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A STUDY ON SHOPPING BEHAVIOR IN INDIA: GEN Z VS. MILLENNIALS

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ABSTRACT

In today's rapidly evolving retail landscape, consumer behavior has become increasingly dynamic and influenced by technological advancements, social media, and changing lifestyles. Understanding generational differences in shopping behavior is crucial for businesses to design effective marketing strategies and meet the expectations of diverse consumer segments. The study examines the differences in buying behavior between two prominent generational cohorts in India. With the rapid evolution of retail and online shopping, understanding generational preferences has become crucial for marketers and retailers. This research adopts a quantitative, descriptive, and comparative approach, using a structured questionnaire administered to 105 respondents (Gen Z and Millennials) to analyze factors such as brand loyalty, social media influence, price sensitivity, discounts, online reviews, and impulse buying. Descriptive statistics summarize consumer behavior patterns, while inferential tests, including t-tests and correlation analysis, assess the significant differences and relationships between variables. The findings indicate that Gen Z is strongly influenced by social media and online trends, whereas Millennials demonstrate higher brand loyalty and price sensitivity. Both generations respond positively to discounts and offers, though Gen Z shows a marked preference for online shopping compared to Millennials. The study provides insights into how generational differences shape shopping behavior, helping retailers and marketers design targeted strategies for enhanced engagement and sales.

Keywords: Shopping Behavior, Millennials, Brand Loyalty, Social Media Influence, Consumer

Preferences.

I. INTRODUCTION

A study on shopping behavior in India comparing Gen Z and Millennials will highlight how two closely linked yet distinct generations are reshaping the country's consumer landscape. As India undergoes rapid digitalization and socio-economic transformation, their shopping choices reflect evolving attitudes toward technology, value, convenience, and brand engagement. Gen Z, typically born between 1997 and 2012, has grown up in an era of smartphones, social media, and instant access to information. In contrast, Millennials, born between 1981 and 1996, have witnessed the transition from traditional retail to digital commerce, making their shopping behavior a blend of conventional and modern approaches. Understanding the contrasting and overlapping preferences of these two cohorts will offer significant insights for retailers, brands, and policymakers seeking to craft effective market strategies.

The shopping behavior of Gen Z in India is heavily shaped by their digital fluency and desire for personalization. This cohort is highly active on social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and emerging influencer-driven channels, which strongly impact their purchasing choices. They tend to rely on short video content, peer recommendations, and influencer endorsements before making decisions. Their shopping approach is experimental, fast-paced, and trend-driven. Gen Z consumers often prefer brands that mirror their values, particularly sustainability, inclusivity, and authenticity. They frequently compare prices online, look for deals, and value convenience through quick delivery services. Their comfort with online payments, digital wallets, and emerging fintech solutions also makes them prolific users of e-commerce platforms.

Millennials, on the other hand, exhibit a more balanced shopping behavior that blends online browsing with in-store experiences. Having grown through the evolution of Indian retail—from traditional shops to malls and finally e-commerce—they value both the tactile experience of brick-and-mortar stores and the efficiency of digital shopping. Millennials tend to be more brand loyal compared to Gen Z, often preferring products that promise durability, reliability, and long-term value. Their purchasing decisions are influenced by detailed reviews, product comparisons, and research-based evaluations. While they are equally active on social media, Millennials respond

more strongly to long-form content, expert reviews, and brand narratives rather than short viral trends.

Both generations display a strong inclination toward online shopping, but the motivations differ significantly. Gen Z is drawn to the excitement of new product launches, dynamic online marketplaces, and gamified shopping experiences such as app-based reward systems. Their shopping behavior is more impulsive, driven by trends and social influence. Millennials, by contrast, prioritize convenience, cost-effectiveness, and pragmatic considerations such as warranties, quality assurances, and after-sales service. While Gen Z prefers shopping through mobile apps and quick commerce platforms, Millennials are more comfortable shopping through established e-commerce websites where they can access detailed product information.

Attitudes toward sustainability mark another key difference. Gen Z in India is more vocal about ethical practices, climate-conscious brands, and eco-friendly packaging. They appreciate transparency and expect companies to take stands on social issues. Millennials also value sustainability but often balance it with budget constraints and practicality. Their purchasing choices reflect a more realistic approach to green consumption, with decisions based on affordability and long-term use rather than trends.

