


EXPLORING THE PERCEPTIONS OF GENERATIONS X, Y AND Z ABOUT ONLINE PLATFORMS AND DIGITAL MARKETING ACTIVITIES – A FOCUS-GROUP DISCUSSION BASED STUDY

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history:</p> <p>Received 20 February 2023</p> <p>Accepted 08 May 2023</p>	<p>Purpose: This study analyzes the perceptions and attitudes of GenX, GenY and GenZ towards online platforms and digital marketing activities.</p> <p>Theoretical framework: This study is qualitative in nature and data were collected from three separate focus group discussions, one each among generations X, Y and Z. Secondary data sources like previous research articles, internet sources and books were referred.</p> <p>Design/methodology/approach: This article is intended to get insights regarding the online platforms and digital marketing consumption patterns to understand the perceptions and attitudes of GenX, GenY and GenZ towards various online platforms. Group discussion was conducted among all generations with pre-planned questions prepared by the researcher; participants were from researcher’s personal and professional network. From transcripts were prepared and information regarding their perceptions on digital marketing and online platforms were obtained and thematic analysis was done using NVivo. Ten themes and sub-themes were identified from the chart presented through Nvivo.</p> <p>Findings: The perceptions of three generations regarding online platforms and digital marketing activities differ significantly as GenX are digital migrants, GenY are digital natives and GenZ are mobile natives.</p> <p>Research, Practical & Social implications: The emergence of internet and digitalization has forced companies to concentrate more on online platforms and digital marketing avenues. Different generations’ interest, traits, perceptions, habits, etc differ and hence there is a need to analyze and understand the perceptions of different generational cohorts for businesses to develop an effective digital marketing strategy. This study would pave the way for more studies and researches which would benefit both academics and industry.</p> <p>Originality/value: This study would help to understand the perceptions of different generational cohorts for businesses to develop an effective digital marketing strategy.</p> <p>Doi: https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2023.v8i5.2122</p>
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EXPLORANDO AS PERCEPÇÕES DAS GERAÇÕES X, Y E Z SOBRE PLATAFORMAS ONLINE E ATIVIDADES DE MARKETING DIGITAL – UM ESTUDO BASEADO EM DISCUSSÃO DE GRUPO DE FOCO

RESUMO

Objetivo: Este estudo analisa as percepções e atitudes de GenX, GenY e GenZ em relação a plataformas online e atividades de marketing digital.

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Estrutura teórica: Este estudo é de natureza qualitativa e os dados foram coletados de três discussões de grupos focais separados, cada um entre as gerações X, Y e Z. Fontes de dados secundários, como artigos de pesquisa anteriores, fontes da Internet e livros foram referidos.

Design/metodologia/abordagem: Este artigo pretende obter insights sobre as plataformas online e os padrões de consumo de marketing digital para entender as percepções e atitudes da GenX, GenY e GenZ em relação a várias plataformas online. A discussão em grupo foi realizada entre todas as gerações com perguntas pré-planejadas elaboradas pelo pesquisador; os participantes eram da rede pessoal e profissional do pesquisador. A partir das transcrições foram preparadas e obtidas informações sobre suas percepções sobre marketing digital e plataformas online e a análise temática foi feita usando o NVivo. Dez temas e subtemas foram identificados a partir do gráfico apresentado por meio do Nvivo.

Resultados: As percepções de três gerações em relação a plataformas online e atividades de marketing digital diferem significativamente, pois GenX são migrantes digitais, GenY são nativos digitais e GenZ são nativos móveis.

Implicações de pesquisa, práticas e sociais: O surgimento da Internet e da digitalização forçou as empresas a se concentrarem mais em plataformas online e meios de marketing digital. Os interesses, características, percepções, hábitos, etc. de diferentes gerações diferem e, portanto, é necessário analisar e entender as percepções de diferentes coortes geracionais para que as empresas desenvolvam uma estratégia de marketing digital eficaz. Este estudo abriria caminho para mais estudos e pesquisas que beneficiariam tanto os acadêmicos quanto a indústria.

Originalidade/valor: Este estudo ajudaria a entender as percepções de diferentes coortes geracionais para que as empresas desenvolvam uma estratégia de marketing digital eficaz.

Palavras-chave: Plataformas Online, Marketing Digital, Percepções da Geração X, Y, Z.

EXPLORANDO LAS PERCEPCIONES DE LAS GENERACIONES X, Y Y Z SOBRE LAS PLATAFORMAS EN LÍNEA Y LAS ACTIVIDADES DE MARKETING DIGITAL: UN ESTUDIO BASADO EN LA DISCUSIÓN DE UN GRUPO FOCAL

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Este estudio analiza las percepciones y actitudes de GenX, GenY y GenZ hacia las plataformas en línea y las actividades de marketing digital.

Marco teórico: este estudio es de naturaleza cualitativa y los datos se recopilaron de tres discusiones de grupos focales separados, cada uno de las generaciones X, Y y Z. Se remitieron fuentes de datos secundarias, como artículos de investigación anteriores, fuentes de Internet y libros.

Diseño/metodología/enfoque: este artículo tiene como objetivo obtener información sobre las plataformas en línea y los patrones de consumo de marketing digital para comprender las percepciones y actitudes de GenX, GenY y GenZ hacia varias plataformas en línea. La discusión grupal se realizó entre todas las generaciones con preguntas previamente planificadas elaboradas por el investigador; los participantes pertenecían a la red personal y profesional del investigador. A partir de las transcripciones se elaboró y obtuvo información sobre sus percepciones sobre el marketing digital y las plataformas en línea y se realizó el análisis temático utilizando NVivo. Se identificaron diez temas y subtemas a partir del gráfico presentado a través de Nvivo.

Resultados: las percepciones de tres generaciones sobre las plataformas en línea y las actividades de marketing digital difieren significativamente, ya que GenX son inmigrantes digitales, GenY son nativos digitales y GenZ son nativos móviles.

Implicaciones sociales, prácticas y de investigación: el auge de Internet y la digitalización ha obligado a las empresas a centrarse más en las plataformas en línea y los medios de marketing digital. Los intereses, características, percepciones, hábitos, etc. de diferentes generaciones difieren y, por lo tanto, es necesario analizar y comprender las percepciones de las diferentes cohortes generacionales para que las empresas desarrollen una estrategia de marketing digital efectiva. Este estudio allanaría el camino para más estudios e investigaciones que beneficiarían tanto a los académicos como a la industria.

Originalidad/Valor: este estudio ayudaría a comprender las percepciones de diferentes cohortes generacionales para que las empresas desarrollen una estrategia de marketing digital efectiva.

Palabras clave: Plataformas en Línea, Marketing Digital, Percepciones de la Generación X, Y, Z.

INTRODUCTION

Business organizations are facing fierce competition at present in the market to sell their products and services (Sadaf, 2019). A proper marketing strategy avoids confusion in targeting the customers of different generations (Vitelar, 2019). Digital marketing and online platforms have started to take over the world, and people have started to engage on these platforms more than traditional marketing avenues. So, organizations need to use digital marketing tools to connect and draw the attention of customers in a better way (Ravi & Rajasekaran, 2023).

