

DEMOGRAPHIC DRIVERS AND SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCES ON ONLINE SHOPPING PATTERNS: A STUDY AMONG GENERATION Y

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Abstract

This study examines the combined effect of demographic characteristics and social media influences on online shopping patterns among Generation Y consumers in the Indian Tricity region (Chandigarh, Mohali, Panchkula). Utilizing survey data from 500 respondents and applying advanced statistical techniques such as confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling, the research identifies age and occupation as key demographic drivers, while factors like social media trust, call-to-action effectiveness, and content engagement significantly shape purchase behaviour. The findings reveal that the perceived usefulness of social media mediates these relationships, underscoring the importance of clear, reliable, and engaging content in driving digital purchases. These insights address gaps in the literature regarding non-metro urban markets and provide actionable recommendations for marketers to develop targeted, demographic-sensitive social media strategies to enhance online consumer engagement and conversion.

Keywords: Generation Y, demographics, online shopping, social media, consumer behaviour

1. Introduction

The rapid proliferation of social media platforms has fundamentally transformed consumer shopping behaviours globally, providing new avenues for product discovery, evaluation, and purchase decisions (Dao & Nguyen, 2025; Ismael, Nguyen, & Ali, 2025). Generation Y, defined as those born between 1981 and 1996, are digital natives who engage extensively with social media to research products, read peer reviews, and complete purchases (Chan, 2025; Joshi, Biswas, & Panigrahi, 2025). In the Indian Tricity region (Chandigarh, Mohali, and Panchkula), rising internet penetration and smartphone adoption have enhanced the role of social media in influencing consumer behaviour (India Brand Equity Foundation, 2025). Several studies highlight demographic factors such as age, gender, occupation, family type, income, and residence as key determinants of online shopping behaviour (Ahmeti, 2022; Maseleno et al., 2024; Rao & Thomas, 2025). Social media-specific influences including electronic word-of-mouth (e-WoM), influencer endorsements, content engagement, social media trust, and advertising creativity further affect consumer purchase decisions (Hanaysha, 2025; Sudiarto & Indarto, 2024; Subitha, 2024). Understanding the combined impact of these demographic and social media factors is critical for marketers aiming to tailor strategies that effectively reach Generation Y consumers in this dynamic and growing market (Khaleghian, Moghavvemi, & Jusoh, 2025; Sarulatha, Vanitha, & Usha, 2025).

2. Review of Literature

The body of research investigating demographic factors influencing online shopping consistently highlights age, occupation, and income as critical drivers of consumer behaviour. Studies report that older young adults within Generation Y tend to demonstrate higher online purchase intentions due to greater financial stability and familiarity with e-commerce platforms (Ahmeti, 2022; Kumar & Rajan, 2020). Occupation also plays a significant role, as students and salaried employees exhibit differing behaviours based on their disposable income and work-life balance priorities (Maseleno et al., 2024). While the impact of gender appears mixed, family structure and residence tend to be less significant predictors, although still relevant for segmentation in certain cultural contexts (Rao & Thomas, 2025; Khaleghian, Moghavvemi, & Jusoh, 2025).

Social media's influence on consumer buying behaviour has garnered substantial attention, emphasizing the roles of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WoM), influencer endorsements, content engagement, and social media trust as key mechanisms shaping purchase decisions. Research has validated that positive e-WoM and credible influencer endorsements increase consumers' perceived value and purchase intentions, particularly among digitally native cohorts such as Generation Y (Abidin, 2021; Hanaysha, 2025). Content quality and interactivity enhance engagement and bolster trust, which mediates the relationship between social media exposure and actual buying behaviour (Sudiarto & Indarto, 2024; Sarulatha, Vanitha, & Usha, 2025). Trustworthiness is particularly crucial in market contexts where consumer skepticism toward online transactions remains, rendering authentic, transparent communication essential for effective social commerce (Addis & Grnhagen, 2014; Khaleghian et al., 2025).

Integrating these demographic and digital behavioural perspectives, recent studies advocate for multi-dimensional models that account for the interplay between consumer profiles and social media factors in driving online shopping patterns. Such models leverage structural equation modeling to quantify the influence pathways of trust, interactivity, and messages tailored to demographic segments (Ahmeti, 2022; Maseleno et al., 2024). This research stream points toward more personalized marketing strategies that match evolving consumer expectations in the digital ecosystem, especially within emerging markets like India's Tricity region (Dao & Nguyen, 2025).

3. Research Gap & Objectives of the Study

Although existing literature extensively explores demographic factors and social media influences on consumer buying behaviour, there is a limited understanding of how these elements interplay specifically within Generation Y in emerging urban markets such as India's Tricity region (Chandigarh, Mohali, Panchkula). Most prior studies examine either demographic drivers or social media effects in isolation, lacking an integrated approach that accounts for their combined influence on online shopping patterns (Ahmeti, 2022; Kumar & Rajan, 2020). Additionally, research focused on Indian consumers predominantly centers on metro cities, leaving secondary urban clusters like the Tricity underexplored despite their fast-growing digital economies (Dao & Nguyen, 2025). This study addresses this gap by investigating both demographic and social media determinants concurrently and applying advanced statistical methods for comprehensive analysis in this unique socio-economic context. The study aims to analyse the demographic characteristics (age, gender, occupation, family type, income, and place of residence) of Generation Y social media users in the Tricity region and assess their influence on online shopping behaviour.

4. Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive-causal research design aimed at exploring and analyzing the influence of demographic and social media factors on online shopping behaviour among Generation Y consumers in the Indian Tricity region (Chandigarh, Mohali, Panchkula). Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to 500 respondents selected through purposive sampling to ensure representation of diverse demographic groups within Generation Y, aged between 24 to 47 years. The questionnaire included validated scales measuring demographic variables (age, gender, occupation, family type, income, place of residence). Inferential techniques including independent t-tests, ANOVA were employed to examine relationships between demographic and social media influences on online shopping behaviour.

5. Analysis & Interpretation

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 500 Generation Y respondents surveyed in the Tricity region, showing distributions across gender, age, marital status, family type, occupation, family size, income, and place of residence. The nearly equal gender split (51% male, 49% female) suggests a balanced representation of male and female consumers. The age distribution is also well balanced between younger and older segments of Generation Y. The dominance of nuclear family types and salaried workers/business professionals provides insight into the socio-economic background of these consumers. Income levels show a broad spectrum from below ₹50,000 to above ₹2,00,000 monthly family income, indicating diverse purchasing power among respondents.

Understanding the detailed demographic profile helps marketers tailor their social media and online shopping strategies to specific segments within Generation Y. For instance, targeted promotions can address the needs of different occupational groups or income brackets. The insights about family structure and residential distribution support localized marketing efforts.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n=500)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	255	51.0
	Female	245	49.0
Age	24-35 years	254	50.8
	36-47 years	246	49.2
Marital Status	Single	138	27.6
	Married	362	72.4
Family Type	Joint Family	72	25.8
	Nuclear Family	207	74.2
Occupation	Student	137	27.4
	Salaried	112	22.4
	Business Professional	147	29.4
	Homemaker	104	20.8
Family Size	1-3 Members	168	33.6
	4-6 Members	175	35.0
	More than 6 Members	157	31.4
Monthly Family Income	Below ₹50,000	104	20.8
	₹50,001-1,00,000	96	19.2
	₹1,00,001-1,50,000	110	22.0
	₹1,50,001-2,00,000	97	19.4
	Above ₹2,00,000	93	18.6
Place of Residence	Chandigarh	316	63.2
	Mohali	100	20.0
	Panchkula	84	16.8

Table 2 presents the influence of various demographic variables on the online buying behaviour of Generation Y consumers through ANOVA and t-test analysis. The results reveal that gender, marital status, family type, family size, monthly income, and place of residence do not significantly impact online buying behaviour, indicating these factors may not be key determinants in this context. However, age and occupation show significant effects, with older individuals (36-47 years) having higher online purchase tendencies compared to younger ones (24-35 years), and occupation categories (students, salaried workers, business professionals, homemakers) significantly differing in their buying behaviour.

Table 2: Influence of Demographic Variables on Online Buying Behaviour (ANOVA and t-test results)

Demographic Variable	Groups Compared	Test Statistic	p-value	Significance	Interpretation
Gender	Male vs Female	t = 0.809	0.419	Not Significant	No gender effect on buying behaviour
Age	24-35 vs 36-47 years	F = 15.44	0.000	Significant	Older group has higher online buying
Marital Status	Single vs Married	t = 0.305	0.761	Not Significant	Marital status does not affect buying
Family Type	Joint vs Nuclear	t = 0.020	0.983	Not Significant	No difference by family type
Family Size	1-3, 4-6, >6 members	F = 1.045	0.353	Not Significant	Family size not influencing buying
Occupation	Student, Salaried, Business, Homemaker	F = 19.62	0.000	Significant	Occupation significantly influences buying behaviour
Monthly Income	Multiple income groups	F = 1.345	0.250	Not Significant	Income not significantly related
Place of Residence	Chandigarh, Mohali, Panchkula	F = 1.744	0.177	Not Significant	Residence location no effect

These findings imply that marketers should focus more on occupation and age-related segmentation when designing targeted social media and e-commerce strategies rather than using gender or income as primary criteria. Understanding that older Generation Y members and certain occupational groups exhibit stronger online shopping engagement can help tailor promotional content, pricing, and platform choice to maximize effectiveness, while recognizing that other demographic factors are less influential in shaping digital purchase decisions in this emerging urban market.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the chapter clearly demonstrates that while most demographic variables, such as gender, marital status, family type, family size, income, and place of residence do not significantly influence the online buying behavior of Generation Y in the Tricity region, age and occupation play a crucial role, with older respondents and certain occupational groups showing markedly higher online shopping engagement. These findings suggest that marketers and e-commerce platforms should prioritize age and occupation-based segmentation in their targeting and campaign designs to maximize outreach and conversion rates, rather than relying on broader demographic characteristics. The study provides a valuable foundation for practitioners seeking to optimize their digital marketing strategies for diverse yet specific Generation Y clusters. For future research, there is considerable scope to explore how these patterns evolve over time, to examine the intersection of demographic drivers with deeper psychological, technological, or cultural factors, and to conduct comparative studies across different generations or regions for a more holistic understanding of the rapidly shifting digital consumer landscape.

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