

GREENING THE FUTURE: HOW SUSTAINABLE MARKETING SHAPES GEN Z'S BUYING DECISIONS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MANIPAL CITY

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Abstract:

Consumerism has become a worldwide problem, impacting not only the economy but also the way we live. One of the major problems resulting from consumerism is global pollution, which obviously affects the environment and has serious consequences, including on people's health. It is essential to take sustainable measures and encourage waste reduction and the choice of eco-friendly products. The main objective of our research paper regarding the generational perspectives on sustainable consumption is to explore the consumer behaviour of Generation Z, and to provide a general understanding of their attitudes, motivations, and behaviours in relation to environmental sustainability. First, we collected information from the specialised literature about the researched subject, after which we carried out quantitative research using the survey method. The results of the research helped us identify the impediments and challenges faced by Generation Z in adopting sustainable practices related to consumption, as well as the factors that encourage them to engage in sustainable consumption. In the last part of our research, we presented some recommendations aimed at improving the culture of sustainable consumption of Generation Z cohorts. This paper contributes to the field by providing essential details about generations perspectives regarding sustainable consumption so that, especially companies, can tailor their products and marketing strategies to align with the values and preferences of Generation Z, fostering a more sustainable future

Keywords: consumer behavior, sustainable consumption, consumerism, Generation Z.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is essential that current and future generations are informed about contemporary topics such as sustainable consumption so that we can live in a healthy and sustainable environment, in which even the economy has a healthy way of growing without harming the environment. The generations born between the mid-1997 and the early 2012, has profoundly influenced marketing strategies. Understanding the consumer preferences of Gen-Z and effectively building sustainable relationships with them have become imperative for companies striving to remain relevant and competitive in the ever-evolving market. Gen-Z, growing up in an age of advanced technology, exhibits distinct consumer preferences compared to previous generations. They are not only accustomed to technology but also leverage it in every aspect of their daily lives, including shopping experiences. This phenomenon has led to the prioritization of certain values and characteristics in their consumer behavior. One prominent aspect of Gen-Z consumer preferences is their inclination towards choosing brands that prioritize social values, environmental concerns, and sustainability. Research indicates that this cohort tends to gravitate towards companies that demonstrate a commitment to social responsibility and environmental stewardship (Dragolea, 2023; Dabija, 2020). Furthermore, Gen-Z consumers are heavily influenced by social media and corporate social responsibility efforts, which significantly impact their purchase intentions (Raza, 2023). In addition to sustainability concerns, Gen-Z consumers value personalized experiences and authenticity in brand interactions (Budac, 2014; Ameen, 2020). Moreover, the influence of social media influencers plays a crucial role in shaping their purchasing decisions, highlighting the importance of marketing strategies in reaching this demographic (Kahawandala, 2020). Once consumers meet with a very large supply of goods, their desire to consume and own as many of them as possible appears. This desire turns into an action of mass consumption, a term known as consumerism. This consumption, usually has an expiration date, because of factors such as: the expiration date of the products, and new trends that appear and make us get rid of the old things to make room for the new ones to intervene. Well, all of this turns into waste, each of which contributes to global pollution, having a negative impact on people's health, the environment, and a safe future for future generations. Effective marketing strategies for Gen-

Z extend beyond understanding their consumer preferences to building sustainable relationships with this cohort.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The systematic review commences with the identification of relevant academic literature through reputable databases such as PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science.

Keywords pertaining to Generation Z, consumer behaviour, marketing strategies, and related themes will be utilised to refine the search results. Inclusion criteria will be established to select studies that directly contribute to understanding Generation Z's preferences and relationships with buying . Upon identifying potential studies, a rigorous screening process will be employed to ensure the inclusion of high-quality research. Studies will be assessed based on their relevance to the research topic, methodological rigour, and credibility of findings. Articles meeting the inclusion criteria will be thoroughly examined to extract pertinent information regarding Generation Z's consumer preferences, behaviours, and marketing strategies. Data extraction will involve systematically organising and categorising key findings, themes, and insights derived from the selected studies. This process will enable the synthesis of quantitative data, facilitating the identification of recurring patterns, emerging trends, and discrepancies across different studies.

