

TARGETING GEN Z CONSUMERS EFFECTIVELY

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most digitally connected, socially conscious and diverse consumer groups are Generation Z, individuals born between 1995 and 2012. Their unique preferences and values are resulting in changing the marketing landscape, as they are entering the workforce. The difference with previous generations reflects in prioritizing inclusivity, authenticity, personal and social values. Brands in Uzbekistan may have challenges in meeting expectations of digital natives and applying local cultural nuances. The aim of this article is to investigate effective marketing strategies for targeting Generation Z, by surveying their digital engagement behavior and value-driven brand preferences. As market is becoming dominated by Gen Z, I found this area needed to be explored in Uzbekistan.

Key words: Gen Z, Uzbekistan, digital natives, marketing, targeting, consumer, behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Jack Flynn, there are approximately 2 billion members of Gen Z in the world which means 30% of the population worldwide (Zippia, 2023). Soon they will turn into workforce. In order to stand out from competitors, companies should look for new ways to grab and keep customers of Gen Z as they are becoming main demographic (billo, 2024). It should be mentioned that various approaches are needed for different generations due to distinctive buying habits and preferences. On average Gen Z uses social media 2 hours 43 minutes a day (Global Web Index, 2024).

The Foundation of Gen Z Marketing.

Individuals born between 1995 and 2012 have grown up in period of technological advancement which caused to form their behavior in various ways. There is difference in preferences of Gen Z compared to previous generation, for example they prefer more engaging and short videos rather than text-based content (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Some points of Gen Z marketing such as authenticity and prioritizing social responsibility still stay the same. However, traditional advertising methods like board messaging is not effective with this audience, in this case relevance and personalization are common. Furthermore, Gen Z is leading marketing campaigns to be more and more inclusive because of racially and ethnically various generation (Dimock, 2019). For example, brands like Pepsi Uzbekistan and Artel used global digital trends to reflect local culture and succeeded at connecting with young audience.

As a foundation of Gen Z marketing, it is important to follow intersection global connectivity and cultural relevance.

Digital Engagement and Online Behavior

The main source for information, commerce, customer service and community engagement for Gen Z is digital media. According to Digital Marketing News, 91% of Gen Z are active on Instagram and 86% are on TikTok. These two platforms are mostly preferred for entertainment and product discovery (Digital Marketing News, 2024). It also should be mentioned that micro and nano-influencers have higher influence on zoomers rather than traditional celebrities (Geysler, 2023). Platforms such as Telegram and Instagram are dominating in Uzbekistan in attracting Gen Z's attention. Taking Beeline as an example, this company tends to publish short video contents and interactive polls which increase engagement. Unlike, the generation Y, for generation Z the price factor is least important, instead they focus mainly on ethical, practical and eco-friendly aspects of products and services (UK POS, 2024).

Values and Brand Trust

The cornerstones in relationship between Gen Z and brands are authenticity and values. Deloitte study shows that more than 60% of generation Z make purchases from brands indicating ethical practices, sustainability and inclusivity (Munro, 2023).

For instance, brands that associate with national pride and sustainability are more valuable to Gen Z. Safia incorporates eco-friendly practices, which attract attention of young customers. It also should be mentioned that international companies adapt to Uzbek language before entering the market in order to set closer relationships with audience. There is one critical factor which is transparency, because factors such as honest communication in pricing, product, company practices are highly important for Gen Z (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

Overall, marketing for Gen Z demands not only trendy campaign, but also identification of authenticity, building trust and matching with their values which helps to turn Gen Z individuals to loyal customers.

METHODOLOGY

This study consists of a mixed approach: primary and secondary. Insights collected from surveys and existing literature will contribute to identify ways of targeting Gen Z consumers effectively.

