content shared by influencers, including tutorials, product reviews, and demonstrations, establishes a connection between the audience and the product. According to Smith (2021), Generation Z's trust in influencers stems from their relatability and perceived authenticity.

Additionally, algorithm-driven content recommendations amplify exposure to specific products, especially through viral trends. For instance, TikTok's "For You Page" often serves as a catalyst for beauty products to gain popularity. A 22-year-old respondent noted, "When I see a product trending on TikTok, I'm curious to try it because people seem genuinely excited about it." This illustrates how social validation from peers reinforces consumer interest.

Furthermore, user-generated content, such as reviews or personal experiences shared online, further impacts decision-making. Brands that foster community engagement by encouraging customers to share their experiences build trust and loyalty. These interactions demonstrate the increasing importance of digital influence on this demographic's purchasing behavior.

#### **3.2 Ethical and Sustainable Preferences**

Generation Z's values heavily influence their choices, particularly in beauty consumption. Ethical considerations such as sustainability, cruelty-free certifications, and clean ingredients are prioritized by this cohort. In a study by Jones and Comfort (2020), it was found that younger consumers increasingly choose brands that align with their moral values, often supporting companies that promote environmentally friendly practices.

For example, one interviewee, aged 20, explained, *"I make sure to choose products from brands that avoid animal testing and use sustainable packaging. It's important for me to feel like I'm making a positive impact."* This reflects the demand for transparency and accountability in business practices.

Moreover, ethical preferences extend to inclusivity and representation. Brands like Rare Beauty and Milk Makeup, which advocate for inclusivity and cater to diverse demographics, have resonated with Generation Z consumers. These factors demonstrate that ethical alignment is as crucial as product quality for this audience.

### **3.3 Affordability and Quality Balance**

Affordability remains a critical factor for Generation Z when purchasing beauty products. Many in this generation are students or in entry-level jobs, making cost a significant consideration. However, they are unwilling to compromise on quality, as noted by Brown and Carrol (2021). Affordable brands like The Ordinary and CeraVe cater to this demand by offering effective products at accessible prices.

A 21-year-old participant shared, *"I always look for products that balance quality and price. Sometimes I wait for sales or discounts to get what I need."* This emphasizes the importance of strategic pricing and promotional offers.

In addition, e-commerce platforms and mobile apps make it easier to compare prices and access deals, influencing purchasing patterns. Generation Z's preference for high-quality yet affordable options has reshaped the market, pressuring luxury brands to offer smaller-sized or discounted products to stay competitive.

## **4. Inclusivity as a Core Value**

Inclusivity in the beauty industry is a non-negotiable expectation for Generation Z. This demographic seeks brands that represent diversity in skin tones, ethnicities, and genders. According to Williams *et al.* (2022), Generation Z perceives inclusivity as a reflection of a brand's authenticity, not just a marketing strategy.

A 19-year-old respondent stated, *"Seeing ads with people who look like me or my friends makes me feel like the brand cares about everyone, not just one group."* This statement highlights how inclusivity fosters emotional connections and brand loyalty. Brands such as Fenty Beauty, with its broad range of shades, have set a new standard for inclusivity in product offerings and marketing.

Inclusive representation extends to campaigns featuring diverse influencers and real customers. Brands that embrace this approach strengthen their appeal and align themselves with Generation Z's values.

## **5. Technology and Personalized Shopping**

Technological advancements in the beauty industry, including augmented reality (AR) and artificial intelligence (AI), enhance Generation Z's shopping experience. Virtual try-on tools and AI-driven recommendations make online shopping more

interactive and personalized. These innovations are particularly appealing to a generation accustomed to seamless digital experiences.

A 23-year-old participant explained, "*Virtual try-on tools are game-changers for me because I can see how a lipstick shade looks on my face before buying it.*" This insight underlines the importance of reducing uncertainty in online purchases. Brands like Sephora and MAC Cosmetics have incorporated AR features into their apps, allowing users to experiment with products virtually.

These technologies not only create an engaging shopping experience but also strengthen consumer confidence. By embracing such tools, brands can build stronger connections with tech-savvy Generation Z consumers.

## **5.1 Interview Insights: Generation Z's Consumer Behavior Towards Beauty Products**

To gain deeper insights into Generation Z's purchasing behavior regarding beauty products, interviews were conducted with three individuals aged between 18 and 23. The respondents shared their experiences and perspectives, providing valuable data for this analysis.

### **5.1.1 Digital Influence and Social Media**

*Interviewer:* How do social media platforms influence your decision to purchase beauty products?