The study investigated the factors that affected consumers' decisions to buy green products, integrating the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) with personal and marketing variables to understand the decision-making process. The study focused on a sample of 155 consumers from the Manipal City as there was a time constraint in utilizing a self-completion questionnaire for data collection. Methodologically, the research employed IBM SPSS version 28 to analyze the data, allowing for the examination of complex interdependencies among variables, while factor analysis was used to validate the constructs measured. The results revealed that environmental concern was the most significant personal factor influencing attitudes towards green products, with positive attitudes leading to increased purchasing intentions. Additionally, marketing variables such as product quality, green advertising, and green labeling played crucial roles in shaping consumer attitudes. **(Hosein Vazifehdoust et, al., 2013).**

A sample of participants completed a 2-page online questionnaire to assess their green purchasing behaviors. The research employed quantitative analysis of the responses, which were adapted from previous studies to ensure reliability. The findings revealed a significant relationship between social influence, environmental concern, and green purchasing behavior,

supporting the initial hypotheses. The conclusion highlighted the need to strengthen environmental attitudes and leverage social influences to promote sustainable purchasing practices, benefiting both marketers and environmental initiatives in Lebanon. **(Grace K. Dagher et al., 2012)**. The paper explored the influence of sustainable marketing on the green consumption intentions of Generation Z in Manipal.

2.1 Research gap

The authors aimed to address a research gap regarding the effectiveness of sustainable buying strategies in promoting environmentally conscious. In conclusion, the research emphasized the importance of sustainable marketing in fostering environmentally friendly consumption practices among Manipal's Gen Z and suggested the need for educational initiatives and collaborations with businesses to enhance sustainable consumption. **(Safia Anjum et al., 2023)**

2.2 Sustainable Consumption Patterns among Generation Z

Recent studies argue that Gen Z are much more concerned about corporate social responsibility practices. Price does not take the height spot in their priorities. It still is an important factor but does not take the top spot (Chatzopoulou & de Kiewiet, 2021).

Social media has been playing an important role in creating awareness regarding sustainable consumption and helped refine the millennial mindset over sustainable consumption (Ali et al., 2023). Gen Z students exhibit sensitivity to sustainability issues, endorse labelling and certification systems to communicate production information, and express a desire for innovative processes to mitigate environmental impacts (Bollani et al., 2019).

Generation Z has more spenders than savers (Vojvodić, 2019). Regarding sustainability, Gen Z is commonly defined as a consumer cohort that feels that businesses and their goods ought to be sustainable (Williams & Hodges, 2022).

This concern over sustainability has even caused new industries to be set up towards green consumption. Modern technologies play a vital role in defining consumer experiences for Gen Z. Studies have shown that Gen Z relies on and expects to make informed decisions using technology (Vojvodić, 2019).

Gen Z is more attentive towards problems such as climate change and poverty. This makes them believe that businesses have a responsibility to tackle these challenges and operate in a manner that addresses these issues. Gen Z prefers to buy from brands that address these issues over those companies that overlook them (Porter Novelli/Cone, 2019).

3. Research Questions / Aims of the Research The aim of the research is to identify the elements that impact sustainable consumption of Generation Z while also gaining insight into their behaviour and knowledge about environmental sustainability.

4. Limitations of the Study

- The study was limited by a small sample size (155 respondents).
- A larger and more diverse sample in future studies could provide broader insights.
- Results are most useful for companies targeting Generation Z.
- Findings can help businesses adapt marketing and communication strategies to align with Gen Z's expectations and behavior.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess Gen Z's awareness of environmental sustainability and its influence on their buying behavior.
- To analyze how often Gen Z is exposed to media about sustainable consumption and which channels are most effective.
- To identify key motivations and barriers influencing Gen Z's sustainable consumption habits.
- To evaluate Gen Z's perception of their environmental impact and who they believe should promote sustainability education.

6. HYPOTHESIS

H₀: There is no significant difference in Gen Z buying behaviour influenced by sustainable marketing based on age and gender

H₁: There is significant difference in Gen Z buying behaviour influenced by sustainable marketing based on age and gender

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the first phase of our research, we conducted exploratory analysis of existing literature to establish a framework on Gen Z's sustainable consumption behavior. In the second phase, we employed a quantitative approach using a well-structured questionnaire through Google Forms administered during April–May 2025. The study targeted 155 Gen Z respondents, both male and female. Here, we used descriptive statistics for analysis purposes. To apply statistical tools, we have applied Excel and SPSS software. For presentation purposes, tables were used.

7.1 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Most frequently purchased sustainable product types among Gen Z consumers with regards to age and gender

	Clothing / Fashion	Cosmetics and Personal Care	Electronics and Gadgets	Food and Beverages	Household Items	Total
18-20	7.10	1.29	-	0.65	-	9.03
20-22	0.65	27.74	0.65	0.65	7.74	37.42
22-24	1.29	2.58	13.55	8.39	1.94	27.74
24-26	1.94	0.65	0.65	22.58	0.00	25.81
Total	10.97	32.26	14.84	32.26	9.68	100

Source: Primary data

(fig. in percentage)

	Clothing / Fashion	Cosmetics and Personal Care	Electronics and Gadgets	Food and Beverages	Household Items	Total
Female	3.23	3.87	13.55	8.39	9.03	38.06
Male	7.74	28.39	1.29	23.87	0.65	61.94
Total	10.97	32.26	14.84	32.26	9.68	100

Source: Primary data

(fig. in percentage)

Table 1 shows the sustainable products most frequently purchased by the Gen Z people. From

the survey, it is observed that people who fall under the age group of 20-22 years are more

attracted to buy sustainable products in the cosmetics and personal care category following the age group of 18-20 years. It is also seen that men are more intended to buy sustainable products over women which is 61.94%.

