

## Buying Behaviors of Selected Generation Z Students in Metro Manila Under the New Normal

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**Abstract:** With rapid advancements in technology and increased market competition, identifying and effectively targeting specific consumer segments has become necessary and challenging for businesses. Generation Z, known for its extensive exposure to digital technology, has emerged as a crucial demographic of interest for marketers. This study examines the buying behavior and factors influencing Generation Z's purchasing decisions, focusing on the role of technology. Using data collected through online surveys from 215 Generation Z students in Metro Manila, the study reveals key insights into their shopping preferences. Despite their digital fluency, 37.21% of respondents strongly prefer physical stores, especially for essential and lower-priced items, highlighting the continued relevance of brick-and-mortar retail. Generation Z leverages technology for price comparisons and customer reviews before making decisions. The findings emphasize Generation Z's potential as a powerful market force, emphasizing their hybrid shopping behaviors and the importance of integrating omnichannel strategies. The study provides business owners and marketers actionable insights to optimize customer experiences across digital and physical channels, ensuring alignment with Generation Z's values, technological fluency, and consumption trends.

**Keywords:** Buying Behaviors, Generation Z

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### *1.1 Background of the Study*

The digital revolution has transformed buying behavior, particularly in retail, where technology has become deeply integrated into the shopping experience. Generation Z, individuals born between 1997 and 2012, represents the first genuinely digital-native consumer segment, demonstrating unprecedented levels of technological integration in their daily lives (Slepian et al., 2024). The distinctive characteristics of this demographic include an inherent comfort with digital technologies, multi-platform engagement, and a preference for seamless integration between physical and digital shopping experiences (Priporas, 2017). Their unique behavioral patterns and consumption preferences present opportunities and challenges for retailers adapting to the growing market dynamics.

This study addresses the gap in understanding the hybrid shopping patterns that apply to Generation Z in emerging markets like the Philippines. By finding out the impact of global disruptions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, on Gen Z's purchasing decisions and channel preferences (Eger, 2021), this research will be able to provide insights for businesses to align their marketing strategies with the evolving buying behavior of this digitally native generation.

### *1.2 Related Literature*

The connection between globalization and technological advancement has ushered in a new era of consumerism characterized by heightened choice and discerning preferences. Generation Z, a group of digital natives primarily reshaping the retail landscape, leads this shift.

Generation Z, born and raised in entirely different circumstances than the other, older generations (Dolot, 2018), are the current entrants to the workplace and voting centers, and they will become the fastest-growing group of employees and customers.(Gaidhani et al., 2019). While this generation has not yet fully impacted the retailing market, there is a need to understand and analyze how they behave. This generation will influence buying trends and primarily contribute to economic development because of their purchasing power. Frost & Sullivan (2021) estimated that Generation Z has an estimated spending power of \$143 billion annually in the U.S. alone. This led businesses to become more interested in serving this group.

As highlighted by Kahawandala and Peter (2020), their digital nativity sets them apart from previous generations. This digital fluency translates into a preference for online shopping and a willingness to engage with brands across various digital platforms. The COVID-19 pandemic further affected this trend, as increased online time intensified their digital consumption habits (Zwanka & Buff, 2020).

Mohammed (2018) findings are similar to a study by Francis and Hoefel (2018). The study said that Generation Z consumers tend to be more socially conscious, valuing sustainability and ethical practices in the brands they support. Being socially conscious, Generation Z tends to consider the opinions of others when making decisions. This translates to reliance on product reviews before making purchase decisions. Product reviews can be easily obtained using online technology.

To effectively engage this generation, retailers must adopt a different approach. This includes leveraging digital technologies to provide seamless online shopping experiences, fostering strong brand identities that resonate with their values, and utilizing social media to drive brand awareness and customer engagement. By understanding the unique characteristics and preferences of Generation Z, businesses can position themselves to capture the attention and loyalty of this influential consumer segment.

### *1.3 Conceptual Framework*

Figure 1 illustrates technology as the central force that interacts with other influential factors -psychological, social, cultural, economic, and personal-impacting Generation Z's buying behavior. Generation Z's relationship with technology is not just about usage but about integration into every aspect of their consumer journey.

Technology enables digital decision-making for Psychological factors by providing instant access to product information, reviews, and comparisons. The ability to research and evaluate products quickly through technology strengthens

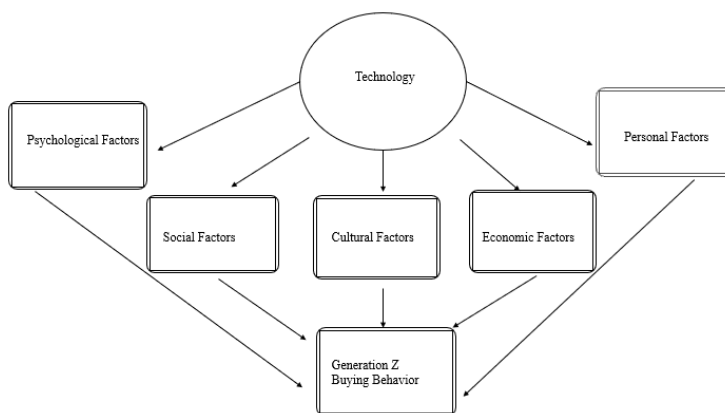
their decision-making in both online and offline environments (Priporas et al., 2017).

