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Gen Z Shopping Behavior Factors in Modern Retail Stores, Bojonegoro City, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the factors that influence Generation Z's shopping behavior in modern retail stores in Bojonegoro, Indonesia. As digital technology and social media increasingly shape consumer habits, understanding how Gen Z that characterized by digital nativeness and high connectivity makes purchasing decisions is crucial for retail development. A qualitative approach was employed using in-depth interviews with five purposively selected participants aged 18–25, complemented by field observations and documentation.Thematic analysis revealed four dominant factors influencing Gen Z's retail shopping behavior: technology adoption, social media engagement, influencer impact, and social environment. Respondents indicated that product discovery often starts through platforms like TikTok and Instagram but decisions are finalized after in-store visits, highlighting a hybrid shopping pattern. Influencers, particularly micro-influencers with relatable content, significantly affect trust and intent to buy. Peer opinions and group shopping activities also play a critical role in shaping preferences.These findings suggest that while Gen Z is highly influenced by digital ecosystems, physical retail experiences remain vital. The research contributes to the understanding of hybrid consumer behavior and offers strategic implications for modern retailers seeking to align their marketing and service strategies with Gen Z preferences. Retailers are advised to integrate online and offline experiences, collaborate with digital influencers, and create interactive in-store environments to attract and retain this consumer segment.

Keywords
Bojonegoro
Consumer Behaviour
Digital Retail
Generation Z
Modern Retail
Purchase Decision

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Introduction

Generation Z is recognized as one of the most critical consumer groups. They have significantly reshaped the landscape of online retail in unprecedented ways. Distinct from previous generations, they seek not only products but also shopping experiences that align with high ethical values and aesthetic standards [1]. As they enter the workforce with substantial purchasing power, they demonstrate a selective attitude toward the brands they choose to support [2]. This shift compels companies to move beyond mere transactional relationships and focus on building meaningful connections and trust with their consumers [3].

Generation Z demonstrates a strong tendency to engage in extensive research prior to making purchasing decisions, systematically comparing prices, product quality, and online reviews in order to secure the most advantageous deals that are also consistent with their personal values [4]. They tend to prefer brands that are transparent about the sourcing of materials, production processes, and environmental impact [5]. As a result, online stores have evolved beyond mere transactional platforms into spaces where brands can showcase their commitment to social and environmental issues, often through visually engaging storytelling and content.

Generation Z refers to individuals born after 1995, often referred to as the post-millennial generation. A study conducted by Chan 2023 identifies four major behavioral components of Gen Z, all grounded in a central foundation: the pursuit of truth. First, Gen Z is described as “the undefined ID,” a term that reflects the generation's appreciation for individual expression without the need for fixed labels. This search for identity fosters a high degree of openness and a willingness to understand and embrace the uniqueness of others [6].

Table 1 illustrates the multifaceted nature of Gen Z’s shopping behavior, particularly in a digital and modern retail context. Technology and social influence emerge as dominant forces, aligning with Gen Z's identity as digital natives who rely heavily on online platforms and peer validation. While psychological factors such as lifestyle and the desire for self-expression also shape their decisions, economic considerations remain crucial for Gen Z often balances aspiration with affordability. Notably, environmental and ethical concerns, although rising in importance, have not yet become primary drivers in everyday purchase decisions.

Table 1. Influencing Factors in Gen Z's Purchase Decision-Making

Factor Category	Sub-Factors	Impact on Purchase Decisions	Thematic Description
Social & Community	• Peer influence • Social media trends	High	Gen Z is heavily influenced by peer opinions and social media trends
Psychological & Emotional	• Lifestyle • Need for self-actualization	Medium to High	Shopping often reflects personal identity and emotional needs
Digital & Technology	• App usability • Online reviews • E-wallet features	Very High	Technology is a key enabler in Gen Z's purchasing decisions
Personal Economic	• Price sensitivity • Discounts • Personal financial capacity	High	Gen Z is price-conscious but attracted to deals and promotions
Product & Brand	• Product quality • Brand awareness • Value for money	Medium to High	Preference for trendy and value-aligned brands
Environmental & Ethical	• Eco-friendly products • Business ethics	Low to Medium	Awareness is growing, but not yet a dominant decision factor

However, brands that actively communicate their sustainability efforts may gain a long-term competitive advantage as this generation matures. This thematic mapping can serve as a strategic guide for retailers and marketers aiming to craft resonant campaigns, product designs, and shopping experiences tailored to Gen Z consumers. According to a survey conducted [7], 63% of Generation Z express an interest in engaging in various creative activities on a daily basis. This creativity is shaped in part by their active participation in communities and social media. This finding aligns with several studies that characterize Generation Z as digital natives who a generation closely associated with technology [8]. They were born during the era of smartphones, grew up alongside advancements in computer technology, and have greater access to the internet compared to previous generations [9].

