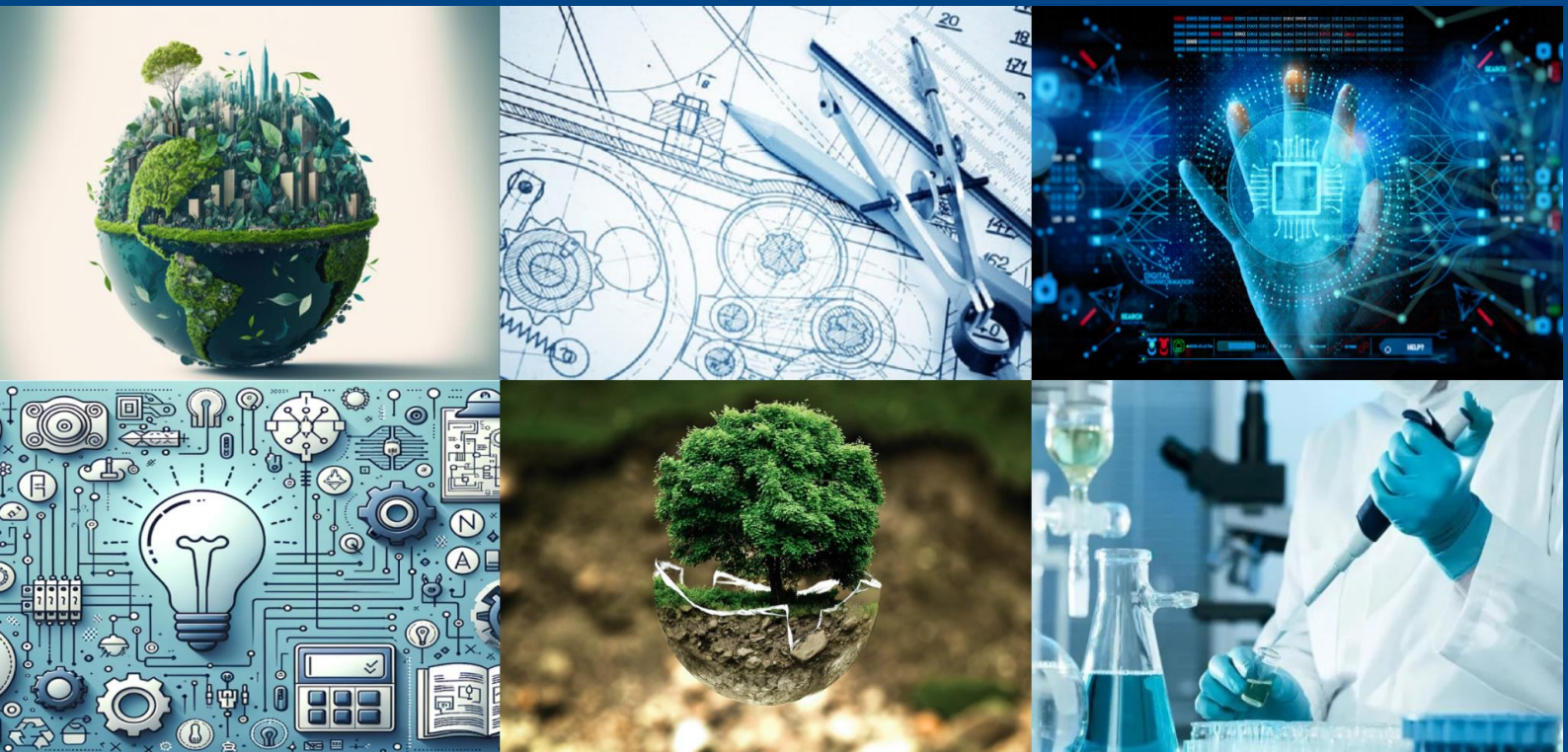




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Impact of Online Reviews and Ratings on Generation-Z Purchase Decisions

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ABSTRACT: This study examines the impact of online reviews and ratings on the purchase decisions of Generation Z consumers, a digitally native cohort highly influenced by online information and peer opinions. With the rapid growth of e-commerce and social media platforms, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has become a critical factor in shaping consumer behavior. The research aims to identify key review-related factors such as review valence, star ratings, review credibility, review volume, and emotional tone, and analyze their influence on purchase intention and decision-making among Gen Z consumers.