One commonality between Gen Z and Millennials is their rising financial independence and increasing aspirations for improved lifestyles. Disposable income for both groups has grown due to wider employment opportunities, especially in urban centers, and this has expanded their participation in fashion, electronics, beauty, and lifestyle markets. However, Millennials, being older and often in more stable income brackets, spend more on home products, family needs, and long-term investments. Gen Z, still younger, tends to spend more on experiential categories like travel, food delivery, entertainment, and fashion accessories.

Another important aspect of their shopping behavior is the trust factor. Gen Z tends to trust peer-generated content, user testimonials, and influencers more than corporate advertising. They seek emotional connection with brands and are quick to abandon those that fail to meet expectations. Millennials, conversely, show a higher tendency to trust established brands and value consistency and professionalism in communication. They are less likely to be swayed by influencers and more by credible experts and detailed reviews.

Payment preferences also differ widely between these groups. Gen Z exhibits high dependence on digital wallets, UPI platforms, and buy-now-pay-later options, reflecting their comfort with technology and desire for flexibility. Millennials also use digital payments extensively, but they show slightly higher usage of credit cards, EMI options, and traditional banking channels due to their established financial histories.

The shopping behavior of Gen Z and Millennials in India reveals a dynamic consumer environment shaped by technology, lifestyle changes, and evolving social values. While Gen Z prioritizes speed, trends, and digital engagement, Millennials value reliability, research, and hybrid shopping experiences. Both groups are transforming the Indian retail sector in profound ways, pushing brands to innovate, adopt omnichannel strategies, and design personalized engagement models. Understanding their differences and similarities will remain indispensable for marketers aiming to thrive in India's rapidly evolving consumer market.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

R., Shankar. et al., (2024) Lately, sustainability and environmental concerns have captured the attention of the fashion industry. Millennials and Generation Z are environmentally conscious consumers that gravitate toward practical goods, creating a massive opportunity for the sustainable fashion industry. Academics are intrigued by Gen Z and millennial clientele because of their great potential. Organizations and corporations often utilize the internet to research and evaluate marketing data. Online marketing and buying have given individuals a voice, and they may use it more freely during the epidemic to voice their preferences and views. The main goal of the research is to examine the relationship between internet marketing methods and purchase intentions, with age and gender serving as moderators. Some of the analytical approaches used with SPSS include regression and the Hayes process-macro. Diversity among the 4Ds has little effect on consumers' propensity to make a purchase, and the results demonstrate that gender plays no role in influencing the correlation between the variables. According to the results, respondents' age and money were the most important factors in their online purchase intentions, while desire, digitization, and design were the most important factors overall.

García Faustino, Litzy et al., (2024) Businesses and digital marketers in the modern day rely heavily on consumer behavior data for trend and market prediction. Members of Generation Z

and Millennials not only make up the bulk of the working-age population, but they also display generationally specific patterns of online purchasing. While Millennials have shown remarkable adaptability to both online and offline shopping thanks to their experience witnessing the birth and growth of the digital age, value recognition, rediscovery, and information access, Generation Z has a natural affinity for technology and is interested in current and future social, environmental, and educational issues. The purpose of this research is to examine and contrast the online purchasing behaviors of these two generations by using publicly available survey data from the largest online retailer, Amazon. The purpose of this research is to draw attention to differences between the two groups by analyzing consumer trends, preferences, and patterns among U.S. people. Businesses and digital marketers should anticipate the results to shed light on the dynamics of the industry going forward and provide them the information they need to target certain demographics of consumers.

Satya, Mutia & Fidayan, Abdul et al.,(2024) There has been a rise in online shopping as a consequence of the migration of physical stores to the web, made possible by the expansion of the internet and other technological developments. There is evidence that users' and customers' willingness to purchase online is influenced by age. Specifically targeting members of Generations Y and Z, this research delves into the hedonistic and practical desires that drive consumer spending. To analyze online buying behavior and identify the main factors impacting purchase choices, the research used Logistic Regression models. The research gathered information from 212 participants via the use of Google Forms. Shopping for fun and entertainment, value reviews and ratings, very high dependence on technology, speed and convenience are characteristics of Gen Z consumers, while Gen Y consumers have utilitarian motive behavior. Gen Y consumers fully consider product information, service, and price when making purchasing decisions, and they are wise with technology. On the other hand, Gen Z consumers have hedonic motive behavior, and they use technology wisely. People buy a lot of things on the internet, but the most popular category is clothing and accessories. Understanding consumer motives and perceived risks while purchasing online is crucial, and this research focuses on how Generation Z and Y vary in their buying behavior to illustrate that point. Consequently, their online purchasing behaviors are varied, despite certain shared characteristics.

