

Gen Z Attitude and Its Factors towards Social Media Advertisements

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ABSTRACT

With the radical growth of technology and the Internet of Things, social media sites rose as an essential tool in promoting products and services. The intergenerational cohorts are also rapidly growing in the e-business limelight. Various studies targeted millennial consumers and less on Gen Z. Thus, this paper will determine the factors influencing Gen Z's attitude towards social media advertisement. The study is descriptive-causal, and to determine the 297 respondents as samples, the stratified sampling technique was used. The findings revealed that perceived usefulness and reliability have a positive effect on Gen Z's attitude towards social media ads. Word-of-mouth is found to be an insignificant factor. Marketers should consider these results to receive a favorable response in online advertisements.

Key Words: Gen Z; social media attitude; perceived usefulness; reliability; word-of-mouth

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, social networking sites are the primary choice for marketing as they already have a massive user base and rich market insight which can be exploited for commercial purposes (Eid et al, 2020; Mogaji & Farinloye, 2019), they serve as an effective medium to advertise products and promote brands (Thao & Anh, 2020). Social networking sites changed consumers' lifestyles (Ahmad & Khan, 2017) and brand engagement with the consumer (Mogaji & Farinloye, 2019). Consumers today want to be more informed about the product before they make a purchase (Eid et al., 2020). They are into collective decisions through internal non-marketing groups by placing product information in connected loop networks (Shareef et al., 2019). They have the power to talk back to the brand and broadcast their opinions of the brand. They trust their peers' opinions more than marketing strategists (Le & Wang 2020; Dhingra, Mudgal, & Dhingra, 2020). Therefore, marketers have no choice but to treat them differently and with greater respect. Businesses must be aware of consumers' attitudes and behaviors on social media sites, as these play a major role in the effectiveness of online advertising campaigns (Shareef et al., 2019; Ahmad & Khan, 2017), affecting the buying intention of the consumer.

Today, the largest consumers dominating the market are members of Gen Z (Tunsakul, 2020). They are the young adults and the true digital natives (Priporas et al., 2017), the first generation born in the digital world. They comprise 50% of the global consumers (Madrigal Moreno, et al., 2017) and have become one of the largest generational cohorts (Weber, 2017). They are different from earlier generations. Gen Z is a hypercognitive generation, they collect many sources of information and integrate it into virtual and online experiences. They value individual expressions and understand the different truths. They also have the ability to influence purchase intention across all ages and behave differently from earlier generations which highly affects consumer behavior patterns (Priporas et al, 2017). Gen Z represents 40% of the consumer purchasing power. Sooner or later, Gen Z will dominate the market.

Generation Z (Gen Z) is born after 1994 (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). This group is distinct from previous generations due to their early and pervasive access to the Internet. Gen Z has grown up in a digital world where technology is an integral part of their daily lives. This generation is known for being tech-savvy, adaptable, innovative, and highly influenced by social media. According to research conducted by Williams, Page, Petrosky, and Hernandez in 2010, Gen Z is particularly adept at utilizing technology to their advantage. Generation Z (Gen Z) consumers have become an attractive prospect for retailers worldwide due to their growing numbers and dominance in global markets (Tunsakul, 2018). According to previous studies, Gen Z is identified as the largest online customer (Priporas, Stylos, & Fotiadis, 2017) and shows less loyalty to specific brands. It is not easy to grab and hold their attention (Priporas et al., 2017). Simangunsong (2018) noted that Generation Z shoppers have different behaviours compared to other generations. Moreover, this generation is a consumptive buyer that tends to immediately spend the money if he or she has a desire for a particular product.

Despite these facts, very few studies have been conducted to understand Gen Z's attitude towards social media advertisements. Understanding generational attitudes in social media advertisements will help business owners, and decision-makers create a superior and effective advertisement (Thao & Anh, 2020; Eid et al., 2020) in today's digital age that has a positive effect on purchase intention (Lestari, 2018).

This study attempts to study the underlying attitudes of Gen Z consumers towards social media advertisements. The study hopes to give value to e-commerce businesses to formulate online strategies to motivate Gen Z consumers. Furthermore, the research implications will add to the body of academic knowledge concerning business management and marketing fields of study. Analysing their attitudes on social media advertisement will help management lay out plans to capture this generation to initiate purchase intention.