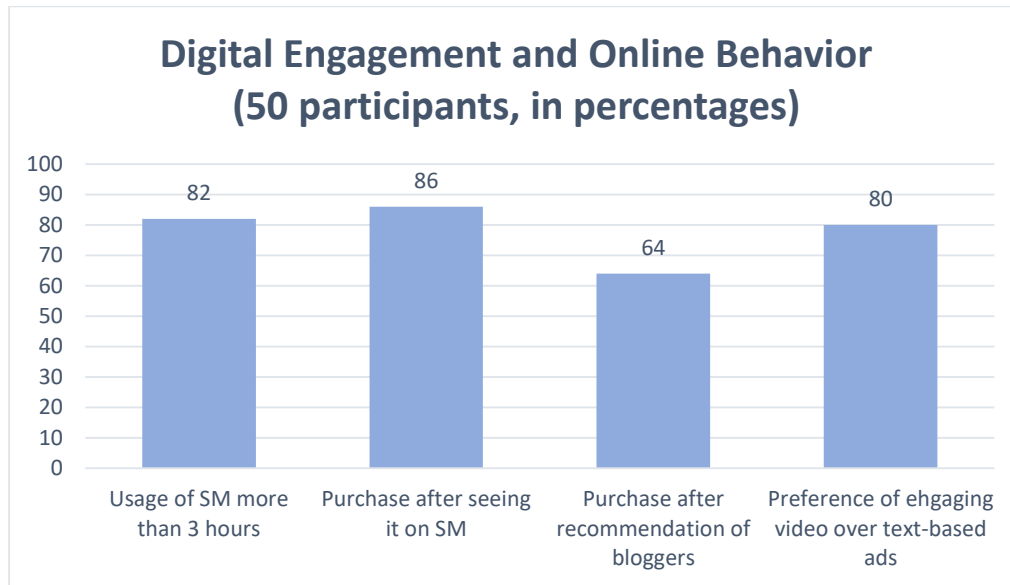
Primary research

Google form was used as a tool for gathering data about behavior, engagement habits and preferences of Gen Z. The survey consists of 10 questions in following formats: multiple-choice, likert scale and yes/no format for diversity and are taken from participants aged 12 to 29 in Millat Umidi University. The survey was spread with the help of Instagram and Telegram. Totally, 50 responses were collected in a week.

Secondary Research

There was taken data from market reports, articles and case studies to compare local findings with global frameworks.

RESULTS



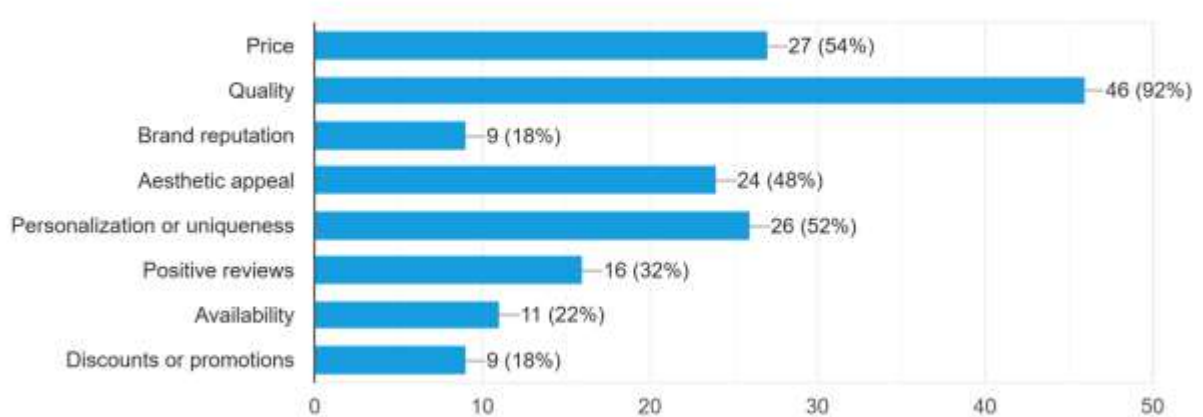
In 3 cases 80% and more than 80% of respondents informed that they prefer engaging videos, rather than advertisements that include text; they spend more than 3 hours a day and purchased products after seeing it on social media. 64% of participants reported that they were influenced by advertisements done by bloggers or influencers.



In 2 cases the indicators were the same: 68% of participants stated that they are more likely to make purchases from brands that that reflect their personal values and brands that contribute to social or environmental causes. While only 38% indicated preference for online shopping, 76% showed a strong preference for brands that reflect Uzbek culture in their advertisements and products.

10. What factors influence your decision to buy a product?

50 responses



Last but not least, the survey also studied the factors that Gen Z mainly takes into account while making purchases and the quality was the main factor with 92%. Following that, there are two factors that showed more than a half, price and personalization or uniqueness. After that, aesthetic appeal indicated 48% of preference.

ANALYSIS

The results collected from 50 Gen Z participants in Millat Umidi University gave meaningful insights which will contribute to marketers. The findings mainly will help to understand deeper digital engagement, online behavior and values, which are highly important to consider in business.

