

EFFECTS OF THE COVID- 19 PANDEMIC ON GENERATION Z CONSUMER BEHAVIOR: A SCOPING REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Background: Gen Z is a generation born between 1995 and 2010 (Yu, 2020). Gen Z is also known as digital natives (Merriman, 2020) or iGeneration, the literate generation of information technology. Gen Z is a generation that cares deeply about health problems, environmental issues, and social issues (Suryadi et al., 2021). Globally, 2.54 billion people make up Gen Z and their buying power is estimated to be \$44 billion (Ahmed, 2019). Due to Covid-19, the consumer behavior of Gen Z has been affected. Socioeconomic changes due to this pandemic have also changed consumer purchasing behavior, consumer product choices, and the reasons consumers choose products (Suryadi et al., 2021). This scoping review identifies, examines, and synthesizes the literature describing characteristics of Gen Z as consumers, how Covid-19 affects Gen Z consumer behavior, and any implications the change in consumer behavior of Gen Z may have on businesses and managers.

Methods: Peer-reviewed literature was searched via ProQuest, EBSCOHost, and Google Scholar dated 2012 to 2022. Only articles written in English were included. International and domestic articles were included. Articles that addressed Gen Z's consumer behavior regarding the Covid-19 pandemic in alignment with the research questions comprised this scoping review. All data was collected, charted, analyzed, and evaluated. This data was then summarized and reported. The research questions include: Who is Gen Z as consumers? How has Covid-19 affected Gen Z consumer behavior? What are the implications for businesses and managers?

Results: Of the 1,445 articles found, 102 of them met the desired criteria. Topics identified in the studies were on Gen Z in relation to consumer behavior, traits, Covid-19, technology, social media, online e-commerce, relationship marketing, customer loyalty, mobile shopping, sustainability, retailer preferences, and past epidemics.

Conclusions: Retailers should adapt to the wants and needs of Gen Z. Gen Z has high expectations when it comes to shopping online. They are heavy online shoppers, and their lack of shopping in-store during the pandemic was not a significant change. Incorporating technology, having accessible products, and offering real human interaction virtually, rather than bots, are a few suggestions for retailers to adopt. Gen Z wants to feel as if they are getting an experience. Companies should be aware of the effects of Covid-19 on Gen Z. Gen Z is concerned with health, future career opportunities, social interactions such as gender equality, and environmental issues such as climate change, pollution, and global warming. Since Gen Z favors green products and sustainability, retailers should make efforts to offer these types of incentives. During the pandemic, Gen Z has adopted online applications pertaining to self-development such as health and fitness. They began to purchase in bulk as well as generic brands to save money. Due to the increase in online activity, product information search and online commerce grew; therefore, forcing retailers to provide extensive information online. Gen Z are influencers and have an impact over their family and friends in terms of advice on what to purchase; therefore, family and friend referrals could increase sales for businesses. Gen Z establish brand identity through product attributes like aesthetics, personal tastes and style, pleasure, happiness, or individuality; therefore, retailers can take advantage of these preferences by creating unique applications that tailor to their individual needs. Changes in buying behavior could remain well after the pandemic for Gen Z, as Gen Z was prone to online shopping before the pandemic. Retailers should seek out opinions and listen to Gen Z's concerns, help improve customer experience, and enable smart technology. Gen Z are looking to be addressed with honesty, transparency, and feedback. For businesses to be competitive, they must adapt quickly to Gen Z consumer preferences, which is possible with extensive knowledge of consumer requirements and buying behavior.