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Unravelling the Influence of Social Media Marketing on Generation Z Consumer Attitudes in Chennai

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Abstract

In the fast-paced digital age, social media has become a pivotal force shaping consumer attitudes, particularly among Generation Z, a demographic characterized by digital fluency. This study investigates the influence of social media marketing communication on Generation Z consumer attitudes in Chennai, India, a vibrant metropolitan city. Generation Z, born between the late 1990s and early 2010s, represents a significant portion of the local population, making understanding their preferences crucial for businesses. Through a rigorous research methodology, employing questionnaires administered to college students aged 18 to 21, the study gathers primary data to analyze the interplay between social media marketing and consumer attitudes. Findings reveal that social media marketing significantly impacts cognitive, affective, and behavioral attitudes among Generation Z consumers in Chennai. Authentic and easily comprehensible communication emerges as a key factor in shaping positive attitudes towards brands. Interestingly, the extent of social media usage and demographic characteristics exhibit limited impact on attitudes. While usage patterns do not significantly influence cognitive and behavioral attitudes, they notably impact the emotional and affective dimensions. The study suggests that businesses should adapt their strategies to align with the evolving dynamics of social media, emphasizing authenticity to effectively engage with this influential demographic. Leveraging popular figures, particularly those admired by teenagers, is identified as a potential strategy for enhancing brand appeal. The study concludes by underscoring the importance of tailoring marketing strategies to align with the evolving preferences of Generation Z in Chennai. By fostering online communities, prioritizing emotional connections, and embracing authenticity, businesses can navigate the complex landscape of social media to effectively connect with and influence Generation Z consumers.

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Introduction

In the digital age, where information travels at the speed of light and connectivity knows no bounds, social media has emerged as a powerful force shaping consumer attitudes and behaviours. Among the various demographics that are significantly influenced by this phenomenon, Generation Z stands out as a generation that has grown up in the era of social media. In Chennai, a vibrant and rapidly evolving metropolitan city in India, the impact of social media marketing communication on the attitudes of Generation Z consumers is a topic of great significance and relevance. Generation Z, born between the late 1990s and early 2010s, is characterized by its unique digital fluency and a penchant for

embracing the latest online trends. In Chennai, this generation forms a substantial part of the population, and their preferences and perceptions are instrumental in steering the dynamics of the local consumer market. Understanding how social media marketing communication influences their attitudes is not only a matter of academic interest but also crucial for businesses seeking to engage effectively with this influential consumer segment.

This article delves into the intricate interplay between social media marketing communication and the attitudes of Generation Z consumers in Chennai. It explores how the digital landscape has become a fertile ground for brand engagement, communication, and persuasion. Moreover, it

investigates the ways in which this communication affects the attitudes of Generation Z towards products, services, and brands, ultimately influencing their purchasing decisions. To unravel the impact of social media marketing communication on Generation Z consumers in Chennai, we will examine the evolving nature of social media, the preferences and behaviours of this demographic, and the strategies employed by businesses to engage and connect with them. Through a comprehensive analysis, we aim to shed light on the ever-evolving relationship between social media and Generation Z consumer attitudes, providing valuable insights for marketers, businesses, and researchers operating in this dynamic digital landscape.

Social Media Marketing and its Communication methods

Social media marketing is a dynamic and essential component of modern digital marketing strategies. It involves the use of various social media platforms to promote products, services, brands, or ideas. To effectively utilize social media for marketing purposes, businesses and marketers employ a range of communication methods. Here are some key aspects of social media marketing communication methods:

1. **Content Creation and Sharing:** Content is at the heart of social media marketing. Marketers create engaging and relevant content such as articles, blog posts, images, videos, info graphics, and more. This content is shared on social media platforms to capture the attention of the target audience.
2. **Platform Selection:** Different social media platforms cater to diverse demographics and interests. Marketers choose platforms that align with their target audience. For example, Instagram may be ideal for visual content, while LinkedIn is often used for B2B marketing.
3. **Engagement and Interaction:** Social media marketing isn't a one-way communication channel. Marketers actively engage with their audience by responding to comments, messages, and mentions. This interaction builds relationships and fosters trust.
4. **Paid Advertising:** Many social media platforms offer advertising options, allowing businesses to reach a broader audience. Marketers can target specific demographics, interests, and behaviours to ensure their content reaches the right people.
5. **Influencer Marketing:** Collaborating with influencers who have a substantial following in a particular niche is a popular strategy. Influencers can promote products or services to their followers, leveraging their trust and credibility.
6. **User-Generated Content (UGC):** Encouraging customers to create and share their content related to a brand or product can be a potent marketing tool. UGC provides social proof and authenticity.
7. **Hashtags:** The strategic use of hashtags can increase the discoverability of content. Marketers create branded hashtags and use trending or relevant ones to expand their reach.
8. **Storytelling:** Sharing stories that resonate with the audience can create a strong emotional connection. Narratives help convey a brand's values and mission.
9. **Analytics and Data Analysis:** Marketers use social media analytics tools to track the performance of their content. This data helps them understand what works and what needs improvement, enabling data-driven decision-making.

