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Psychological and Sociological Drivers of Generational Differences in Online Shopping

Abstract

The growing prominence of online shopping has significantly impacted consumer behavior, with different generations demonstrating varied patterns and preferences. These generational differences can be attributed to psychological and sociological factors that influence shopping behaviors.

From a psychological perspective, generational differences in online shopping stem from varying levels of trust, comfort with technology, and digital literacy. Younger generations, such as Millennials and Generation Z, are often more tech-savvy and comfortable navigating e-commerce platforms, which influences their greater frequency of online shopping. In contrast, older generations, including Baby Boomers and Generation X, may approach online shopping with more caution, particularly due to concerns about privacy, security, and the lack of physical interaction. Furthermore, younger consumers are more inclined to engage in impulsive purchasing behavior, driven by the ease of access and frequent online promotions, while older generations may exhibit more deliberate purchasing decisions, valuing detailed product information and customer reviews.

On the sociological level, generational differences in online shopping can be linked to cultural shifts, social influences, and changes in lifestyle. Younger generations, often raised in an era of constant connectivity, view online shopping as an integral part of their social and cultural lives. Social media plays a crucial role in shaping the buying behaviors of Millennials and Gen Z, as they are more likely to make purchases based on influencer recommendations and peer reviews. In contrast, older generations tend to have a stronger attachment to traditional shopping experiences, influenced by social norms and values around in-person interactions and tactile product experiences.

Keywords: *intergenerational, online, psychological, social, technology, consumer, creative, impulsive*

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Onlayn alış-verişdə nəsillər fərqlərinin psixoloji və sosioloji amilləri

Xülasə

Onlayn alış-verişin artan nüfuzu müxtəlif nəsillər müxtəlif nümunələr və üstünlüklər nümayiş etdirərək istehlakçı davranışına əhəmiyyətli dərəcədə təsir etdi. Bu nəsillər fərqləri alış-veriş davranışlarına təsir edən psixoloji və sosioloji amillərlə əlaqələndirilə bilər.

Psixoloji nöqteyi-nəzərdən onlayn alış-verişdə nəsillər fərqləri müxtəlif səviyyəli etibar, texnologiya ilə rahatlıq və rəqəmsal savaddan qaynaqlanır. Millennials və Generation Z kimi gənc nəsillər tez-tez texnoloji biliklərə malikdirlər və elektron ticarət platformalarında rahat naviqasiya edirlər ki, bu da onların onlayn alış-veriş tezliyinə təsir göstərir.

Bunun əksinə olaraq, Baby Boomers və Generation X daxil olmaqla yaşlı nəsillər, xüsusən də məxfilik, təhlükəsizlik və fiziki qarşılıqlı əlaqənin olmaması ilə bağlı narahatlıqlar səbəbindən onlayn alış-verişə daha ehtiyatla yanaşa bilərlər. Bundan əlavə, gənc istehlakçılar, giriş asanlıqı və tez-tez onlayn təqdimatlarla idarə olunan impulsiv satınalma davranışına daha çox meyillidirlər, yaşlı nəsillər isə ətraflı məhsul məlumatlarını və müştəri rəylərini qiymətləndirərək daha düşünülmüş alış qərarları nümayiş etdirə bilərlər.

Sosioloji səviyyədə onlayn alış-verişdə nəsil fərqləri mədəni dəyişikliklər, sosial təsirlər və həyat tərzindəki dəyişikliklərlə əlaqələndirilə bilər. Tez-tez daimi əlaqə dövründə böyüyən gənc nəsillər onlayn alış-verişə sosial və mədəni həyatlarının ayrılmaz hissəsi kimi baxırlar. Sosial media Millennials və Gen Z-nin alış davranışlarının formalaşmasında mühüm rol oynayır, çünki onlar təsir edənlərin tövsiyələri və həmyaşıdların rəyləri əsasında alış-veriş etmək ehtimalı daha yüksəkdir. Bunun əksinə olaraq, yaşlı nəsillər şəxsi qarşılıqlı əlaqə və toxunma məhsul təcrübələri ətrafında sosial norma və dəyərlərdən təsirlənən ənənəvi alış-veriş təcrübələrinə daha güclü bağlılıq nümayiş etdirirlər.

Açar sözlər: *nəsillərarası, onlayn, psixoloji, sosial, texnologiya, istehlakçı, yaradıcı, impulsiv*

Introduction

The rise of online shopping has revolutionized consumer behavior across generations, with each age group exhibiting unique preferences and approaches to digital retail. These generational differences in online shopping patterns can be attributed to various psychological and sociological factors that shape how individuals interact with e-commerce platforms. Younger generations, such as Millennials and Generation Z, have grown up in a digital-first world, making them more comfortable and adept at navigating online marketplaces. In contrast, older generations, including Baby Boomers and Generation X, often approach online shopping with more caution, shaped by differing levels of technological proficiency and trust in digital platforms.

From a psychological perspective, factors like digital literacy, trust in technology, and consumer behavior play pivotal roles in these differences. Additionally, sociological influences such as cultural norms, social media trends, and changing lifestyle priorities further contribute to how different generations engage with online shopping. This divergence in online shopping habits highlights the need for businesses to adapt their marketing and sales strategies to cater to the distinct characteristics and preferences of each generational cohort. Understanding these psychological and sociological drivers is crucial for businesses seeking to effectively reach and serve consumers in today's digital economy.

