GENDER DIFFERENCES IN GENERATION Z IN CONTEXT OF TRADITIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

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ABSTRACT

Social media play a dynamic role in user's life style by removing communication barriers and become a noticeable place for social interactions. Therefore, social media with its interactive features provide users opportunities to engage with other users and companies. This study investigates the gender difference of Generation Z in relation to features of social media usage. Also, this study explores the relation between purchase intentions and company created social media content, purchase recommendations, sharing the purchase experience in Generation Z. The research instrument was a questionnaire, and data were collected through social media platforms using Google forms. Descriptive statistics, Spearman correlation coefficients and nonparametric statistics (Mann-Whitney U Test) were used to achieve the objective of this study. The research sample consisted of 162 social media users of Generation Z. The results reveal that there is a significant difference between the features of social media usage and gender of Generation Z. Also, research results found statistical significant relation between purchase intentions and company created social media content, sharing information about past purchase experience and encouraging other users to make purchase in social media. At the end of the paper, the author discusses the results, along with implications, limitations and recommended future research directions. This paper contributes on the field of theory to better understanding of the gender differences in social media and also it has practical implications to online retailers and marketing experts in order to highlighted barriers that are specific for purchase behaviour in social media based on gender awareness.

KEYWORDS: social media, generation z, purchase intention

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media usage has grown exponentially in recent year and it has become an integral part of consumer lifestyle [Muhammad et al. 2017]. Today, consumers are increasingly using social media sites to search for information and turning away from traditional media, such as television, radio, and magazines [Mangold and Faulds, 2009]. Social media has become an essential tool of the younger population, especially generation Z. Social media allows people to connect, communicate, discuss, and interact through social media and offer them unique opportunity to fulfil their needs for additional information or products. Therefore, social media is platforms and tools that people use to share opinions and experiences including photos, videos, music, insights and perceptions with each other [Turban, 2009]. On the other hand, social media also provide required, different values to companies, such as improved brand

awareness [De Vries et al., 2012], enabling faster word-of-mouth communication [Chen et al. 2011], increasing sales [Agnihotri et al., 2012], sharing information in a business context [Lu and Hsiao 2010] and creating strong social support for consumers [Ali, 2011]. These valuable data gathered on social media provides company useful information about consumer awareness towards their products and reputation. Therefore, this information offer in social media could help the companies identify how consumers perceived them and their products [Asamoah, 2019] in order to establish strong relation and gain strong competitive advantage.

The special characteristics of social media platforms and the unique opportunities they provide for the consumers and companies, has made the study of consumer purchase behavior more complex [Arenas-Gaitán et al., 2019]. Understanding and determine users purchase behavior on social media is significant important for companies and marketers in order to allows them to communicate more effectively with potential and present consumer. Especially, the social media usage is being increasingly embraced by Generation Z. This generation have extensive internet access and online presence and, therefore, understanding their social media usage could be significant to marketers and companies. In addition, companies are trying to take advantage of increasing trend of customers depending on social media particularly for their purchases. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the gender difference of generation Z in relation to features of social media usage. Also, this study explores the relation between purchase intentions and company created social media content, purchase recommendations, sharing the purchase experience in Generation Z.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 is literature review, section 3 explains the methodologies used in the study followed by presentation of research results and analysis in section 4. Finally, the paper is concluded with a discussion, limitation of the study and description of future recommendation in Section 5.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Nowadays, social media is an effective and convenient platform. Social media are increasingly used for commercial purposes [Vanani and Majidian, 2019] and extensive growth of social media usage often define consumer purchase behavior [Wang et al. 2019; Khajeheian and Ebrahimi, 2020]. Today, users in social media spending more time searching and providing helpful information, which mostly determine their purchase intentions. Research shows that social media can influence on consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and intentions [Narangajavana et al., 2017; Dwivedi et al., 2021].

Social media has influenced consumer behavior from information acquisition to post-purchase behavior [Mangold and Faulds, 2009]. Users view social media platforms as an additional service or sales channel, where they can engage with the company. Also they are allowed to create user generated content [Moghadamzadeh et al., 2020] and share them in social media platforms in order to provide helpful and useful information to the other users. They often use different perspectives such as data sharing and social media usage [Muhammad et al., 2022] because they are concerns about their privacy or risky purchase decision. In order to reduce purchase risk, consumers rely on product ratings, feedback, and comments about the product [Aladwani, 2018; Xu et al., 2020]. Sharma and Rehman [2012] suggested that positive or negative review or comments about a product posted on the social media has significant influence on consumers purchase behaviour. On the other hand, social media usage encourage company to create some type of engagement and relationship with their potential customers

[Park et al., 2021]. Social media increases customer's purchase intentions, and also increase companies' sales and long-term relationships with users [Trawnih et al., 2021]. Many research confirmed that word of mouth has positive impact on purchase intention in social media [Yusuf et al., 2018; Wang and Herrando, 2019; Park et al., 2021]. Therefore, companies could take advantage of social media in distributing comprehensive information, influencing on user's attitudes and opinions, increasing their reputation and generating positive word-of-mouth [Song et al., 2021]. These interactions provide different benefits and values for both, companies and users in social media environment.