10. Scheduled Posting: To maintain a consistent online presence, marketers often use scheduling tools to plan and automate posts. This ensures that content is shared at optimal times for maximum visibility.

11. Community Building: Marketers work on cultivating a sense of community around their brand. This involves fostering discussions, conducting polls, and hosting events or webinars.

12. Crisis Management: Social media can also be a platform for addressing customer complaints and managing crises. Timely and transparent communication is crucial in such situations.

Social media marketing communication methods are diverse and multifaceted. Successful social media marketing strategies involve a combination of these methods, tailored to the specific goals and target audience of a business or brand. Adapting to evolving social media trends and algorithms is essential to maintain a strong online presence and engage effectively with the audience.

Social Media Usage

In today's digital age, social media usage has evolved into a fundamental aspect of daily existence. Its reach extends across generations, from tech-savvy Millennials and Generation Z to Baby Boomers who have adapted to the new digital landscape. These platforms have become more than just tools for communication; they are virtual town squares where people come together to share experiences, ideas, and information. The prevalence of smartphones has further deepened our dependence on social media, with the majority of users accessing their favorite platforms through mobile apps. Within this expansive digital ecosystem, users can select from a vast array of platforms, each tailored to cater to distinct interests and communication styles. Facebook remains a central hub for connecting with friends and family, while Instagram dazzles with its visual appeal, allowing users to curate and share snapshots of their lives. On Twitter, conversations unfold in real-time, offering a dynamic platform for news dissemination and public discourse. For those seeking professional opportunities, LinkedIn provides a space for networking and career advancement. Meanwhile, TikTok, Snapchat, and Pinterest offer unique experiences, ranging from bite-sized entertainment to creative inspiration. But social media's role transcends personal connections and leisure; it has become an indispensable source of news and information. News articles and updates from reputable sources are frequently shared and discussed, amplifying the reach and impact of breaking stories. This fusion of personal and public domains within social media has also made it a haven for entertainment. Users follow their favourite celebrities, influencers, and content creators, revelling in a constant stream of captivating content, from humor and inspiration to educational content. However, it's not all positive; the rise of social media has come with its set of challenges. Privacy concerns and data security issues loom large, prompting users to exercise caution in sharing personal information. Moreover, the excessive use of social media has been associated with mental health issues. The constant exposure to carefully curated images and idealized lifestyles has given rise to social comparison and feelings of inadequacy. Cyberbullying and harassment have become real threats to user well-being. Governments and regulatory bodies worldwide are also taking a keen interest in social media platforms.

They are scrutinizing issues such as misinformation, hate speech, and the potential for political influence. This has led to ongoing discussions about content moderation, regulation, and the responsibility of social media companies in ensuring safe and responsible use of their platforms. Social media usage is a multifaceted phenomenon that has embedded itself deeply in our lives. Its influence is pervasive, impacting the way we communicate, access information, entertain ourselves, and even perceive the world.

As we navigate the complex terrain of social media, we are constantly reevaluating its benefits and challenges, seeking to strike a balance between connectivity and safeguarding our well-being in this digital age.

Factors Influencing Demographic

According to statistical data reported by the Kompas newspaper, Indonesia boasts a considerable online population of 30 million Internet users, encompassing a wide age range from children to teenagers. Notably, disparities exist between young residents of urban areas and their rural counterparts. As mobile devices gain popularity among the majority, it becomes imperative for social media platforms to enhance their design and user interface to ensure optimal usability and a seamless experience on these devices.

Within the Realm of Demographic Variables, there are Certain Attitudinal Attributes to Consider

1. **Gender:** While gender plays a limited role in influencing the hierarchy of attitude response, it notably impacts marketing engagement on online information and communication technology (ICT) platforms. Specifically, female respondents tend to exhibit greater receptiveness compared to their male counterparts. Gender can indeed be a significant factor in decision-making processes, particularly in the realms of social and economic aspects.
2. **Age:** The influence of age on the hierarchy of attitude response is typically marginal, except in terms of desire, where millennials tend to display a more favorable attitude toward social marketing communication. The level of intellectual and practical acumen often increases with age. Additionally, age and gender are key factors that define the social dynamics within an organization, potentially categorizing individuals into specific groups based on these attributes.