Research

Online shopping has experienced exponential growth in recent years, with distinct generational cohorts showing varying preferences and behaviors. Statistical data reveals that these generational differences are influenced by several factors, including digital literacy, trust in technology, and the influence of social media (Syamsudin, Sabirin, Elliyana, 2025; Fedorko, 2022; Quetua, 2023; Novita, Lina, 2024).

1. Digital Literacy and Technological Comfort: A key factor driving generational differences in online shopping is the level of digital literacy. According to the 2021 *Statista Digital Market Outlook*, Generation Z and Millennials, who are often referred to as "digital natives," are more likely to engage in online shopping, with 93% of Gen Z and 89% of Millennials shopping online regularly. In comparison, only 60% of Baby Boomers and 68% of Generation X are consistent online shoppers. This discrepancy is largely attributed to the comfort and familiarity younger generations have with digital platforms.

2. Trust and Security Concerns: Trust in online shopping platforms and security concerns also play a significant role in shaping generational behavior. A 2020 survey conducted by *Nielsen* revealed that 78% of Gen Z and 75% of Millennials express confidence in online shopping security. In contrast, only 56% of Baby Boomers and 60% of Generation X share the same level of trust. Older consumers

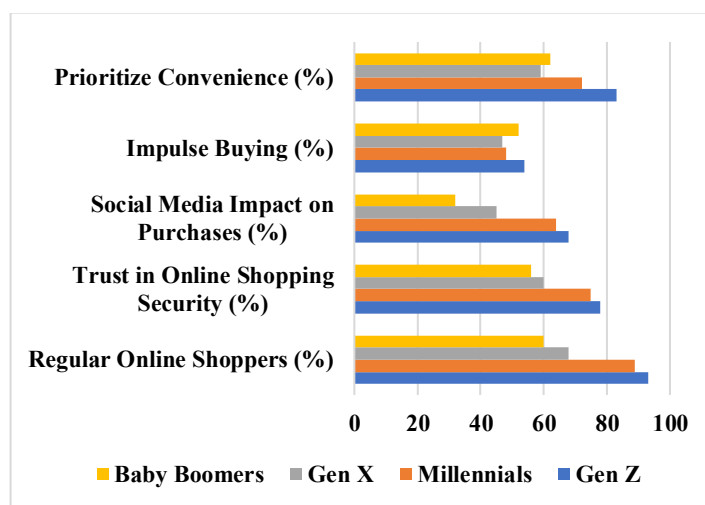
are often more cautious about making online purchases, citing concerns about data privacy, fraud, and the inability to physically inspect products.

3. Social Media Influence and Peer Recommendations: Another prominent sociological factor affecting online shopping behaviors is the influence of social media. According to a 2021 report by *GlobalWebIndex*, 68% of Gen Z and 64% of Millennials report that social media platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok, significantly impact their purchasing decisions.

4. Consumer Priorities and Purchasing Habits: Generational priorities also differ in terms of convenience, product research, and decision-making processes. Younger generations, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, prioritize convenience and speed when shopping online. A study by *McKinsey & Company* found that 83% of Gen Z consumers are attracted to online shopping because it saves time, while 72% of Millennials value the convenience of shopping from home. On the other hand, older generations tend to place more importance on the quality and details of the product, often spending more time researching items before making a purchase. A *Pew Research Center* study revealed that 62% of Baby Boomers and 59% of Generation X prefer shopping in physical stores because they enjoy the tactile experience and feel more confident in their purchases when they can see and touch the product (Singh, 2025; Journal of Social Trends & Marketing, 2022; Masters, 2024).

5. Impulse Buying and Promotional Impact: Impulse buying behaviors also differ significantly across generations. According to a 2021 report by *Adobe*, 48% of Millennials and 54% of Gen Z admit to impulse buying when shopping online, particularly during sales events such as Black Friday or Cyber Monday.

Graphic 1. Generational Differences in Online Shopping Behaviors.



Source: Statista Digital Market Outlook, 2021.

The graphic 1 presents generational differences in various aspects of online shopping behaviors. It highlights key factors such as the percentage of regular online shoppers, trust in online shopping security, the influence of social media on purchasing decisions, impulse buying tendencies, and the importance of convenience (Catană, 2025; Helmi, Suherman, Zusnita, 2025; Henderson, et al., 2024; Theocharis, Tsekouropoulos, 2025; Nwobodo, 2024).

Younger generations, particularly Gen Z and Millennials, demonstrate higher engagement in online shopping, with a significant portion considering convenience as a primary factor. These generations also show a stronger influence of social media on their purchasing choices and higher rates of impulse buying compared to older generations. Gen X and Baby Boomers, on the other hand, exhibit lower percentages in these areas, reflecting more cautious and planned purchasing behaviors. Additionally, while younger consumers are more trusting of online security, older generations tend to have more reservations about privacy and security issues in online transactions.

Conclusion

The analysis of generational differences in online shopping reveals distinct psychological and sociological drivers that influence purchasing behaviors. Younger generations, such as Gen Z and Millennials, are more comfortable with technology and exhibit higher levels of trust in online shopping platforms. Their shopping behavior is heavily influenced by social media and often includes impulse buying due to the convenience and immediate gratification provided by digital platforms. These generational cohorts prioritize convenience, time-saving, and seamless digital experiences, making them more likely to engage in frequent online shopping.

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