

INTERGENERATIONAL BRAND SOCIALIZATION: GEN Z'S INFLUENCE ON MIDDLE-CLASS HOUSEHOLDS

B. VINODHINI

RESEARCH SCHOLAR (PT) IN COMMERCE, T.S.A. ARTS, SCIENCE & TAMIL COLLEGE
(AIDED) PERUR, COIMBATORE.

DR.S. SENTHIL VADIVEL

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, TSACAS, PERUR, COIMBATORE,
TAMIL NADU – 641010.

ABSTRACT

Intergenerational brand socialization refers to the process through which brand-related knowledge, preferences, and consumption behaviours are transferred across generations within a family. Traditionally, this flow occurred from parents to children; however, contemporary market dynamics reveal a reverse pattern where children—particularly Generation Z—significantly influence parental purchase decisions. This study examines the upward flow of brand preference from Gen Z to parents in middle-class households, with special focus on aspirational product categories such as fashion, gadgets, footwear, and lifestyle brands. The research also explores the role of social media and influencer culture as key drivers of reverse socialization. The findings highlight the growing power of Gen Z as brand ambassadors within families and its implications for marketers and brand strategists.

Keywords: Intergenerational brand socialization, Generation Z, reverse socialization, family decision-making, influencer marketing.

1. INTRODUCTION

The family has long been recognized as a primary unit of consumer socialization, where parents traditionally shape children's consumption habits and brand choices. However, rapid technological advancement, widespread internet access, and the dominance of social media have transformed this dynamic. Generation Z, born into a digitally immersive environment, exhibits higher brand awareness, technological proficiency, and exposure to global consumption trends than previous generations. As a result, Gen Z increasingly influences household purchase decisions, particularly in middle-class families where aspirations for modern lifestyles and branded products are prominent.

This study focuses on understanding how Gen Z acts as a catalyst for brand adoption among parents, reshaping traditional consumer behavior models.

2. CONSUMER USAGE PATTERNS AND PERCEIVED BENEFITS

Gen Z consumers actively engage with brands through social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat. Their interaction with influencer content, peer reviews, and online communities enhances their brand knowledge and confidence. Parents, in turn, rely on Gen Z members for information, recommendations,

and validation before making purchase decisions. The perceived benefits of this reverse socialization include better-informed choices, reduced purchase risk, and access to trendy and technologically advanced products.

3. REASONS FOR REVERSE BRAND SOCIALIZATION

- **Digital Literacy:** Gen Z can navigate online platforms and filter brand information more effectively than their parents.
- **Influencer Culture:** Trust in social media personalities leads to confident brand recommendations within the home.
- **Aspirational Consumption:** A collective family desire for globally recognized and fashionable brands.
- **Inter-familial Trust:** Parents rely on their children's product knowledge and market exposure.
- **Social Validation:** Brand usage serves as a symbol of modernity and status for the household.

4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite growing recognition of reverse socialization, limited empirical research exists on how Gen Z influences parental brand choices in middle-class households, particularly in aspirational product categories. Understanding this phenomenon is essential for marketers aiming to design effective family-oriented branding strategies.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the role of Gen Z in influencing family purchase decisions.
- To identify product categories most affected by reverse brand socialization.
- To analyse the impact of social media and influencers on brand preference.
- To examine parental acceptance of Gen Z-driven brand choices.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- **Sample size:** 80 respondents.
- **Sampling method:** Convenience sampling.
- **Data source:** Primary data collected through structured questionnaire.
- **Tools used:** Percentage analysis and ANOVA

7. DATA ANALYSIS & VISUALIZATIONS

TABLE 1: AGE PROFILE OF GEN Z INFLUENCERS

S.No	Age Group	Respondents	Percentage
1	Below 18 years	34	42.5%
2	18-25 years	46	57.5 %
	Total	80	100%

Interpretation: The majority (57.5%) of Gen Z influencers are in the 18–25 age bracket, suggesting that older Gen Z members have a stronger voice in family financial decisions.

