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## FOOTWEAR PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR IN INDIA: A GENDER ANALYSIS OF GENERATION Z

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**Abstract:** With the exponentially rising affluent middle-class income category urban Indians, the lifestyle of the people has seen a significant change since the last decade. The role of brands tends to play a much influencing role in today's generation especially for this category of people to suit themselves with the urban social life. The people belonging to Generation Z are witnessed to be a large chunk of consumers in India who behave extremely different from generation X and Y thereby calling in for a pressing need to analyse their behaviour across genders. The present study aims to evaluate the difference in footwear purchasing behaviour of generation Z Indians across males and females and also check the role of sales promotion when it comes to purchasing of branded footwear from branded outlets. The data is collected from 385 respondents from different parts of the country and the difference in behaviour is further analyzed with the help of Levene's test of homogeneity, independent t-test and Cohen's d. The study interprets certain distinct findings like women being more involved in short term buying behaviour as in comparison to men, the stronger influence of sales promotion over tools upon women than men and such others.

**Index Terms:** Generation Z, Sales Promotion, Footwear, Retail, India.

### INTRODUCTION:

The retail sector of India is facing rapid growth with the exponential increase of the middle-class section with their rising disposable income. (Singh & Mishra, 2008) discusses that being a country of growing consumerism and a competitive arena, India is a land with huge potential. This potentiality of a huge basket of consumers has induced many foreign companies to enter India and work in parallel to the various domestic firms across all the product lines. One of such categories that deeply calls in for extensive research is the footwear section of the Indian retail. It can be witnessed that from a report by Statista that the revenue earned from the Indian footwear market amounts to US\$7,923 million in 2020 which is expected to grow by 9.6% per annum (CAGR 2020-2025) (Footwear India, n.d.) thereby making it an area of significant importance. The present study primarily hoops into the difference in the footwear purchasing behaviour of the Indians across different genders and is checked how influencing is the role of sales promotion when it comes to popular branded footwear. It has been reported earlier by different authors that there has been a substantial difference in male and female shopping behaviour (Janson, 2016). In a work by (Shannon, 2004), it further was analyzed that the shopping behaviour of the males shall experience a tremendous change with the advent of large scale stores and other methods for convenience shopping thereby creating a differential attitude from that of the females. In the present context, the primary thrust area of the study is to evaluate the behaviour of India's Generation Z. Generation Z, being a population of 372 million in India (It's time, Gen Z is ready to rule the world, 2020) calls in for a pressing need to analyse their behaviour as this is the generation that can build and break stereotypes.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

As goes the popular saying 'Men Buy and Women Shop', it draws a line of distinction between males and females. As per numerous prior works, this distinction has been verified as well. In one of the works by (Brown, Pope, & Voges, 2003), it is summarized that women be more inclined towards online shopping as a comparison to men. Similarly, (Cleveland, Babin, Laroche, & Ward, 2003) and (Meyers-Levy & Sternthal, 1991) stated that women customers prefer making detailed choices as in comparison to men while purchasing. Catalysts like cultural factors, economic factors, social factors etc. have the potentiality to draw a line of distinction between males and females especially in an extensively diverse country like India.

(Zurawski, 2011) defined the concept of shopping as a "socio-cultural practice" and has equally focused on consumption and consumer surveillance as a part of shopping. (Gehrt, Onzo, Fujita, & Rajan, 2007) subdivided the idea of shopping as a brand browser and prize browser segment, along with several efforts that were made to covert the browser into a buyer. (Ho, Ong, & Lee, 1997) explained in their research that multiculturalism often poses a challenge to the marketers of different products and services. (Gilberton, 2014) point out the new Indian middle class that considers important marketing attention in the last two decades and highlights how significant it is to focus on their behavioural traits.

This category of customers is often witnessed as being influenced by the various promotional tools and techniques offered by marketers. One of the popular methods of the promotion mix, in the referred context, is sales promotion. (Familmaleki, Aghighi, & Hamidi, 2015) defines sales promotion as a short-term strategy of the marketers that helps in increasing the profits by inducing sales with a higher degree of demand. In another work by (Chandon, Wansink, & Laurent, 2000), the authors testify that sales promotion works more efficiently when it comes to utilitarian products. In the present study, footwear being a utilitarian retail product, thereby makes it evidential to be roped with a sales promotional tool for quicker sales and profits. Retailing can be defined as the process of selling consumer goods to the public to earn profits and uses different channels of distribution. (Bhandari, 1956), in his work extended the definition of retail trade as a single and continuous process of production and distribution. It further stated its primary motto to be a maximization of material satisfaction. While considering the Indian scenario (Goetz & Swaminathan, 2007) portray that the presence of big-box chains, inefficient logistics, and transportation technology creates greater scope for a middleman. (Singh & Mishra, 2008) explained that the Indian retail market considers as potential goldmine land which attracts large no. of a giant international trader and predicted that by 2025 India became the fifth largest consumer market.

