

ANALYSIS OF ONLINE AND OFFLINE SHOPPING PREFERENCES ON GENERATION Z CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

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Abstract

The development of digital technology has changed consumer behavior patterns, including how Generation Z obtains information, evaluates products, and makes purchases. Online shopping offers convenience, flexibility, product variety, and the ability to compare prices, while offline shopping provides a direct experience, personal interaction, and certainty about product condition. This study aims to analyze online and offline shopping preferences in relation to Generation Z consumer behavior in Tebing Tinggi City. The study used a descriptive quantitative approach with 50 respondents belonging to the Generation Z group and having experience shopping through both online and offline channels. The results show that Generation Z consumer behavior in choosing a shopping channel is influenced by a combination of factors such as convenience, price, product variety, trust, security, shopping experience, and speed of product acquisition. Online shopping has advantages in terms of flexibility and ease of access, while offline shopping has advantages in terms of physical product evaluation and direct interaction. The research findings indicate that Generation Z does not fully rely on one shopping channel, but tends to use online and offline channels according to their needs and the characteristics of the products purchased.

Keywords: Shopping Preferences, Online Shopping, Offline Shopping, Consumer Behavior, Generation Z.

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes to the way people conduct economic activities, including searching for information and purchasing goods and services. E-commerce allows consumers to conduct transactions without having to visit a physical store. This change has led to more flexible consumption processes, allowing consumers to compare products, prices, and information more quickly. However, the growth of online shopping has not automatically eliminated offline shopping channels. Consumers still consider direct experience, interaction with sellers, certainty about product condition, and speed of delivery. Research on Indonesian consumers shows that perceptions of security, ease of use, usefulness, e-service quality, purchase intention, and satisfaction are important aspects of the online shopping experience, while differences in perceptions of online and offline transactions are still found (Bailusy et al., 2022).

Generation Z is a relevant consumer group to study in the development of digital commerce. This group grew up in an environment close to the internet, social media, mobile devices, and digital platforms. This makes technology a crucial part of the information search process and the formation of consumption preferences. However, being a digital generation does not mean that Generation Z has completely abandoned the in-person shopping experience. Research on young Indonesian consumers shows that their shopping styles have diverse characteristics, including quality orientation, entertainment seeking, impulsive tendencies, interest in novelty, and loyalty to certain brands (Helmi et al., 2023). Therefore, Generation Z's consumption behavior needs to be analyzed by considering the relationship between technology, experience, economic values, trust, and individual preferences.

Online shopping has several advantages that make it attractive to Generation Z consumers. Consumers can obtain product information, compare prices, read reviews, and make transactions through digital devices. Convenience and flexibility are important factors in using online channels. Research on Generation Z consumers in Indonesia shows that trust, shopping habits, information quality, and price are factors that influence online shopping decisions (Asih & Rubiyanti, 2023). Other research also shows that supporting conditions, website

quality, security, convenience, economic reasons, and social influence can influence e-commerce purchase intentions (Alfanur & Kadono, 2021). Thus, preference for online shopping is not only related to technological advances but also to consumer perceptions of the benefits and security of transactions. On the other hand, offline shopping still has advantages that cannot be completely replaced by digital platforms. Consumers can see, touch, try, and evaluate products directly before making a purchase. Interaction with sellers can also provide additional information and increase consumer confidence in the product. Research on fashion shopping preferences in Indonesia shows that some consumers still prefer offline shopping because they want to physically evaluate the product before purchasing (Sisca et al., 2022). Research on the shopping experience in physical stores also shows that convenience and the store environment can contribute to the value of the consumer shopping experience (Maningkas et al., 2020). Therefore, offline shopping still holds a significant position in consumer behavior despite the continued growth of digital commerce.

Previous research has provided various insights into Generation Z shopping behavior. Simangunsong (2018) showed that Generation Z in Indonesia has a strong tendency to make online purchases, especially in the clothing and food and beverage categories. Helmi et al. (2023) found that young Indonesian consumers have a hedonic online shopping style, are quality-oriented, seek entertainment, are interested in novelty, and have a tendency to be loyal to certain stores and brands. Recent research on Generation Z also shows that trust, electronic word-of-mouth, and social media marketing can influence online purchase intentions, while price is not always the main factor in purchasing decisions (Lady et al., 2025). These findings indicate that Generation Z consumer behavior is complex and is not solely determined by price considerations.

