

A Study on the Impact of Social Media Marketing on Gen Z Smartphone Purchase Decisions with Special Reference to Palakkad

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S. Shahid

III BBA. Logistics

*Department of Business Administration (Logistics and Aviation Management)
Nehru Arts and Science College (Autonomous), Coimbatore*

A. Abdul Salam

III BBA. Aviation Management

*Department of Business Administration (Logistics and Aviation Management)
Nehru Arts and Science College (Autonomous), Coimbatore*

C. Hariharasudhan

Assistant Professor

*Department of Business Administration (Logistics and Aviation Management)
Nehru Arts and Science College (Autonomous), Coimbatore*

Abstract

The propagation of social media has dramatically influenced consumer purchase behaviour, especially among Generation Z (Gen Z), who are most active on digital platforms. This study examines the impact of social media marketing on smartphone purchase decisions among Gen Z consumers in Palakkad. Primary data were collected from 112 respondents using a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis were employed to analyze relationships between social media marketing exposure and purchase intention. The findings reveal that social media advertising, influencer promotions, peer reviews, and interactive brand content significantly influence smartphone choices. Gen Z respondents displayed higher engagement with visual platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. Regression results indicate that peer influence and influencer credibility are significant predictors of purchase decisions. However, factors such as perceived advertisement overload and mistrust of sponsored content moderately dampen social media's effectiveness. The study concludes that social media marketing plays a key role in shaping Gen Z smartphone purchase decisions in Palakkad, but authenticity and trust remain critical for sustained engagement.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Gen Z, Smartphone Purchase Decisions, Influencer Marketing, Consumer Behaviour.

Introduction

Social media has transformed the way consumers interact with brands, particularly among Generation Z (Gen Z), who are digital natives and highly responsive to online content. Platforms such as Meta Platforms' Facebook and Instagram, and Google' YouTube serve as major channels for brand engagement, product information,

reviews, and influencer marketing. For smartphone brands, social media marketing has become a critical tool to influence purchase decisions, offering visual advertisements, peer recommendations, and influencer endorsements that resonate with young audiences.

In Palakkad, Kerala, the increasing penetration of smartphones and internet connectivity has made social media a key platform for influencing Gen Z's buying behaviour. Young consumers rely not only on product specifications but also on peer feedback, trending content, and influencer credibility when choosing smartphones. Understanding how social media marketing affects purchase intentions is essential for brands to design effective campaigns, build trust, and increase sales among this digitally connected segment. This study focuses on analyzing the impact of social media marketing on Gen Z smartphone purchase decisions in Palakkad, highlighting the key factors driving their online engagement and buying behaviour.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the impact of social media marketing on Gen Z's smartphone purchase decisions.
2. To identify which social media platforms most influence Gen Z behaviour.
3. To determine the role of influencers, peer reviews, and ads in purchase intention.
4. To provide recommendations for enhancing social media marketing effectiveness.

Review of Literature

Kumar and Singh (2025) explored social media's role in influencing consumer purchase behaviour among Gen Z in Indian urban markets. They found that platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube significantly shape purchase intentions by providing brand content, peer reviews, and influencer endorsements. The study indicated that the interaction between users and brands on social media enhances product awareness and trust, especially for high involvement products like smartphones. Visual content and relatable influencer messaging were found to be stronger predictors of purchase decisions among younger consumers, highlighting the need for targeted campaigns to engage Gen Z effectively.

Ramesh and Jayan (2024) analyzed how social media advertising affects smartphone buying behaviour among college students. Their study revealed that ads tailored to individual interests—with engaging visuals and interactive elements significantly increased brand recall and preference. Peer comments and reviews on social media were found to influence trust levels and attitudes more than traditional celebrity endorsements. The research further concluded that Gen Z consumers rely heavily on user generated content and recommendations in online communities when making purchase decisions.