A generation is defined as "a cohort of people born within a similar span of time who share a comparable age and are shaped by a particular span of time" (McCrinkle & Wolfinger, 2010). Generations X, Y and Z (GenX, GenY, and GenZ) possess different behaviors, beliefs, preferences, values and were born in different socio-economic conditions. The dynamics and perceptions of every generational cohort differ, which forced the businesses to diversify their marketing strategies. A common marketing plan would not create an impact on all generations (Sidra et al., 2020). One generation may prefer buying products from in-store or retail shop where they can experience the product by touch and feel, whereas another generation might favor online shopping from e-commerce platforms because of convenience and easiness in shopping (Pitardi & Dessart, 2018). Different generation cohorts have their own way in the usage of online platforms, shopping behavior, social media preference and view point on digital marketing avenues. By recognizing the generational differences, companies can change the digital marketing activities and social media platforms they employ (Bashir et al., 2020).

There are multiple online platforms available for the customers today and different generation cohorts use different and unique platforms (Chowdhury & Tushi, 2016). Customers comment, recommend and share views about new products, services and commercial contents in social media platforms (Barenblatt, 2015). As there are many online platforms to promote their products or services, the marketers must know the online avenues that customers are active, their likes and dislikes and things that motivate and appeal them (Smith, 2012). The businesses have to utilize the benefits of online digital media by offering a personalized relationship with graphics and visual communication elements (Naumovska, 2017). The companies should try to connect with different generational cohorts on their turf and know the online digital arena where they are engaged more (Gandasari et al., 2020).

At this juncture, companies are reaching out to multi-generational consumers and therefore need to know their online behavior and must try to understand and gain attention of these diverse buyers (Walgrove, 2015). The companies must come up with innovative digital

marketing strategies to attract customers belonging to different generations towards the brand or product (Thangavel et al., 2019). The emergence of internet and digitalization has forced companies to concentrate more on online platforms and digital marketing avenues. As marketing approaches to various generations are different marketers need to know their interest, traits, perceptions, habits, etc. Hence, there is a need to analyze and understand the perceptions of different generational cohorts for marketers to develop an effective digital marketing strategy. This study would pave the way for more studies and researches in this field which would benefit both academics and industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review has been conducted to get a conceptual idea of the previous studies performed regarding the perceptions of GenX, GenY and GenZ about online platforms and digital marketing activities.

There are five different generational cohorts: Baby Boomers born during 1946 – 1960, Generation X born during 1961 -1980, Generation Y (Millennials) born from 1981 to 1994 (Pew Research Center, 2014), Generation Z born from 1995 during 2012 (Levickaite, 2010), and Generation Alpha, also called as “Google Kids” born after 2012 (Shaw, 2020).

Generation X

GenX, also referred to as Baby busters, Post Boomers, are those born from 1961 to 1980 (Gurau, 2012). They are considered to be Digital Immigrants as they were raised prior to the digital age and who migrated to the latest technology. This generation is described as stuck in the middle, as they fall in between the analogue and digital generation (Fox, 2014). GenX are influenced by certain digital marketing activities, one such is Email marketing (Robinson, 2020). Many organizations feel email marketing as outdated and tend to forget it. According to Global Web Index (2018) report, there is a myth that GenX are not digital natives unlike GenY and GenZ, but, in reality GenX highly value the advancement in the online technology field. They are an engaging audience and are drawn to meaningful and purposeful interactions in the online space and the online media platforms are continuously drawing the attention of GenX and they are moving slowly away from the traditional advertising methods (Mangold & Smith, 2012). They like online ads which have fun and having unique creative style with a lot of images. They are also attracted to infographic contents and ads in online platforms. They access internet daily through computers and laptop than mobile devices (Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009).

GenX are internet adopters and are considered to be more responsible in their use of social media communications as they started using and getting familiar with mobile devices, social media platforms and other modern communication technologies during adulthood or later (Dabija & Grant, 2016). They use these platforms frequently as the source of information and to expand their knowledge base. GenX are attracted to online shopping and look for customer convenience, community relations, and brands. At times they do online shopping as a means of relaxation and they care about the opinions of others. GenX like to research while shopping online and read more reviews and opinion sites than any other generation. GenX give importance to recommendations, especially from friends and family and thus word of mouth advertising can make a big influence on GenX (Peralta, 2015).

According to Susarla et al., (2016), online purchase decision of GenX depends on the type of products or services they intend to buy. The recommendations, posts on social networks and influencers can help to draw their attention (Intel, 2016). GenX are open to study the online platforms and are moving with latest digital trends, just as millennials and GenZ. Traditional marketing methods strongly attract them, still digital marketing influences them. Digital marketing activities like social media ads, YouTube ads force them to research about the brands on social media platforms (Kim & Krishnan, 2015). GenX are very much price-conscious. Discounts, rewards and loyalty points are encouraging factors for them to buy more than any other generation. They also favor online shopping because of free returns and free delivery. They are frequently surfing online using smart phones for checking emails, accessing social media networks, seeing streaming videos and hearing music and for buying products online (Alkire et al., 2020).

The media use of GenX is also moving up with the digital media trends and has started watching content in online streaming platforms on mobile devices (Slootweg & Rowson, 2018). Thus, online platform is a key marketing avenue to reach GenX. GenX is spending less time in social media platforms compared to GenY and GenZ. But, most of the GenX people have accounts on social media platforms, mostly in Facebook and LinkedIn. As they spend less time online compared to later generations, the marketers need to target GenX with relevant content as they have less windows of opportunity to get engaged (Kaja et al., 2016). Facebook is the first social media platform GenX joined and they visit YouTube streaming platform very regularly. Traditional marketing channels like TV and newspaper ads are still the most impactful among GenX. But, they have started to do research in online platforms regarding the ads they see in traditional marketing avenues (Dabija et al., 2018). GenX are also getting

attached to online technologies and new electronic gadgets as they feel it has simplified their daily affairs (Sharma et al., 2020). They appreciate personalized advertising but are also concerned about the possibility of tracking their personal data by these online platforms (Mayer et al., 2020). According to FONA Consumer Insight: Generation X (2019) report, unlike GenY and GenZ, GenX is not accustomed to the new technologies and devices. GenX is often forgotten by organizations as target group while developing digital marketing and social media marketing strategies. However, majority of the GenX go online on social media platforms and other online platforms daily. They are gaining the techno-literacy and need to be considered a highly valued target group in online media platforms (Lissitsa & Ofrit, 2016).

Generation Y

GenY is also referred to as Millennials or Echo- Boomers and are born during 1981 - 1994 (Taylor, 2014). They are also called as entitled generation and digital generation as they were grown and matured with computer, internet and other electronic gadgets. Millennials are an important generation as they are the connecting link between the past and the next generation (Tulgan, 2013). GenY matured when the internet development was booming and they were the first generation who got high exposure to internet. They are the first group of data natives who are considered to start the online shopping trend in the world (Dimock, 2019). Millennials actively participate in online activities, express their opinions, and tend to document and share their activities in social media platforms. Millennials rely more on online information such as Microblogs, Facebook, YouTube, Social networking sites compared to traditional marketing channels (Dabija & Babut, 2019).