Dabija, Dan-Cristian & Lung et al., (2019) This research aims to shed light on generational

disparities in online buying habits among Gen Z and Millennials in a developing market. The study was carried out utilizing a survey approach, using a face-to-face questionnaire given by volunteers, and it included 1233 respondents from a developing market. The findings show that although both generations still favor in-store purchases over online ones, millennials and Gen Zers lean more toward smartphone-based internet purchases. Online shopping is a common practice among Gen Y, and among Gen Z, it is the only way to buy services. This paper adds to the growing body of generational theory literature, which in turn aids retailers in creating offers that appeal to Millennials and Gen Z by illuminating how to effectively target these demographics and how to provide a positive shopping experience for young people in developing markets.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative, descriptive, and comparative research design to examine differences in buying behavior between Generation Z and Millennials in India. The approach is appropriate as it allows for statistical testing of hypotheses related to brand loyalty, social media influence, price sensitivity, product preferences, and demographic effects, thereby providing a clear comparison between the two generational cohorts.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The study comprises a sample of 105 respondents, including Generation Z (born after 1997) and Millennials (born between 1981 and 1996). Respondents are selected using convenience sampling, a non-probability method commonly employed in exploratory research where accessibility and availability determine participant selection. While this technique may limit generalizability, it provides a practical means to gather data efficiently within the constraints of time and resources.

Data Collection Instrument

Primary data is collected using a structured questionnaire designed in Google Forms. The questionnaire consists of two sections:

1. **Demographic Section** – capturing age, gender, and income.

2. **Buying Behavior Section** – comprising scale-based questions on brand loyalty, social media influence, price sensitivity, discounts and offers, and the role of online reviews. Most items are measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

Reliability and Validity

The questionnaire is pre-tested with a small pilot group to ensure clarity and comprehensibility. Internal consistency reliability is assessed using Cronbach’s Alpha, which exceeds the acceptable threshold of 0.70 for all constructs, indicating good reliability. Content validity is ensured through expert review and alignment with established constructs from prior research.

Data Analysis

The collected data is analyzed using MS Excel and SPSS software. Descriptive statistics summarize respondent profiles and shopping behavior patterns, while inferential statistics—t-tests are applied to compare buying behaviors between Generation Z and Millennials and to assess relationships between variables such as brand loyalty, social media influence, and price sensitivity.

IV. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents (N = 105)

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18–25 years (Gen Z)	45	42.9%
26–35 years (Young Millennials)	38	36.2%
36–45 years (Older Millennials)	22	21.0%
Total	105	100%

