Influence of Digital Marketing on the Buying behaviour of Gen –Z Consumers in Cuddalore – A Study

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ABSTRACT

Digital marketing communication refers to the purposeful use of online platforms and digital tools to deliver promotional messages, build brand awareness, and engage with targeted consumers. In recent years, it has become deeply integrated into everyday life, particularly among Generation Z—individuals who are considered true digital natives due to their upbringing in the era of rapid technological advancement. This demographic represents a significant and influential consumer segment that actively interacts with digital content and social media platforms.

The present study examines how digital marketing communication shapes the purchasing behaviour of Gen Z consumers in Cuddalore. Employing a descriptive research design, primary data were collected from 250 respondents. Descriptive statistical tools were used to analyze the data. The findings underscore the growing influence of digital marketing on the decision-making patterns of Gen Z, highlighting its role in shaping preferences, attitudes, and online buying behaviour.

The study provides meaningful insights for businesses seeking to effectively engage this tech-savvy group and improve their digital marketing strategies. It also offers valuable implications for academics, practitioners, and policymakers in Cuddalore who aim to better understand and address factors affecting consumer behaviour in the digital environment.

Keywords: Gen Z, Digital marketing, Social media, Consumer buying behaviour..

INTRODUCTION:

In the contemporary business environment, digital marketing has emerged as a powerful driver of consumer behaviour and decision-making. It refers to marketing activities carried out through the Internet and digital technologies, enabling the promotion of products and services via online platforms and electronic devices. Essentially, digital marketing encompasses all marketing efforts conducted through the web, whether accessed on mobile phones, laptops, or other digital tools (Khan et al., 2020). It includes a broad range of strategies aimed at engaging target audiences, strengthening brand visibility, increasing website traffic, and converting potential customers into buyers. In an increasingly competitive marketplace, effective digital communication has become essential for attracting consumer attention and sustaining business success.

Digital marketing significantly shapes consumer purchasing patterns (Fadilla & Sya'roni, 2023). By tailoring promotional messages to specific audience segments—particularly Generation Z—businesses can deliver content that aligns closely with consumer needs and interests. Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, represents a distinct group of consumers who have grown up entirely in a digital era. As true digital natives, they are deeply immersed in technology and highly active on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. These online spaces play a major role in influencing their purchasing decisions. With constant exposure to digital content, advertisements, and influencers, Gen Z forms a unique consumer segment shaped by uninterrupted connectivity and social media engagement.

Their purchasing power has gained increasing attention in today's consumer market. Purchasing power refers to an individual's ability and financial capacity to make buying decisions (Cakranegara et al., 2022). As more Gen Z individuals enter the workforce and attain economic independence, they are becoming key contributors to market trends and reshaping business strategies (Naidu, 2018). Their distinct spending habits, preferences, and behaviour patterns make them an important demographic for marketers to understand.

In conclusion, this study seeks to explore how various digital marketing channels—such as social media marketing, search engine marketing, and email marketing—affect the attitudes and purchase intentions of Generation Z consumers. Gaining insight into the relationship between digital marketing practices and Gen Z's behaviours and digital identities is essential for organisations aiming to design effective and impactful marketing campaigns.

Digital Marketing

Digital marketing is the use of digital channels, platforms, and technologies to promote or market products and services to consumers." (*Damian Ryan*)

Digital Marketing Channels

Website Marketing:

A website serves as the foundation for all digital marketing initiatives. It functions not only as a standalone promotional tool but also as a central hub for executing various online campaigns. An effective website should clearly showcase a brand's products and services, while being visually appealing, responsive, mobile-friendly, and easy to navigate.

Pay-Per-Click (PPC) Advertising:

PPC advertising allows businesses to display paid advertisements across multiple digital platforms, targeting specific internet users. Through platforms like Google, Bing, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Pinterest, advertisers can reach individuals searching for products or services related to their offerings. These campaigns can be customized based on demographics, interests, or geographic location. Among the most widely used PPC platforms are Google Ads and Facebook.

Content Marketing:

Content marketing focuses on attracting and engaging potential customers by producing valuable and relevant content. Such content is typically hosted on a company's website and promoted via social media, search engine optimization (SEO), email marketing, and paid advertising. Common forms include blogs, infographics, e-books, podcasts, webinars, and online tutorials.