Millennials are technology friendly, have openness towards digital communication, have digital competence and have active presence on numerous social networks (Doster, 2013). According to Park et al., (2021), millennials are active in multiple social networking sites, but their preferred platforms are Facebook, YouTube and Instagram compared to others. According to Smith (2012), millennials are more attracted to advertisements with words like offers, discounts and free coupons and they hate pop-up ads. Personalized content and messages on online platforms can have an influence on them. Apart from entertainment, content and credibility, corporate and brand reputation plays an important role in shaping the attitude of GenY towards the advertisements in online platforms (Hamouda, 2018). According to Myers (2016), GenY login to online and digital platforms multiple times a day and their activities are for i) research/information seeking, ii) work, ii) social media/communication, iv) academic

purpose, v) email, and vi) personal entertainment and leisure. Attractive designs of ads attract GenY consumer and they feel cheated if the ads provide wrong information for getting their attention (Tiago et al., 2014).

The relevance of online and social media platforms will only grow as the GenY consumers' dependence on such networks increase day by day (Arora & Agarwal, 2019). Usage of online and social media platforms among GenY is an evolving phenomenon as they mature (Ngai et al., (2015). Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook have become the go-to platforms for millennials for real-time updates on any political, economic or social matter (Helal et al., 2018). GenY have also developed a behavior of skipping the ads as they know the delivery spot of ads (Nettelhorst et al., 2020). Ordinary individuals sharing routine activities through blogs have a genuine setting and can influence the GenY Consumers (Ozuem et al., 2016). The brands can try to earn the trust of millennial consumers by aligning with somebody they trust. Young millennials tend to follow social influencers who they can relate with and find similarities (Sudha & Sheena, 2017). Millennials spend more time in social media and online news portals for getting latest news. Reading print media and watching news in television is slowly decreasing among GenY (American Press Institute, 2015).

Good content, a personal and social connect and good presentation provides a strategic advantage for businesses and marketers in attracting the millennials (Mark, 2023). Millennials are always searching for new, interesting, convenient platforms which are more attractive and dynamic (Jones, 2015). Millennials prefer real-time experiences which online marketing offers compared to traditional marketing (Taylor, 2014). According to Rahman (2015), GenY prefer innovative and interactive ads with clear and precise product information. They are also attracted to online ads showing discount coupons, offers and tend to click them. Millennials are concerned about the privacy issue which online platforms can cause. WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram are getting attention of GenY and these platforms are heavily used by them irrespective of gender. Pinterest is gaining popularity among female group of millennials (Rahman, 2015). GenY gained significant influence over old generation and they are considered to be the connecting link between past and new generations. Marketers must try to deliver marketing strategies to millennials in such a way that it should make them brand loyal and avoid excess marketing and overselling the product or service (Slootweg & Rowson, 2018). Marketers and businesses need to introduce new approaches according to new trends and things which attract millennial group as they are slowly moving away from mainstream media and entering into much newer and interactive media (De Vries et.al, 2018).

Generation Z or Mobile Natives

Generation Z is also called the "instant online" generation, since they are fully immersed in internet technology (Levickaite, 2010). This generation individuals were born between 1995 and 2012, the decade with widespread emergence of World Wide Web. They lived their adolescent years after 2000, so digital devices have been there all their lives. They are also referred to as iGen, Centennials, Generation Next, and Post-Millennials (Sadaf, 2019). They are considered to be tech-savvy, multi-taskers, technology driven, open minded, adventurous, talented and active decision makers (Singh, 2014). Their life has been influenced by technology like the millennials and hence GenZ are also sometimes treated as "Millennials 2.0". But, their perspectives regarding online platforms are different (Swanson & Charlene, 2020). GenZ view smartphones as the part and parcel of their life and their personal portal which link their online and offline lives (Fromm & Read, 2018). Powah & Vaukins (2018) coined the term "digitally innate" to describe GenZ, as they interact virtually in seamless way.

GenZ are called mobile natives and true digital natives. They perceive internet as a habitual thing in their life and use smartphone to access them (Kunja & GVRK, 2018). They significantly differ from their prior generations regarding their usage and perceptions of online platforms and digital marketing activities (Muminova, 2015). GenZ is the most prominent group in social media platforms and navigate the online digital world with ease compared to their prior generations (Smith & Anderson, 2018). According to Rue (2018), preferred platforms of GenZ differ from those of previous generations and predominantly use Instagram, Snapchat, Tik Tok and micro-video platforms. They are still on Facebook to stay in touch with their seniors, teachers and relatives. GenZ expect an efficient and convenient purchase experience which is tailored for them. GenZ are 24x7 generation and expect professional assistance from businesses even after the normal working hours (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). They use different platforms in online and constantly adapt latest technologies. The best way to communicate with GenZ is to have a content which is clear, attractive, humorous, thought provoking, simple and precise. GenZ engage more with storytelling and narrative content. They use diverse online digital media beyond the social media platforms, which include delivery and cashless payment platforms. GenZ are guiding prior generations like GenX and GenY to adopt delivery and cashless online payment platforms (Hamstra, 2021).

Trust, transparency and genuinity are the key elements which make GenZ loyal consumers. Wrong information, link and details make them lose trust immediately on product or service (Lorenzo-Romero et. al, 2016). They prefer virtual stores over physical stores

(Perlstein, 2017). Creating video content with proper story line can be an effective component in online marketing communication for GenZ (Faseeh & Mohammad, 2018). For this generation “the wisdom of the crowd” is important. Influencers can create a stimulus among GenZ to buy the product or service (Giarla, 2019). Celebrities and Influencers in TikTok, Micro - video platforms have the power to influence and direct GenZ customers especially from the age of 15 to 25 years. Micro-video platforms have a significant impact on GenZ consumer’s behavior and their brand selection (Dirir, 2022). GenZ discuss with friends and peers regarding discounts, latest offers and products in online (Morning Consult, 2019). Fischer (2019) stated that GenZ prefer Instagram, Snapchat than older generations. GenZ is shaping the e-commerce platform, as they mostly prefer online shopping due to convenience, flexibility, fast and easiness to buy. GenZ are influencing the online shopping heavily both from consumer point of view and marketing point of view (Priporas et al., 2017). They have the tendency to share their experience after purchase in online and go for personalized and customized products (Topalova, 2021).

Word of Mouth attracts GenZ towards a product or service as they do discuss regarding latest trends and offers in market with their friends, peers and close ones (Lalwani et al., 2021). These factors create an impact among GenZ in brand perception and purchase decision (Gandasari et al., 2020). Generation Z believe views and reviews of ordinary people about a product over any celebrity, as they mostly listen to people with whom they can actually identify with (Munsch, 2021). GenZ has entirely grown up in the online digital world that has given them a totally new outlook and is drifting towards online digital marketing compared to traditional marketing avenues. The marketers and businesses are racing to understand their online behavior and traits (Omor, 2022). As this generation is well aware of all the marketing techniques and content share, it would remain a challenge for businesses and brands to earn their loyalty. GenZ is becoming a new reckoning force in the market and is considered as a disruptor of existing status quo across all industries and markets. They are also setting new trends which are influencing GenX and GenY as well (Kraus, 2017). Brands and marketers must stay up-to-date with the latest trends and happenings in the online and social media platforms to keep GenZ consumers interested (Thangavel, 2021). Generation Z is group of consumers who will gain the purchasing power in future and organizations need to develop strategies to reach them to remain competitive in the long-term. Brand loyalty is considered to be less in GenZ compared to prior generations (Cagnin & Nicolas, 2022).