Digital Engagement and Online Behavior

One of the questions in survey was aimed to identify the duration of online presence by Gen Z, which showed the result 82% respondents spending more than 3 hours daily. The root causes of being active online are online connection, source of information and entertainment. Companies with Gen Z target audience should keep in mind that platforms such as Telegram, Instagram and TikTok are potential for building relationships with customers. The findings show that purchasing decisions of Gen Z significantly can be influenced by seeing products or services on social media, with the indicator 86%. It means that there are good opportunities to attract Gen Z's attention and make high ROI by social media with visually engaging promotions. In addition, 64% of participants stated that they made purchases based on recommendations from influencers or bloggers, which shows that influencer marketing is a good way of promoting products. The bridge between Gen Z consumers and companies can be influencers who have good interaction, communication skills. It also should be mentioned that preference for engaging videos rather than static advertisements was indicated by 80% of respondents. It means that Gen Z has high desire towards

interactive content and marketers can increase sales, brand awareness by investing more in short, engaging, creative videos. At the same time, they should keep in mind to balance authenticity and entertainment because Gen Z notices easily insincere messages.

Values and Brand Trust

In consumer behavior it is highly important to pay attention for values, 68% of participants are more likely to buy from companies that reflect their personal values. Also, the same indicators are shown in companies that contribute to social or environmental causes. The demand of Gen Z to make a positive impact on society and the planet can urge companies to be more eco-friendly by implementing ethical practices and marketing campaigns. As an example, they can decrease carbon footprints, however it is important to show tangible actions. Otherwise, digital natives can easily notice companies trying to seem socially responsible. One more notable finding is about the importance of cultural relevance, preference for brands that reflect Uzbek culture was shown by 76% of respondents. Gen Z in Uzbekistan values authenticity both in cultural representation and ethical practices. One critical finding is that preference for online shopping was shown only by 38% of participants. As online shopping has become very widely-used among young generation, this is showing contrast to other global Gen Z trends. There can be some external reasons why Gen Z has lack of trust in e-commerce: lack of wide-spread e-commerce infrastructure or a cultural preference for face-to-face interactions. From another side, it is an opportunity to develop online shopping specifying in security, delivery and reliability in Uzbekistan.

Factors Influencing Purchase Decisions

The most important factor in purchase decision was found quality with 92%. Gen z high standards towards product to be high-quality and durable. In most cases, price sensitivity happens with young customers, however Gen Z is ready to pay as long as product has a good quality. Next factors that influence on purchase decisions of Gen Z are aesthetic appeal and personalization, with 48% and 52% respectively. Companies can focus on individuality and self-expression by offering limited-edition collections which allows customers to feel unique. Less influential factors were brand reputation (18%), discounts (18%) and availability (22%). In this case, marketers can work on product development and branding strategies that match with Gen Z values.

DISCUSSION

There are significant insights about the preferences and behaviors of Gen Z from the findings in this study which will contribute to make a guidance for marketers to target this demographic effectively. This discussion will focus on 3 main themes: quality and aesthetics, personalization and uniqueness, discounts and promotions.

Quality and Aesthetics

According to survey conveyed for 92% of respondents - quality was on a priority in purchasing decision matching with the global research on preference for durable and functional products among Gen Z (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). It means that this generation is ready to invest in products that are worthwhile, than spending money on cheap alternatives. In addition, the findings about the importance of aesthetic appeal while making a purchase correspond to study of Maria Bengtsson if product lacks a visual appealing design, it can quickly be disregarded by Gen Z (Maria Bengtsson, 2024). In order to have competitive advantage brands in Uzbekistan have need for quality assurance and visually engaging product presentations.

Personalization and Uniqueness

52% of survey respondents informed that personalization is important factor for them in purchasing. This finding resonates with the research from book “The rules for reaching this vast—and very different—generation of influencers” that Generation Z values customization and brand alignment with personal identity (Fromm & Read, 2018). Brands in Uzbekistan can collaborate traditional Uzbek designs with modern products which symbolizes both authenticity and their demand for originality.

Discounts and Promotions

Findings show that discounts and promotions were considered as an important factor only by 18% of respondents. They are less influenced by short-term discounts instead they are driven to have trust and long-term relationships with brands (Priporas, 2017). Brands in Uzbekistan can invest in loyalty programs and exclusive offerings rather than short-term discounts.

FURTHER RESEARCH

This study explored key aspects of targeting Gen Z consumers effectively, but there are areas that need to be researched more deeply. From this research there was identified the necessity of personalization, aesthetics, quality and authenticity in marketing among Gen Z. However, there are areas for further research such as the role of emerging technologies, loyalty and behavior changes, cultural nuances in Gen Z preferences, intersection of social values and brand engagement and effectiveness of omnichannel strategies. Future research of these areas would contribute hugely to marketing landscape in Uzbekistan.

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