These insights underscore the importance of recognizing

the interplay between demographic variables and attitudinal characteristics, particularly in the context of digital engagement and marketing strategies.

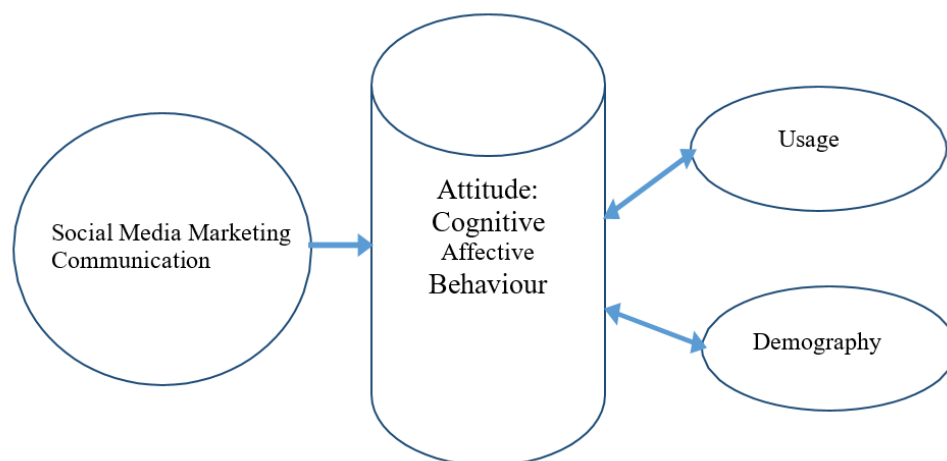
Attitude

Belch and Belch proposed that attitudes consist of three distinct levels or components: emotional, cognitive, and behavioural.

1. **Cognitive Components:** Barry further clarified that these cognitive components encompass elements of consciousness and intelligence. Belch added that within the cognitive aspect, there lies the reservoir of memory, information, and data collected from various sources, including advertising. This cognitive facet aids consumers in comprehending a product and its associated details.
2. **Affective Component:** Deeply rooted in the affective or emotional component is the mindset, which is the most enduring factor capable of reshaping attitudes. This emotional aspect plays a pivotal role in shaping how individuals feel about a particular subject.
3. **Conative or Behavioural Aspect:** Attitude is closely linked to the conative component, which pertains to an individual's inclination to act or behave in a certain way. A person's values and emotions towards a specific stimulus can significantly influence their actions in specific situations. Consistently aligning one's behaviour with these values and emotions forms an individual's conduct. The behavioural aspect is closely associated with predicting how consumers will respond or act in various scenarios, including their willingness to experiment with, purchase, reject, or accept products.

Research Methodology

In order to assess the impact of social media marketing communication on the attitudes of Generation Z, we gathered primary data through the administration of questionnaires. The respondents in this research consisted of college students from Chennai who fall within the post-adolescent age group, specifically aged between 18 and 21 years, thereby representing Generation Z. The selection of our sample group, which comprised a total of 100 respondents, was carried out using the purposive sampling technique. These questionnaires employed a Likert scale to measure the responses of the participants.



Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: ANOVA Test of Online Marketing Communication towards Attitude

| Description | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------------|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|-------|
| Cognitive | Between Groups | 8910.595 | 1 | 424.314 | 12.695 | 0.000 |
| | Within Groups | 10127.454 | 99 | 33.424 | | |
| | Total | 19038.049 | 100 | | | |
| Affective | Between Groups | 8286.9 | 1 | 394.614 | 13.286 | 0.000 |
| | Within Groups | 8999.857 | 99 | 29.702 | | |
| | Total | 17286.757 | 100 | | | |
| Attitude | Between Groups | 8367.716 | 1 | 39 8.463 | 8.528 | 0.000 |
| | Within Groups | 14157.195 | 99 | 46.723 | | |
| | Total | 22524.911 | 100 | | | |

Table 2: ANOVA Test of Social Media Use towards Attitude

| Description | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------------|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|-------|
| Cognitive | Between Groups | 99.445 | 1 | 24.861 | 0.42 | 0.794 |
| | Within Groups | 18938.604 | 99 | 59.183 | | |
| | Total | 19038.049 | 100 | | | |
| Affective | Between Groups | 117.217 | 1 | 29.304 | 0.546 | 0.702 |
| | Within Groups | 17169.54 | 99 | 53.655 | | |
| | Total | 17286.757 | 100 | | | |
| Attitude | Between Groups | 71.548 | 1 | 17.887 | 0.255 | 0.907 |
| | Within Groups | 22453.363 | 99 | 70.167 | | |
| | Total | 22524.911 | 100 | | | |