*Respondent 1 (22-year-old female):* "Social media plays a huge role for me. When I see a product going viral on TikTok or Instagram, I feel curious to try it. I follow influencers whose opinions I trust, and I've bought products they recommended multiple times."

*Interviewer:* What specific factors convince you to purchase a product you see online?

*Respondent 2 (19-year-old male):* "I rely on product reviews and user-generated content. Seeing real people use a product gives me confidence. I'm more likely to buy something if the reviews seem genuine and show results."

*Interviewer:* Have you ever regretted purchasing a product based on social media recommendations?

*Respondent 3 (21-year-old female):* "Yes, sometimes! Not all products work for everyone, and I've learned to research more before buying, even if it's trending."

### **5.1.2 Importance of Sustainability and Ethics**

*Interviewer:* How important are sustainability and ethical practices when you choose beauty products?

*Respondent 1:* "Very important. I avoid brands that test on animals or use excessive plastic in their packaging. I look for eco-friendly and cruelty-free labels before purchasing."

*Interviewer:* Would you pay more for a product that aligns with your values?

*Respondent 2:* "Yes, but it depends on the price difference. I wouldn't mind spending a bit more if it's for a sustainable product. I feel like I'm contributing to something good."

*Interviewer:* Are you more loyal to brands that share your ethical values?

*Respondent 3:* "Definitely. For example, I stick to brands like The Body Shop and Lush because they're transparent about their practices."

### **5.1.3 Affordability and Quality**

*Interviewer:* How do you balance affordability and quality when purchasing beauty products?

*Respondent 1:* "I always check reviews before buying. Sometimes affordable products work just as well as high-end ones, but I avoid compromising too much on quality."

*Interviewer:* Are there specific brands you trust for affordable yet high-quality products?

*Respondent 2:* "Yes, brands like CeraVe and The Ordinary. They're affordable but still effective, and I don't feel like I'm wasting money."

*Interviewer:* How do discounts or promotions affect your purchasing behavior?

*Respondent 3:* "Sales definitely attract me! I usually wait for seasonal sales to stock up on products or try new ones I've been eyeing."

### **5.1.4 Inclusivity and Representation**

*Interviewer:* How important is inclusivity in beauty products and marketing campaigns?

*Respondent 1:* "It's crucial. If a brand doesn't offer products for diverse skin tones or genders, I feel like they're out of touch."

*Interviewer:* Can you name a brand that represents inclusivity well?

*Respondent 2:* "Fenty Beauty is a great example. They set the standard for shade ranges, and it's inspiring to see other brands following suit."

*Interviewer:* Does inclusive marketing influence your loyalty to a brand?

*Respondent 3:* "Yes, because it shows that the brand cares about everyone, not just a select group. It makes me want to support them."

### **5.1.5 Role of Technology**

*Interviewer:* Have you used virtual try-on tools or AI features to choose beauty products?

*Respondent 1:* "Yes, I've used Sephora's app to try on lipstick shades virtually. It's super helpful because I can see how it looks on me before buying."

*Interviewer:* Do you think technology improves your shopping experience?

*Respondent 2:* "Absolutely. It saves time and makes online shopping more reliable. I'm more confident when I know what to expect."

*Interviewer:* Would you recommend brands that use technology in their shopping process?

Respondent 3: "Yes, because it feels modern and convenient. I think all brands should invest in tools like this to keep up with our expectations."

## **6. Conclusion**

The analysis of Generation Z's consumer behavior towards beauty products reveals a dynamic interplay of values, preferences, and technological influence. Generation Z prioritizes authenticity, sustainability, and inclusivity, which significantly shape their purchasing decisions. Social media serves as a critical platform for product discovery, where influencers and user-generated content establish trust and credibility. However, this generation also demands deeper transparency, as they are increasingly drawn to brands that align with their ethical and environmental values.

Affordability remains essential, but not at the cost of quality. Generation Z consumers demonstrate loyalty to brands that offer value, performance, and ethical practices. Inclusivity in product offerings and marketing campaigns stands out as a pivotal factor in fostering brand trust and emotional connection. This demographic expects beauty brands to represent diverse identities and provide products suitable for all.

Moreover, the integration of technology, such as virtual try-on tools and AI-driven recommendations, enhances their shopping experience, making it more personalized and engaging. These advancements meet the tech-savvy nature of Generation Z and offer a convenient way to explore and purchase products confidently.

For brands, the insights underscore the importance of adopting a holistic approach that combines innovation, ethical practices, and inclusivity. By addressing these aspects, beauty brands can build meaningful connections with Generation Z, ensuring long-term loyalty in a highly competitive market.

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