

Factors Affecting the Purchasing Decisions at Shopee of Generation Z in Hồ Chí Minh City

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Abstract: This study investigates some of the factors that affected purchasing decisions on Shopee marketplace of Generation Z in Hồ Chí Minh City which included: Customer Service Quality (SQ), Product Price (PP), Easiness of Use (ES), Online Customer Rating (OCR), and Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM). The findings reveal that Gen Z in Hồ Chí Minh City primarily prioritize service quality satisfaction when purchasing goods in Shopee platform, then price, conveniences (speed and distance) while Electronic Word of Mouth has the weakest impact on Gen Z customer who often prefer to make decisions through personal exploration rather than relying on peer opinions, unless those opinions come from Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) or other influential figures. Personalized Customer Relationship Management software is suggested to customize promotion messages to each customer, being transparent and authentic, and an appropriate and effective pricing strategy is necessary to accelerate the purchasing decision process of Gen Z consumers.

Keywords: Customer purchasing decision, customer behavior, Shopee, Gen Z.

Subject classification: Economics.

1. Introduction

Since the emergence in 1995, web-based trade has been on a consistent increase in popularity (Kadam, 2019). E-commerce relies rigidly on information technology, such as computer networks and internet, to provide a platform for the sale, purchase, marketing and delivering of goods and services (Nursiam et al, 2020). The Vietnam e-commerce market embraces significant potential for growth

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across different regions, especially in the two major cities - Hanoi and Hồ Chí Minh City, which collectively accounts for over 70% of e-commerce related activities (Nguyen et al, 2022). In the Asia Digital Transformation Summit (2021), Vietnam's e-commerce sector reached 21 billion USD in 2021, making up 5% of the country's total GDP and was expected to continue its upward trend (Vietnamplus, 2022).

Shopee reigns as the top e-commerce platform, according to the YouGov Buzz Ranking (2021), it is the most mentioned brand in Asia Pacific, surpassing other major global names such as Youtube or Samsung. Although the e-commerce businesses in the Vietnamese market are in fierce competition, Shopee has been reported as the top-of-mind trading floor for almost half of Vietnamese online shoppers, reinforcing their dominance in Vietnam (Decision Lab, 2023). Shopee reached 145.7 million visits on its website, followed by 19.9 million by Lazada and 6.7 million by Tiki. In 2023, according to the e-commerce data intelligence platform YouNet ECI, Shopee dominated the Vietnamese market, accounting for 72.7% of the market shares or 22.7 trillion VND. Shopee's entry into Vietnam is among the first triggers to encourage the Vietnamese to shop online and partially shape a new Vietnamese buying behavior (Tran, 2022).

Generation Z (also known as Post Millennials, the iGeneration, or the Homeland Generation) is the demographic cohort following The Millennials. There is no exact exact consensus on the beginning or end dates for this group; Anthropologists and researchers often use different birth years, ranging from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s. In this study, Generation Z is primarily classified as born between 1995 and 2012 (Bassiouni & Hackley, 2014). In this research, the authors decide to examine results with analysis on the Generation Z currently residing in Hồ Chí Minh City, whose age range is between 11 and 26. With their typical characteristics and upcoming dominance in certain social and economic aspects, the Generation Z population is considered a key contribution to the e-commerce industry, which Shopee currently dominates.

By delving into the variety of factors influencing purchasing decisions within the context of online shopping platforms (Shopee), this research intends to provide a deeper understanding of the target customers (Gen Z), and their purchasing patterns at a specific location in Vietnam (Hồ Chí Minh City). Therefore, e-commerce companies, not only Shopee, can take advantage of the insights revealed in this paper to further strengthen their strategies, satisfy their customers' needs, and enhance the overall customer buying experience.

2. Develop a research model

2.1. E-commerce platform and Shopee

According to the definition of World Trade Organization (WTO), e-commerce is “the production, distribution, marketing and/or sale of goods and services by electronic means”. Far more than the scope of trade, e-commerce is inclusive of any form of business collaborations that are Internet-based, rather than physical exchange (Kurniawan et al, 2023). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), on the other hand, regards e-commerce as “the sale or purchase of goods or services, conducted over computer networks by methods specifically designed for the purpose of receiving or placing orders”. In details, e-commerce can be classified into various types: Business-to-Business (B2B), Business-to-Consumer (B2C), Consumer-to-consumer (C2C), Consumer-to-business (C2B), Business-to-administration (B2A), Business-to-government (B2G), Consumer-to-administration (C2A) and so on. In Vietnam, the forms of B2C and C2C are the two most well-received, with fierce competition between some dominant enterprises like Shopee, Lazada, Tiki... (Jain et al, 2021).