The majority of Generation Z today experience constant lifestyle changes, often influenced by emerging trends that evolve in line with increasingly complex technological advancements [10]. Modernization has transformed human life to align more closely with human desires. Generation Z has undergone significant social, economic, and cultural changes as a result of technological progress [11].

Moreover, certain adolescent behaviors are a consequence of lifestyle patterns that lead to social climber tendencies. Previous research conducted [12] indicates that the presence of social media captures the attention of Generation Z, prompting them to compete in showcasing their lifestyles in pursuit of fame and social recognition.

Consumer behavior can be defined as the mental and emotional processes, as well as physical activities, undertaken by individuals when selecting, purchasing, using, and organizing goods and services to satisfy specific needs and desires [13]. Consumer behavior refers to the actions of individuals, groups, or organizations, and the processes they use to select, acquire, use, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas for the purpose of satisfaction [14].

In Bojonegoro Regency, various forms of modern retail business designs have increasingly emerged, ranging from supermarkets to modern mini markets, in line with ongoing economic development. Amid the proliferation of mini markets and modern retail outlets, consumer behavior continues to evolve over time, driven by improvements in economic conditions [15]. In recent years, many new retail formats have emerged, offering various advantages that attract consumers to make purchases at these establishments. Modern retail sales are no longer solely product-oriented; instead, they now emphasize aspects such as convenience, entertainment, ease of transactions, and other value-added experiences.

Today, Generation Z customers adhere to different norms and expectations. Driven by technology and an on-demand culture, these young consumers have grown up with media and services that are accessible at the touch of a button, anytime and anywhere. This is not a concept of the future it is a reality that is already unfolding in the present. According [16], the atmosphere of a store or a particular area is a variable that influences the overall experience perceived in that environment. Store atmosphere provides sensory stimuli that can affect buyers' responses and, in turn, influence their purchasing behavior.

Retail refers to a business activity that sells products and services with added value to fulfill the needs of individuals, families, groups, or end users in small quantities. Retail plays a crucial role in the distribution chain and serves as the final link in the distribution process that connects producers with consumers. The main characteristics of modern retail include modern management, advanced technology, strong capital investment, fixed pricing, sophisticated facilities, and the availability of payment methods such as credit cards, debit cards, or e-money. It also operates on the self-service principle, features frequent promotional activities, discounts, and giveaways, and is generally managed by private entities. Modern retail outlets are predominantly located in urban areas, typically housed in clean and well-maintained buildings, and cater primarily to middle- and upper-class consumers [15].

Literature Review

Generation Z are interested in engaging in various creative activities on a daily basis. This creativity is partly shaped by Generation Z's active involvement in communities and social media. This finding is consistent with several studies that identify Generation Z as a generation closely associated with technology (digital natives), as they were born in the era of

smartphones, grew up alongside advanced computer technologies, and have greater accessibility to the internet compared to previous generations [17].

The majority of Generation Z today experience constant lifestyle changes, often influenced by emerging trends that correspond with increasingly complex technological advancements [18]. Modernization transforms life to better align with human desires. Generation Z has undergone significant social, economic, and cultural changes as a result of technological progress [19].

Consumer behavior can be defined as the mental and emotional processes, as well as the physical activities, undertaken by individuals when selecting, purchasing, using, and managing goods and services to satisfy specific needs and desires [20]. Consumer behavior refers to the actions of individuals, groups, or organizations and the processes they employ to select, acquire, use, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas for satisfaction [21].

According to Anggapratama [22] state that although shoppers may not fully pay attention to the store environment while shopping, it can still influence their personal condition. Customers are more likely to make purchases in stores with an appealing atmosphere.

Purchase decision is the buyer's activity of selecting a product perceived as a solution to their needs and desires. Buyers consistently pursue multiple purchasing options, and these choices are a primary concern for businesses and advertisers. Most organizations conduct in-depth studies of buyers' purchase decisions to address questions such as what customers want to buy, where they shop, how much they spend, when they spend, and why they make purchases [23].

After purchasing a product, buyers naturally want to assess whether the product meets their expectations in terms of quality or satisfaction [24]. From that moment onward, customers will consider whether the brand they purchased is satisfactory (if not, they may reconsider) or whether they will make repeat purchases when seeking similar products. According to Khan et.al., [25], in making a purchase decision, customers consider up to five sub-choices, including: brand selection (e.g., brand A), vendor selection (e.g., vendor 2), quantity (e.g., 1 unit of a PC), timing of purchase (e.g., weekend), and payment strategy (e.g., Visa installment). The decision to buy or not to buy a product is influenced by these various sub-choices.