A quantitative research approach was adopted using a structured questionnaire distributed to 124 respondents belonging to the Gen Z demographic. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), employing reliability analysis and correlation techniques. The results indicate that online reviews and ratings have a significant positive impact on purchase decisions. Positive reviews and higher star ratings enhance trust, decision confidence, and brand perception, while negative reviews and fake or manipulated reviews reduce purchase intention and consumer trust. The findings also highlight that Gen Z consumers actively compare multiple reviews before making decisions and rely heavily on peer validation and social proof. Additionally, emotional content in reviews influences buying behavior, particularly in impulsive purchase situations.

The study contributes to existing literature by providing a Gen Z-specific perspective on digital consumer behavior and offers practical implications for marketers to focus on authenticity, transparency, and effective review management strategies. Overall, the research underscores the importance of online reviews as a powerful determinant of purchasing behavior in the digital era.

KEYWORDS: Online Reviews, Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM), Purchase Decision, Consumer Behavior

I. INTRODUCTION

Generation Z typically defined as individuals born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s — represents one of the most digitally immersed and socially connected consumer cohorts. As digital natives, Gen Z has grown up in an environment characterized by smartphones, social media platforms, instant information access, and algorithm-driven content exposure. Unlike previous generations who relied heavily on traditional advertising and offline word-of-mouth, Gen Z consumers increasingly depend on online reviews and ratings when making purchase decisions.

Online reviews and ratings function as contemporary forms of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Platforms such as Amazon, Flipkart, Google Reviews, Instagram comments, and YouTube testimonials provide real-time feedback from other consumers. These reviews offer not only product information but also emotional cues, social proof, and perceived authenticity signals. For Gen Z, who exhibit high levels of skepticism toward traditional advertising and strong reliance on peer validation, online reviews significantly shape purchase intentions, brand perceptions, and trust formation.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing literature confirms that online reviews and ratings strongly influence consumer purchase decisions through cognitive evaluations, emotional responses, and social proof mechanisms. However, most studies examine general consumer populations, treat reviews as uniform constructs, or fail to integrate mediating and moderating variables in a



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Gen Z-specific context. This highlights the need for an integrated empirical model focused specifically on Generation Z consumers.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design adopted for this study is descriptive and analytical in nature. A descriptive approach is used to systematically examine Gen Z consumers' perceptions of online reviews and ratings, while an analytical approach is employed to investigate relationships between review-related variables and purchase decisions.

The study follows a quantitative research approach, as it enables objective measurement of digital influence factors and statistical testing of hypotheses. A survey method is adopted as the primary data collection strategy, allowing standardized data collection from a sizable sample of Gen Z consumers.

The unit of analysis in this study is the individual Gen Z consumer who actively engages with online shopping platforms or social media reviews. A structured questionnaire is designed using validated scales adapted from prior research on electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), review credibility, and purchase intention. Responses are measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

Techniques Used for Data Analysis

The following statistical techniques were used in this research:

1. Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

Reliability analysis was conducted to ensure that the questionnaire items consistently measure the constructs of the study. Cronbach's Alpha is commonly used in social science research to evaluate the internal consistency of a scale.

Cronbach Alpha Value	Interpretation
Above 0.9	Excellent reliability
0.8 – 0.9	Good reliability
0.7 – 0.8	Acceptable reliability
Below 0.7	Poor reliability

In this study, the Cronbach's Alpha value was greater than 0.89, indicating that the questionnaire items were highly reliable and consistent.

2. Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was used to measure the relationship between variables related to online reviews and purchase decisions. The study used Pearson Correlation Coefficient, which measures the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two variables.