Literature Review

Social media advertising is rapidly growing each day and companies of all sizes are taking advantage of it (Dhingra, Mudgal, & Dhingra, 2020). Duffet (2017) found that advertising on social media had a favorable impact on cognitive (awareness, knowledge); affective (liking, preference), and; behavioral (intention-to-purchase, purchase) components. It can influence customers' attitudes, decision-making, and purchase intention. It also provides the managers the opportunity to have conversations with the users to promote their products (Kyriakopoulou & Kitsios, 2017). Cheung, Pires, Rosenberger, Leung, and Ting (2020) investigated the role of social media marketing in value co-creation and engagement among smartphone users in China and Hong Kong. The study revealed that social media marketing is effective in building value co-creation, engagement, repurchase intention, and future behavior. De Pelsmacker, van Tilburgh, and Holthof (2018) found that digital marketing strategies have a direct effect on online reviews and indirectly affect hotel performance. Wang and Kim (2017) examined the influence of social media marketing in increasing customer relationship capability and firm performance. The results show that the use of social media moderates the relationship between customer relationship capability and firm performance.

Although social media advertising has been rapidly growing and gaining popularity, there is a lack of theoretical and empirical understanding regarding its effectiveness and impact on consumer behavior, (Johnston et al., 2018). To fully benefit from the potential of social media as an advertising channel, marketers must fully examine and understand the unique characteristics and attitudes of consumers across all generations (Gaber, Wright, & Kooli, 2019). For the past years, many studies have been conducted to understand and determine the factors that influence social media advertising (Syed Hassam, Hassan, & Bahtiar 2017; Ratham et al., 2017; Syed Hassam, Hassan, & Bahtiar 2017; Souiden, Chtourou, & Korai, 2017; Shareef et al., 2018; Lim, Radzol, Cheah & Wong 2017; Shareef et al., 2018; Bruntha et al., 2019; Shareef et al., 2019; Gaber, Wright, & Kooli, 2019; Debashish et al., 2019; Arora & Agarwal, 2019; Keller & Vellayil, 2020; Thao & Anh 2020; Eid et al., 2020; Le & Wang, 2020). However, very little literature was conducted to determine the attitudes of Gen Z in social media advertisements. According to Ahmand and Khan 2017, several factors play an important role in influencing the attitudes of consumers towards social media advertising.

Perceived Usefulness

Perceived usefulness is an independent construct recognized in the technology acceptance model (TAM) (Milaković et al., 2020), which represents a direct predictor of behavioral intention of technology usage (Abdullah, Bakar, Hamid & Razak, 2016). Moreover, according to Jin et al. (2014), the concept of perceived usefulness refers to the user's understanding of how a website or social network can offer benefits, effectiveness, and advantages. This understanding is pivotal in shaping the user's perception of the value and relevance of the platform in question and can significantly impact user engagement and satisfaction.

Perceived usefulness has a positive relationship with customers' attitudes towards social network advertising (Dhingra, Mudgal, & Dhingra, 2020; Ahmad & Khan, 2017). Gen Z consumers are realistic. They are more concerned with the benefits of a product or service (Lestari, 2018). According to Keller & Vellayil, (2020), consumers show a positive attitude towards advertising if they can learn about new products, product benefits, and comparative information from other products. Consumers become more dependent on advertising and various promotional tools in seeking information that will help them in their buying decisions (Lestari, 2018; Dhingra, Mudgal, & Dhingra, 2020). The higher the perceived usefulness of social media marketing, the more positive the user attitude towards social media advertising (Thao & Anh, 2020).

H₀₁: Perceived Usefulness does not significantly influence Attitude towards social media advertisements.

Reliability

Social networking-based advertisements have become increasingly popular in recent years (Mitra & Baid, 2009) due to the widespread use of social media platforms. However, the reliability of the information in these advertisements is crucial in shaping customers' attitudes towards the products or brands being promoted. According to a study by Eid et al. in 2020, the reliability of the information provided on social networking-based advertisements affects the customer's attitude towards products or brands offered. Therefore, it is essential for companies to ensure that the information they provide in their social networking-based advertisements is accurate, reliable, and trustworthy to maintain a positive image of their products or brands among customers.