Speaking about the growth potentiality of the Indian retail market, it is to be mentioned that it is generation Z that holds the power to influence the growth of the market concerned. To be more specific about the definition of generation Z, the opinion of (Gaidhani, Arora, & Sharma, 2019) can be considered where it is stated that people born from 1995 to 2014. They further reported that this generation has a whole new approach towards life and is poles apart from that of generation X and Y and with its exponentially rising population, it is very important for the companies to analyse and understand their behaviour for successful growth in the future.

#### **WORKING DEFINITIONS:**

For smooth conduction and clear insights into the study, three working definitions have been formulated by the researcher. They are-

1. **Generation Z:** Generation Z, in the present context, refers to the people belonging to the age group of 5 to 26 years of age i.e. people born between 1994-2015.
2. **Footwear:** Footwear refers to any wearing apparel that is intended towards protecting the human feet from any environmental adversities.
3. **Sales Promotion:** Sales promotion primarily refers to the time-bound promotional techniques by the marketer with the intension of boosting the sales figures in the short run.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

The study primarily focuses on the following objectives-

1. To study the difference in the in-store footwear buying behaviour between the Indian male and female generation Z.
2. To study the attitudinal difference towards branded footwear between the Indian male and female generation Z when exposed to in-store sales promotional offers.

#### **RESEARCH GAP:**

After an extensive literature review, the researcher finds out that though there are substantial researches conducted in the sphere of retail trade, a very limited number of works have been conducted to bridge the gap between footwear retailing and consumer behaviour. Additionally, the researcher did not come across any work that was conducted on the footwear buying behaviour of the Indian generation Z. Though there were certain works done on footwear retailing at the regional level, a national level study was found to be missing that specifically focused on the generation Z inclined towards footwear purchase behaviour.

#### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:**

With the sky-rocketing customer base of generation Z in present-day India almost across all segments, it is very important to study how this cluster of consumers behave and respond. The present study ponders primarily upon how the male and female generation Z of India differ in their footwear purchasing behaviour. With no such prior research on the overall Indian millennial footwear purchase behaviour, the present study tends to be of significant importance that would pose itself to be an ice-breaking attempt to venture into bridging the gap between the three non-connected pillars viz. Consumer Behaviour, Footwear Retailing and Generation Z. The study would also practically implicate the marketers to get better insights into the behavioural trend and thereby make effective marketing communications to reap the best out of them.

#### **HYPOTHESIS:**

To gain deeper insights into the subject, two null hypotheses and two alternate hypotheses have been formed by the researcher viz.-

1. H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant statistical difference in the footwear purchase behaviour between the male and female generation Z when exposed to sales promotional offers.
2. H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant statistical difference in the attitude towards branded footwear between the male and female generation Z when exposed to sales promotional offers.

**METHODOLOGY:**

The present study is based on a quasi-experimental research design which is exploratory that aims to investigate the difference in behaviour between the Indian male and female generation Z. The generation Z focused in the present study, however, belongs to the lower and upper-middle-class category as defined by the World Bank who falls under the family income group of Rs 70,135/- per annum to Rs 8,45,955/- per annum (Mallapur, 2020). As another significant consideration, primarily for establishing homogeneity in the maturity level, the researcher targeted respondents falling within the age group of 17-23 years. Primary data was collected from respondents residing in different parts of India using the snowball method of data collection. 15 out of 29 states and 7 union territories were chosen as contact zones from the country wherefrom the snowballing was generated to fill the respective quota for each of the selected zone. With 95% confidence level, 5% margin of error and 50% population proportion, the required sample size determined at 385 for unknown population size (Sample Size Calculator, 2020). To test the hypotheses formulated for the present study, independent t-tests were performed. To get deeper insights into the first set of hypotheses, two aspects were taken into consideration viz. the role of promotional offers in the purchase behaviour and importance of sales promotion over other forms of promotional measures. Subsequently, for the second set of hypotheses three aspects were evaluated viz. attitude towards branded footwear, preference towards branded outlets and brand switching when exposed to better sales promotional tools. It is also noteworthy that both the male and female distributions were normal enough to proceed with the independent t-test i.e. skew < |2.0| and Kurtosis < |9.0| (Schmider, Ziegler, Danay, Beyer, & Buhner, 2010) Furthermore, Levene's F test was used to check the assumptions of homogeneity of the variances. Cohen's d was also estimated using the formula  $2t / \sqrt{df}$  in order to determine the effect size of each aspect evaluated based on the Cohen's guidelines (Cohen, 1992).

**ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

On an analysis of the data collected from respondents spread across 15 different states of India with responses from 192 males and 193 females belonging to the age group of 17 years to 23 years, it was observed that there is a significant statistical difference in the way the male and female generation Z behave and perform when it comes to footwear which has been described in the following way-

Table 1: Group Statistics

	Gender of the Respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
How frequently do you purchase footwears	Female	192	3.46	1.432	.103
	Male	193	3.28	1.385	.100
Promotional offers play a very important role for purchasing footwear	Female	192	3.375	1.2172	.0878
	Male	193	3.332	1.1105	.0799
Sales Promotional Offers are better than any other offers	Female	192	2.03	.926	.067
	Male	193	2.08	.952	.068
I prefer purchasing footwears from popular brands	Female	192	3.859	1.1739	.0847
	Male	193	3.394	1.1904	.0857
I prefer purchasing footwear from branded outlets only	Female	192	3.354	1.3103	.0946
	Male	193	2.959	1.1763	.0847
With Better Sales Promotional Offers, I can switch footwear brands	Female	192	3.349	1.3097	.0945
	Male	193	2.964	1.1743	.0845

Table 2: Independent t-test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
How frequently do you purchase footwears	Equal variances assumed	2.738	.099	1.289	383	.198	.185	.144	.467	.097
	Equal variances not assumed			1.289	382.690	.198	.185	.144	.467	.097
Promotional offers play a very important role for purchasing footwear	Equal variances assumed	2.607	.107	.365	383	.715	.0434	.1187	-.1901	.2769
	Equal variances not assumed			.365	379.451	.715	.0434	.1188	-.1901	.2769
Sales Promotional Offers are better than any other offers	Equal variances assumed	.891	.346	-.486	383	.628	-.046	.096	-.235	.142
	Equal variances not assumed			-.486	382.817	.628	-.046	.096	-.235	.142
I prefer purchasing footwears from popular brands	Equal variances assumed	.218	.641	3.864	383	.000	.4656	.1205	.2287	.7025
	Equal variances not assumed			3.864	382.971	.000	.4656	.1205	.2287	.7025
I prefer purchasing footwear from branded outlets only	Equal variances assumed	8.412	.004	3.118	383	.002	.3956	.1269	.1461	.6451
	Equal variances not assumed			3.117	378.202	.002	.3956	.1269	.1460	.6452
With Better Sales Promotional Offers, I can switch footwear brands	Equal variances assumed	8.699	.003	3.039	383	.003	.3852	.1268	.1360	.6345
	Equal variances not assumed			3.038	378.095	.003	.3852	.1268	.1359	.6345

The female group of Indian generation Z (N=192) is seen to be associated with a footwear purchase frequency M=3.46 (SD=1.432). By comparison, the male group of Indian generation Z (N=193) is associated with a numerically smaller footwear purchase frequency M=3.28 (SD=1.385). Furthermore, using the Levene's F test, the assumption of homogeneity is verified with  $F(383)=2.739$ ,  $p=.099$ . The independent t-test is also associated with a statistically significant effect,  $t(383)=-1.289$ ,  $p=.198$ . However, Cohen's d is estimated at 0.13 which interprets the effect size to be a small nature. Thus, it can be deciphered that though the Indian female generation Z are associated with statistically a larger footwear purchase frequency than the Indian male generation Z yet this difference is of a small effect.

Focusing on the first set of hypotheses, it is observed that the female group tends to be associated with consideration of promotional offers as a factor influencing purchase behaviour with M=3.375 (SD=1.2172). However, the male group is associated with M=3.332 (SD=1.1105) which is a numerically smaller inclination towards promotional offers. On the other hand, investigating into the second aspect i.e. preference of sales promotional offers over other tools, it is observed that the female group has a larger mean size of 2.08 and standard deviation of .952 as in comparison to the male group with a mean size of 2.03 and standard deviation of .926. Furthermore, using the Levene's F test, the assumption of homogeneity is verified for the first aspect with  $F(383)=2.607$ ,  $p=.107$  and for the second aspect with  $F(383)=.891$ ,  $p=.346$ . The independent t-test also depicts a statistically significant effect,  $t(383)=.365$ ,  $p=.715$  in the case for the role of sales promotion to influence purchase behaviour and  $t(383)=-.486$ ,  $p=.628$  in the preference of sales promotional offers over other promotional tools. With Cohen's d estimated at 0.03 and 0.04 respectively, it interprets the effect size to be small. Thus, it can be interpreted based on the aspects considered that though the Indian female generation Z are associated with statistically a larger inclination towards sales promotional offers than the Indian male generation Z yet this difference is of a small effect which leads us to accept the alternate hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis.