Email Marketing:

Email marketing continues to be one of the most reliable digital marketing tools. Unlike spam emails, genuine email marketing targets individuals who have shown interest in a brand or subscribed for updates. Marketers often use other digital channels to build their email lists and then nurture these leads through personalized campaigns designed to convert them into customers.

Social Media Marketing:

Social media platforms are primarily used to strengthen brand recognition and build consumer trust. Over time, businesses can leverage social media not only for brand visibility but also for lead generation and direct sales. Engaging content and active interaction with users are key to sustaining audience interest.

Affiliate Marketing:

Affiliate marketing, though one of the oldest marketing techniques, has been revitalized through digital technology. In this model, marketers promote someone else's products and earn a commission for every sale or lead generated through their link. Prominent companies such as Amazon operate large-scale affiliate programs that reward individuals and websites for successful referrals.

Video Marketing:

Video has become a major component of modern marketing, with YouTube emerging as the second-largest search engine globally. Consumers increasingly rely on videos to learn about products, make purchase decisions, or consume entertainment. Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook support video marketing campaigns, which often yield strong results when combined with SEO, content marketing, and social media strategies.

SMS Messaging:

Short Message Service (SMS) is another valuable digital tool for direct communication. It is frequently used in promotional campaigns, political outreach, and customer notifications, enabling immediate and personalized engagement with audiences.
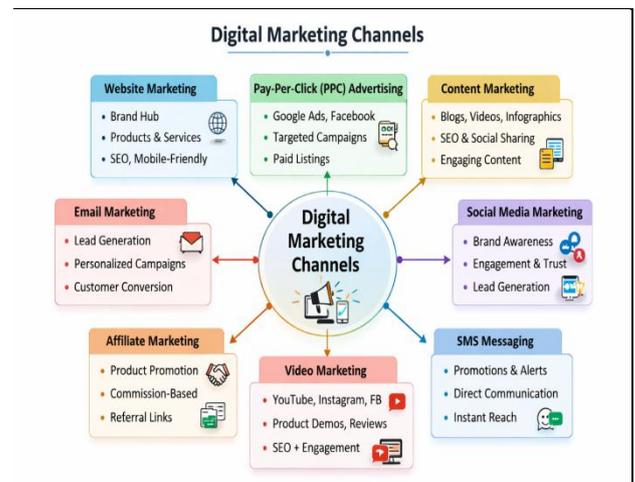
Review of Literature

Maheshwari M. and Jain Jacob M. (2025), in their study titled *"The Role of Digital Marketing in Shaping Gen Z Consumer Behaviour,"* highlight the significant influence of digital marketing—particularly AI-powered personalization and social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok—on Gen Z consumer behavior. Gen Z consumers show a strong preference for hyper-personalized content and place greater trust in influencer-generated content over traditional advertising, valuing authenticity and engagement. The study also addresses Gen Z's concerns about data privacy and explores the potential of blockchain technology to enhance trust in digital transactions.

M. Uma Maheshwari and Biji Jose (2024) conducted a study titled *"Influence of Digital Marketing Communication: A Gen Z Behavioral Perspective."* The study highlights the shift from traditional to digital channels in marketing strategies. It demonstrates that digital communication enables immediate customer engagement, offers cost efficiency, and allows for easier measurement of marketing effectiveness. However, challenges persist, particularly concerning the authenticity of digital content and the need to adapt to rapidly evolving technologies.

Yijia Liu's (2024) According to his research, the emerging digital marketing technologies-such as personalized

marketing, social media, AR/VR, and voice assistants-are profoundly reshaping consumer behavior by enhancing convenience, engagement, and personalization.Studies consistently show that digital marketing influences consumer decision-making, trust, and brand loyalty, with consumers increasingly valuing tailored experiences and targeted content. Researchers emphasize the need for businesses to balance technological innovation with privacy protection to foster sustainable consumer trust and engagement.

Hadi Wijaya1, Nora Listiana2, Feri Nugroho3, Revita Desi Hertin4, Nurul Aslamiah Istiqomah5, Alfi Maghfuriyah6, Febria Anjara7 (2024). Their research paper highlights that social media and influencer marketing significantly shape Gen-Z consumer behavior by leveraging trust, authenticity, and relatability, which are valued more than traditional advertising. Overall, the review underscores that effective social media and influencer marketing strategies are essential for brands targeting Gen-Z, as these approaches directly impact their discovery, evaluation, and adoption of products.