Correlation Value	Strength of Relationship
0.00 – 0.19	Very weak
0.20 – 0.39	Weak
0.40 – 0.59	Moderate
0.60 – 0.79	Strong
0.80 – 1.00	Very strong

The significance levels used in the study are:

Symbol	Meaning
**	Significant at 0.01 level
*	Significant at 0.05 level



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3.3 Hypothesis Testing

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study.

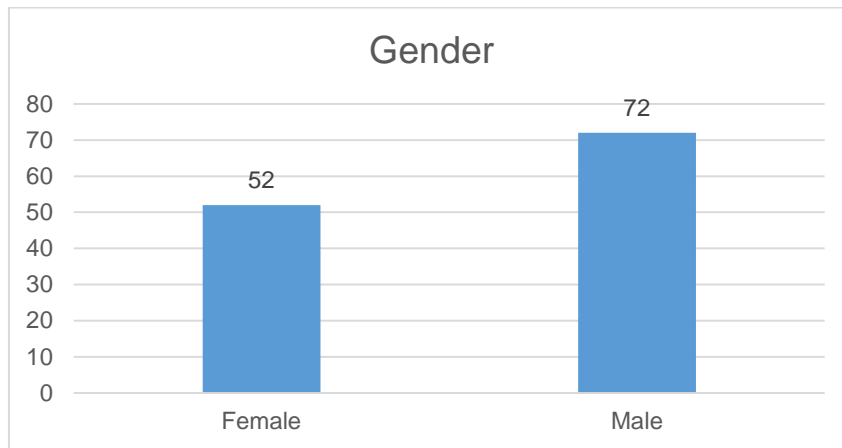
Null Hypothesis (H0)

Online reviews and ratings do not have a significant impact on the purchase decisions of Generation Z consumers.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1)

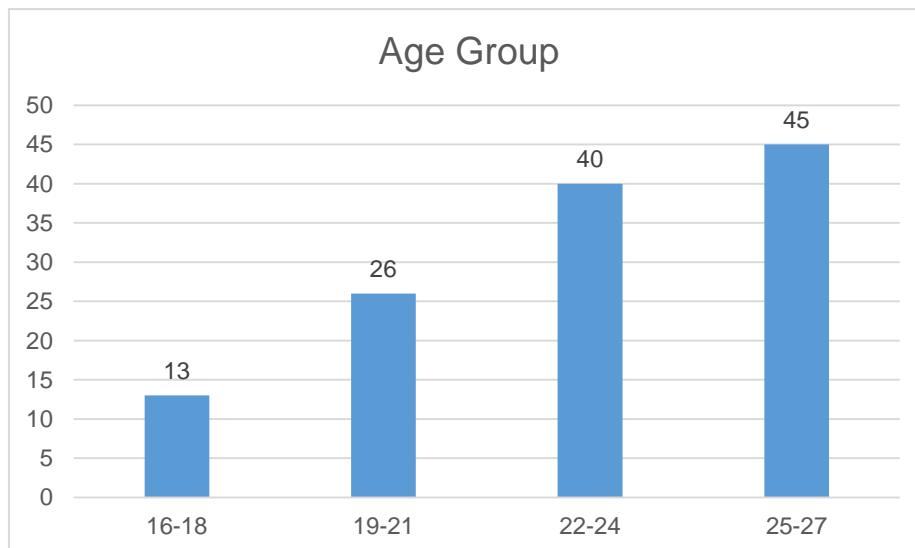
Online reviews and ratings have a significant impact on the purchase decisions of Generation Z consumers. Correlation analysis was used to test the hypotheses by examining relationships between the variables representing review influence, trust, brand perception, and purchasing behavior. If the correlation between these variables is statistically significant, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Representation of Gender



This bar chart displays the count of individuals by gender in a dataset. It shows 52 females and 72 males, indicating a male majority. The higher male count (about 58% of the total 124) suggests potential gender imbalance, which could influence analysis in marketing or consumer behavior studies. Minor visual issues like duplicate labels and whitespace do not alter the core insight of male predominance.