Inter-Generational Comparison Between GenX, GenY and GenZ

While developing an online marketing campaign and strategy, marketers need to understand that every generation cohort requires a different way of marketing to attract them (Hobsbawm, 2017). For all generations internet and online platforms plays a prominent role in their life, but, differ in what they do online, the time they spent, the different platforms they use, the social media platforms they select, the influence online have in their purchase decision, etc. (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). The easy availability of information through online platforms makes all generation people to be active in online at all times (Slootweg & Rowson, 2018). GenY and GenZ use online platforms more to gain information about latest trends in fashion and clothing, to make purchase online compared to GenX. GenX use online streaming platforms for watching news, latest updates and information, whereas GenY and GenZ use to watch live video broadcast of programs, sports and to hear music, etc. (Sadaf, 2019).

Transparency, clarity, accountability and authenticity are the qualities all generational cohorts expect from all products and services either online or offline. GenY and GenZ are more experienced with digital technology compared to GenX. Still, GenXers are active in few social media platforms, whereas millennials and GenZ use multiple social media platforms. Further, a slow and incremental shift away from Facebook towards Instagram can be seen for the late GenY and GenZ cohorts. While, GenY and GenZ have distinct approaches, they share a common experience as both are pioneer users of online digital media (Rahman, 2015). GenY is the generation who began the trend of using social media platforms and created the foundation for GenZ to learn and follow. The fact is that GenY and GenX turn to GenZ for all their digital needs as they are the early adopters of new digital technologies (Bona et al., 2020). Thangavel et al., (2021) stated that GenZ grew up with online platform and variety of digital gadgets. GenY and GenX thought DVD players, giant desktop computers and mobile phones with tiny screens, as break through inventions, whereas GenZ have easy access to smart phones, electronic gadgets, unlimited internet connection and online streaming services (OTT). GenY is considered to be the linking group between analog and digital generation (Wirokarto, 2013)

Volkom et al., (2014) observed that young adults of GenY and GenZ adapt and are more comfortable in using latest technologies compared to GenX and middle aged people in GenY. Traditional marketing methods are still very effective among GenX, whereas GenY and GenZ prefer online digital method as it facilitates them two-way communication with the businesses and brands (Budree et al., 2019). GenY and GenZ tend to use cellphones more for texting, whereas GenX use cellphones to actually make calls (Volkom et al., 2014). All generations use

smartphones to have a quick access to social media platforms, for communication and for entertainment purpose, whereas, computers are used by generations for study, work and reference purpose (Hoai & Nguyen, 2020). While GenY and GenZ are experts in using the online and social media platforms, GenX are slowly adapting to these modern digital platforms as it has become a part of everyone's life. GenX are trying to improve their knowledge so that they can continue to keep them updated, engage and communicate effectively with GenY and GenZ (Hysa et al., 2021). Visual appealing content attracts all generation customers. Video and images attract GenY and GenZ. Text driven content attracts GenX. Understanding the characteristics of generations help marketers to approach them in a better way. This would help organizations improve their marketing efforts with proper segmentation (Gajanova et al., 2019). GenY and GenZ prefer to engage with businesses and brands on social media compared to GenX. GenY and GenZ is more products loyal, whereas GenX at times look at the brand of the product before making a purchase decision (Ghosh, 2019). GenY and GenZ believe the reviews and ratings given by others in e-commerce platforms and influence their purchase decision, whereas GenX have reservation regarding the reviews and ratings in online. Word of mouth and the feedbacks given by friends, peers and close ones has a power to influence all generations. GenX believes more in traditional avenues like television and newspaper ads compared to GenY and GenZ (Silvia, 2019).

Marketers should formulate user-friendly and informative website with customized marketing programs to target GenY and GenZ effectively (Nguyen et al., 2022). Social media and online platforms have infiltrated into every generation and they spend quality time on these platforms. Marketers across the globe must try to incorporate latest updates and trends into their business and marketing operation to reach different customers according to their preferences and perspectives (Hossain & Tiasha, 2018). In this competitive online environment, the content is the king and it is very important to appeal to each generation at an individual level (Macharia & Cheng, 2019). Without understanding the perspectives and preferences of different generations, marketers cannot develop and implement a marketing concept online (Giarla, 2019). It is always important for marketers to understand the digital ecosystem of their target groups (Ranjana & Priya, 2021). Customer preferences and tastes have evolved in this digital age and their social media usage has increased. So, no company can ignore social media platforms while drafting their marketing and advertising strategies (Joshi et al., 2023). Every generational cohort showed a shift in their technology usage and purchase behavior which has made the marketers to concentrate more on online platforms (Devina & Rahayu, 2022).

Research Gap

From the literature survey, the researcher concluded that several studies have been undertaken on GenX and GenY, but, studies conducted on GenZ are less and latest studies are directed towards it. Nevertheless, the comparative studies on the perceptions of GenX, GenY and GenZ about online platforms and digital marketing activities are less and need to be explored further.

METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative in nature done by conducting focus group discussions among GenX, GenY and GenZ. Current concerns of digital marketers, regarding which online platform GenX, GenY, GenZ are active, advertisements they prefer, ads annoy them, online content attract them were kept in mind while preparing the questions for focus group discussions. The research questions were arrived from the output of focus group discussions. Using thematic analysis, the patterns and insights were obtained from the responses received from focus group discussions. Data has also been obtained from previous studies, articles and research papers in this area.

Research Problem

In this era of online and electronic gadgets, all generational cohorts are exposed to various online platforms and digital marketing activities. It is very important for the businesses to understand the digital ecosystem of their target audience. GenX, GenY and GenZ have different sets of beliefs, values, traits and behaviors. Online marketing has a lot of potential and is emerging as the largest advertising segment globally. Understanding the perception of different generational cohorts towards online platforms and digital marketing will remain the biggest challenge for marketers.

Aim

To bring out valuable insights regarding the online platforms and digital marketing consumption patterns of GenX, GenY and GenZ that may help the marketers to engage, interact and develop foolproof online marketing strategy for different generation customers.

Research Questions

1. What are the social media platforms which are used and that influence GenX, GenY and GenZ?
2. What are digital marketing activities that different generational cohorts like and dislike, and that grabbed their attention or irritated them?
3. Which mode of shopping do different generational cohorts prefer and why?
4. Is traditional marketing losing its power among different generational cohorts in this online digital era?

Objectives

1. To learn the online media consumption pattern of different generations.
2. To find out the most preferred online platforms and factors influencing the buying behavior of different generational cohorts in online.
3. To study whether traditional marketing still has an impact on different generation customers in this digital era.
4. To analyze the perceptions of different generational cohorts towards online platforms and digital marketing activities

Data Sources

For this study the data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected by conducting focus group discussions among Generations X, Y and Z. Secondary Data was collected from previous studies, journals, research works, internet sources and books.

Qualitative Research

The method used for the study is qualitative research that is basically exploratory focusing on understanding and gaining primary reasons, opinions, causes for a problem or a topic. Qualitative research helps in providing insights into a topic or a problem and helps in developing ideas for doing quantitative research (DeFranzo, 2020).

