

Impact of Social Media on Generation Z's Purchase Decisions regarding Beauty Products, Apparels, and Tech Gadgets (special reference to jammu division)

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Abstract: This study investigates how social media platforms affect generation Z's purchasing decision in Jammu, focusing on beauty products, apparels, and technology gadgets. The research utilizes survey data to understand the role of social influencers, peer recommendations, advertisements, and online trends. Results show that platforms like Instagram and YouTube significantly shape consumer behavior, with notable differences across gender and product categories. The findings offer valuable insights for marketers targeting young audiences in smaller urban centers.

Introduction: Social media refers to websites and applications that enable users to create and share content, participate in social networking, and engage in online communities. It encompasses various platforms like social networking sites, media-sharing platforms, discussion forums, and consumer review sites. These platforms facilitate communication, information sharing, and content creation, playing a significant role in both personal and professional life. Social media has transformed how young consumers make purchasing decisions, especially among college students who are highly engaged with digital platforms. This study explores the influence of social media on the buying behavior of students in Jammu, a Tier-2 city in India. It aims to understand how visual content, peer influence, and digital advertising impact their choices in beauty products, apparels, and tech gadgets.

Objectives:

- To assess how social media affects purchase decisions.
- To identify the most influential platforms.
- To analyze variations in influence based on gender and product type.

2. Literature Review: Prior research (e.g., Kapoor et al., 2020) has highlighted that social media acts as a critical factor in consumer decision-making, especially among Gen Z. Platforms like Instagram and YouTube have emerged as powerful tools for marketing, driven by influencer culture and peer-generated content. Consumer trust tends to shift from traditional advertisements to relatable, authentic content shared by individuals online.

3. Methodology: A survey was conducted among 300 college students aged 18-25 from various institutions in Jammu. The questionnaire gathered data on social media usage, preferred platforms, and their influence on purchasing decisions across the three selected product categories.

Data Analysis: Responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and comparative charts to identify key patterns in behavior and preferences.

4. Results:

- **Platform Usage:** Instagram (82%) and YouTube (68%) were the most frequently used platforms, followed by Snapchat (45%).
- **Product Influence:**
 - **Beauty Products:** Strongly influenced by Instagram influencers and beauty tutorials.
 - **Apparels:** Fashion-related content, including outfit inspiration and hauls, played a major role.
 - **Tech Gadgets:** YouTube reviews and unboxing videos had the most influence, especially among male students.
- **Consumer Trust:** 71% of students reported purchasing based on influencer suggestions, and 66% trusted peer reviews over traditional brand ads.

5. Discussion: The research highlights a strong correlation between social media engagement and purchase behavior among students. The impact varies across product types and is influenced by gender. Visual storytelling, relatability, and peer trust are major drivers. Female students showed greater influence in beauty and fashion, while male students were more engaged with tech content.

6. Conclusion: Social media is a powerful tool influencing college students' buying decisions in Jammu. Platforms like Instagram and YouTube dominate due to their visual and interactive nature. The study provides insights for brands aiming to connect with youth through authentic and engaging digital content.

7. Recommendations:

- Collaborate with regional micro-influencers for higher relatability.
- Focus on short-form video content like Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts.
- Encourage user-generated content to build community trust.

8. Limitations and Future Scope: The study is geographically limited to Jammu and may not reflect national trends. Future research could expand to other regions and explore long-term behavioral shifts.

9. References:

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- Smith, A. (2021). Trust and Influence in Online Media. *Harvard Business Review*.