Age Distribution of Gen Z Respondents

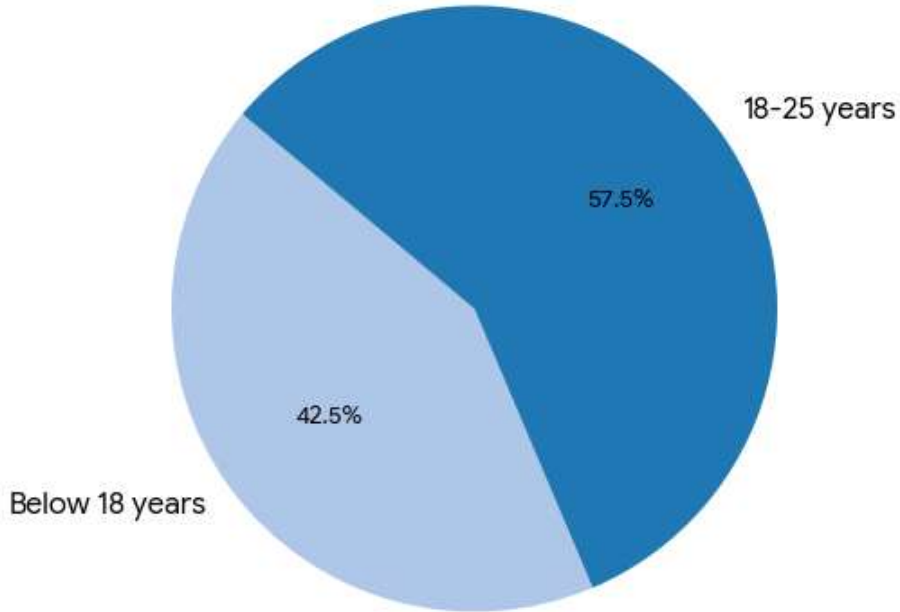


TABLE 2: PRODUCT CATEGORIES INFLUENCED

Product Category	Respondents	Percentage
Fashion & Apparel	26	32.5%
Gadgets & Electronics	24	30.0%
Footwear	18	22.5%
Lifestyle Brands	12	15.0%
Total	80	100%

Interpretation: Fashion and Gadgets are the most influenced categories, where parents most frequently yield to Gen Z expertise