Age Group of Respondents



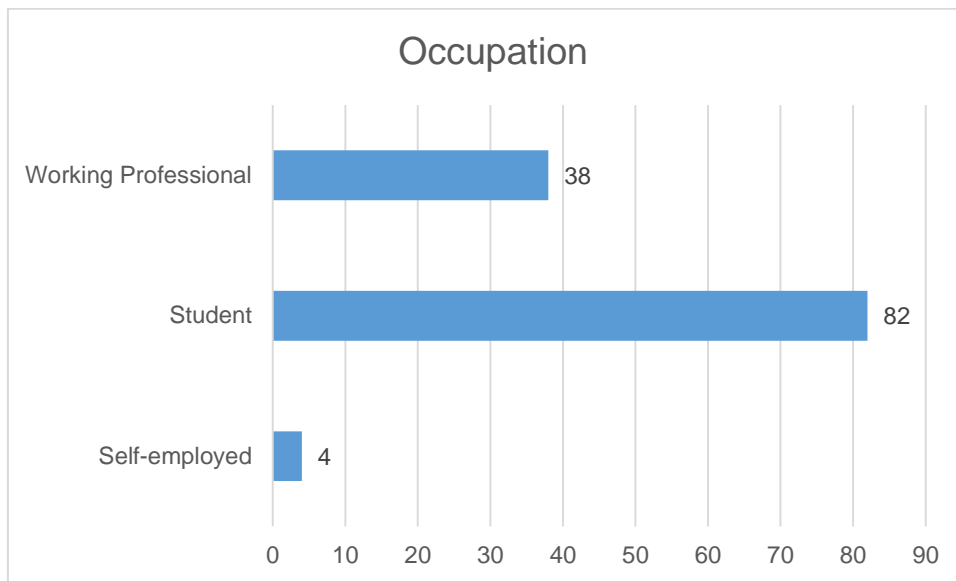


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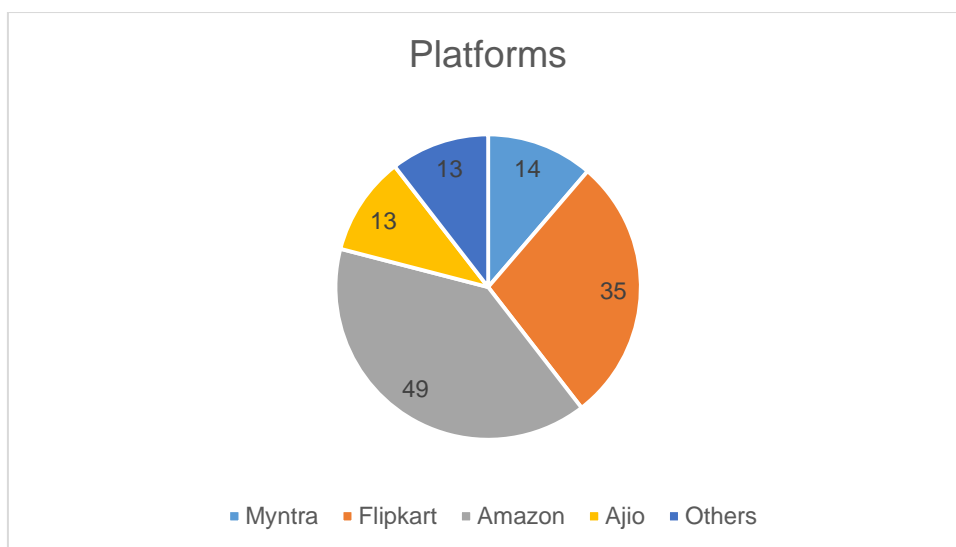
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This bar chart illustrates the distribution of respondents across four age groups: 16-18, 19-21, 22-24, and 25-27. The 22-24 group is the largest at 40 counts, followed by 25-27 at 45, while 16-18 has the fewest at 13, showing a skew toward young adults. In a marketing context like consumer behavior analysis, this highlights prime targeting for 20s demographics comprising over 70% of the sample.