Finally, focusing on the final set of hypotheses i.e. to evaluate the difference in attitude towards branded footwear accessed on the grounds of preference towards popular brands with M=3.5859 (SD=1.1739) within males and M= 3.394 (SD=1.1904) within females; inclination towards branded footwear outlets with M=3.354 (SD=1.3103) within the male group and M=2.959 (SD=1.1763) within the females; and brand switching when exposed to better sales promotional offers with M=3.349 (SD=1.3097) within the former category and M=2.964 (SD=1.1743) within the latter, it has been observed that the female group is associated with a numerically larger inclination towards branded footwear. Furthermore, using the Levene's F test, the assumption of homogeneity is verified for the first aspect with  $F(383)=.218$ ,  $p=.641$ ; for the second aspect with  $F(383)=8.412$ ,  $p=.004$  and for the third aspect with  $F(383)=8.699$ ,  $p=.003$ . The independent t-test also depicts a statistically significant effect,  $t(383)=3.864$ ,  $p=.000$  in the case preference towards popular brands;  $t(383)=3.118$ ,  $p=.002$  in the preference towards branded outlets and  $t(383)=3.039$ ,  $p=.003$  when it comes to brand switching when exposed to better promotional offers. With Cohen's d estimated at 0.39, 0.31 and 0.31 respectively for all the three cases, it interprets the effect size to be medium. Thus, it can be interpreted based on the aspects considered that the Indian female generation Z are associated with statistically a larger inclination towards branded footwear with a medium-sized effect than the Indian male generation Z which leads us to accept the alternate hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis.



**FINDINGS:**

The study tends to draw attention towards the footwear purchasing behaviour of the Indian generation Z spread across the family income group of Rs 70,135/- per annum to Rs 8,45,955/- per annum (Mallapur, 2020) as stated by the World Bank. Pondering primarily upon the difference in purchase behaviour between males and females, the study focused on the aspects of sales promotion and its influence in the purchase decision and how it impacts the branded footwear choice. With the tests being conducted, it was found that the Indian female generation Z purchase footwear more frequently as in comparison to its counterpart which indicates that either the females are more trend-conscious or less quality-conscious thereby indulging them to buy more frequently as in comparison to the males. Even though the difference between the comparison group is of small effect size, it tends to reveal various other queries as well. After testing the proposed set of hypotheses, the study revealed that the impact of sales promotion is more on the female generation Z than the males. Additionally, they tend to be inclined more towards sales promotional tools rather than other promotional measures which indicates that the female group are more interested in short term purchase behaviour. This can also be interlinked with the phenomenon that as their footwear purchase frequency of the female group is on a greater scale, they prefer offers that are time-bound so that the new trends in footwear can be experienced. It was also found that the female generation Z are more preferable towards branded footwear. They choose to purchase preferably from branded outlets only to which in comparison the males tend to exhibit lesser preference. The point to be focused here is that the effect size of the difference between both the groups is neither large nor small. It tends to exhibit a medium effect as per Cohen's guidelines (Cohen, 1992).

Considering the findings, it can be well interpreted that the assumption of being less-quality conscious be discarded. The female generation Z involve in a higher footwear purchase frequency displaying better quality conscious characteristics preferring popular brands only; being much influenced by the various sales promotional techniques. On the other hand, with a small effect size in the difference of behaviour the male generation Z of India tend to be involved in lesser footwear purchase frequency who exhibit an indifferent attitude towards popular brands and sales promotional tools which deciphers that for them, footwear is more like a need than a style statement.

**FUTURE SCOPE OF RESEARCH:**

The present study can be considered as an ice-breaking attempt to study the behaviour of the Indian generation Z. With the ever-increasing customer base of the generation Z, it can be witnessed in the present-day Indian business scenario that almost every firm is in the urge of tapping more and more of this cluster as they tend to contribute themselves to the category of most resourceful customers. While the present research primarily studies about the difference between the male and female behaviour, it opened the gateway for future researchers to introspect into the transgender community of the generation Z. Also, only one retail category has been focused upon in the present study which enables the door open for future researchers to evaluate the other sectors as well and thereby make comparisons between them.

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