The qualitative methods like focus group discussions, one – on – one in depth interviews, observation method, secondary sources, etc. (Bhandari, 2020), the researcher employed focus group discussion among GenX, GenY and GenZ. The qualitative data obtained were analyzed using Nvivo.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling method was used for this study as the participants were selected through researcher's personal and professional network. Participants selected were GenX (1961 – 1980), GenY (1981 – 1994) and GenZ (1995-2012).

Focus Group Discussion

Focus Group discussion is a qualitative research method which involves gathering people from similar strata and asking about their perception, attitude and opinion on a topic or an issue. This method helps to understand and get knowledge about a problem or a topic in a deeper level. Through this method we can understand not only about “what” people think but also “why” they think so (Atlan, 2017).

Focus group discussions were conducted among GenX, Y and Z through online and offline meetings. The discussion was conducted to capture the insights about their perceptions regarding online platforms and digital marketing activities. Three separate focus group discussions were conducted for this study which comprises of 9 candidates for GenZ, 8 from GenY and 7 from GenX. A set of 10 questions were prepared which could give a detailed picture about their perception on online platforms and digital marketing activities.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis is one of the common forms of analysis in qualitative research method. It is the process of reviewing the data obtained by making notes and sorting the data into codes and categories (Boyatzis, 1998). Thematic Analysis refers to identifying, analyzing and reporting pattern and themes within the qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Braun and Clarke (2006) further explained that thematic analysis has six phases. They are;

- i. Familiarizing yourself with your data
- ii. Generating initial codes
- iii. Searching for themes
- iv. Reviewing themes
- v. Defining and naming themes
- vi. Producing the report

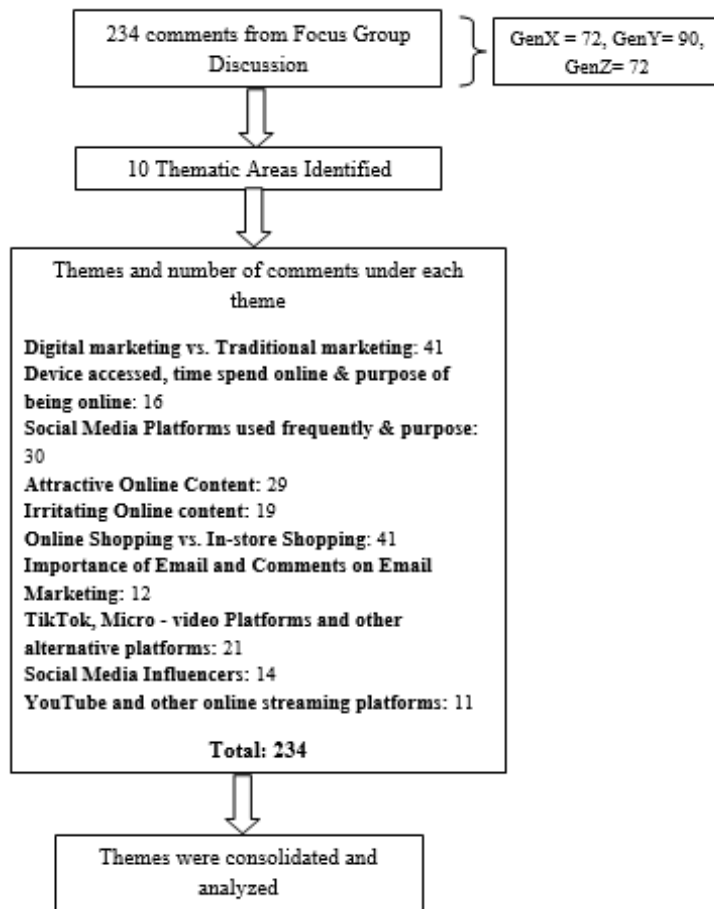
Findings From Thematic Analysis Using NVivo

Thematic analysis of the data was done in a systematic manner by preparing proper transcripts from the focus group discussion, became familiar with the data obtained from transcripts, generated initial codes for the data using NVivo and reached for the potential themes, checked and reviewed the themes whether it is related to codes extracted, and whether it gives an overall picture of the analysis.

Following these steps, 10 distinct themes have emerged from this study.

- i. Digital Marketing vs. Traditional Marketing
- ii. Device accessed, time spent online and purpose of being online
- iii. Social media platforms used frequently and purpose
- iv. Attractive online content
- v. Irritating online content
- vi. Online shopping vs. In-store Shopping
- vii. Importance of Email and Comments on Email Marketing
- viii. TikTok, Micro - video platforms and other alternative platforms
- ix. Social Media Influencers
- x. YouTube and other online streaming platforms

Figure. 1: Diagrammatic Representation of Thematic analysis.



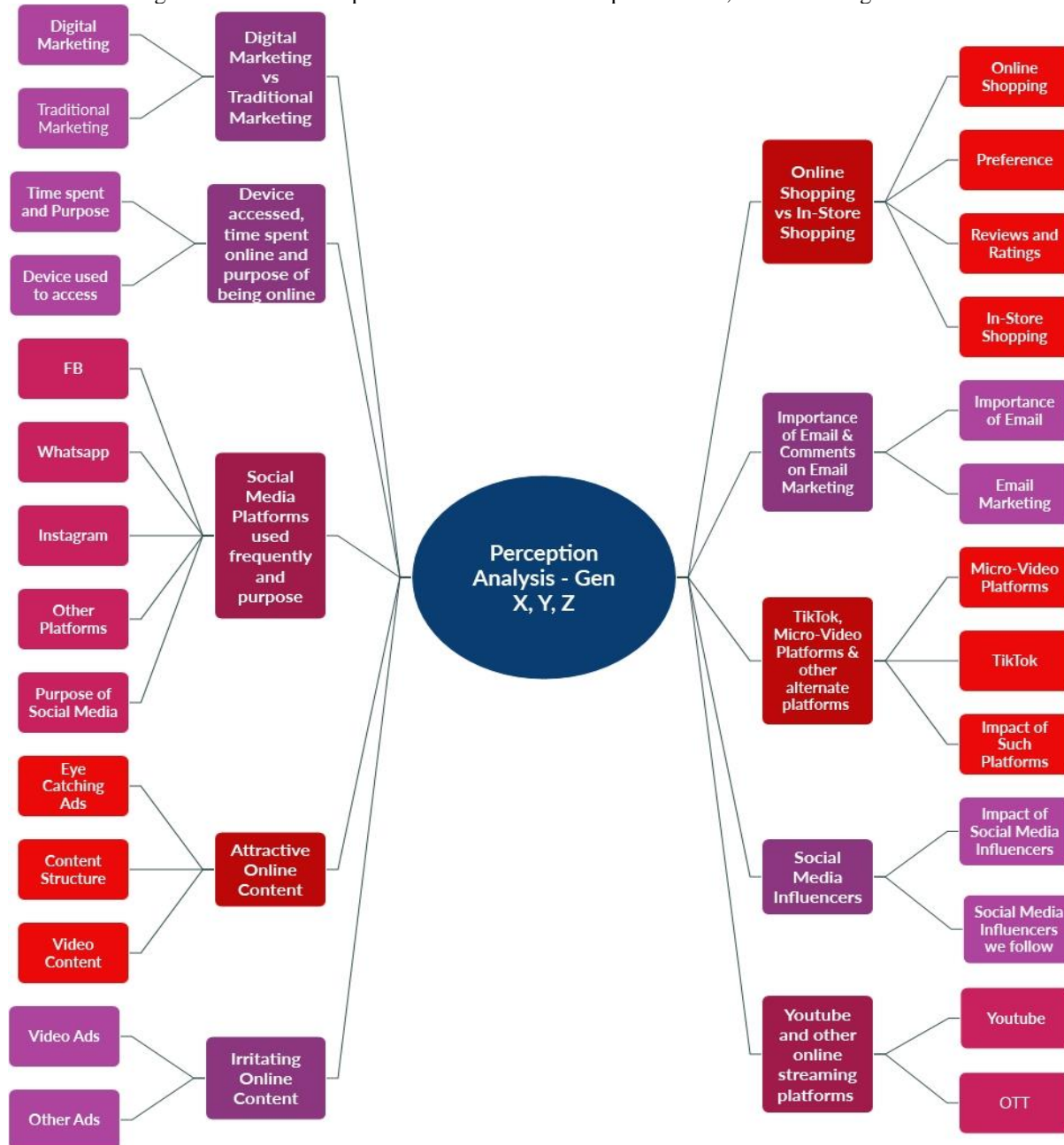
(Source: Prepared by the Authors, 2023)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mind Map