Division of Age



This bar chart shows the distribution of occupations in a dataset, with students dominating at 82 respondents, followed by working professionals at 38. Self-employed individuals are the smallest group at just 4, indicating a sample heavily skewed toward academic or entry-level career stages. For marketing analysis, this suggests targeting strategies should prioritize student consumer behavior, as they represent over 65% of the total 124 respondents.

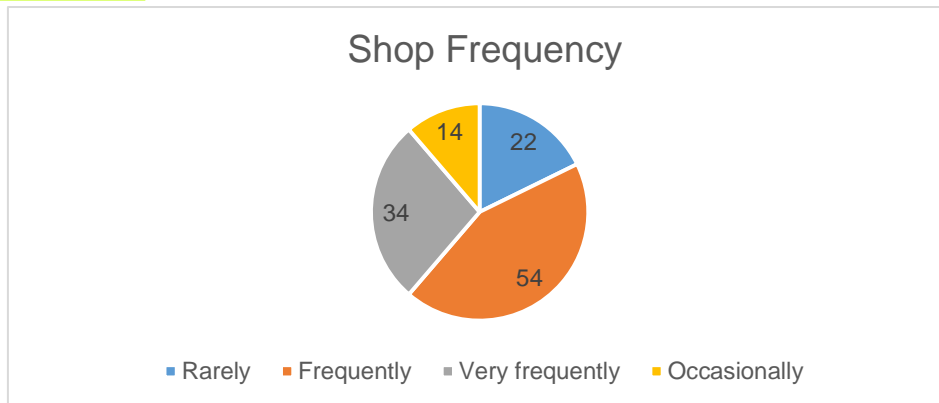


The chart shows that most customers shop frequently, making up the largest segment with 54 responses. A significant portion (34 respondents) shop very frequently, indicating strong regular engagement. Only a small number shop occasionally (14) or rarely (22), suggesting low infrequent shopping behavior overall



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The chart illustrates the distribution of customers based on how often they shop. A majority of respondents (54) shop frequently, making it the dominant behavior. A considerable segment (34) shops very frequently, indicating a loyal and active customer base. A smaller group shops rarely (22), showing limited engagement. Only a few respondents (14) shop occasionally, highlighting that infrequent shopping is less common overall.

IV. RESEARCH OUTCOME AND FINDINGS

The present study examined the impact of online reviews and ratings on the purchase decisions of Generation Z consumers. Based on the analysis of data collected from 124 respondents using statistical tools such as correlation analysis and reliability testing, several key findings have emerged. These findings highlight the growing importance of digital word-of-mouth in shaping consumer behavior among Gen Z, a cohort that is highly dependent on online information and peer validation.

One of the primary findings of the study is that online reviews have a significant influence on purchase decisions. The results indicate a moderate positive relationship between reliance on reviews and purchase intention, suggesting that Gen Z consumers actively use reviews as a critical source of information before making buying decisions. This confirms that online reviews act as a powerful decision-making tool in the digital marketplace.

V. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that online reviews and ratings play a crucial role in influencing the purchase decisions of Generation Z consumers. In the digital age, electronic word-of-mouth has become a dominant factor shaping consumer behavior.

Key conclusions of the study:

- Online reviews significantly influence purchase decisions
- Trust and credibility are essential for consumer confidence
- Negative and fake reviews reduce purchase intention

The findings emphasize that Gen Z consumers rely heavily on peer opinions and digital validation. Businesses must focus on transparency, authenticity, and customer engagement to succeed in the competitive digital marketplace.

Overall, the research provides both theoretical and practical insights into the role of online reviews in shaping modern consumer behavior.

Future research can build upon this study by exploring new dimensions and addressing existing limitations.

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