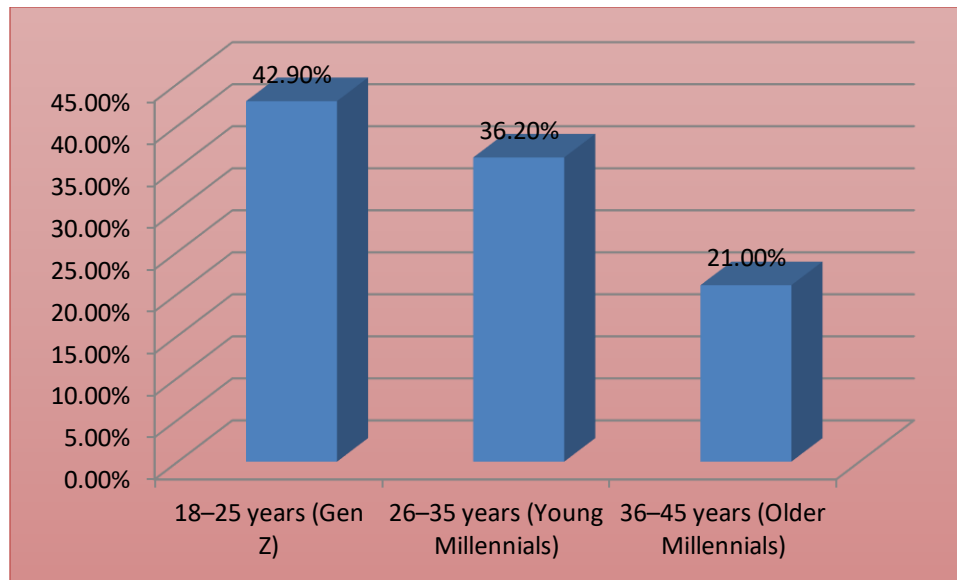


Figure 1: Age Distribution of Respondents

The age distribution of respondents shows that the sample is largely composed of younger individuals, with Gen Z forming the biggest segment. The data indicates that 42.9% of the respondents fall within the 18–25 age group, suggesting that nearly half of the participants represent the youngest consumer cohort. This highlights a strong presence of digitally active and trend-responsive individuals whose shopping behavior is typically influenced by social media, online platforms, and rapidly changing market trends. Their dominance in the sample also suggests that the study may capture more contemporary and tech-driven shopping patterns. The next largest group consists of young Millennials aged 26–35, who make up 36.2% of the respondents. This indicates that more than one-third of the sample represents individuals who are in the early to mid stages of their careers and may possess moderate purchasing power and increasing financial stability. Their presence adds valuable insights into balanced shopping behavior that integrates both traditional and digital habits. They contribute significantly to understanding consumer decisions shaped by practical needs, brand preferences, and price-value considerations. Older Millennials, aged 36–45, constitute the smallest segment, accounting for 21% of the respondents. Although they are fewer in number, this group brings an important perspective shaped by higher financial responsibility, family-oriented needs, and long-term purchase planning. Their participation provides a more mature viewpoint, reflecting stable buying patterns and a preference for reliability and quality.

Table 2: Gender Distribution of Respondents (N = 105)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	52	49.5%
Female	53	50.5%
Total	105	100%

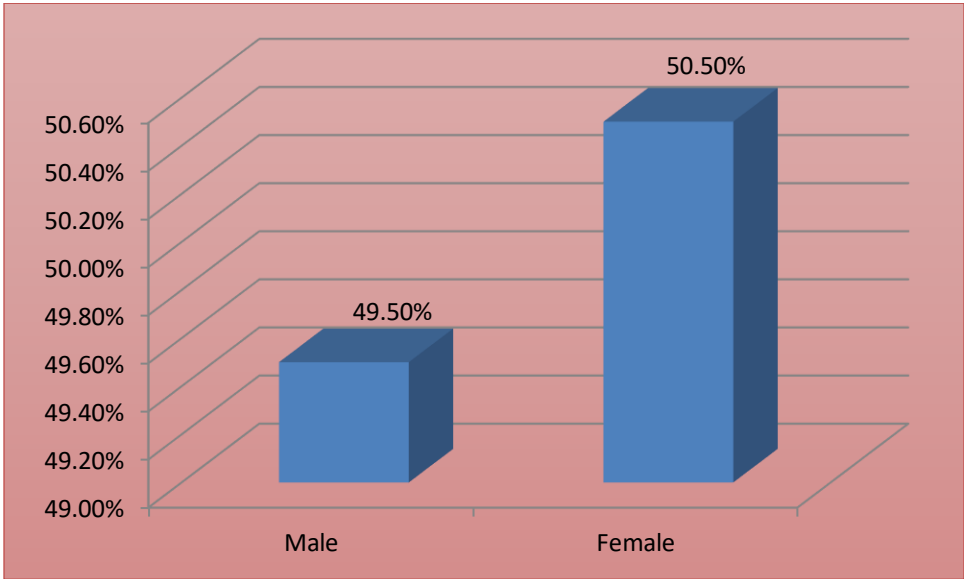


Figure 2: Gender Distribution of Respondents

The gender distribution of respondents reflects a nearly equal representation of male and female participants, which strengthens the balance and reliability of the study’s findings. With males accounting for 49.5% of the sample and females making up 50.5%, the data indicates that both genders have been almost equally included. This near parity ensures that the insights derived from the study are not skewed toward one gender and that the shopping behaviors observed reflect a fair

comparison across male and female consumers. Such an evenly distributed sample also enhances the generalizability of the results, as it captures diverse shopping preferences, decision-making patterns, and consumption habits from both genders. It suggests that the study is well-positioned to draw meaningful conclusions about gender-based similarities or differences in purchasing behavior, whether in relation to brand choices, spending habits, or the influence of digital platforms.