Table 2: Key aspects of sustainable marketing that most influence Gen Z consumer preferences with regards to age and gender

	Eco-friendly packaging	Environmental commitment in advertising	Ethical sourcing and labour practices	Social Media Campaigns	Total
18-20	1.29	1.29	-	6.45	9.03
20-22	1.29	34.84	1.29	-	37.42
22-24	17.42	1.29	8.39	0.65	27.74
24-26	3.23	2.58	0.65	19.35	25.81
Total	23.23	40	10.32	26.45	100

Source: Primary data

(fig. in percentage)

	Eco-friendly packaging	Environmental commitment in advertising	Ethical sourcing and labour practices	Social Media Campaigns	Total
Female	20.65	7.74	9.03	0.65	38.06
Male	2.58	32.26	1.29	25.81	61.94
Total	23.23	40	10.32	26.45	100

Source: Primary data

(fig. in percentage)

Table 2 depicts the key aspect of sustainable marketing which influences the Gen Z consumption pattern. The respondents are much more influenced by the social media campaigns (26.45%) and eco-friendly packaging (23.33%). Even in the case of gender, men are mostly influenced by social media campaigns whereas for women it is eco – friendly packaging.

Table 3: Key barriers preventing Gen Z consumers from purchasing sustainably marketed products with regards to age and gender

	Higher cost	Lack of trust in claims	Low availability in stores	Unawareness of such products	Total
18-20	7.10	0.65	0.65	0.65	9.03
20-22	1.94	27.74	7.10	0.65	37.42
22-24	1.29	2.58	9.03	14.84	27.74
24-26	20.65	3.23	1.94	0.00	25.8
Total	30.97	34.19	18.71	16.13	100

Source: Primary data

(fig. in percentage)

	Higher cost	Lack of trust in claims	Low availability in stores	Unawareness of such products	Total
Female	1.94	4.52	16.13	15.48	38.06
Male	29.03	29.68	2.58	0.65	61.94
Total	30.97	34.19	18.71	16.13	100

Source: Primary data

(fig. in percentage)

The above presented *Table 3* shows that lack of trust in claims is one of the main reasons which is preventing Gen Z from purchasing sustainable products irrespective of age and gender especially from the age 20-22 (27.74%) and that to males (29.68%).

TESTING HYPOTHESIS

H₀: There is no significant difference in Gen Z buying behaviour influenced by sustainable marketing based on age and gender

H₁: There is significant difference in Gen Z buying behaviour influenced by sustainable marketing based on age and gender

Table 5: Chi-square values showing awareness & perception of gen z people towards sustainable marketing

Statement	Age		Gender	
	Chi-square value	p-value	Chi-square value	p-value

I know what sustainable marketing means.	31.257	0.002	21.318	0.001
I can tell when a brand promotes sustainability.	24.316	0.083	13.102	0.011
I think sustainability claims show a brand's values.	26.857	0.043	3.454	0.485*
I trust brands with eco-labels or green tags.	33.224	0.007	17.308	0.002
I check if a brand is sustainable before buying.	25.145	0.067	5.932	0.204*

Source: Authorized compilation

**Significant at 5%*

Table 5 reveals that in the 1st, 2nd and 4th statement, the chi-square statistics are more than the critical value and p-values are lesser than 5% level of significance for both age and gender and in 3rd and 5th statement, chi-square statistics are more than the critical value and p-values are lesser than 5% level of significance for age but the chi-square statistics are lesser than the critical value and p-values are higher than 5% level of significance for gender. As in majority of statements, the chi-square statistics are more than the critical value and lesser than p-values, null hypothesis is rejected and it can be concluded that there is significant relationship between sustainable marketing and consumption pattern of Gen Z.