Reliability components are trustworthiness and credibility, which positively affect consumers' attitudes towards social media (Ahmad & Khan, 2017). Trustworthiness affects the attitudes towards advertising (Wang & Genç, 2019). Claims about the brand/product advertised must be truthful and believable (Arora & Agarwal, 2019). Credibility

in advertisement design is one of the important links between customers and marketers, creating trust (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Without credibility, individuals would not continue their relationships beyond a single transaction (Gaber, Wright, & Kooli, 2019).

Ho₂: Reliability does not significantly influence Attitude towards social media advertisements.

Word of Mouth Quality

Word-of-mouth or Electronic word of mouth (eWoM) refer to posting varied topics online (Shareef et al., 2019), which is taken more seriously than marketing messages (Ahman & Khan, 2017). A previous study of Trusov et al. (2009) revealed that, at an Internet-based social networking site, the employment of word-of-mouth marketing strategies provides a greater member growth rate as compared to the use of traditional marketing techniques. This effect is attributed to the duration of carryover effects and the higher response elasticities associated with word-of-mouth marketing. These findings provide valuable insights into the efficacy of word-of-mouth marketing as a powerful tool for online businesses seeking to enhance their growth prospects.

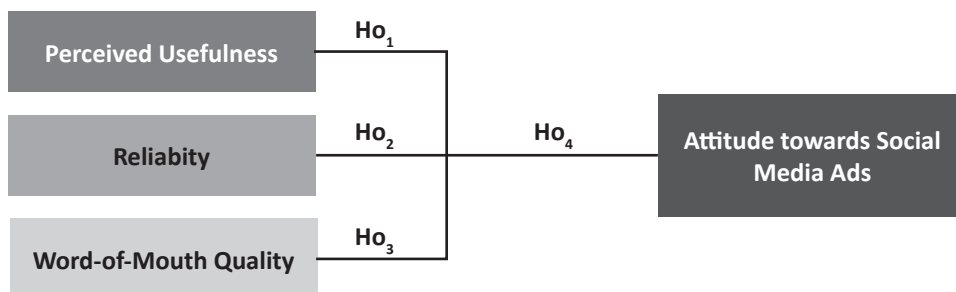
Consumers continuously search for the products' reviews before buying. Gen Z individuals tend to collect and cross reference from different sources such as peers and influencers (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Influential users post over a wide range of topics and receive a lot of audience reactions (Kumar et al., 2017). Credible social media influencers can affect consumers' attitude, opinions, beliefs, and behavior (Wang et al., 2017). According to Lim, Radzol, Cheah, & Wong (2017); Thao & Anh (2020); Ha, Huang, & Park (2019), the higher the level of involvement in social media such as comments, reviews, and feedback, the more positive the effect is on its influence on user attitudes towards social media advertising.

Ho₃: Word-of-mouth quality does not significantly influence Attitude towards social media advertisements.

Frameworks

The operational framework below consists of two categories - independent variables and dependent variable. The independent variables listed on the left column are the determinants that influence consumer attitudes towards social media advertisements. These variables are perceived usefulness, reliability, and word-of-mouth quality.

Figure 1
Operational Framework



The study in question focuses on three critical concepts that play a crucial role in shaping the perception of social media advertisement in the minds of consumers. These concepts are perceived usefulness, reliability, and word-of-mouth quality.

Perceived usefulness is a broad concept that deals with how consumers perceive value and benefits. It encompasses several critical aspects, such as, how it enhances performance, abilities, usage, and enjoyment. Reliability is another essential concept that is closely linked with perceived usefulness. It refers to how trustworthy and secure a product or service is, as well as, how credible the information or claims provided by the product or service are. Reliability is crucial for building trust and confidence in the minds of consumers and can significantly impact their decision to use or recommend a product or service. Finally, word-of-mouth quality is a concept that deals with the feedback and recommendations that consumers provide to others based on their experience with a product or service. Thus, word-of-mouth quality can be positive or negative and can have a significant impact on the reputation and success of a product or service.