Established by Sea Group (Singapore) in early 2015, Shopee is designed to be user friendly that enables people to effortlessly sell and buy products online effortlessly with their smartphones and virtually displays multiple categories of products with guaranteed payment methods. (Alfan Shafi'i et al, 2021). Like other e-commerce platforms, Shopee illustrates the products in form of pictures, videos and provides users with information like prices, products specifications, descriptions, information of sellers, previous customers' feedbacks and ratings and allows both online money transfer or Cash on Delivery (COD). In addition, Shopee is a trailblazer in applying features like intrinsic cues, physical characteristics, or the Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) and rating system (Boon et al, 2021).

2.2. *Gen Z customer*

The definition of Gen Z varies greatly but mostly they are considered the initial generations to have widely and firsthand experienced digital technology, such as social networking sites and the abundance of information on the internet (Turner, 2015). They are the generation that has grown alongside highly advanced technology, which made them far more knowledgeable and savvy with online websites through engaging with the Internet for most of their daily activities (Fitri Ayunu, 2019). When compared to millennials and their prior generation, Gen Z expresses unique characteristics (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). As described in the Generational White Paper (2011), Gen Z appears to be more impatient, quick-tempered, and lacking the aspirations of earlier generations. However, Generation Z is also found to be more entrepreneurial, trustworthy, tolerant, and less motivated by money than Generation Y (Johnson, 2017). Moreover, this generation has been fundamentally shaped by the advent of new technologies, including smartphones, tablets, Wi-Fi, online gaming, and social networks, distinguishing them from past generations (Zheng & Ni, 2010). Technology is not merely a tool for Generation Z, it is a fundamental component of who they are.

2.3. Customer purchase decision

Online purchase decision is defined as the process in which buyers have their shopping requirements satisfied in Internet-based stores (Haque et al, 2006). Meanwhile, purchase decisions indicate a step, in which consumers, after picking up a certain product, are able to pay sellers in exchange for that good (Wijaya & Warnadi, 2019). From one research in 2013, Afroz associated the definition of purchasing decision with an attitude of using and being willing to purchase a product - regardless of whether it is tangible or intangible product - that satisfies a customer's wants or needs. This willingness means the buyers are also willing to take risks related to the buying decision they make. Similarly, as customers are bombarded with various options when buying a product, they need to carefully weigh the items, making the purchase decision the resultant behavior to buy or transact (Nursiam et al, 2020).

Another definition states that a purchase decision is the mindset of consumers in making the final decision to buy after giving careful consideration (Karimi et al., 2015). When researching on purchase decisions, it has been discovered that the interpretation of cognitive factors and consumer persona has a positive correlation and thus exerts a heavy influence on the attitude of the buyers and their decision whether to purchase a product or service (Sanjiwani & Suasana, 2019).

Price. Product price is one of the fundamental factors in consumer decision-making. The study by Rizki, Hidayat, & Devita (2019) shows that the price is likely to affect Generation Z purchasing decision on e-commerce platform. In contrast, other studies, such as Mbete and Tanamal (2020), found no significant link between price and Generation Z purchasing behaviour. Therefore, this conflict in findings across different studies makes it essential for further exploration.

Online customer rating. Moreover, online customer rating, though less impactful for immediate decisions, are recognized to shape post-purchase satisfaction and loyalty. This finding aligns with the results of a 2021 study by Istiqomah and Mufidah, which also concluded that online customer ratings is not among the significant factors influencing the purchasing decisions of Gen Z on Shopee platform. Although it did not have a significant immediate impact on the purchase decisions of Gen Z university students in prior research, it remains a relevant factor to investigate. Including this variable allows us to comprehensively compare different perspectives on the influence of online ratings and ensures that our analysis covers all possible factors affecting the target group's behavior.

Ease. According to the research of Mbete and Tanamal (2020), ease (or easiness) was proven to have a significant positive relation with the online purchase decisions of Gen Z consumers. This findings is highlighted by their study on Shopee and supported by previous research like that of Wigaya and Warnadi, et al., (2019). The variable of ease relates to how user-friendly and accessible an e-

commerce platform is, which can directly influence consumer behavior and decision-making. By examining ease as a factor, we can understand its importance in enhancing the shopping experience and increasing conversion rates, making it an essential component in analyzing e-commerce purchasing behavior.