Aumprakash Pavate's (2021) mentioned in his study that, the rapid transformation of consumer shopping habits in India due to technological advancements and the proliferation of digital marketing. Indian youth, characterized by their high digital media access and trend sensitivity, are identified as a challenging yet influential demographic for marketers, often shaping both family and peer purchasing decisions. Studies reveal that digital marketing strategies-especially those leveraging online platforms-significantly impact the buying behavior of young consumers, who are more inclined toward online purchases over traditional shopping.

Scope and Significance of the study

This study focuses on analyzing how digital marketing influences the buying behaviour of Generation Z consumers in the Cuddalore region. It aims to explore the extent to which various digital marketing practices affect their decision-making processes and identify the specific elements that contribute to the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies. The study's significance lies in offering valuable insights for businesses seeking to strengthen consumer engagement and enhance sales through well-planned digital marketing initiatives. By understanding the preferences and responses of Gen Z consumers, organizations can tailor their digital approaches more effectively and remain competitive in a rapidly evolving market.

Statement of the Problem

With the rapid advancement of technology, the marketing landscape has undergone major changes, positioning digital marketing as a critical tool in shaping consumer attitudes, preferences, and purchasing behaviours. Generation Z, having grown up in a highly digital environment, is particularly influenced by online content, social media interactions, and other digital touchpoints. Their distinct values, expectations, and consumption habits create both opportunities and challenges for marketers. Although digital marketing is increasingly relied upon to attract and persuade this demographic, there is still limited understanding of how these strategies

specifically affect the buying behaviour of Gen Z consumers. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the influence of digital marketing on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z in order to bridge this knowledge gap.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study is carried on with the following objectives:

To examine the demographic characteristics of Gen Z consumers in Cuddalore.

To identify the preferred digital marketing communication channels among respondents in the study area.

To investigate the role of social media platforms influencing the buying behaviour of Gen –Z Consumer in the study area.

Research Questions

The study on the "Influence of Digital Marketing on the buying behaviour of Gen –Z consumers in Cuddalore" aims to explore how various aspects of digital marketing impact consumer in their purchase decisions. To guide the investigation, the research is framed by specific research questions and hypotheses. The research questions for this study focus on understanding the different dimensions of digital marketing and their impact on consumer preferences.

The key questions are designed to address the objectives of the research, and they are as follows:

How aware are Gen –Z consumers in Cuddalore District of various digital marketing channels?

What is the effectiveness of digital marketing in influencing the buying behaviour?

Hypothesis

To achieve the study's goals, the following hypothesis was developed:

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between age and Gen Z consumers' perceptions of digital marketing preferences.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between Educational Qualification and Gen Z consumers' perceptions of digital marketing preferences.

Research Methodology.

To address the above objectives, the following research methods were employed.

Questionnaire development and instrument

The data was gathered using a structured Google form questionnaire created in accordance with the objectives of this paper. Due weightage was given to the number of questions, type, relevance, wording and scale of measurement.

Sample and Data collection:

The study based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data have been collected through well-structured Google form questionnaire among 250 Gen –Z consumer in Cuddalore, India. The survey questionnaire was self-administered and distributed through watsapp and emails.

The Secondary data was collected through various articles, thesis, websites,shodhganga and journal.

Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling was employed to select participants for the study. This non-probability sampling technique was chosen due to the need for quick and efficient data collection, given the geographical and demographic diversity of the study area.

Data analysis

The questionnaires were thoroughly checked and edited. It comprised of a question on Likert scale with five point and other close ended function pertaining to the influence of digital marketing. The data were entered in SPSS package Version 14. Moreover, statistical tests such as ANOVA, T – test and percentage analysis were applied for further data analysis.

Limitations

The study is based on a limited sample size of 250 respondents, which may not fully represent the broader Gen Z population in the study area.

The research focused exclusively on Gen-Z consumers, and therefore, the results may not be applicable to other consumer groups using digital platforms.

The study was confined to the Cuddalore region, which may limit the applicability of the findings to other geographical areas.

The study was done for a short period which might not hold the long run.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis revealed the following results based on objectives.