The dependent variable pertains to the attitude towards social media advertisement, which is situated in the right column of the data set. This variable serves as the key parameter of interest in the study and indicates a positive (favorable) or negative (unfavorable) behavior towards the advertisement. The attitude towards social media advertisement plays a vital role in gauging the efficacy of social media advertising campaigns and can furnish invaluable insights into consumer behavior and preferences. As such, a thorough comprehension of this variable is essential in comprehensively understanding the impacts and implications of social media advertising.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher employed the descriptive-causal research method to be able to describe the characteristics of the variables (Tugade et al., 2021) and investigate the underlying cause-and-effect relationship between Generation Z's attitude toward social media advertisements and their perceived usefulness, reliability, and word-of-mouth quality. Through this method, the researcher can study the behavior or phenomena under investigation by analyzing the variables and their relationships, which also allows them to predict outcomes based on these interactions.

In determining the respondents, a stratified random sampling technique was used for different year levels of the marketing management students from the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Academic Year 2020-2021. This method involved dividing the population into distinct subgroups or strata based on their year level and then selecting participants from each stratum depending on the frequency of the total population. Slovin's formula was used to calculate the ideal sample size with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. By using this technique, the study will be able to achieve a more accurate and reliable representation of the population, which enhances the validity and generalizability of the findings.

Out of 1,148, the sample size was 297; 108 (36%) from the first year, 78 (26%) from the second year, 97 (33%) from the third year, and 14 (5%) from the fourth year. Most of the respondents were female, 70% while 30% were male. The ages are from 18-26.

The instrument was adapted from the study of Ahmad and Khan (2016) entitled "Factors Influencing Consumers' Attitudes toward Social Media Marketing" with his permission. The constructs of the instrument were adapted from different studies: four items on Attitude (adapted from Khare & Rakesh, 2011); four items on Perceived Usefulness (adapted from Childers et al., 2001); three items on Reliability (adapted from Kim, Chung, & Lee, 2011); and three items on Word-of-mouth Quality (adapted from Awad & Ragowsky, 2008).

The individual constructs have the Cronbach alpha value: for Attitude, 0.7056, which is acceptable; for Perceived Usefulness, 0.7965, acceptable; for Reliability, 0.9024, excellent; and for Word-of-mouth Quality, 0.8249, good. The overall Cronbach alpha of the instrument is 0.9173, therefore the instrument is excellent in terms of reliability.

Regression Analysis was used in this study. Regression Analysis is a widely used technique to establish the relationship between one dependent variable and one or more independent variables. The primary objective of this technique is to determine the degree of association of the independent variables with the dependent variable. It helps to understand the impact of changes in one variable on the other variable (Thomas, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1

Perceived Usefulness to Attitude towards Social Media advertisement

H_{01}	<i>p</i> value	Adj. R^2	Predictor	β	<i>p</i> value
PU – ATT	.001	0.234	Intercept	1.847	<.001
			PU1	0.162	0.002
			PU2	-0.053	0.273
			PU3	0.020	0.74
			PU4	0.289	< .001

* level of significance is <.05

* PU1 - Enhanced Performance, PU2 - Enhanced Usage, PU3 - Enjoyment, PU4-Enhanced Abilities

Table 1 shows the regression analysis of the perceived usefulness of the respondents' attitudes towards social media. It can be observed that Enhanced Performance has a *p*-value of 0.002 and Enhanced Abilities has a *p*-value of <.001, which is less than the assigned level of significance. This implies that Enhanced Performance and Abilities dimensions of Perceived Usefulness are predictors of the attitude. Enhanced Usage ($\beta = -0.053$; $p = 0.273$) and Enjoyment ($\beta = -0.020$; $p = 0.74$), on the other hand, are deemed insignificant. This negates the position of some studies stating that social media sites have caused consumers the feeling of connectedness by making connections online (Grieve et al., 2013; Bonds-Raacke & Raacke, 2010). Cho and Son (2019) stated that "consumers are more likely to perceive social commerce as easy and useful (utilitarian value) and enjoyable (hedonic value) resulting from social connections and a sense of belonging that are fundamental to the social commerce platform".