Descriptive Analysis of Buying Behavior

Table 3: Mean Scores of Buying Behavior Variables (Likert Scale 1–5)

Variable	Gen Z Mean	Millennials Mean	Overall Mean
Brand Loyalty	3.92	4.15	4.05
Social Media Influence	4.28	3.85	4.05
Price Sensitivity	3.65	4.10	3.90
Discounts & Offers	4.10	4.05	4.08
Online Reviews	4.00	3.95	3.97
Impulse Buying	3.95	3.80	3.87

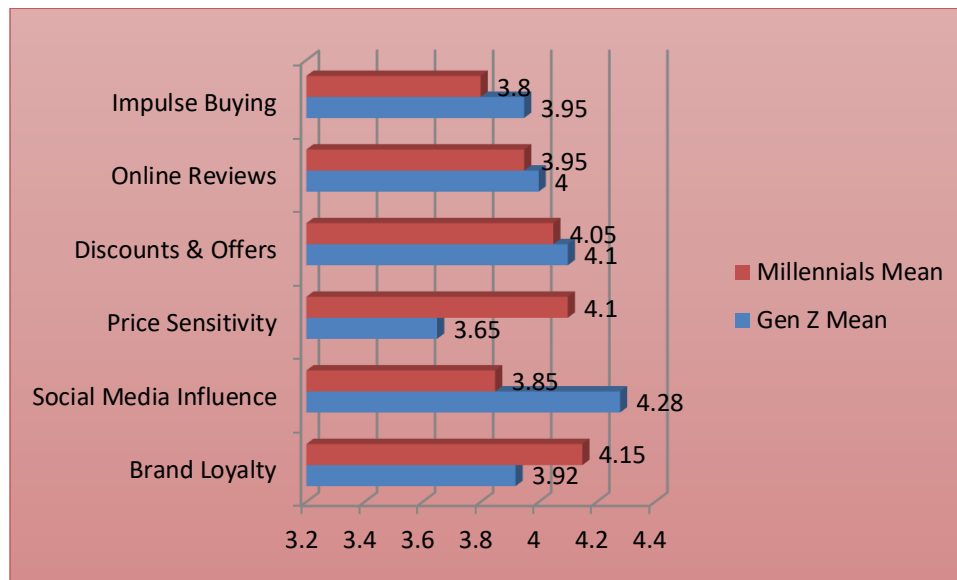


Figure 3: Mean Scores of Buying Behavior Variables (Likert Scale 1–5)

The mean scores of the buying behavior variables reveal clear differences between Gen Z and Millennials in their shopping preferences and decision-making patterns. Gen Z shows slightly lower brand loyalty (3.92) compared to Millennials (4.15), suggesting that younger consumers are less committed to sticking with familiar brands and are more willing to experiment with new options. Millennials, on the other hand, place more value on established brands, reflecting a preference for reliability and long-term trust. This difference may be influenced by factors such as financial stability, purchasing experience, and exposure to traditional brand marketing. Social media influence is notably higher among Gen Z, with a mean score of 4.28 compared to 3.85 for Millennials. This highlights that Gen Z is more responsive to trends, influencer recommendations, and digital content when making purchasing decisions. Their online-first lifestyle makes social platforms a major driver of their buying behavior, whereas Millennials rely comparatively less on social media, combining digital cues with practical evaluation. Price sensitivity also varies significantly, with Millennials scoring higher at 4.10 compared to Gen Z at 3.65. This indicates that Millennials are more conscious of value for money, budget considerations, and long-term benefits before buying. Gen Z, though still somewhat price-aware, tends to prioritize trends, convenience, and quick access over cost considerations. A similar trend is reflected in the variable of discounts and offers, where both groups show high interest, but the scores remain close, with

Gen Z at 4.10 and Millennials at 4.05. This suggests that promotional deals appeal strongly across generations, making discounts a universally effective marketing strategy. When it comes to online reviews, both generations also show almost equal reliance, with Gen Z scoring 4.00 and Millennials 3.95. This reflects the importance of social proof and user-generated content in the buying decision process for all consumers, regardless of age. It suggests that both groups seek credibility, assurance, and shared experiences before making purchases, especially in online environments. Impulse buying displays slightly higher scores among Gen Z (3.95) compared to Millennials (3.80), indicating that younger consumers are more likely to make spontaneous purchases driven by trends, emotions, or persuasive digital cues. Millennials tend to be more deliberate, aligning their purchases with needs or long-term value.