Service quality. The study by Wigaya and Warnadi, et al., (2019) shown that service quality had a minor impact on the purchasing decision of Gen Z, while the study of Rizki, Hidayat, and Devita (2019) demonstrated the opposite result. This discrepancy in findings makes service quality an important variable that needs empirical testing in this current study.

Electronic word of mouth. Electronic word of mouth has been shown to significantly influence the purchase decisions of Gen Z consumers on e-commerce platforms, such as in the study of Bukalapak (Kaban & Angelina, 2022). The positive impact of eWOM, supported by previous research like that of Mawadah and Mada, highlights its role as a persuasive factor in online purchasing. By including eWOM in our analysis, we can better understand how peer reviews and user-generated content contribute to consumer behavior, providing a comprehensive view of the various influences on purchasing decisions in the digital age.

3. Develop a research hypothesis

3.1. The impact of price on the purchase decisions of Gen Z buyers on the Shopee application

Price, at its most basic, is defined as “the amount of money that a buyer gives to a seller in exchange for a good or a service” (Asmundson, 2013). Or, the term “Price” may also refer to the evaluation of a product’s value worth from the perspectives of customers (Abshor, Hasiolan, & Malik, 2018). Based on the research of Mbete and Tanamal (2020), the price has a positively significant influence on consumer purchasing decisions on the online Shopee platform in Surabaya. This is also consistent with a study conducted in Bekasi by Syahtidar, Suherman, & Siregar (2022), which found that the importance of product pricing in a company’s operation is noteworthy since an appropriate and reasonable price might motivate customers’ willingness to spend on a particular service or product.

H1: Product price (PP) has a positive impact on the purchase decisions of Gen Z buyers on the Shopee application.

3.2. The impact of online customer ratings on the purchase decisions of Gen Z buyers on the Shopee application

“Online customer rating” is a judgement of customers’ preferences, based on

their prior purchase or consumption of a product, expressed by commenting or using a specific scale to rate their satisfaction with the goods (Said, n. d; Said, Rodin, & Fariany, 2023). Specifically on the Shopee online marketplace, the term “Ratings” referred to an opinion expressed through a set of star symbols (Suryawan, Sumerta, Vatara, & Abdullah, 2022). In addition, when rating online, the social learning theory (SLT) conducted by Albert Bandura also suggests that individuals tend to observe and imitate the activities done by others. Furthermore, according to the famous theory of reasoned action (TRA) framework, conducted by Ajzen & Fishbein in 1980 and 1975, it is founded on the assumption that people are rational and make systematic choices about the knowledge that is accessible to them, which under such circumstances, the accessible knowledge will be the online ratings from other customers (Ajzen, 2011). Generally, customers have the tendency to follow the information they see through the ratings section, which then influences them to buy or not to buy a product (Nair & Radhakrishnan, 2019).

H2: Online customer ratings (OCR) positively influenced the purchase decisions of Gen Z on the Shopee application.

3.3. The impact of Easiness of Use on the purchase decisions of Gen Z buyers on the Shopee application

According to research conducted by Chin & Todd (1995), “Ease” was referred as a thought of relatively simple to use and comprehend regarding technology and online transactions. The term “Ease” can also be described as the extent to which consumers do or get something without effort (Wijaya & Warnadi, 2019). In particular, the technology acceptance model (TAM) framework initially developed by Fred Davis in 1989, and utilized in the research of Mbete and Tanamal (2020), which takes into account two fundamental external variables that influence the adoption and usage of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT): the Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use. Both are associated - thus, for instance, an easy-to-use website is more likely to be considered as a valuable website, and affect the individual’s attitude toward the use of technology (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989). Therefore, the ease variable is concluded to have a tremendous positive impact on purchasing decisions on the Shopee application.

H3: Easiness of Use (ES) has positively affected the buying decisions of GenZ consumers on the Shopee application.

3.4. The impact of customer service quality on the purchase decisions of Gen Z buyers on the Shopee application

For years, hundreds of researchers have proposed many service viewpoints (Zeithaml, 2009; Ramsaran and Fowdar, 2007). Service quality is mentioned as the assessment made by customers in accordance with their experiences with the service they received throughout their online shopping process (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1990). It is not solely engaged in the finished product and service, but also in the manufacturing and distribution process (Kumra, 2008). On the study of Primandaru, Noormalita & Sembiring (2024) found out that e-service quality positively influences purchasing decisions, highlighting its importance in enhancing customer satisfaction and convenience while online shopping.

H4: Customer service quality (SQ) has a positive influence on the purchase decisions of Gen Z on the Shopee application.