When looking at the Adjusted R^2 of the general construct, 23.4% explained and exhibited a total variation of attitude towards social media by the Perceived Usefulness (Enhanced Performance and Enhanced Abilities). The level of significance for this association is < .001, hence, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis. This conforms to the findings of the study of Dhingra, Mudgal, and Dhingra (2020), Ahmad and Khan (2017), and Ratham et al. (2017) which stated that Perceived Usefulness has a positive relationship with customers' attitudes towards social network advertising. Thao and Anh (2020) noted that the higher the perceived usefulness of consumers, the more their attitudes towards social media ads are. When met, consumers tend to engage more in online shopping. Because of these shopping experiences; it ultimately creates a positive attitude towards social media which influences their intention to repurchase online (Dharmesti et al, 2019).

Table 2

Reliability to Attitude towards Social Media advertisement

H ₀₁	p value	Adj. R ²	Predictor	β	p value
R- ATT	< .001	0.103	Intercept	2.60	<.001
			R1	0.174	0.002
			R2	0.328	0.554
			R3	0.091	0.080

*Level of significant if *p-value is <.05*

*R1-Security, R2-Trust, R3-Credibility

Regression analysis on Reliability and Attitude towards social media revealed significance along with predictor on Security ($\beta = -0.174$; $p = 0.002$). Trust ($\beta = -0.328$; $p = 0.554$) and Credibility ($\beta = -0.091$; $p = 0.080$) are deemed insignificant as shown in Table 2. This implies that consumers' attitudes towards social media ads are influenced by the security aspects of the social media sites and not totally by trust and perceptions of credibility. When shopping online, personal information is at stake, especially when using online- payments (e.g. credit cards, etc.) due to information leaks. Hence, consumers prefer to shops with secured and reliable payment system (Nartea, et al., 2019).

Meanwhile, the general association has an Adjusted R² of 0.103 and a p-value= .002, which means that Attitude in social media can be predicted by 10.3% Reliability and is deemed significant. For that reason, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis. Uncertainty is considered to be an important determinant of online purchase willingness (Wang, 2017; Yang et al., 2016). Customers' perceived uncertainty has a direct impact on their attitudes, decision-making, and behavior (Benedicktus, Brady, Darke, & Voorhees, 2010; Shiu, Walsh, Hassan, & Shaw, 2011; Yang et al., 2016). Because of the absence of physical products (i.e. consumers rely on posted images), online sellers may hide the true features of products, make false promises, and leak private customer information (Bock et al., 2012; Weathers, Sharma, & Wood, 2007), while product quality may be lower than promised, product delivery delayed, and the wrong product delivered (Dimoka et al., 2012).

Table 3

Word-of-Mouth to Attitude towards Social Media Advertisement

H ₀₁	p value	Adj. R ²	Predictor	β	p value
WOM - ATT	0.002	0.039	Intercept	2.687	<.001
			WOM1	0.177	0.024
			WOM2	-0179	0.079
			WOM3	0.187	0.013

* Level of significance *is <.0*

* WOM1 - Relevant, WOM2 - Helpful, WOM3 - Informative

Table 3 revealed significant associations between consumer attitude towards social media ads and relevance ($\beta = 0.177$; $p = 0.024$) and informativeness ($\beta = 0.187$; $p = 0.013$). Helpfulness is deemed insignificant ($\beta = -0.179$; $p = 0.079$). The Adjusted R^2 value is 0.039 and the p-value is 0.002 which is found to be significant. This rejects the null hypothesis that word-of-mouth quality does not significantly influence attitude towards social media advertisements. This conforms to various studies relating to eWOM (Electronic Word-of-Mouth) communication, which can have a significant effect on adopting information, consumer attitude, purchase intention, trust, and brand loyalty (Filieri & McLeay, 2014; Ismagilova et al., 2020a; Ismagilova et al., 2020). Consumers can write their opinions about products on blogs, social network sites, and other platforms, opinions that could be seen by other consumers around the world (Lopez & Sicilia, 2014).

