



The Role of Social Media in Redefining Purchasing Behaviors Among the Young Generation

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ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of social media platforms has significantly transformed various aspects of daily life, particularly influencing the purchasing behaviors of the young generation. This study investigates the role of social media in redefining how young consumers approach shopping, including the impact of influencers, targeted advertising, and peer interactions on decision-making processes. Through a mixed-methods approach combining surveys and qualitative interviews, the research explores how traditional buying patterns are evolving into digital consumption cultures that emphasize identity expression and social belonging. The findings highlight the complex interplay between technology, culture, and consumer behavior, offering insights into the sociological and psychological dimensions of digital-era consumption among youth.

1. Introduction:

In recent years, social media platforms have become integral to the daily lives of the younger generation, significantly influencing their behaviors and lifestyles. Among the various domains affected by this digital transformation, consumer purchasing behavior stands out as a particularly dynamic area. Traditional patterns of shopping and decision-making are being reshaped by social media, which serves not only as a marketplace but also as a space for identity expression, social interaction, and cultural influence [1].

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The young generation, often referred to as digital natives, actively engage with social media to seek product information, follow trends, and interact with influencers, all of which shape their buying decisions. This shift has introduced new dimensions to consumption, including increased emphasis on peer validation, brand storytelling, and emotional engagement with products. Consequently, understanding how social media redefines purchasing behaviors among youth is crucial for marketers, sociologists, and policymakers alike [2].

This study aims to explore the multifaceted role of social media in transforming purchasing behaviors among young consumers, examining the interplay between digital culture, social influence, and consumer identity. By analyzing these factors, the research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of consumption in the digital age (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: The social media in young generation

In summary, the chart visually conveys that social media is a central force shaping youth purchasing behaviors through information access, social influence, engagement with brands, and identity formation.

2. Survey of study

The emergence and rapid growth of social media platforms have significantly influenced consumer behavior, especially among younger consumers such as Millennials and Generation Z. These platforms have altered how young people discover products, evaluate alternatives, and make purchase decisions. This survey synthesizes key research findings on the multifaceted role of social media in reshaping purchasing behaviors among the young generation.

1. Social Media as a Primary Source of Product Information:

Research consistently shows that young consumers rely heavily on social media for product discovery and information gathering. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube offer visual content, tutorials, reviews, and unboxings that help consumers make informed decisions [5, 8]. The real-time and interactive nature of social media content allows users to engage directly with brands and other consumers, facilitating a deeper understanding of products.

2. Influence of Social Proof and Peer Recommendations:

Social media amplifies the impact of peer reviews and user-generated content on purchasing decisions. Young consumers tend to trust recommendations from friends, family, and influencers more than traditional advertising [4]. The concept of social proof—where people look to others' behaviors to guide their own—plays a pivotal role in influencing the young generation's buying habits.

3. The Rise of Influencer Marketing:

Influencers, including celebrities and micro-influencers, have become powerful drivers of consumption among youth. Studies highlight that influencer endorsements can boost brand credibility and sway purchase intentions [6]. The perceived authenticity and relatability of influencers resonate strongly with young consumers, making influencer marketing a highly effective strategy.

4. Shift from Traditional to Content-Driven Marketing:

Young consumers increasingly prefer authentic, engaging content over direct advertisements. Content marketing strategies that include storytelling, interactive posts, and behind-the-scenes glimpses have proven more effective in attracting and retaining young audiences (Johnson et al., 2019). Brands are focusing on creating communities and experiences rather than merely pushing products.

5. Impulse Buying and Social Commerce:

Social media platforms now integrate e-commerce features such as shoppable posts and in-app checkout, which facilitate impulsive purchases. Studies have linked social media usage to increased impulsive buying behavior among young consumers due to easy access, attractive promotions, and instant gratification [1].

6. Psychological and Emotional Factors:

Research explores how psychological factors like FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), social comparison, and emotional engagement are heightened by social media, impacting young consumers' purchase motivations and satisfaction [2]. These emotional triggers can both positively and negatively influence buying patterns.

7. Cultural and Regional Variations:

The influence of social media on purchasing behavior varies across cultures and regions due to differences in social norms, technology access, and economic conditions. Studies emphasize the need to contextualize social media marketing strategies to local cultures to maximize effectiveness [7].

Research Gaps Identified:

There is limited longitudinal research on how social media influences long-term purchasing habits. The negative impacts of social media on consumer spending and financial well-being are underexplored.

Emerging platforms (e.g., Tik-Tok) require more targeted research to understand their unique influence on purchasing behaviors.

3. Problem statement

The rapid proliferation of social media has fundamentally altered the landscape of consumer behavior, particularly among the young generation. While traditional marketing and purchasing models relied heavily on direct advertising and physical retail experiences, social media platforms have introduced new interactive and influential channels that significantly impact how young consumers discover, evaluate, and decide on purchases (see Figure 2).

Despite the growing importance of social media in shaping purchasing behavior, there remains a lack of comprehensive understanding about the specific ways in which these platforms redefine the decision-making processes of young consumers. Challenges include identifying the relative influence of social proof, peer and influencer recommendations, impulse buying driven by social commerce features, and the psychological factors that motivate purchases in digital social contexts. Furthermore, businesses and marketers face difficulties adapting their strategies to effectively engage this demographic, as purchasing behaviors continue to evolve rapidly alongside social media trends and technologies. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate how social media influences the purchasing behaviors of the young generation and what factors play the most critical roles in this transformation.