Table 3: ANOVA Test of Demography towards Attitude

| Description | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------------|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|-------|
| Cognitive | Between Groups | 1161.477 | 14 | 82.963 | 1.439 | 0.134 |
| | Within Groups | 17876.572 | 220 | 57.666 | | |
| | Total | 19038.049 | 234 | | | |
| Affective | Between Groups | 1271.994 | 14 | 90.857 | 1.759 | 0.044 |
| | Within Groups | 16014.763 | 220 | 51.661 | | |
| | Total | 17286.757 | 234 | | | |
| Attitude | Between Groups | 1561.454 | 14 | 111.532 | 1.649 | 0.065 |
| | Within Groups | 20963.457 | 220 | 67.624 | | |
| | Total | 22524.911 | 234 | | | |

A general linear model (GLM) analysis was conducted to ascertain whether various attitudes yielded similar or distinct impacts. The results, as presented in Table 6, indicate the influence of social media marketing communication on attitudes, including cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions. Notably, the analysis revealed that both the utilization of social media and demographic factors had no significant effect on these attitudes.

Table 4: Test of the General Linear Model

| Source | Dependent Variable | F | Sig. |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------|-------|
| Online Marketing Communication | Cognitive | 186.223 | 0.000 |
| | Affective | 205.822 | 0.000 |
| | Attitude | 81.008 | 0.000 |
| Use of Social Media in a Day | Cognitive | 0.399 | 0.528 |
| | Affective | 0.262 | 0.609 |
| | Attitude | 0.203 | 0.653 |
| Demography | Cognitive | 0.007 | 0.935 |
| | Affective | 0.558 | 0.455 |
| | Attitude | 0.812 | 0.368 |

Findings

The results of this study consistently demonstrate that, concerning attitudes, social media marketing communication

significantly influences all aspects. The clear and easily comprehensible nature of social media marketing communication has a noteworthy impact on individual attitudes towards brands. Consequently, intensive promotion through social media platforms empowers modern businesses to adapt to the digital era's evolving landscape. However, it's worth noting that the use of social media does not exert an influence on the cognitive attitudes of individuals in terms of usage levels, duration, or profile upgrades. As observed by Cox (2010), experienced Internet users tend to become less receptive to advertising when they encounter annoying ads and seek to block them. Consequently, the data collected indicate that the cognitive behaviors of respondents are not affected by the extent of their social media usage. This phenomenon may be attributed to contemporary teenagers' inclination to use social media primarily for self-expression rather than for informational purposes. Businesses should take into account these changing dynamics and adapt their social media strategies to pique the interest of their target audience. Similarly, when it comes to behavioral attitudes, individuals who have been using social media for an extended period are not inherently influenced. The data gathered illustrate that while the majority of respondents access social media through computers and mobile devices, the use of these devices does not significantly shape their behavioral attitudes. On a global

scale, numerous online activities are carried out by people with varying motivations and objectives, particularly on social media. Researchers and academics have shown considerable interest in understanding this phenomenon. It's worth noting that individuals typically begin by sharing personal moments or activities with friends on social media, which often results in a form of self-presentation and a display of accomplishments.

This study's findings emphasize that factors such as entry, duration of use, login frequency, login duration, and profile updates in social media usage for marketing communication have minimal impact on the emotional, affective, and behavioral attitudes of Generation Z. Companies should consider leveraging popular artists or celebrities, especially those adored by teenagers, to enhance the appeal of their products among this demographic.

Furthermore, it's evident that customers' emotional states, including feelings and concerns, are influenced by the transparency of advertisements. However, digital marketing does not directly affect purchase decisions but has a significant impact on word-of-mouth promotion. Building social connections online remains a key motivator for people to engage with digital media. Lastly, the study reveals that the demographic characteristics of the respondents do not significantly influence the attitudes of Generation Z in terms of perceptual, affective, and behavioral aspects. Specifically, gender demographics show no substantial impact on attitudes, although teenage girls tend to exhibit a higher preference for social media marketing communication. Additionally, age demographics have a limited effect on attitude components, with older adolescents expressing slightly more favorable feelings than their younger counterparts. Consequently, future studies should consider including respondents aged 15-18, as they too are navigating their identities and may yield valuable insights.

Conclusion

It is concluded that, this study underscores the significant influence of social media marketing communication on the attitudes of Generation Z consumers in Chennai. While social media plays a crucial role in shaping their attitudes towards brands, the study also reveals that factors like the extent of social media usage and demographic characteristics have limited impact on their attitudes. This underscores the need for businesses to adapt their strategies to align with the changing dynamics of social media and prioritize authenticity in their engagement with this influential demographic. By fostering online communities and leveraging emotional impact, companies can effectively connect with Generation Z consumers, shaping the future of marketing in Chennai and beyond.

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