Through social media platforms and digital communities, technology powers social connectivity, which is crucial to Generation Z's purchasing decisions. Peer recommendations and online communities heavily influence their buying behavior.

Technology shapes a digital lifestyle associated with Generation Z's cultural identity. This digital-first mindset influences how they perceive brands, interact with products, and expect delivery of services. This cultural orientation is closely tied to their perception of brands and their alignment with technological advancements, highlighting how deeply technology influences consumer culture (Kotler & Keller, 2021).

Economic decisions are enhanced by technology through mobile payment solutions, digital wallets, and instant access to deals and discounts. Digital payment solutions, such as mobile wallets and online transaction systems, simplify the purchasing process and cater to their preference for efficiency. These tools enhance their ability to assess value, optimize spending, and engage in cost-conscious shopping (Frick & Matthies, 2020).

Lifestyle preferences, such as adopting convenience-driven shopping habits or favoring digital tools, further influence their behaviors.



**Fig. 1.** *Conceptualized Framework on the Influence of Technology on the Buying Behavior of Generation Z*

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study is a descriptive evaluative research. A quota sampling method of research was utilized to determine the buying behaviors of selected Generation Z students in Metro Manila. Two hundred fifteen (215) Generation Z students enrolled in College, most coming from different universities in Metro Manila. National University, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, and Rizal Technological University participated in the study. While most respondents came from these institutions, participation was open to qualified Generation Z college students who could access the survey through shared social media links.

Online survey questionnaires were used as the primary instrument in the study as the respondents are digital natives and are comfortable with using technology. Questions were adapted from previous studies on buying behavior. The questionnaire structure included the demographic profile of the respondents, internet usage, and physical and online shopping behavior. Two industry practitioners reviewed the adapted questionnaire for content appropriateness and clarity before distribution. This review helped ensure the questions were suitable for the local setting and target respondents.

The study employed basic descriptive statistics to analyze the collected data: Frequency distribution to organize the raw data and percentage distribution to determine the proportion of responses in each category.

The data collection process included distributing the online survey primarily through social media. In contrast, data collection was done for two weeks and accumulated 215 valid responses from Generation Z.

The methodology acknowledges limitations as convenience sampling through social media may have affected the sample's representativeness, while the two-week collection period may be considered brief. The reliance on descriptive statistics may have also limited the depth of the analysis in interpreting the study's findings.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

**Table 1.** *Demographic Profile of Respondents*

Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
17 – 18 years old	11	5.12%
19 – 20 years old	116	53.95%
21 – 23 years old	88	40.93%
Gender		
Male	82	38.14%
Female	133	61.86%
Monthly Household Income		
Below P40,000	142	66.04%
P40,000 – P49,999	23	10.70%
P50,000 – P59,999	16	7.44%
P60,000 – P69,999	7	3.29%
P70,000 and above	27	12.56%

The data indicates that most respondents are between 19 and 20 years old, with a more significant proportion identified as female. Generation Z is alternatively addressed by technological terms such as digital natives born in the late 1990s to 2012. Generation Z has grown up in an environment saturated by technology (Salam et al., 2024).

Regarding household income, most respondents belong to families under PHP 40,000. Economic factors influence consumer behavior and purchasing decisions (Liu, 2024). The respondents, being students, are primarily dependent

on their parent's or relatives' income.

**Table 2.** *Time Spent on the Internet by Generation Z Students*

<b>Time Spent/Day Percentage (%)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
2 hours	20
9.30	
3-4 hours	39
18.14	
5-7 hours	58
26.98	
8-10 hrs	86
40.00	
More than 10 hrs	12
5.58	

Most respondents (40%) spend 8–10 hours daily on the internet, reflecting a significant digital dependence, a characteristic of Generation Z's lifestyle. This pattern aligns with studies highlighting the generation's reliance on digital platforms for entertainment, communication, and shopping (Twenge, 2017).

This is also indicative of their social environment, where the physical presence of other people has been replaced by online interactions (Chang & Chuang, 2019). Individuals are immersed with digital devices to search for information online, review comments from unknown users on forums, and communicate with their social network members through social media platforms and software. Evidence has shown that individuals are willing to accept information from people who are not their friends or unknown but seem trustworthy (Chang & Chuang, 2019).

