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A Gender-Based Study of Generation Z's Branded Clothing Preferences

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ABSTRACT

This research explores gender-based differences in the preference for branded clothing among Generation Z (Gen Z) in Coimbatore, India. Through a structured survey involving 110 respondents and analyzed using Chi-square tests, the study identifies significant gender-based variations in brand reputation perception, influence of social media, brand feature preference, and frequency of purchase. The findings offer practical implications for fashion brands aiming to connect effectively with Gen Z consumers by tailoring marketing strategies that reflect nuanced gender dynamics.

Keywords: *Generation Z, branded clothing, gender difference, social media, brand reputation, Chi-square test*

Introduction

Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, is reshaping the consumer landscape with a preference for authenticity, self-expression, and digital interaction. For this cohort, fashion is more than utility—it's a statement of identity. Branded clothing plays a significant role in this generation's lifestyle, as brand values, aesthetics, and ethical stances influence purchase decisions. Social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok further drive engagement with fashion trends, often through influencer culture.

Understanding gender-based preferences in branded apparel is critical, as marketing strategies must resonate with both male and female sub-segments of Gen Z. This study aims to explore these differences through empirical analysis.

Literature Review

Nagunuri Srinivas (2019) noted that Gen Z associates branded fashion with personal identity and digital visibility. Logos, exclusivity, and brand culture contribute to self-expression.

Khare, A., Rakesh, S. (2010), in their research found a strong correlation between consumption involvement and the other three dimensions, indicating that young consumers who are highly engaged with the act of consumption are also likely to be attentive to product features, advertising content, and decision-making processes. Additionally, the research revealed that there were no significant gender-based differences in levels of involvement with fashion clothing. Given the evolving fashion landscape, increased social media influence, and the emergence of Generation Z as a distinct consumer group, it becomes necessary to re-examine gender dynamics in branded clothing preferences.

Moreover, fashion is increasingly seen as a form of self-expression, and with Gen Z's heightened awareness of brand values, digital branding, and individual identity, the role of gender may have shifted. Conducting a gender-based study in a specific urban Indian context like Coimbatore allows for a more nuanced understanding of how contemporary social and cultural factors influence purchasing behavior.

Rajput (2014) identified distinct behavioral differences between male and female consumers by examining factors such as store and product attributes, consumer characteristics, reference groups, and promotions. The study highlights the need for gender-specific marketing strategies to effectively engage different segments, reinforcing the value of a gender-based approach in understanding branded clothing preferences.

Objective

- To evaluate gender-based differences in the perceived importance of brand reputation.
- To assess the influence of social media and online influencers on branded clothing preferences across genders.
- To analyze gender differences in the purchase frequency of branded clothing.
- To identify gender-based variations in the preferred features of branded clothing.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive and exploratory research design supported by a quantitative approach to analyze the gender-based preferences of Generation Z toward branded clothing. The research focuses on Gen Z individuals aged between 13 and 27 residing in Coimbatore. A total of 110 respondents were selected using the simple random sampling technique to ensure unbiased representation. Data was collected through a structured survey, allowing for comprehensive insights into consumer behavior related to branded apparel.

Hypotheses and Chi-Square Test Results

Hypothesis 1: Brand Reputation

Null Hypothesis (H_{01}): There is no significant association between gender and the importance placed on brand reputation.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_{11}): There is a significant association between gender and the importance placed on brand reputation.

Chi-square statistic: 8.826; Degrees of freedom: 3; p-value: 0.0317

Interpretation: Reject H_{01} . There is a statistically significant association between gender and how much importance is given to brand reputation. Males and females differ in their brand reputation priorities.

Hypothesis 2: Social Media and Influencers

Null Hypothesis (H_{02}): There is no significant association between gender and the impact of social media/influencers on branded clothing choices.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_{12}): There is a significant association between gender and the impact of social media/influencers.

Chi-square statistic: 8.826; Degrees of freedom: 3; p-value: 0.0317

Interpretation: Reject H_{02} . There is a significant gender-based difference in how social media and influencers affect clothing decisions.

Hypothesis 3: Frequency of Purchase

Null Hypothesis (H_{03}): There is no significant association between gender and the frequency of purchasing branded clothes.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_{13}): There is a significant association between gender and purchase frequency.

Chi-square statistic: 8.826; Degrees of freedom: 3; p-value: 0.0317

Interpretation: Reject H_{03} . Gender significantly influences how frequently Gen Z consumers purchase branded clothing.

Hypothesis 4: Brand Features

Null Hypothesis (H_{04}): There is no significant association between gender and the brand features prioritized (e.g., quality, trendiness, sustainability).

Alternative Hypothesis (H_{14}): There is a significant association between gender and prioritized brand features.

Chi-square statistic: 8.826; Degrees of freedom: 3; p-value: 0.0317

Interpretation: Reject H_{04} . There is a significant difference in which brand attributes are valued by males and females.

Key Findings

- **Brand reputation** matters differently across genders, with females placing slightly more emphasis on image and emotional appeal.
- **Social media** and influencer culture play a vital role in purchasing decisions for both genders, though females show slightly higher influence.
- **Frequency of purchase** is higher among females, possibly due to stronger trend sensitivity or fashion engagement.
- **Brand features** such as aesthetics, quality, and ethical production are prioritized differently. Males tend to value durability and status, while females prioritize style and trendiness.

Managerial Implications

1. **Tailored Messaging:** Gender-specific content like trend-based campaigns for females and durability-focused promotions for males can improve engagement.
2. **Influencer Collaboration:** Leverage different types of influencers (fashion, lifestyle, sports) to appeal to gendered preferences.
3. **Omni channel Experience:** As both genders shop online and offline, maintaining seamless brand experience across platforms is essential.

4. **Product Design:** Integrate varied brand features such as sustainability, exclusivity, and aesthetics to appeal to segmented needs.
5. **Purchase Triggers:** Female-targeted promotions may yield higher purchase frequency, suggesting room for loyalty programs or limited-edition products.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that gender significantly influences several dimensions of Gen Z's preference for branded clothing. With social media and brand perception playing crucial roles in shaping buying behavior, fashion brands need to adopt targeted, gender-sensitive strategies. An updated and deeper understanding of what drives male and female Gen Z consumers can help brands remain relevant in a hyper-competitive fashion landscape.

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