Research Methods

The method used in this research is a qualitative approach. This study aims to explore the factors influencing the behavior and purchasing decisions of Generation Z in modern retail stores in Bojonegoro City. A qualitative approach is chosen to gain an in-depth understanding

of participants' perspectives, experiences, and motivations in relation to their shopping behavior [26].

Data sources include both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews and direct observation of selected Generation Z individuals. Secondary data were gathered from relevant literature, previous research, and official reports related to retail behavior and consumer decision-making [27]. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on Gen Z individuals who actively engage in shopping activities at modern retail stores such as supermarkets and minimarkets in Bojonegoro. The number of participants was determined based on data saturation, where interviews were conducted until no new significant information emerged. Data collection techniques included semi-structured interviews, field observations, and documentation. The interview process followed a guide but remained flexible to allow respondents to share their experiences in depth [28].

The research was conducted in Bojonegoro City, which serves as the central location for data collection. The population in this study consists of Generation Z individuals residing in Bojonegoro City. This qualitative research design is intended to provide rich, detailed insights into the psychological, social, and contextual factors that shape Gen Z's behavior and decision-making processes in the context of modern retail in Bojonegoro.

The participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria:

1. Aged between 18–25 years, falling within the Generation Z demographic.
2. Reside or are active in Bojonegoro, making them relevant to the local modern retail context.
3. Regularly visit modern retail stores, with a minimum frequency of twice a month.
4. Actively use social media or digital platforms in their shopping journey.

These criteria ensure that participants reflect the behavior of Bojonegoro's digitally engaged Gen Z consumers, who blend online and offline retail experiences. They represent a generation that is technologically savvy but still values in-person retail interactions.

Results

This study aimed to identify the factors influencing the purchasing behavior of Generation Z in modern retail stores in Bojonegoro City. The findings were derived through a combination of participant profiling, thematic content analysis, and factor categorization. The analysis followed five systematic steps, enhanced by both narrative and structured data.

A. Step 1: Participant Profile Overview

Five representative Generation Z participants aged 19–25 provided in-depth information on their shopping preferences. Table 2 presents their demographics and digital behaviors.

Table 2. Participant Demographics and Behavior

ID	Age	Gender	Retail Visit Frequency	Digital Shopping Behavior
R1	20	Female	3 times/month	Uses TikTok & Shopee
R2	23	Male	2 times/month	Uses Instagram & Tokopedia
R3	21	Female	4 times/month	Uses Shopee & TikTok
R4	19	Male	Weekly	Uses Instagram & Lazada
R5	25	Female	2 times/month	Uses Tokopedia & Shopee

All participants actively use social media and digital marketplaces, indicating a strong digital orientation typical of Generation Z.

B. Step 2: Thematic Coding and Sub-Factor Identification

Open coding of interview and survey responses yielded recurring references to digital habits, lifestyle alignment, financial concerns, brand preferences, and social influence. Axial coding allowed for grouping into broader thematic categories. For example:

- "I always check TikTok reviews" → *Digital & Technology / Online Reviews*
- "I shop if it's on discount" → *Personal Economic / Discounts*
- "I prefer brands that support sustainability" → *Environmental & Ethical / Eco-friendly Products*

C. Step 3: Factor Categorization and Impact Assessment

Themes were then classified into six major factor categories, each with identified sub-factors and assessed impact levels. This structured matrix is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Factor Categories and Impact on Purchase Decisions

Factor Category	Sub-Factors	Impact on Purchase	Thematic Description
Social & Community	Peer influence, Social media trends	High	Gen Z is heavily influenced by peer opinions and current social media trends
Psychological & Emotional	Lifestyle, Self-actualization	Medium to High	Shopping is used to express identity and meet emotional or lifestyle needs
Digital & Technology	App usability, Online reviews, E-wallet features	**Very High**	Technology is a central enabler in decision-making and purchase execution
Personal Economic	Price sensitivity, Discounts, Financial capacity	High	Gen Z is highly price-conscious but responsive to deals and flexible payments
Product & Brand	Product quality, Brand awareness, Value for money	Medium to High	Preference for trend-aligned, high-quality, and value-based brands
Environmental & Ethical	Eco-friendly products, Business ethics	Low to Medium	Growing awareness, but still secondary to convenience and brand appeal

D. Step 4: Pattern Matching Across Participants

- Digital & Technology was unanimously dominant across all profiles. Every participant emphasized features such as online reviews, ease of app use, and Shopee or Tokopedia convenience.
- Social & Community influence appeared strong, especially through TikTok and Instagram.
- Female participants (R1, R3, R5) expressed higher concern for price sensitivity and lifestyle alignment, while males (R2, R4) leaned more toward peer influence and product quality.
- Environmental & Ethical considerations were mentioned sporadically, often linked to brand image rather than core motivation.