3.5. The impact of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) on the purchase decisions of Gen Z buyers on the Shopee application

E-WOM has evolved from an aspect of traditional WOM concept, which is an interpersonal interaction formed when people meet face-to-face, into an entirely different setting with distinct characteristics in a virtual world using the internet as the medium (Kaban & Angelina, 2022). In addition, it is a specific form of interaction that has arisen, especially given the growth and rapid expansion of social media (Henning, Thurau, 2004). Particularly, on the research operated by Kaban & Angelina in 2022 has validated that eWOM has positively effect towards purchase decision, in both partial and simultaneous ways at Bukalapak.

H5: Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) positively impacts the purchase decisions of Gen Z shoppers on the Shopee application.

4. Methodology

The study employed a quantitative research method conducted through an online questionnaire survey using a convenience sampling approach, targeting consumers in Hồ Chí Minh City. The respondents were within the Gen Z age range, possessing varied in income, occupation, educational levels and importantly, had previously purchased products from the Shoppe marketplace. After excluding invalid responses, a total of 250 observations were eligible for data analysis. In addition, this research used two measurement techniques: the nominal scale and the Likert scale were developed based on theoretical foundations and empirical models from previous studies. The nominal scale was used to collect demographic data on the target generation Z's gender, income level, occupation, and education in Hồ Chí Minh City, then a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 = Totally disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree and 5 = Totally agree. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the constructs were as follows: Product Price (0.631); Easiness (0.823); Online

customer ratings (0.821); Customer service quality (0.738); Electronic Word of Mouth (0.706).

Table 1. Measurement Scale

Variable	Indicator	Index	Source
Price	PP1	Products available at Shopee have affordable prices.	Nanda Syahtid ar et al. (2022)
	PP2	The products contained in this Shopee store have competitive prices with other online stores.	
	PP3	The price of the product at Shopee is in accordance with its quality.	
Online Customer Rating	OCR1	High ratings describe good service.	Laila Said et al. (2023)
	OCR2	Rating awarded based on the consumer's shopping experience.	
	OCR3	Rating is a benchmark for the quality of a product.	
	OCR4	High rating can increase the number of product sales.	
	OCR5	Good response sellers can increase store ratings.	
Easiness	ES1	Shopee application is easy in ordering products.	Goldian us and Tanama 1 (2020)
	ES2	Shopee application is easy in product payments.	
	ES3	Shopee application is easy in product delivery.	
	ES4	Shopee application is easy to use by anyone.	
	ES5	The Shopee application is easy for anyone to learn.	
Service Quality	SQ1	The system in the Shopee application can always be accessed for buying and selling activities.	Goldian us and Tanama 1 (2020)
	SQ2	The page in the Shopee application does not experience an error.	
	SQ3	My personal data is protected on the Shopee application.	
	SQ4	My financial data and transaction data are protected	

on the Shopee application.

Electronic Word of Mouth	eWOM1	I care about the number of opinions posted online by other Shopee customers.
	eWOM2	I do take into consideration of the satisfied and unsatisfied opinions that are posted online in Shopee platform.
	eWOM3	The online comments offer enough information to let me know about the quality of the service on Shopee.

Table 2. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient Analysis

		A_PP	A_OCR	A_ES	A_eWOM	A_SQ	A_Y
A_PP	Pearson Correlation	1	.560	.573	.483	.463	.559
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	248	248	248	248	248	248
A_OCR	Pearson Correlation	.559	1	.617	.584	.465	.517
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	248	248	248	248	248	248
A_ES	Pearson Correlation	.517	.463	1	.589	.522	.548
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	248	248	248	248	248	248
A_eWOM	Pearson Correlation	.548	.465	.483	1	.294	.343
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	248	248	248	248	248	248
A_SQ	Pearson Correlation	.343	.522	.584	.573	1	.652
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	248	248	248	248	248	248
A_Y	Pearson Correlation	.652	.294	.589	.617	.560	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	248	248	248	248	248	248

Table 3. The Regression Analysis Conclusion

Hypothesis	Content		
		Result	Sig.
H1	Product Price has a positive impact on the purchase decisions of Gen Z consumers on the	Accepted	0.000

	Shopee application		
H2	Easiness has a positive impact on the purchase decisions of Gen Z consumers on the Shopee application	Accepted	0.033
H3	Online Customer Ratings has a positive impact on the purchase decisions of Gen Z consumers on the Shopee application	Accepted	0.028
H4	Customer Service Quality has a positive impact on the purchase decisions of Gen Z consumers on the Shopee application	Accepted	0.031
H5	Electronic Word of Mouth has a positive impact on the purchase decisions of Gen Z consumers on the Shopee application	Accepted	0.000