Table 1: Primary details and Student demographics.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	92	36.8
Female	158	63.2
Transgender	250	100.0
Age		
13 -17	16	6.4
18 – 22	157	62.8
23- 27	77	30.8
Marital Status		
Married	32	12.8
Unmarried	218	87.2
Education		
Less than High School	2	.8
High School Diploma or Equivalent	7	2.8
Bachelor's Degree	145	58.0
Master's Degree	96	38.4
Occupation		
Student	180	72.0
Employed	52	20.8
Unemployed	12	4.8
Self-Employed	3	1.2
Others	3	1.2
Family Monthly Income		
Less than ₹50,000	144	57.6
₹50,001 - ₹1,00,000	52	20.8
₹1,00,001 - ₹150,000	12	4.8
₹150,001 - ₹200,000	5	2.0
Above ₹2,00,000	37	14.8
Resident Type		
Urban	146	58.4
Suburban	46	18.4
Rural	58	23.2
Aware of Digital Marketing Channels		
Fully aware	45	18.0
Aware	137	54.8
Somewhat aware	47	18.8
Neither aware or not aware	11	4.4
Fully not aware	10	4.0

Influence of Digital Marketing Platform		
Social Media (e.g., Intagram, Facebook, Watsapp, Telegram)	119	47.6
Search Engines (Google)	2	.8
Websites (Amazon, Fipkart)	65	26.0
Email Marketing Campaigns	6	2.4
Influencer Endorsement	2	.8
Youtube	8	3.2
All the above	48	19.2

Source: **Primary Data**

Table 1 displays the variables related with the adoption of Influence of Digital Marketing on buying behaviour along with demographic aspects. Further, in Table 1, the majority of the respondents gave more positive feedback than negative. This indicates that the respondents are aware of various digital marketing platforms.

Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
.712	15

 Total reliability of 15 items that includes variables for influence of Digital Marketing on the buying behaviour of Gen-Z consumer is 0.712.

Table 2: ANOVA for Age and Gen -Z Consumer Perception

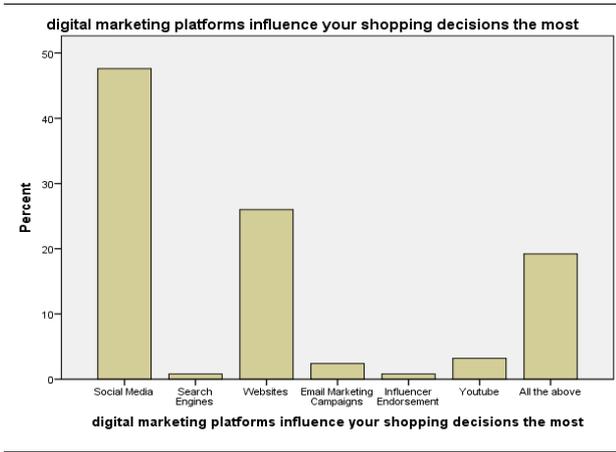| Factors	Mean	F Value	P Value
I am aware of digital marketing practices.	.164	.244	.784
I recognize how digital marketing influences my shopping behaviour.	3.691	4.892	.008
Digital marketing effectively captures my attention.	1.240	1.570	.210
I find online advertisements relevant to my interests.	3.451	3.639	.028
Online marketing campaigns influence my brand perception.	3.780	3.278	.039
I often engage with brands through social media.	6.368	7.528	.001
I compare products online before making a decision.	3.863	3.860	.022
I read online reviews before purchasing lifestyle products.	2.015	2.133	.121
Email promotions influence my purchasing behaviour.	9.235	6.540	.002
I am more likely to purchase if there is a price discount online.	1.333	1.283	.279
I am satisfied with the products I have purchased through digital platform	1.189	1.467	.233

Source: **Primary Data**

The table 2 presents the ANOVA results examine whether age has an influence on Gen-Z consumer perception of digital marketing. The significance values show that several factors have p-values less than 0.05, including: *Recognition of how digital marketing influences shopping behaviour (p = .008), Relevance of online advertisements (p = .028), Influence of online marketing campaigns on brand perception (p = .039), Engagement with brands through social media (p = .001), Comparing products online before decision-making (p = .022) and Influence of email promotions on purchasing behaviour (p = .002).*

These results indicate that, for these factors, age has a statistically significant impact on Gen-Z consumers' perceptions and behaviors related to digital marketing. Although some variables have p-values above 0.05, the presence of multiple significant factors demonstrates that age does influence consumer perception in important areas such as engagement, advertising impact, and purchasing decisions.