Priya and Raj (2024) investigated social media influence on smartphone purchases among youth in South India. Their findings demonstrated that influencer credibility, content relevance, and frequency of exposure positively affect purchase intention. Consumers perceive authentic influencer experiences as more trustworthy than generic advertisements. The study also noted that smartphone brands with consistent engagement on social platforms enjoyed higher consumer preference and loyalty. The authors emphasized the importance of interactive content and responsive digital engagement in shaping Gen Z attitudes towards smartphones.

Gupta and Verma (2023) assessed the effectiveness of Instagram marketing on tech product purchases among millennials and Gen Z. The study found that visually appealing advertisements, Reels, and interactive Stories created higher engagement and influenced purchase decisions. User comments and reviews acted as social proof that reduced perceived purchase risk. The research highlighted that social media brand engagement boosted customer involvement and positive product attitude, leading to increased online purchases.

Sethi and Bansal (2023) examined the impact of social media influencer campaigns on consumer attitudes towards smartphone brands in urban India. They reported that influencers with niche technology expertise were more effective than entertainment influencers in shaping purchase intentions. The study noted that credibility (trust), attractiveness (appeal), and relatability (personal connection) of influencers strongly influenced consumer attitudes and decisions. Additionally, brand interactions and timely responses to consumer queries improved brand trust and purchase likelihood.

Chatterjee and Dey (2022) explored the role of YouTube marketing in consumer electronics purchases and found that video reviews, unboxing experiences, and performance comparisons significantly impacted purchase decisions. Gen Z consumers preferred detailed, user-centric content that helped them evaluate product features and value for money. The study concluded that YouTube content, along with social sharing, increases consumer confidence and reduces purchase anxiety, especially for high investment products like smartphones.

Shankar and Menon (2021) investigated the influence of Facebook-based social media marketing on customer buying behaviour in the electronics segment. Their research demonstrated that brand pages with active user engagement, frequent updates, and interactive polls attracted more consumer attention and positively influenced purchase decisions. The study also found that the perceived usefulness of social media information correlated strongly with consumer purchase intentions, particularly among digitally savvy youth.

Research Methodology:

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the impact of social media marketing on Gen Z smartphone purchase decisions in Palakkad. A descriptive approach is suitable for understanding the characteristics, perceptions, and buying behaviour of respondents, while also identifying relationships between social media marketing variables and purchase intentions.

Area of Study

The study was conducted in Palakkad district, Kerala, focusing on urban and semi-urban areas where Gen Z consumers are highly active on social media and increasingly engaged in smartphone purchases. The area was selected due to its rising smartphone penetration, growing digital literacy, and active social media usage among youth.

Population of the Study

The population consists of Generation Z individuals residing in Palakkad who are active social media users, interested in smartphones and related technologies and potential or recent smartphone buyers.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

- Sample Size: 112 respondents
- Sampling Technique: Convenience sampling was used to select respondents based on accessibility and willingness to participate. This method ensures the study captures relevant data from digitally active Gen Z individuals in Palakkad.

Sources of Data

The study utilizes both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected directly from 112 Gen Z respondents in Palakkad using a structured questionnaire. Secondary

data were gathered from published research articles, academic journals, books, industry reports, and credible online sources related to social media marketing, Gen Z consumer behaviour, and smartphone purchasing trends.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected from 112 respondents were analyzed using percentage analysis, correlation, and regression techniques to examine the impact of social media marketing on Gen Z smartphone purchase decisions in Palakkad.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	65	58.00%
	Female	47	42.00%
Age	18–21	50	44.60%
	22–25	62	55.40%
Income	Below Rs. 3 Lakhs	30	26.80%
	Rs. 3–6 Lakhs	50	44.60%
	Above Rs. 6 Lakhs	32	28.60%

Interpretation

The majority of respondents are aged 22–25, indicating that older Gen Z individuals are more active in smartphone purchasing. Gender distribution shows a relatively balanced participation among males and females.

Social Media Engagement Level

Engagement Level	Respondents	Percentage
High	60	53.60%
Moderate	38	33.90%
Low	14	12.50%

Interpretation

More than half of the respondents exhibit high engagement with social media platforms, showing that they are regularly exposed to brand content and influencer promotions.