A mind map of the responses obtained from the focus group discussions conducted on Generations X, Y and Z was prepared using NVivo and is represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. The mind map derived from the Transcripts of GenX, Y and Z using NVivo



(Source: Prepared by the Authors, 2023).

From mind map we can understand the themes and the sub-themes generated from the Focus-Group discussion conducted among GenX, Y & Z.

Word Cloud

A word cloud mapping of the responses obtained from the focus group discussions conducted on Generations X prepared using NVivo is represented in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Word Cloud of the transcripts from the focus group discussion among Generation X using NVivo



(Source: Prepared by the Authors, 2023).

From Word Cloud of GenX responses, we can understand that online platforms are getting prominence, even though they are Digital Immigrants. Traditional marketing avenues and good content have influence on them. They use online shopping, due to convenience and easiness.

A word cloud mapping of the responses obtained from the focus group discussion conducted on GenY s prepared using NVivo is represented in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Word Cloud of the transcripts from focus group discussion among Generation Y using NVivo



(Source: Prepared by the Authors, 2023).

From Word Cloud of GenY, we can understand that online platforms are influencing them more than traditional marketing. Video content with good purpose influence them. Online shopping is common among them.

A word cloud mapping of the responses obtained from the focus group discussion conducted on GenZ prepared using NVivo is represented in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Word Cloud of the transcripts from the focus group discussion among GenZ using NVivo



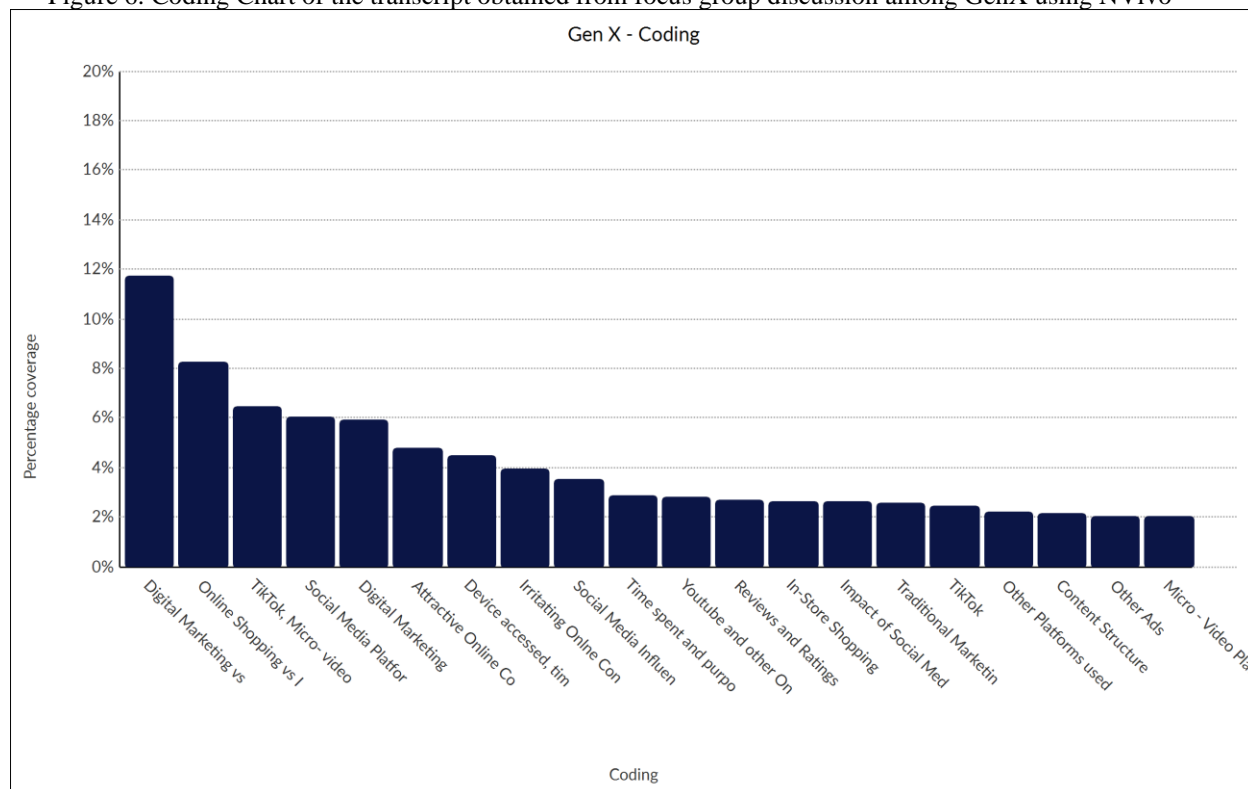
(Source: Prepared by the Authors, 2023).

From Word Cloud of GenZ, we can understand that Instagram is most commonly used platform among them. They are setting new trends in online shopping. Influencers and ratings have an impact on them.