5. Result discussion

Table 4. Overall Result Discussion

Factor	Standardized Coefficient Beta	Ranking
Customer Service Quality (SQ)	0.424	1
Product Price (PP)	0.232	2
Easiness of Use (ES)	0.144	3
Online Customer Ratings (OCR)	0.135	4
Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)	0.042	5

The result of Standard Coefficient Beta rank the factors, from the strongest impact to the weakest, as follow: Customer Service Quality (SQ), Product Price (PP), Easiness of Use (ES), Online Customer Rating (OCR), and finally Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM). According to regression discussion, the SQ factor is proved to have the strongest impact on the Gen Z customers whenever buying something online. The regression analysis also indicates that the eWOM variable has a limited power to influence customers' consideration of shopping on the Shopee online marketplace.

Customer Service Quality (SQ) exhibited the highest regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.424$), which is consistent with the findings of Mbete and Tanamal (2020). Their research emphasized that platform stability, reliability, and security are core elements that make consumers feel reassured when engaging in e-commerce transactions. This reinforces the crucial role of service quality in digital

environments, particularly for Generation Z, who are highly sensitive to the quality of their digital experiences.

Product Price (PP) ($\beta = 0.232$) also showed a strong and positive influence, echoing the conclusions drawn by Angelina and Kaban (2022), who noted that young consumers are typically attracted to competitive pricing strategies - especially in the context of frequent promotions and flash sales as seen on Shopee.

Easiness of Use (ES) ($\beta = 0.144$) aligns with the study by Syahtidar et al. (2022), suggesting that the easier it is for users to search, place orders, and complete transactions, the more likely they are to finalize a purchase. This finding mirrors the Gen Z consumer tendency to favor convenience and speed in their online shopping behavior.

Online Customer Ratings (OCR) ($\beta = 0.135$) had a somewhat weaker influence than expected. While Said et al. (2023) highlighted OCR as a critical factor for reducing perceived risk, the results in Hồ Chí Minh City suggest that Gen Z consumers may not fully trust reviews - possibly due to incentivized feedback mechanisms that compromise the authenticity of customer responses.

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) ($\beta = 0.042$) recorded the lowest impact among the variables, which contrasts with prior international studies that emphasized the importance of eWOM in online consumer behavior. This divergence may be explained by the characteristics of Vietnamese Gen Z consumers, who often prefer to make decisions through personal exploration rather than relying on peer opinions, unless those opinions originate from Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) or other influential figures.

In the context of Vietnam, the results reflect several unique aspects of Gen Z behavior, particularly in Hồ Chí Minh City. *Firstly*, Gen Z consumers place a strong emphasis on the overall customer experience, with customer service standing out as a pivotal factor. This aligns with their high expectations regarding professionalism, prompt support, and transparent return policies, features that Shopee has been actively improving to retain younger users. *Secondly*, product price remains a major attraction, mirroring Gen Z's habit of hunting for deals and using discount codes. This is especially evident during major sales campaigns such as 9/9, 10/10, and the platform's recurring "free shipping xtra" programs. *Thirdly*, the significance of easiness underscores the widespread habit of anytime-anywhere shopping. Shopee's integration of features such as e-wallet payments, real-time delivery tracking, and fast shipping options cater well to this demand. *Lastly*, the lower impact of OCR and eWOM indicates that Gen Z shoppers are no longer passively influenced by reviews alone. Instead, they actively evaluate multiple forms of user-generated content, such as authentic photos, unboxing videos, and even negative comments, before making decisions. This trend calls for Shopee and its sellers to focus on delivering transparent and authentic customer experiences, rather than merely optimizing for positive ratings.

6. Conclusion

Based on the findings, customer service quality has the strongest influence on the purchase decisions of Gen Z on the Shopee application, so business owners should carefully train and recruit on-duty staff for responsible answering customer questions as quickly as possible with a nice attitude. In addition, online stores must provide policies to secure consumers' information when shopping online, thus enhancing customers' trust as well as their likelihood of repurchasing. To maximize the impacts of Customer Service Quality, business owners can also apply personalized Customer Relationship Management software to customize promotion messages to each customer. Besides, product price also has a fairly strong impact on the purchase decisions of Gen Z in Hồ Chí Minh City, therefore, an appropriate and effective pricing strategy can also be a decisive contributing factor towards accelerating the purchasing decision process of Gen Z consumers.

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