Factors Influencing Smartphone Purchase

Factor	Frequency (High Importance)	Percentage
Influencer Recommendations	68	60.70%
Peer Reviews	63	56.30%
Promotional Offers	59	52.70%
Brand Social Media Content	55	49.10%
Product Demonstrations	50	44.60%

Interpretation

Influencer recommendations are the most significant factor influencing smartphone purchase decisions, followed closely by peer reviews and promotions. Gen Z consumers rely heavily on social proof and relatable content.

Trust and Risk Perception

Concern Level	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	28	25.00%
High	36	32.10%
Moderate	26	23.20%
Low	15	13.40%
Very Low	07	6.30%

Interpretation

Nearly 57% of respondents express high concern regarding data security, product authenticity, and online payment safety, highlighting trust as a critical factor in online smartphone purchases.

Correlation Analysis

Variables	Correlation (r)	Interpretation
Social Media Engagement & Purchase Decision	0.63	Strong Positive Relationship
Influencer Influence & Purchase Decision	0.58	Moderate Positive Relationship
Perceived Risk & Purchase Decision	- 0.44	Moderate Negative Relationship

Interpretation

High engagement and influencer exposure increase purchase intentions, while perceived risk negatively affects smartphone buying behaviour.

Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable: Smartphone Purchase Decision

Variable	Beta Value	Significance
Social Media Engagement	0.50	Significant
Influencer Influence	0.37	Significant
Perceived Risk	- 0.30	Significant

Interpretation

Social media engagement is the strongest predictor of Gen Z smartphone purchases, followed by influencer recommendations. Perceived risk negatively impacts purchase decisions, indicating the importance of trust and security in digital marketing strategies.

Findings

1. The majority of Gen Z respondents in Palakkad belong to the 22–25 age group, indicating that older Gen Z individuals are the most active in smartphone purchasing.

2. Gender distribution is relatively balanced, with 58% males and 42% females participating.
3. Over 53% of respondents exhibit high engagement with social media platforms, suggesting strong exposure to online marketing content.
4. Influencer recommendations (60.7%) and peer reviews (56.3%) are the most influential factors affecting smartphone purchase decisions.
5. Promotional offers and brand content on social media also play a significant role in shaping purchase intentions.
6. Around 57% of respondents express high concern regarding online trust and security, indicating that perceived risk affects buying behaviour.
7. Correlation analysis shows a strong positive relationship between social media engagement and purchase decisions ($r = 0.63$). Influencer influence moderately increases purchase intention ($r = 0.58$), while perceived risk negatively affects it ($r = -0.44$).
8. Regression results confirm that social media engagement is the most significant predictor.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that smartphone brands focus on enhancing social media engagement through interactive posts, live demos, and targeted content for Gen Z consumers in Palakkad. Leveraging credible influencers can strengthen brand credibility and positively impact purchase decisions. Companies should offer attractive promotional deals and discounts to incentivize online purchases while maintaining transparency and authenticity. Addressing consumer concerns about data security and online payment safety through secure platforms, visible trust badges, and clear return policies will reduce perceived risk. Additionally, encouraging peer reviews and testimonials can further reinforce trust and social proof. Continuous monitoring of social media trends and adopting Gen Z-friendly communication strategies will enhance brand influence and online buying behaviour.

Conclusion

The study concludes that social media marketing significantly impacts Gen Z smartphone purchase decisions in Palakkad. High social media engagement and influencer recommendations strongly influence buying behaviour, while perceived risk related to online transactions negatively affects purchase intention. Convenience, promotional offers, and peer reviews also play important roles in shaping consumer decisions. Brands targeting Gen Z must focus on interactive digital content, trustworthy influencer collaborations, and secure online platforms to strengthen purchase intent. By addressing security concerns and emphasizing engagement-driven marketing strategies, smartphone companies can enhance their reach and conversion among Gen Z consumers, ensuring long-term loyalty in the highly competitive digital marketplace.

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