Coding Chart

Coding chart of the transcripts of responses obtained from the focus group discussion among GenX using NVivo is represented in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Coding Chart of the transcript obtained from focus group discussion among GenX using NVivo

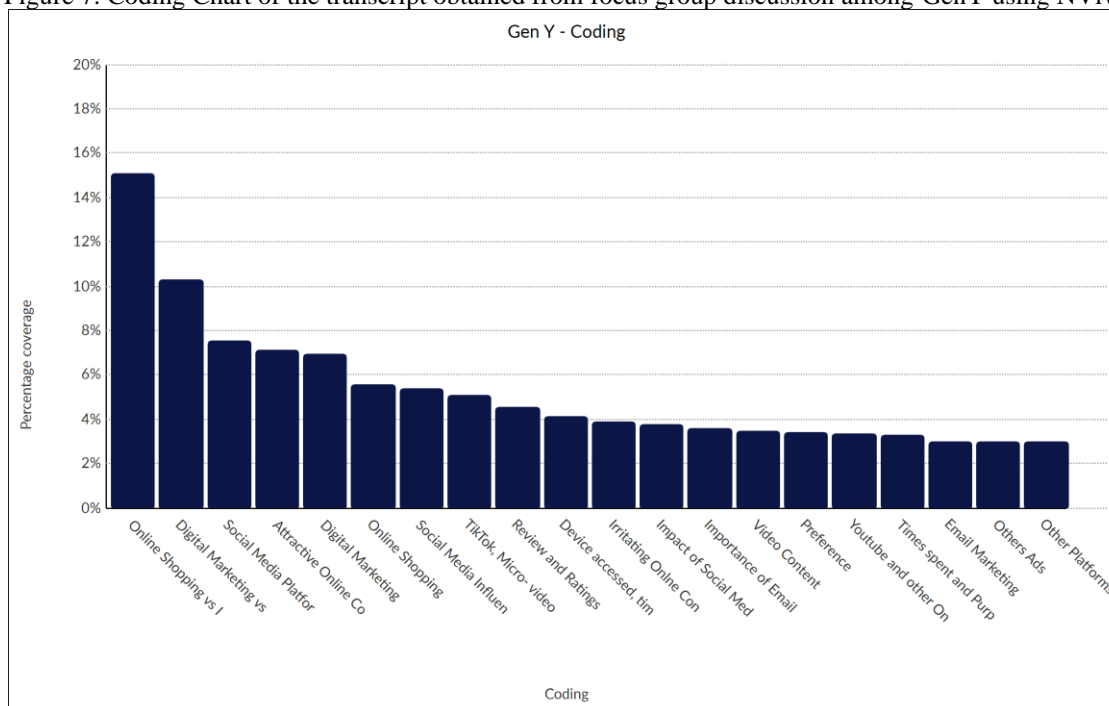


(Source: Prepared by the Authors, 2023).

From GenX Coding chart we can understand that they have responded more about Digital Marketing and Traditional Marketing avenues, followed by online shopping and in-store shopping. They have responded less about Micro-Video Platforms.

Coding chart of the transcripts of responses obtained from the focus group discussion among GenY using NVivo is represented in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Coding Chart of the transcript obtained from focus group discussion among GenY using NVivo

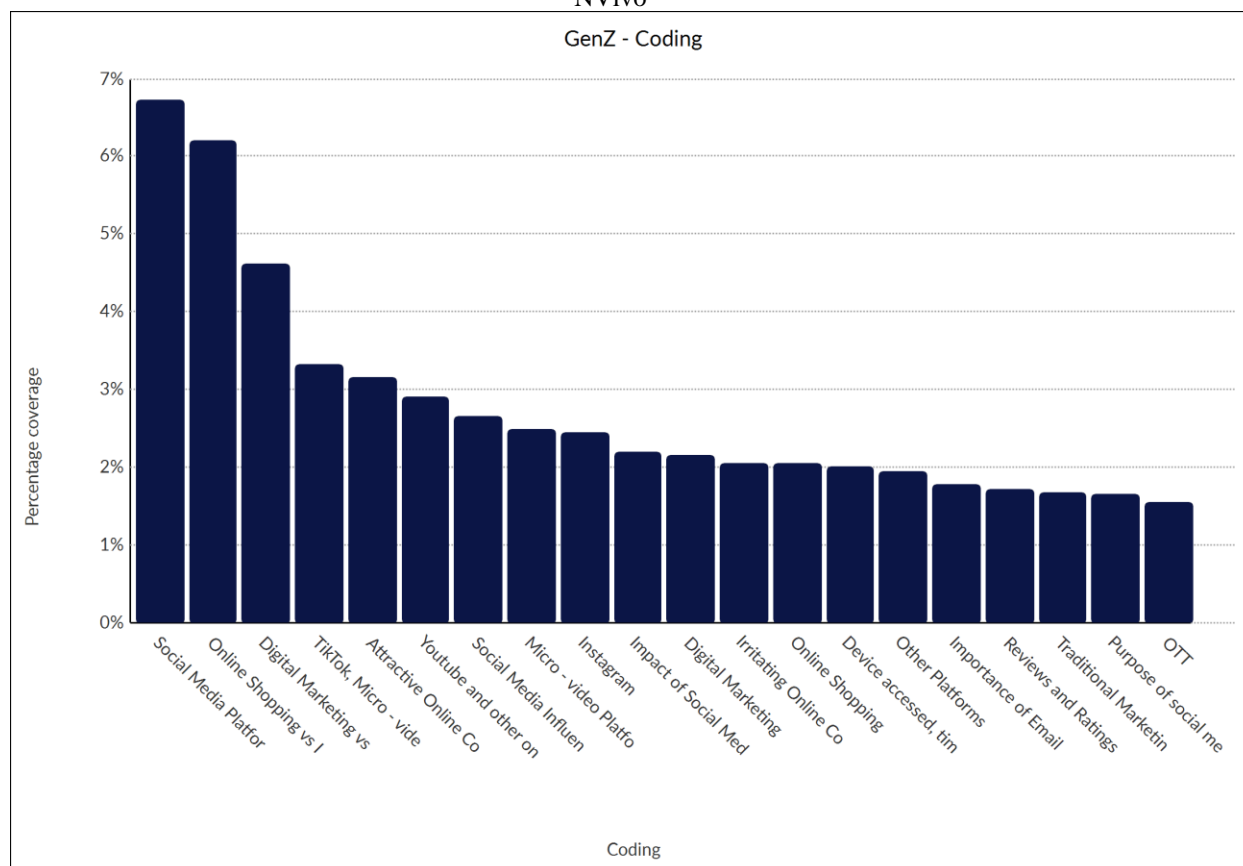


(Source: Prepared by the Authors, 2023).

From GenY Coding chart we can understand that they have responded more about online shopping and in-store shopping followed by Digital Marketing and Traditional Marketing avenues. They have responded less about Email Marketing.

Coding chart of the transcripts of responses obtained from the focus group discussion among GenZ using NVivo is represented in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Coding Chart of the transcript obtained from focus group discussion among Generation Z using NVivo



(Source: Prepared by the Authors, 2023).

From GenZ Coding chart we can understand that they have responded more about Social Media Platforms followed by online shopping and in-store shopping. They have responded less about Traditional Marketing avenues.