Although research on online shopping behavior and Generation Z has grown, there is still room for further exploration. Most studies have focused primarily on online purchase intentions and have not directly compared online and offline shopping preferences within a single context. Furthermore, research on Generation Z has largely been conducted in regions with larger market characteristics, while studies on Generation Z shopping preferences in Tebing Tinggi City are still limited. Differences in regional characteristics, access to digital platforms, availability of physical stores, and consumption habits can influence consumer choices. Consumers also do not always choose one shopping channel exclusively, as preferences can change based on product type, level of need, price, and previous experience. Therefore, research on online and offline shopping preferences among Generation Z in Tebing Tinggi City has both academic and practical relevance.

Based on the above description, this study aims to analyze online and offline shopping preferences in relation to Generation Z consumer behavior in Tebing Tinggi City. This study focuses on the factors consumers consider when choosing a shopping channel. This study also seeks to understand the differences in the characteristics of experiences consumers obtain through online and offline channels. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the study of Generation Z consumer behavior in the context of changes in the trade ecosystem. Practically, the research results can provide input for business actors in designing marketing strategies that are more in line with the behavior of young consumers. The results of the study are also expected to encourage business actors to consider the integration of digital strategies and physical shopping experiences.

THEORITICAL REVIEW

Consumer Behavior

Solomon (2020) explains that consumer behavior is not only related to the act of purchasing but also encompasses the psychological, social, and cultural processes that influence consumer choices. In a digital context, the consumer decision-making process becomes increasingly complex because consumers have rapid access to various sources of information.

Preference

According to Agrawal and Gupta (2022), shopping channel preferences are shaped by various consumer motives, including convenience, digital transaction security, reviews and ratings, entertainment, social interaction, and the need for a shopping experience. Their research found that consumers tend to choose online channels for convenience, while offline channels are more often chosen to meet needs related to risk reduction and social interaction.

Online Shopping

Hamzagic et al.'s (2023) opinion views online purchasing as an alternative to traditional purchases in physical stores, where the purchasing process is carried out via the internet as part of the digital transformation in trading activities.

Offline Shopping

Maningkas et al. (2020) explain that the physical store shopping experience is related to the retail environment, comfort, layout, lighting, familiarity, and perceived experiential value. Furthermore, the store atmosphere and environmental comfort can influence the consumer's shopping experience and value (Maningkas et al., 2020). Thus, offline shopping still has relevant advantages in modern consumer behavior. Research by Sisca et al. (2022) shows that physical product evaluation is one of the reasons consumers continue to choose offline shopping.

Generation Z

Meanwhile, Smaliukiene et al. (2021) explain that Generation Z is a generational group whose consumption characteristics are closely linked to digital communication environments and social media. Research by Simangunsong (2018) shows that Generation Z in Indonesia has a strong inclination towards online shopping. However, other research indicates that young consumers still consider offline channels based on product characteristics and desired experiences (Sisca et al., 2022). Thus, Generation Z can be understood as flexible consumers in using various shopping channels.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a quantitative approach with a descriptive design. The quantitative approach is used to obtain an overview of online and offline shopping preferences and consumer behavior of Generation Z in Tebing Tinggi City. The study population is Generation Z consumers who live in Tebing Tinggi City and have experience shopping through online and offline channels. The number of respondents used in this study is 50 respondents. Research data was collected through a questionnaire designed to identify respondents' experiences and preferences in conducting online and offline shopping activities. The questionnaire includes questions regarding ease, convenience, price, product variety, trust, security, direct experience, interaction with sellers, and speed of obtaining products. The data obtained were then analyzed descriptively. Descriptive analysis is used to describe the tendencies of respondents' answers to research indicators.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Generation Z Shopping Preferences

The results of a study of 50 respondents indicate that Generation Z in Tebing Tinggi City has experience using both online and offline shopping channels. This indicates that respondents are not familiar with just one form of commerce channel. Experience using both channels allows consumers to compare the benefits and limitations of each. Online shopping offers experiences related to technological convenience and transaction flexibility. Offline shopping offers experiences related to direct interaction and physical product evaluation. Thus, Generation Z consumer behavior can be understood as adaptive to the development of commerce channels. Consumer preferences for shopping channels are influenced by their needs and purchasing situations. Consumers may choose online shopping when prioritizing convenience, efficiency, variety, and the ability to compare products. Conversely, consumers may choose offline shopping when they need certainty about product condition or want to purchase goods directly. These findings align with research showing that young consumers have diverse and heterogeneous shopping styles (Helmi et al., 2023). Therefore, Generation Z's shopping preferences cannot be explained solely by age or proximity to technology.