Many young people especially Generation Z use social media platforms on a daily basis [Digital 2022 Global Overview report]. The Z generation are an attractive segment especially for social media marketing activities since they are always connected to their social media [Flynn et al., 2016]. Social media usage is being increasingly embraced by Generation Z [Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010]. They mostly use for conversation and communication with their friends and groups but also use for purchasing decision process. The Generation Z have better awareness of products and services, are efficient in searching and providing information on the social media platform, enjoy purchasing, pay attention to advertising, and they are often seeking and use different promotions on social media.

Gender differences have been shown to occur in the social media and have strong effects on purchase behaviour [Raacke and Bonds-Raacke, 2008; McAndrew and Jeong, 2012;], but results are different. Some studies find that women are more active social media users than men and show different type of behaviours [Sheldon and Bryant, 2016; Khan, 2017]. Research reveals that young women are more likely to use social media to maintain existing relations, or for informational and education gratifications, while young men prefer to use social media to meet new people and socialize [Kircaburun et al., 2020]. Kian, et al., 2017 find that men have stronger purchase intention in social media websites than women. However, women users as compared to men are more influenced with eWOM are when buying in social media (Kim et al., 2011). Also, women are tending to less risk taking and rely on online reviews before buying the products in social media [Sohaib et al., 2018]. They have higher levels of concerns about tangible rewards and are more likely to take advantage of promotions and sales when shopping in social media platform than male users [Venkatesh et al., 2012]. According to Zhang et al. [2013], women are more likely than men to express their opinions and emotions and probably be more inclined to posted review or comments about their purchase experience. Furthermore, men and women share different types of topics on social media such as Facebook. For example, men like to share information about their favourite team and sports events, while women like to share a variety of topics such as their lifestyle, talking about their children and their personal hobbies [Lin and Wang, 2020].

3. METHODOLOGY

This study investigates the gender difference of generation Z in relation to features of social media usage. Also, this study explores the relation between purchase intentions and firm-created social media content, purchase recommendations, sharing the purchase experience in Generation Z. To achieve the objectives of the study, a questionnaire was developed based on the results of the literature review. A questionnaire was designed to collect the necessary data from a convenience sample of consumers who have already used social media platforms. The research sample consisted of 162 social media users of Generation Z. Generation Z is identified as individuals who were born in the mid-1990s; some studies mark the beginning of this

generation as the year 1995, while others consider it 1997–1998, arguably ending between 2012 and 2018. This study includes social media users born between 1995 and 2010 [Suderman, 2016, Rosenblant, Ramirez, Oulopis, 2016]. Data collection was done by distributing questionnaires to respondents via Google forms. shared on social media such as Facebook and Instagram. The participants who are younger than 18 provided informed consent of adults, prior to accessing the surveys.

The required data was collected between July 2021 and October 2021. A convenience sampling approach was used for data collection. The survey questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section included questions, "How often do you use social media" and Using social media company achieve" measured with an ordinal scale with closed questions. The second part included statements about purchase intentions, firm-created social media content, purchase recommendations and sharing the purchase experience. The statements were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, with respondents expressing their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement (1=completely disagree, 5=strongly agree). In addition, the questionnaire included demographic characteristics such as gender, age, education level, and monthly income of the respondents

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

The Mann-Whitney U Test is a non-parametric statistical technique used in statistics to examine differences between two independent groups on a continuous or ordinal scale. The reasons why the Mann-Whitney U test was use because the independent variable, gender consists of more than 2 groups gender: "male" and "female"). The Mann– Whitney U test was used for statistical analysis of the data ($\alpha = 0.05$). To get the U statistic, instead of using means, we use ranks by ordering the scores from both groups from smallest to largest, keeping track of which group each score came from, then adding up the ranks for the scores from each group [Emerson, 2023.]. The test results of mean ranks for every statements according to gender are presented in the following Table 1.