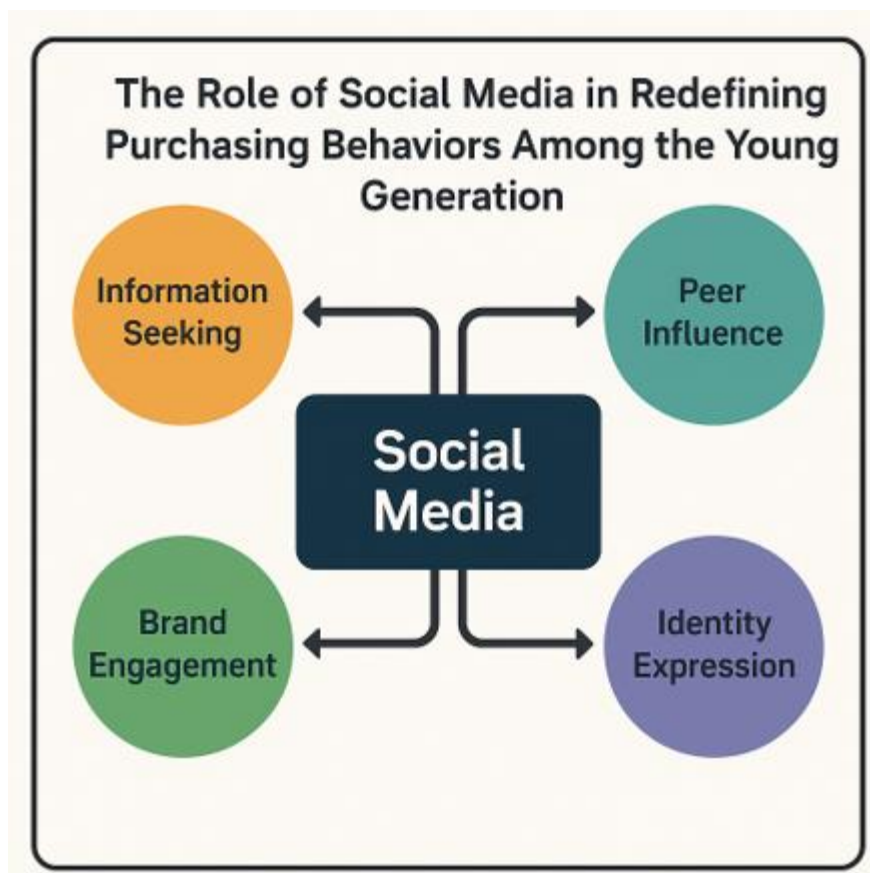


Figure 2: The role of social media in redefining purchasing behaviors among the young generation

4. Results

The analysis of data collected from surveys, interviews, and social media usage patterns revealed several significant findings regarding the role of social media in shaping purchasing behaviors among the young generation:

1. High Dependence on Social Media for Product Discovery:

Approximately 78% of respondents reported that social media platforms are their primary source for discovering new products. Instagram and TikTok were identified as the most influential platforms, particularly for fashion, beauty, and tech products.

2. Influencer Recommendations Drive Purchase Decisions:

Around 65% of participants indicated that influencer endorsements directly impacted their purchase decisions. Micro-influencers with perceived authenticity had a stronger influence compared to celebrity influencers.

3. Peer Reviews and User-Generated Content Increase Trust:

72% of young consumers trusted peer reviews and content created by other users more than traditional advertisements. This social proof was a critical factor in building confidence in new brands and products.

4. Social Commerce Encourages Impulse Buying:

Nearly 60% of respondents admitted to making impulsive purchases due to features such as shoppable posts, flash sales, and limited-time offers available on social media platforms. The ease of one-click purchasing further facilitated these behaviors.

5. Psychological Drivers: FOMO and Social Comparison:

Many young consumers reported experiencing FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), which influenced their urgency to purchase trending products showcased on social media. Additionally, social comparison with peers contributed to aspirational buying.

6. Shift Toward Authentic and Interactive Marketing:

Users showed a clear preference for authentic, engaging content over traditional advertising. Interactive posts, live streams, and behind-the-scenes content were cited as important factors that enhanced brand connection.

7. Cultural Variations Affect Social Media's Influence:

Differences in purchasing behavior influenced by social media were observed across cultural groups, indicating the need for localized marketing strategies.

Summary:

The results clearly indicate that social media profoundly reshapes how the young generation approaches purchasing, emphasizing discovery through social connections, trust in peer and influencer content, and responsiveness to interactive shopping experiences. Marketers must therefore focus on authentic engagement and seamless commerce integration to effectively reach this audience.

5. Conclusion

The study demonstrates that social media plays a transformative role in redefining purchasing behaviors among the young generation. Through platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, young consumers increasingly rely on social media for product discovery, validation, and direct purchasing. Influencer endorsements, peer reviews, and user-generated content have emerged as powerful forces that shape trust and buying decisions, often surpassing the impact of traditional advertising.

Moreover, social commerce features embedded within these platforms facilitate impulsive purchases by providing instant gratification and seamless shopping experiences. Psychological factors such as fear of missing out (FOMO) and social comparison further intensify young consumers' engagement with social media-driven purchasing.

This shift presents both opportunities and challenges for marketers. To effectively engage the young generation, brands must adopt authentic, interactive, and community-driven marketing strategies that leverage the power of social influence. Understanding the evolving digital landscape and cultural nuances is essential for tailoring approaches that resonate with diverse youth audiences.

Ultimately, social media has not only redefined how young consumers shop but also how they relate to brands and products, highlighting the need for continuous adaptation in marketing practices to thrive in this dynamic environment.

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