Therefore, the null hypothesis (H₀) — *There is no significant difference between age and Gen-Z consumer perception* — is rejected. The findings confirm that age differences within Gen-Z do play a meaningful role in shaping how they perceive and respond to digital marketing practices.

Chart 1

I read online reviews before purchasing lifestyle products.	.19 8	.20 6	.89 2
Email promotions influence my purchasing behaviour.	1.6 26	1.1 04	.34 8
I am more likely to purchase if there is a price discount online.	1.9 04	1.8 47	.13 9
I am satisfied with the products I have purchased through digital platform	1.3 99	1.7 34	.16 1
I am aware of how Artificial Intelligence is used in digital marketing	2.3 74	2.0 98	.10 1

Source: **Primary Data**

The ANOVA results presented in the table examine the relationship between educational qualification and Gen-Z consumer perception of digital marketing. The mean scores for all factors show generally positive perceptions toward digital marketing practices. However, the significance values (p-values) for almost all variables are greater than 0.05, indicating that there is no statistically significant difference in perceptions across different educational levels. Only one factor—"I recognize how digital marketing influences my shopping behaviour"—shows a significance value of 0.046, which is slightly below 0.05, suggesting a marginal difference for this specific item. Overall, since the majority of the factors do not show statistically significant differences, the null hypothesis (H_0) stating that *there is no significant difference between educational qualification and Gen-Z consumer perception* is accepted. This implies that Gen-Z consumers, regardless of their educational background, share similar perceptions and behaviors toward digital marketing.

The bar chart-1 illustrates the digital marketing platforms that most strongly influence consumers' shopping decisions. The data clearly shows that social media has the highest impact, with 48% nearly half of the respondents indicating it as their primary source of influence. Websites also play a notable role, attracting a considerable portion of users 26% who rely on them for information before making purchases. A smaller yet meaningful group reported being influenced by YouTube and email marketing campaigns. Very few respondents depend on search engines or influencer endorsements alone. Additionally, a significant share 20% selected "All the above," suggesting that many consumers are influenced by a combination of multiple digital platforms rather than a single source. Overall, the findings highlight that social media remains the dominant force shaping online shopping choices, supported by contributions from other digital channels.

Table 3: ANOVA for Educational Qualification and Gen -Z Consumer Perception

Factors	Me an	F Val ue	P Val ue
I am aware of digital marketing practices.	1.3 92	2.1 03	.10 0
I recognize how digital marketing influences my shopping behaviour.	2.0 67	2.7 12	.04 6
Digital marketing effectively captures my attention.	1.5 74	2.0 07	.11 4
I find online advertisements relevant to my interests.	1.6 74	1.7 44	.15 9
Online marketing campaigns influence my brand perception.	.89 0	.75 6	.52 0
I often engage with brands through social media.	1.4 34	1.6 23	.18 4
I compare products online before making a decision.	.55 7	.54 1	.65 5

Table 4: ANOVA for Age and Gen -Z Consumer Digital Marketing Exposure

Factors	M ea n	F Valu e	P Valu e
Familiar are you with Digital Marketing Channels	2.133	2.507	.084
Digital marketing platforms influence your shopping decisions the most	17.649	3.364	.036
Internet Usage Frequency	1.603	1.332	.266
Digital advertisements on social media	1.552	1.768	.173
Preferred Shopping Method	3.346	9.011	.000

Source: **Primary Data**

The ANOVA results reveal that age has a selective influence on Gen-Z consumers' exposure to and interaction with digital marketing. The findings indicate a statistically significant difference in how digital marketing platforms affect shopping decisions (F = 3.364, p = .036) and in preferred shopping methods (F = 9.011, p = .000) across different age groups within Gen-Z. This suggests that even within the same generational cohort, age variations contribute to differences in purchasing behavior and platform preference. However, age does not significantly affect familiarity with digital marketing channels, internet usage frequency, the impact of digital advertisements on social media, or the factors influencing online purchase decisions, as their p-values exceed the 0.05 significance level. Although awareness of AI applications for online purchasing and familiarity with digital marketing channels show values close to significance, they do not demonstrate strong statistical evidence of age-based differences. Overall, the analysis suggests that while general digital exposure remains consistent among Gen-Z consumers, age plays a meaningful role in shaping their shopping preferences and the influence of digital marketing platforms on their buying decisions.