Table 4: t-Test Results Comparing Gen Z and Millennials

Variable	t-value	p-value
Brand Loyalty	-2.10	0.038
Social Media Influence	3.45	0.001
Price Sensitivity	-2.05	0.042
Discounts & Offers	0.54	0.590
Online Reviews	0.63	0.530
Impulse Buying	1.25	0.214

The t-test results comparing Gen Z and Millennials highlight significant differences in certain buying behavior variables while showing similarities in others. Brand loyalty shows a statistically significant difference with a p-value of 0.038, indicating that Millennials demonstrate notably higher loyalty toward brands than Gen Z. The negative t-value further reflects that Gen Z scores lower on this variable. This suggests that younger consumers frequently switch brands and are more open to exploring new options, whereas Millennials tend to remain committed to familiar and trusted brands. Social media influence also shows a highly significant difference, with a t-

value of 3.45 and a p-value of 0.001. This confirms that Gen Z is considerably more influenced by digital platforms, online trends, and influencer content compared to Millennials. The strong statistical significance indicates that social media consistently shapes the preferences and decisions of Gen Z, making it an essential marketing channel for brands targeting younger consumers. Price sensitivity reveals another significant difference, with a p-value of 0.042 and a negative t-value indicating that Millennials score higher on price consciousness. This means Millennials are more careful about budgeting, evaluating alternatives, and seeking value for money before making purchases. Gen Z, though still somewhat price-aware, is less driven by cost considerations and more influenced by trends, convenience, and quick access. In contrast, variables such as discounts and offers, online reviews, and impulse buying show no statistically significant differences between the two generations, as all their p-values exceed 0.05. This indicates that both Gen Z and Millennials share similar attitudes toward promotional deals, suggesting that discounts appeal broadly and remain an effective tool across age groups. The lack of significant difference in online reviews implies that both generations trust and rely on user-generated content when making informed decisions, highlighting the universal importance of customer feedback in the digital marketplace. Similarly, impulse buying does not differ significantly between the groups, suggesting that both generations are prone to occasional spontaneous purchases driven by emotional or situational factors.

Table 5: Preferred Shopping Channel by Generation

Shopping Channel	Gen Z Frequency (%)	Millennials Frequency (%)	Overall (%)
Online	32 (71.1%)	28 (46.7%)	60 (57.1%)
Offline (Mall/Store)	13 (28.9%)	32 (53.3%)	45 (42.9%)
Total	45	60	105

The distribution of preferred shopping channels highlights clear generational differences between Gen Z and Millennials in India. A significantly higher proportion of Gen Z respondents prefer

online shopping, with 71.1% choosing digital platforms compared to only 46.7% of Millennials. This indicates that Gen Z is more comfortable with technology-driven shopping experiences and relies heavily on e-commerce apps, quick-delivery platforms, and online marketplaces. Their strong inclination toward online shopping reflects their desire for convenience, speed, and access to a wider variety of choices, along with the influence of social media and digital promotions that often drive their purchase decisions. In contrast, more than half of the Millennials, 53.3%, prefer offline shopping through malls or physical stores, which is notably higher than Gen Z's 28.9%. This suggests that Millennials value the physical experience of shopping, including product inspection, trial, and face-to-face interactions. Their preference for offline channels may also be linked to trust, familiarity with traditional retail formats, and a desire for personal assurance regarding quality before purchase. This behavior reflects a more balanced shopping approach where Millennials blend both online research and offline purchase experiences.

V. CONCLUSION

The study on shopping behavior in India comparing Gen Z and Millennials provides valuable insights into the evolving consumer landscape and highlights both generational differences and shared tendencies. Gen Z emerges as a highly digital-savvy cohort, strongly influenced by social media, trends, and influencer recommendations, with a preference for online shopping, quick access, and experiential purchases. They demonstrate lower brand loyalty and slightly higher impulsiveness, reflecting a willingness to experiment and adopt new products. Millennials, on the other hand, exhibit more deliberate shopping behavior, showing higher brand loyalty, greater price sensitivity, and a balanced approach that combines online research with offline store visits. Their decisions are influenced by reliability, quality, and long-term value, highlighting their practical and experience-driven mindset. Despite these differences, the study also identifies areas of convergence, such as the importance of discounts, offers, and online reviews, which appeal across both generations. The findings emphasize the need for marketers and retailers to adopt differentiated strategies: leveraging social media and digital engagement to target Gen Z, while providing trustworthy, quality-driven experiences for Millennials. Overall, understanding these nuanced patterns is crucial for brands aiming to effectively meet the expectations of India's diverse consumer base and adapt to the country's rapidly shifting retail environment.

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