**Table 3.** *Preferences on Stores to Shop*

<b>Stores to Shop</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Physical Stores	80	37.21%
Online	78	36.28%
Both Physical and Online	57	26.51%

The results above show that the difference between shopping preferences via physical stores and online shops is insignificant, with a notable portion (26.51%) opting for both. This highlights the growing importance of an omnichannel or multichannel approach for retailers, as Generation Z consumers value the flexibility to choose between in-person and online shopping experiences.

The preference for physical shopping is also consistent with research by Priporas et al. (2017), which suggests that Generation Z values the experience of in-store shopping. However, their inclination toward online shopping reflects their digital fluency and the convenience e-commerce platforms offer.

These findings underscore the necessity for retailers to integrate physical

and online (digital) channels to meet the expectations of Generation Z, providing a consistent shopping experience that caters to practical and experiential needs.

**Table 4.** *Comparison of Factors that Motivate the Purchase*

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Physical Store (Frequency, Percentage)</b>	<b>Online Store (Frequency, Percentage)</b>
Need	118 (54.88%)	85 (39.53%)
Price	55 (24.32%)	80 (37.22%)
Advertisements	42 (19.80%)	30 (13.95%)

The factors influencing Generation Z's purchasing decisions reveal distinct priorities between physical and online shopping contexts. For physical stores, "Need" emerges as the most critical factor influencing shopping behavior, with 54.88% of respondents prioritizing quality, availability, and the ability to inspect products in person. Many of these purchases are driven by the necessity of obtaining essentials such as groceries, clothing, and other daily items. Physical stores provide immediate access to these necessities, allowing consumers to ensure product quality and suitability before purchase.

While the convenience of having necessities delivered to one's door is an attractive feature of online shopping, need purchases are less dominant than in physical stores, where the tangible evaluation of products is often critical for fulfilling basic needs (Frick & Matthies, 2020). Consumers may prefer shopping for perishable goods, household items, or specific clothing in person to avoid mistakes or quality concerns, which are more likely in e-commerce settings.

Price plays a significant role in motivating online shopping, influencing 37.22% of respondents. The perception of e-commerce platforms as venues for lower prices and competitive deals attracts cost-conscious Generation Z shoppers. In physical stores, price-related factors such as branding and promotions influence 24.32% of shoppers. While important, price considerations in brick-and-mortar settings are often secondary to the immediate availability and sensory evaluation of products (Kotler & Keller, 2021).

Advertisements have a small impact in both shopping contexts but play a slightly more significant role in physical stores (19.80%) than online shopping (13.95%). In physical stores, customer service and positive reviews can build trust and reinforce purchasing decisions, creating a sense of reliability (Kotler & Keller, 2021). Online advertisements are less impactful as consumers rely more on convenience and price.

A study by Carr (2023) highlighted Generation Z's Research Online Purchase Offline (ROPO) behavior: 80% of Gen Z shoppers research products online before making in-store purchases. They use their smartphones in-store to compare prices, read reviews, and look for promotions.

Prasanna and Priyanka (2024) said that Gen Z consumers appreciate quality and are often looking for good deals and value. They are also more likely to research products extensively before purchasing. This indicates that Generation Z tends to be savvy buyers.

These findings highlight the dual importance of physical and online shopping for Generation Z. Retailers must adopt a strategic omnichannel approach, offering concrete and immediate experiences in physical stores while capitalizing on cost efficiency, convenience, and digital marketing in e-commerce. By addressing the unique factors motivating both settings, retailers can effectively serve the hybrid shopping preferences of Generation Z consumers.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

This study features the buying behavior of Generation Z, a generation that has grown up in a digitally interconnected world. The findings reveal that, despite their heavy reliance on technology, Generation Z continues to value physical stores for fulfilling basic necessities, such as groceries and clothing, due to their proximity, sensory assurance, and quality evaluation. At the same time, their preference for online shopping is driven by convenience, price competitiveness, and accessibility, making digital platforms an integral part of their purchasing journey.

The hybrid shopping behaviors of Generation Z, where nearly equal preferences for physical (37.21%) and online (36.28%) stores, alongside 26.51% favoring both, emphasize the necessity of adopting an omnichannel strategy. Businesses must recognize the importance of providing seamless and consistent shopping experiences across all platforms.

Generation Z's purchasing decisions are influenced by psychological, social, cultural, economic, and personal factors, with technology acting as a central force. Their focus on need-based consumption, price sensitivity, and the impact of social proof and digital reviews emphasizes their position as informed and value-driven consumers. Personal values, such as a preference for ethical and sustainable brands, also play a critical role in shaping their buying behavior.

As Generation Z's purchasing power grows, they are expected to become a powerful force in the marketplace. Business owners and marketers must recognize the nature of Generation Z's consumption preferences and patterns and provide them with a good shopping experience while ensuring a balance using traditional and digital channels. Future research could examine technology's evolving impact and explore emerging trends, such as sustainability, to further enrich the understanding of this dynamic generation.

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