E. Step 5: Final Factor Synthesis

Combining thematic insights and structured analysis, six major influencing factors were validated. Their occurrence and perceived impact provide a nuanced view of how Generation Z in Bojonegoro make purchase decisions. See Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of Key Factors Influencing Gen Z Shopping Behavior

No.	Factor	Key Influence Area	Impact Level
1	Digital & Technology	App interfaces, online reviews, digital payments	Very High
2	Social & Community	Friends' opinions, influencer trends, online communities	High
3	Personal Economic	Price comparisons, discounts, Shopee PayLater	High
4	Product & Brand	Brand visibility, perceived value, trendiness	Medium to High
5	Psychological & Emotional	Identity expression, lifestyle matching	Medium to High
6	Environmental & Ethical	Eco-consciousness, ethical purchasing	Low to Medium

This results presentation offers both qualitative richness and quantitative clarity, allowing for strong connections to the theoretical discussion and implications for retail strategies targeting Gen Z.

Discussion

Generation Z is widely recognized as a cohort of digital natives, i.e., individuals who have grown up with continuous exposure to digital technology, social media, and mobile connectivity. Born into the era of smartphones and e-commerce, they exhibit distinctive behavioral patterns shaped by ubiquitous internet access and online communities [7]. This generation is characterized by creativity and self-expression, often shared through digital platforms such as TikTok and Instagram [9].

The findings of this study align with the growing literature highlighting Gen Z's high level of digital literacy and their reliance on online information sources in making purchasing decisions [1]. Social media plays a significant role in influencing this generation's consumption behavior. Influencer marketing and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) have been shown to strongly affect brand preferences and perceived value, especially in youth-dominated markets [2],[12].

In Bojonegoro, Gen Z consumers demonstrate a clear preference for online shopping platforms such as Shopee, Tokopedia, and Lazada. This trend is driven by the convenience of comparing prices, browsing customer reviews, and accessing promotions that all from a smartphone [4]. The behavioral shift toward online retail is not only a response to technological accessibility but also to their consumer-centric mindset that values speed, convenience, and personalized recommendations [13].

Furthermore, Gen Z's purchasing behavior is highly influenced by peer and community trends. The trust placed in product recommendations from friends or social media influencers reflects the collective nature of decision-making in this cohort [23]. These influences are amplified by micro-communities formed on digital platforms, where brand loyalty is often constructed through shared values, aesthetic alignment, and trend adoption [14].

Cultural and environmental awareness also shape Gen Z's buying patterns. Many of them are drawn to brands that align with their ethical views, including environmental sustainability and corporate social responsibility [5],[10]. In this context, green product choices and support for local businesses represent not just preferences but identity statements. This behavior mirrors global findings indicating that Gen Z is more likely to "buy with a purpose" compared to older generations [18]. Educational attainment and internet fluency also enhance their critical evaluation of products and services. Access to information enables Gen Z to make informed decisions, often backed by online research, expert reviews, and real-time feedback [8]. As such, their decision-making is more analytical, supported by a variety of data points sourced from digital environments.

Finally, modernization and digital transformation have influenced how Generation Z shops in Bojonegoro. While traditional retail outlets remain relevant, the physical experience is often complemented or even replaced by virtual browsing and e-commerce platforms. The importance of the retail environment (e.g., cleanliness, layout, and comfort) is secondary to the immediacy and interactivity of online shopping [22]. This study confirms that Gen Z in Bojonegoro represents a tech-savvy, socially influenced, and value-driven consumer group. Their shopping behavior reflects a hybrid experience that merges digital efficiency with social validation, setting them apart from previous generations in both motivation and method.

Conclusion

Technology serves as a significant factor influencing Generation Z's behavior and purchasing decisions in choosing to shop at modern retail outlets, particularly through the use of social media, influencers, e-commerce platforms, and online shopping applications. The social environment is also a crucial factor in Gen Z's purchasing decisions at modern retail stores, encompassing the influence of family and friends, social media exposure, cultural norms, and access to education and information. Both technology and the social environment collectively impact the shopping behavior and purchasing decisions of Generation Z in the context of modern retail.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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