Table 4
Overall to Attitude towards Social Media Advertising

H_{01}	p value	Adj. R^2	Predictor	β	p value
OA -ATT	< .001	0.263	Intercept	1.142	< .001
			PU	0.339	< .001
			R	0.306	< .001
			WOM	0.013	0.825

*Level of significance is $<.05$

*PU-Perceived Usefulness, R-Reliability, WOM-Word-of-Mouth

Regression analysis on the overall associations of dependent constructs showed significant p-values of Perceived Usefulness ($\beta = 0.339$, $p < .001$) and Reliability ($\beta = 0.306$, $p < .001$). Word-of-mouth is found insignificant at $\beta = 0.013$ and $p = 0.825$. Therefore, the predictor for Attitude is only Perceived Usefulness and Reliability. In general, the Adjusted R^2 is 0.263 and has a p-value of $<.001$, which means that 26.3% of the total variation of the attitude towards social media is the overall factor and is significant. Thus, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis.

Hassan et al. (2013) stated that consumers take social networking site ads as “infotaining” (informative and entertaining) and credible and do not consider it as irritating. They enjoy personalized product content, promotion, and price of Social Networking Advertisement (SNA). They have more advertisement value and show a positive attitude towards SNA. Advertisement value has been found to mediate the relationship between infotainment, credibility, irritation, and consumers’ attitudes towards social networking sites.

Seo et al. (2019) found that a social media ad displayed with a higher number of “likes” is perceived to be more credible, which can then yield more positive attitudes towards the brand because consumers perceive a higher number of “likes” to reflect social

proof for advertising credibility. Filipinos are known for being cautious when purchasing a product. They consider security factors, faster transaction, and payment convenience as their primary consideration. Essential in their decision would likewise be the price and its value, return or exchange rules, website reputation, online reviews, and peer feedback.

Word-of-mouth is used by posting varied topics online. Online users post most of the group's content and can influence most of the group's population. Influential users post over a wide range of topics and receive a lot of audience reactions (Kumar, et al., 2017). However, Gen Z consumers tend to collect information and compare from different sources, such as peers and social media influencers to understand the truth (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored the factors affecting the attitude towards social media advertisements among Gen Zs. From the reviewed literature concerning attitudes towards social media and the site's perceived usefulness (PU), the reliability of information, and word-of-mouth (WOM), this study revealed differing findings across the general constructs and predictors. For instance, Enhanced Performance and Abilities are deemed significant in this study, while Enhanced Usage and Enjoyment are insignificant, which is contrary to the findings of Grieve et al. (2013) and Bonds-Raacke and Raacke (2010). However, Perceived Usefulness was found to have a significant influence on consumer attitudes towards social media ads. Generation Z consumers consider the performance and abilities of the products in social media advertisements as important factors in online shopping, rather than the usability and hedonic aspect that it may give.

Similarly, online consumers consider primarily the capacity of social media sites to handle the security factor of consumer personal information, such as those in credit cards for payment purposes. Trust and credibility, though, are found insignificant in this study. Literature posited that these two significantly affect consumer attitude, especially where reliability is concerned. Because of the knowledge of Gen Z individuals on social media sites, they are able to distinguish which site(s) are trusted and credible.

Lastly, Generation Z online consumers consider the relevance of information and informativeness of social media sites in purchasing online which also affects their attitudes. They also consider the feedbacks from the different online sources, however, it might not be significant or meaningful for them.

General associations induced significant associations between attitude towards social media ads and perceived usefulness, and reliability but insignificant to word-of-mouth.

The results of the study could be used in the preparation and creation of social media ads, as such, establish clear information, helping mitigate online customers' perceived uncertainty (Howcroft, Hewer, & Hamilton, 2003; Shulman et al., 2015) and highlighting the perceived usefulness of the product to create a favorable response from the Gen Z consumers.

Hence, the study focused only on three factors. Future researchers may explore other variables or conduct a cross-sectional study to better understand the attitude of Gen Z in social media. Future researchers may also consider exploring in-depth generational comparisons as guidance in targeting different generations in social media.

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