Hierarchy Chart

Hierarchy Chart prepared from the response transcripts of focus group discussion among GenX using NVivo is depicted in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Hierarchy Chart prepared from the transcripts of focus group discussion among GenX using NVivo

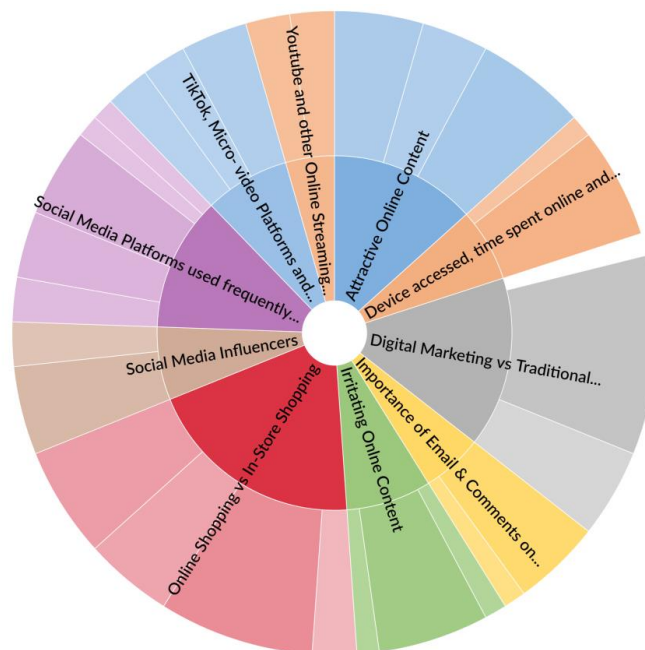


(Source: Prepared by the Authors, 2023).

From GenX Hierarchy chart we can understand that the response from transcripts was more about online shopping and in-store shopping followed by Social Media Platforms and Digital Marketing and Traditional Marketing avenues.

Hierarchy Chart prepared from the response transcripts of focus group discussion among GenY using NVivo is depicted in Figure10.

Figure 10. Hierarchy Chart prepared from the transcripts of focus group discussion among Generation Y using NVivo

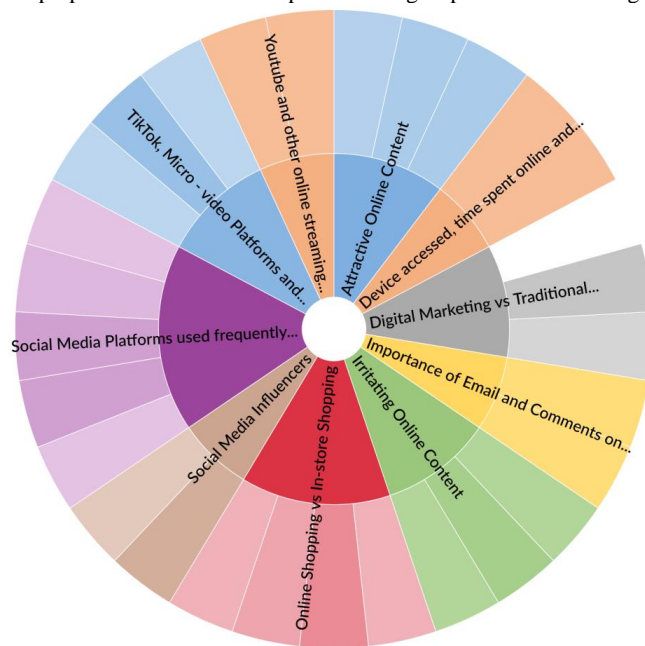


(Source: Prepared by the Authors, 2023).

From GenY Hierarchy chart we can understand that the response from transcripts was more about online shopping and in-store shopping followed by Digital Marketing and Traditional Marketing avenues and Attractive Online content.

Hierarchy Chart prepared from the response transcripts of focus group discussion among GenZ using NVivo is depicted in Figure 11.

Figure 11. Hierarchy Chart prepared from the transcripts of focus group discussion among Generation Z using NVivo



(Source: Prepared by the Authors, 2023).

From GenZ Hierarchy chart we can understand that the response from transcripts was more about Social Media Platforms followed by online shopping and in-store shopping and Irritating Online content.

GenX, GenY and GenZ are well aware of digital marketing and social media platforms. GenX still considers traditional marketing avenues more reliable than online ads, whereas GenY and GenZ depend more on online platforms. Every generational cohort spends quality time online for knowledge, reference and entertainment purpose. Communication, sharing of information has become faster through online platforms.

GenX are more active in Facebook compared to other platforms, whereas GenY and GenZ are shifting away from Facebook, to other social media platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, etc. All generations use WhatsApp for communication and YouTube for streaming videos. Visual appealing video and pictorial content attract all generations in online platforms. Catchy content which generate curiosity and presented in story-telling way also attracts customers of all generations. The attention span of GenZ is less compared to GenY and GenX. Junk mails, repetitive ads, pop-up ads, ads while doing serious online work irritate all groups. GenY started the online shopping trends, which was followed GenX and GenZ. GenX is slowly adapting to online shopping, but still prefer in-store shopping as it provides them touch and feel. GenY and GenZ prefer online shopping over in-store stores as it is easy and convenient. All generations are attracted to offers and discounts provides by e-commerce platforms.

All generations consider Email as the formal way of communication. Only GenX opens marketing messages in email whereas GenY and GenZ rarely open any marketing mails. All of them feel email marketing as outdated and such mail is filling up their mail space. Micro-video platforms like TikTok, Sharechat, and Moj are more familiar and common among GenZ compared to GenY and GenX. Some of the GenY use micro-video platforms, but GenX feel it as waste of time. Social media influencers and celebrity endorsements in online and social media platforms grab the attention of all generations. Though they are well aware that it is done with business interest, still a section of all generations are influenced by them. Word-of-mouth, opinions of friends, relatives and peer-group, impact the purchase decision of all generational cohorts. YouTube is the streaming platform which is used by all the 3 generations, other streaming platforms like Amazon Prime, Disney+Hotstar are slowly getting prominence among them. All generations unanimously agree that digital marketing is here to stay for some time and blend of both traditional marketing and digital marketing is required in current scenario.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE SCOPE

The perceptions of generations X, Y and Z about online platforms and digital marketing and their involvement vary significantly. All generations unanimously agree that digital marketing is here to stay for some time and a blend of both traditional marketing and digital marketing is required in current scenario. GenX is more active in Facebook and LinkedIn whereas GenY are more active in Instagram, Twitter followed by Facebook and GenZ are in Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok and micro-video platforms. Younger generation is slowly shifting away from Facebook platform. GenX still prefers traditional marketing avenues more than digital marketing, but they have started to adapt to online platforms. GenY is aware of both digital and offline marketing avenues but GenZ do not see any difference between them as they have not seen a life without internet. GenX must never be overlooked, as they have good purchasing power. If targeted properly they can be converted into loyal customers. GenY is influenced by both traditional and digital marketing platforms, so marketing activities needs to blend both of them. GenZ are more into online and social media platforms, hence digital marketing strategy will be the best option to target them. Hence, at this juncture it is recommended that marketers should adopt omni-channel marketing strategy to effectively market their products and services to different generations. The dynamics and perceptions of every generational cohort differ, which has forced the businesses to diversify their marketing strategies. A common marketing plan would not create an impact on all generations.

As the participants selected for the focus group discussion were from researcher's personal and professional network, the findings obtained cannot be generalized for the population as a whole. Generational cohorts are not homogenous groups, hence each cohorts need to be further segmented into intra – generational grouping within each generation to get deeper insights. Future studies need to look into these aspects as well. The patterns and perceptions of different generational cohorts towards online platforms and digital marketing need to be known in an extensive manner, so organizations should invest resources in such researches. An understanding of the perceptions of GenX, GenY and GenZ about online platforms and digital marketing helps in providing a framework for the marketing activities of companies. These studies will be pivotal in creating and improving effective digital marketing strategies.

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