Table 5: Chi-square values showing influence on buying behaviour of gen z people

Statement	Age		Gender	
	Chi-square value	p-value	Chi-square value	p-value
I prefer buying eco-friendly products.	30.383	0.0020	21.318	0.098*
I've changed how I shop after seeing sustainability ads.	14.839	0.250	13.102	0.178*
I'm okay paying more for eco-friendly products.	29.176	0.004	3.454	0.680*
Green ads affect me more than normal ads.	14.852	0.250	17.308	0.739*

I feel good buying from eco-friendly brands.	16.332	0.176	5.932	4.458*
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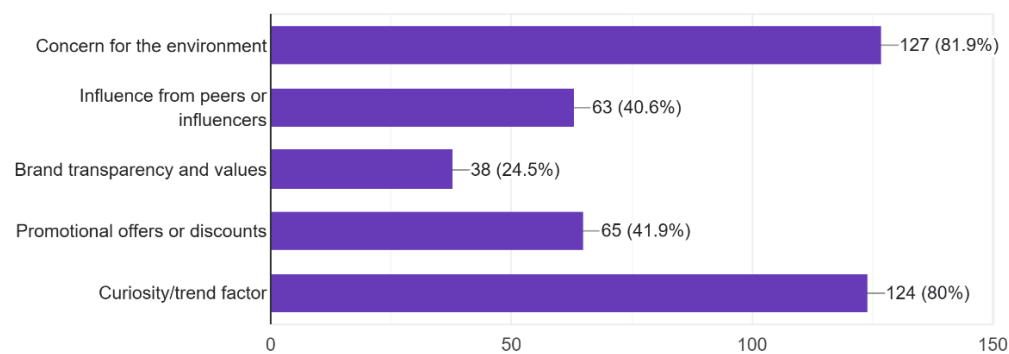
Source: Authorized compilation

**Significant at 5%*

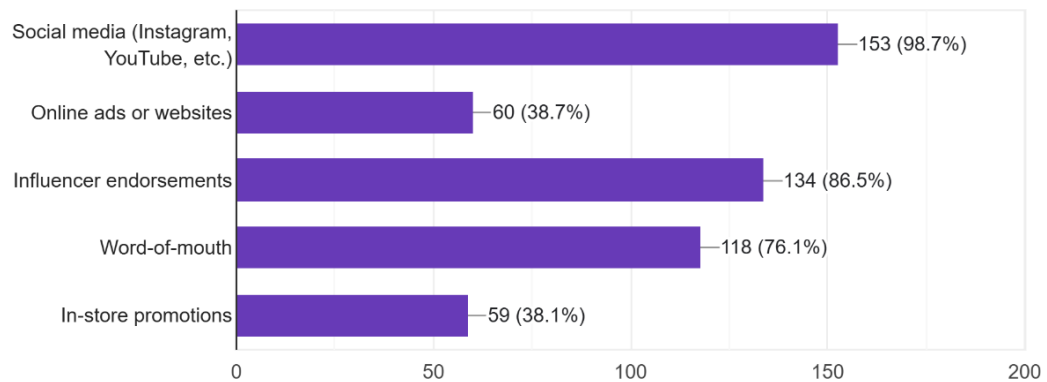
Table 6 exhibits that the chi-square statistics are more than the critical value and p-values are lesser than 5% level of significance and it can be said that there are positive implications of sustainable marketing practices on the buying behavior of Gen Z people.

8. FINDINGS

- It is found in the study that 61.9% of respondents are male and 38.1% are female and out of it the maximum respondents are from the age group of 20-22 with 37.4% followed by 22-24 with 27.7%.
- It is understood by the study that environmental commitment in advertising and social media campaigns has the most influence on Gen Z in their buying behaviour in respect to sustainable marketing approach with over 40% and 26.5% respectively.
- As per the study, Gen Z people prefer sustainable products over the conventional one is mostly either concern for the environment (81.9%) or not to miss the trend or out of curiosity (80%). It can also be represented as below



- It's been observed from the study that most of the Gen Z people come to know about sustainable marketing mainly through social media (98.7%) followed by influencer endorsements and word of mouth. It can be better represented with the following diagram



9. CONCLUSION

Our research has focused on the generational perspectives Generation Z regarding sustainable consumption and consumer behaviour. Based on our findings, we provided information about their motivations and barriers regarding sustainable consumption, determined the level of awareness and education into the subject and the channels that provided them with this information, as well as how effective they think their efforts are in making a positive impact on the environment and who did they consider responsible for educating the public about sustainability. We discovered that this generations had similar exposure to education regarding the environment and also were not deprived of information. The main channels where they found information were social media, Television, Blogs, Print Media, and Radio. Our recommendation to those who want to communicate on this topic is to integrate both the channels less frequented by respondents and the most common ones. We believe that a general and harmonious integration of all channels can bring results in increasing the level of awareness. In conclusion, sustainable consumption is a practice that must be integrated into the everyday life of all current and future generations in order to reduce as much as possible the negative effects of consumerism and also to live in a healthy and sustainable environment.

10. Limitations:

However, our study was limited by the sample size and we believe that future studies could have a larger number of respondents. These results can help companies that address the public from the generations to adapt their business, communication, and marketing strategies according to the behaviour and expectations of Generation Z in order to obtain the most satisfactory results.

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