Table 1. Mean ranks

	GENDER	N	MEAN RANK	SUM OF RANKS
I intend to make purchases on social media in the future.	Male	61	72,06	4395,50
	Female	101	87,20	8807,50
	Total	162		
Purchasing via social media is in trend.	Male	61	68,16	4157,50
	Female	101	89,56	9045,50
	Total	162		
Reviews on social media helps in making purchase decisions.	Male	61	67,48	4116,50
	Female	101	89,97	9086,50
	Total	162		
Social media are a good additional	Male	61	71,46	4359,00

channel of sales and advertising for the company.	Female	101	87,56	8844,00
	Total	162		
I am searching for information about products advertised on social media.	Male	61	71,42	4356,50
	Female	101	87,59	8846,50
	Total	162		

Source: Research findings (N=162)

The Mann-Whitney U test to assess the significance of differences between respondents in terms of demographic characteristic such as gender. Additional confirmation of the results has been obtained by Mann Whitney test with significance below α=0,05 in Table 2,3,4,5 and 6. The following table shows the Mann Whitney test result for purchase intentions considering the gender of Generation Z.

Table 2. Mann Whitney U test - gender of Generation Z and purchase intentions

	Purchase intentions
Mann-Whitney U	2504,500
Wilcoxon W	4395,500
Z	-2,082
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,037

Grouping Variable: GENDER
Source: Research findings (N=162)

Table 1 provide data on the calculated z-values and the approximately calculated statistical significance of differences between the crossed variables Since the significance for purchase intentions is less than 0.05, exactly 0.037, it can be confirmed that there is a statistically significant difference in the purchase intentions with regard to the gender of Generation Z. Introduction of gender variable into further analysis indicates that female respondents are more inclined to make purchase in social media than men. This is confirmed by the results from table 1 where the rank for women is 8807,50 and for men is 4395,50. The next table shows the Mann Whitney test result for purchasing via social media is in trend considering the gender of the respondent.

Table 3. Mann Whitney U test - gender of Generation Z and purchasing via social media is in trend.

	Purchasing via social media is in trend.
Mann-Whitney U	2266,500
Wilcoxon W	4157,500
Z	-3,045
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,002

Grouping Variable: GENDER
Source: Research findings (N=162)

The existence of significant statistical difference in the purchasing via social media is in trend per gender of Generation Z was confirmed by Mann Whitney test, shown in the Table 3, the significance being below α=0,05. When analysing the gender difference, it is noticeable that female respondents are more likely to agree with the statement in relation to the male

respondents, since the rank for female is 9045,50 and for men 4157,50 (Table 1). Research results suggest that female respondents of Generation Z consider social media as convenient and trendy place for purchasing. Most likely, female respondents believe that shopping through social media will provide more suitable and comprehensive information that can help in purchasing decision making. The results of Mann Whitney test for variable gender of Generation Z and reviews on social media helps in making purchase decisions are present in the Table 4.

Table 4. Mann Whitney U test - gender of Generation Z and reviews on social media helps in making purchase decisions

	Reviews on social media helps in making purchase decisions.
Mann-Whitney U	2225,500
Wilcoxon W	4116,500
Z	-3,205
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,001

Grouping Variable: GENDER
Source: Research findings (N=162)

Table 4 shows the Mann Whitney test result for reviews on social media helps in making purchase decisions considering the gender of Generation Z. Since the significance for reviews on social media helps in making purchase decisions is less than 0.05 and is 0.001, it can be confirmed that there is a statistically significant difference between reviews on social media that helps in making purchase decisions with regard to the gender of Generation Z. Table 1 shows the ranks of reviews on social media helps in making purchase decisions with regard to gender of the respondent indicating that women are more likely to search for review before making a purchase decision since the rank is 9086,5, and for men it is 4116,50. Next table show result of Mann Whitney test between gender of Generation Z and social media are a good additional channel of sales and advertising for the company.

Table 5. Mann Whitney U test - gender of Generation Z and social media are a good additional channel of sales and advertising for the company.

	Social media are a good additional channel of sales and advertising for the company.
Mann-Whitney U	2468,000
Wilcoxon W	4359,000
Z	-2,297
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,022

Grouping Variable: GENDER
Source: Research findings (N=162)

Table 5 indicates that there are statistically significant differences in attitudes of respondents to the said statements with respect to gender. The significance is 0.022, being less than α=0,05. Results shows that female respondents since the rank is 8844,00, are more prone to agree with the statement that a social media is a good additional channel of sales and advertising when compared with male respondents with rank of 4359,00. Female respondents consider social mead as efficient place where can get more timely information through advertisements. Also, they perceived social media as a potential place for making purchases more efficiently since they have direct communication with the preferred company. Mann Whitney U test between gender of Generation Z and searching for information about a product on social media are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Mann Whitney U test - gender of Generation Z and searching for information about a product on social media

	Searching for information about a product on social media
Mann-Whitney U	2465,500
Wilcoxon W	4356,500
Z	-2,282
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,023

Grouping Variable: GENDER
Source: Research findings (N=162)

The results show that, there is a statistically significant difference in the mean score gender and searching for information about a product on social media (Mann–Whitney U = 2465,500, p = 0.023). The female respondents of Generation Z tend to rely more on the search of general information before purchasing the products via social media.