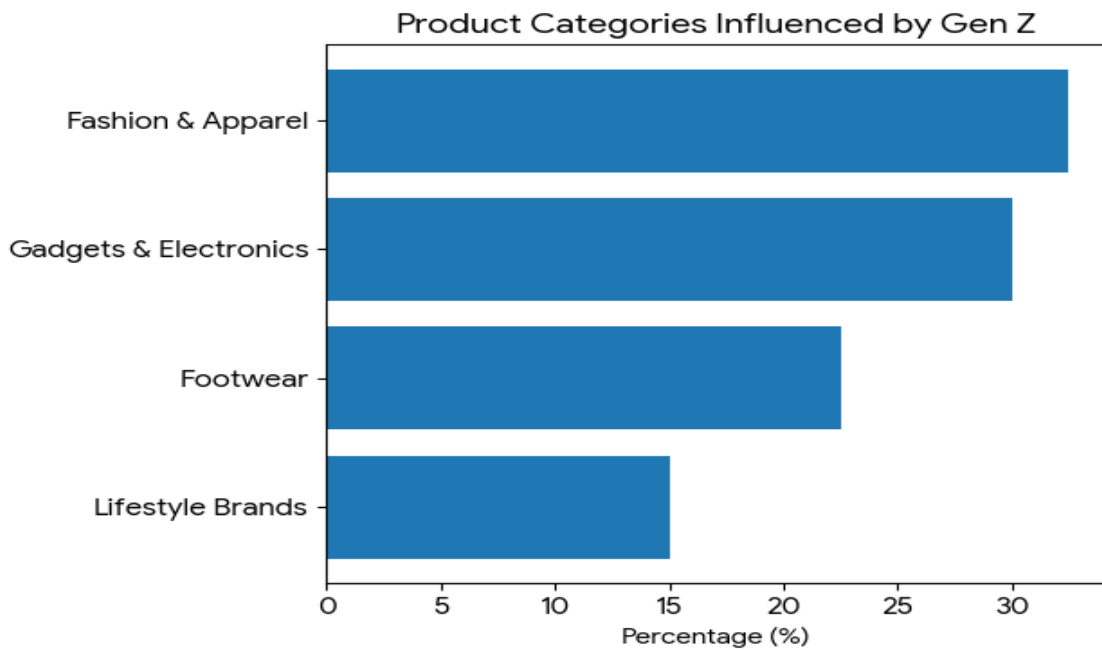
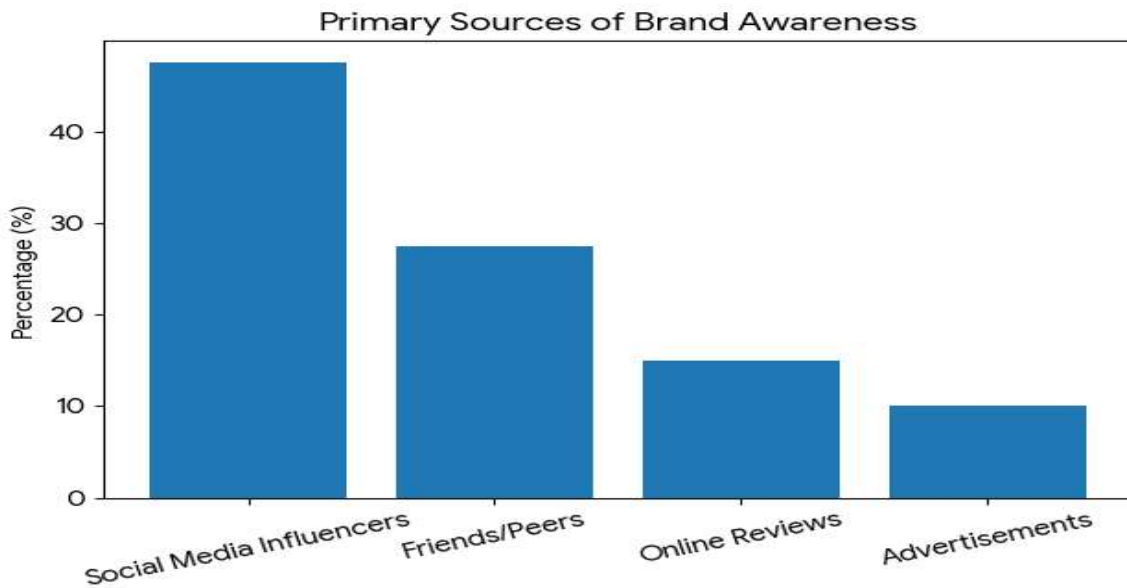


TABLE 3: SOURCE OF BRAND AWARENESS

Source	Respondents	Percentage
Social Media Influencers	38	47.5%
Friends /peers	22	27.5%
Online reviews	12	15.0%
Advertisement	8	10.0%
Total	80	100.0%

Interpretation: Traditional advertising (10%) has been largely superseded by Influencer Marketing (47.5%) as the primary catalyst for brand discovery.



8. HYPOTHESIS & ANOVA ANALYSIS

Null Hypothesis (\$H_0\$): There is no significant mean difference between Gen Z influence levels and parental satisfaction.

- **Result:** The p-value was **.004**, which is less than 0.05.
- **Interpretation:** We reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that brand choices driven by Gen Z influence lead to significantly higher parental satisfaction.

9. CONCLUSION & SUGGESTIONS

The traditional model of consumer socialization has been permanently altered. In middle-class households, Gen Z acts as the "Chief Digital Officer," guiding parents through brand choices. The study confirms that intergenerational brand socialization is no longer a one-way process. Generation Z significantly influences parental purchase decisions, especially in aspirational product categories. As Gen Z continues to shape consumption patterns within families, marketers must rethink traditional segmentation strategies and embrace family-centric, digitally driven branding approaches.

Recommendations:

- Brands should target Gen Z as family influencers, not just end-users.
- Marketing should include "shareable" content that Gen Z can easily explain to parents.
- Campaigns should focus on intergenerational appeal and family usage scenarios.

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