Table 5: ANOVA for Educational Qualification and Gen -Z Consumer Digital Marketing Exposure

Factors	Mean	F Value	P Value
Familiar are you with Digital Marketing Channels	6.113	7.672	.000
Digital marketing platforms influence your shopping decisions the most	3.881	.723	.539
Internet Usage Frequency	3.516	2.984	.032
Digital advertisements on social media	.568	.640	.590
Preferred Shopping Method	.570	1.4550	.229
What factors influence your decision to purchase products online	.864	.161	.922
What are the AI apps you aware for online purchase	3.712	1.101	.349

Source: **Primary Data**

The ANOVA analysis examining educational qualification and Gen-Z consumers' digital marketing exposure indicates that education level significantly influences certain aspects of digital engagement. A statistically significant difference is observed in familiarity with digital marketing channels (F = 7.672, p

= .000), suggesting that respondents with different educational backgrounds vary notably in their awareness and understanding of digital marketing platforms. Additionally, internet usage frequency (F = 2.984, p = .032) also shows a significant difference across educational groups, implying that higher or differing educational attainment may be associated with variations in online activity levels. However, no significant differences are found in the influence of digital marketing platforms on shopping decisions, the impact of social media advertisements, preferred shopping methods, factors affecting online purchase decisions, or awareness of AI applications for online shopping, as their p-values exceed the 0.05 threshold. Overall, the findings suggest that while educational qualification plays an important role in shaping digital familiarity and internet usage patterns among Gen-Z consumers, it does not substantially alter their shopping preferences or responsiveness to digital marketing influences.

Major Findings

➢ The majority of respondents (49.6%) use the internet between 1–3 hours per day.

➢ 47.6% of participants often see digital advertisements on social media.

➢ The majority (42.4%) were neutral about making purchases after seeing online promotions.

➢ A large majority (76.8%) prefer a combination of online and in-store shopping as their preferred mode of shopping.

➢ Among respondents, 26.8% shop online once a month.

➢ Most respondents (52.8%) chose online price comparison as the influencing factor for online purchase decisions.

➢ 56% of respondents always compare prices or read reviews before buying online.

➢ 58.4% admitted to purchasing products based on a social media influencer's recommendation, highlighting influencers' strong effect on consumer behavior.

➢ Clothing (53.6%) is the most preferred category for online purchases.

➢ The majority of respondents (35.6%) chose Amazon as the most visited store for online purchases.

➢ 34% were somewhat aware of AI in digital marketing.

➢ ChatGPT is the most recognized AI app (66%) for online purchases.

Suggestions

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to help Gen-Z consumers in Cuddalore enjoy a safer and more satisfactory online shopping experience:

1. Before making any online purchase or payment, consumers should verify that their internet

connection is safe and stable to avoid interruptions, failed transactions, or security risks.

2. Reading product ratings and reviews posted by previous buyers can provide valuable information about the product's quality, durability, and actual performance.

3. Opting for well-known and credible online shopping sites can reduce the chances of encountering fake products, misleading sellers, or fraudulent activities.

4. Customers should validate the authenticity of discounts, promotional deals, and advertisements to protect themselves from misleading or exaggerated marketing claims.

5. It is important for buyers to cross-check the product received with the online description, particularly in terms of quality, specifications, and overall condition.

6. Whenever possible, customers may select secure payment options such as Cash-on-Delivery (COD) or verified digital payment gateways to minimize financial risks.

7. Since Gen-Z in Cuddalore actively uses platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, and Instagram, businesses should prioritize these channels for digital promotions to effectively engage and influence young consumers.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study reveal that Gen-Z consumers in Cuddalore show a strong preference for modern digital marketing channels, particularly websites and social media platforms. They perceive online shopping as more convenient and time-efficient than visiting physical stores. Most respondents also expressed confidence in the safety of online payment systems. Attractive digital offers such as discounts, cashbacks, and vouchers significantly motivate their purchase decisions. Additionally, round-the-clock accessibility, detailed product information, and reliable delivery services further enhance their online shopping experience. Overall, the study concludes that digital marketing plays a major role in shaping the buying behaviour of Gen-Z consumers in Cuddalore, influencing both their product choices and purchasing patterns.

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