Regarding social media usage, as the Mann–Whitney results indicate, there is enough evidence to conclude that there are significant differences between the gender of Generation Z and 5 statements. Since all p-values are smaller than the significance level of 5%, there is a significant gender difference regarding every statement included in this paper. For every statements (Table 1), female respondents of Generation Z ranked higher than males. This demonstrates with respect to social media usage that female respondents are more inclined toward purchasing via social media and provide useful information about their purchase experience. Furthermore, female respondents will likely to talk about, recommend or purchase products on social media since they consider social media a useful advertising tool as well as an additional and potential point of sale. Table 7 shows the results of correlation matrix between purchase intentions and pre-purchase behaviour, number of reviews and intention to review.

Table 7. Correlation matrix between purchase intentions and company created social media content, sharing information about past purchase experience and encouraging other users to make purchase in social media

Spearman's rho	Purchase intentions
I would encourage my friends to purchase via social media.	665**
	,000
I would share the purchase experience via social media.	553**
	,000
The level of communication with companies via social media meets my expectations	464**
	,000

** Correlation is significant at 0,01
Source: Research findings (N=162)

Statistical analysis of data displayed in Table 7 found statistically significant, moderately strong but positive relation between purchase intentions and company created social media content, sharing information about past purchase experience as well as encouraging other users to make purchase in social media. Values of Spearman's correlation coefficient show statistically significant, moderately strong positive relation between purchase intentions and company created social media content. The result confirm that the users are satisfied with the company created social media content because it allows them to simply follow the latest news and trends that appear daily in social media. Also, the result indicate that users are satisfied with the communication because they can exchange information with the company in a very simple way in order to fulfil their needs. Such an approach allows users to develop strong individual relation

with the company and become potential loyal consumer in future. Further, statistical analysis presented in the table 7, show moderately strong but statistically significant, positive relationship between purchase intention and sharing information about past purchase experience. From the data shown in table 7 it can be seen that users will be willing to share the necessary information about their past purchase experiences and satisfaction with the products purchase via social media. Further analysis, show that there is a strong statistically significant, positive relationship between purchase intention and encouraging other users to make purchase in social media. The results suggested that users, based on their own positive purchase experiences, will encourage other users to buy a product they are satisfied with. Such a result indicates that e-WOM can have a significant impact on the purchase intentions of other users in future.

5. CONCLUSION

This study investigates the gender difference of generation Z in relation to features of social media usage. Also, explores the relation between purchase intentions and firm-created social media content, purchase recommendations, sharing the purchase experience in Generation Z. In context of results, female respondents of Generation Z ranked higher than males. Female respondents will likely to exchange information, recommend or purchase products on social media since they consider social media a useful advertising tool as well as an additional and potential point of sale. Further statistical analysis shows statistically significant, moderately strong but positive relation between purchase intentions and company created social media content, sharing information about past purchase experience as well as encouraging other users to make purchase in social media. The result confirm that the users are satisfied with the company created social media content because it enables them to simply follow the latest news and trends that appear daily in social media. Also, the result indicate that users are satisfied with the communication because they can exchange information with the company in a very simple way in order to fulfil their needs. Such approach allows users to develop strong individual relation with the company and become potential loyal consumer in future. Also, users will be willing to share the necessary information about their past purchase experiences and satisfaction with the products purchase via social media. They probably believe that sharing the crucial information can be useful for other users to helps them by reducing the perceived risk in purchase in order to make a right purchase decision. In addition, results recommended that users, based on their own positive purchase experiences, will encourage other users to buy a product they are satisfied with. Such a result indicates that e-WOM can have a significant impact on the purchase intentions of other users in future.

A deeper understanding of gender difference in social media can be helpful for both researchers and practitioners to gain better insights into consumer purchase behavior. Investigating gender differences in social media could benefit to companies in order to highlighted barriers that are specific for purchase behaviour in social media based on gender awareness.

The main limitation is that the study is based on non-probability convenience sampling, meaning that the sample is unlikely to be representative of the population being studied, have unbalanced sampling structure and small number of sample units. Limitation of this study is that it refers to only Z Generation users, which also limits the generalization of the research results. Considering the stated limitations, future research should consider to include other generation in sample and to include additional variables to this survey to gain a comprehensive insight into users' social media usage.

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