Online Shopping Preferences

Based on an analysis of research indicators, online channels have advantages in terms of ease of access and flexibility. Consumers can search for products without having to visit a store in person. Consumers can also compare prices and product characteristics from various sellers. This convenience makes online shopping relevant for consumers who prioritize efficiency. Research by Alfianur and Kadono (2021) shows that convenience, security, website quality, supporting conditions, economic reasons, and social influence are factors related to online purchase intentions. Therefore, preference for online shopping can be understood as a result of a combination of technological benefits and consumer perceptions of value. Trust is a crucial aspect of online shopping behavior. Consumers need to be confident that the product information provided is reliable and that transactions can be conducted securely. Research by Asih and Rubiyanti (2023) shows that trust is a dominant factor in Generation Z's online shopping decisions. Other research also shows that security and the quality of the digital experience play a role in shaping consumer trust and loyalty (Arizal et al., 2024). Therefore, online businesses need to provide

transparent product information and maintain transaction security. Trust is even more crucial because consumers cannot physically inspect products before completing a transaction.

Offline Shopping Preferences

Offline channels have the advantage of providing a direct experience to consumers. Consumers can see, touch, try, and evaluate products directly. This advantage is crucial for products whose quality is difficult to assess solely through digital images or descriptions. Consumers can also interact directly with sellers to obtain additional information. Research by Sisca et al. (2022) shows that physical product evaluation is one of the reasons consumers continue to choose offline shopping. Thus, offline channels continue to play a crucial role in providing certainty and a direct experience. Beyond product evaluation, offline shopping also provides a social and emotional experience. Consumers can enjoy the store atmosphere and interact directly with the shopping environment. Research by Maningkas et al. (2020) shows that comfort and store environmental elements can influence consumers' shopping experiences and values. This demonstrates that physical stores serve more than just transactional purposes. They can also be experiential spaces that shape consumers' perceptions of products and brands. Therefore, offline businesses need to pay attention to the overall quality of the consumer experience.

Comparison of Online and Offline Preferences

A comparison between online and offline channels shows that both channels have distinct advantages. Online shopping excels in convenience, flexibility, variety, information retrieval, and price comparison. Offline shopping excels in direct experience, physical evaluation, personal interaction, and product certainty. These differences indicate that Generation Z consumers can use both channels based on their needs. Consumers don't always choose one channel permanently. Choices can change based on product type, urgency, price, trust level, and previous experience. These findings align with research showing that Indonesian consumers still have different perceptions of online and offline shopping activities (Bailusy et al., 2022). Research on fashion products also shows that some consumers still prefer offline channels because they require physical product evaluation (Sisca et al., 2022). Therefore, the rise of online shopping does not mean that physical stores have lost their relevance. Instead, both channels can function side by side to meet consumer needs. This pattern demonstrates the importance of marketing strategies that integrate digital and physical experiences.

Implications for Business Actors

The research findings imply that businesses need to understand Generation Z behavior more flexibly. Marketing strategies cannot simply rely on a digital presence. Businesses also need to build trust, provide transparent information, and enhance transaction security. At the same time, businesses with physical stores need to create a comfortable experience and provide added value to consumers. Integrating social media, digital catalogs, online ordering, and physical store services can be a relevant strategy. This approach aligns with the characteristics of Generation Z consumers, who are accustomed to switching between digital and physical channels.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above research, it can be concluded that online and offline shopping preferences have different advantages in shaping consumer behavior. Online shopping offers key benefits such as ease of access, time flexibility, product variety, ease of price comparison, and transaction efficiency. Meanwhile, offline shopping offers advantages such as direct product experience, personal interaction with sellers, certainty about the condition of the goods, and the ability to obtain products directly. The results of the study indicate that Generation Z cannot be viewed as a consumer group that relies solely on online shopping despite their strong affinity with digital technology. Consumer preferences can change based on product type, level of need, price, trust, security, and shopping experience. Thus, Generation Z consumer behavior in Tebing Tinggi City shows flexible characteristics and tends to be multi-channel.

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