



## Sustainable Purchasing Trends Among Gen Z: Understanding Through Online Media

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**Abstract:** This study discusses sustainable purchasing trends among Generation Z influenced by online media such as social media, blogs, and marketplaces. Generation Z has a high awareness of sustainability and chooses ethical and environmentally friendly products. They are exposed to various content that introduces sustainable products through influencers and online communities, which shapes their awareness and consumption choices. This study uses qualitative methods, involving in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation to understand the sustainable consumption behavior of Gen-Z in Wonokerto District. The findings show that online media plays a major role in increasing sustainability awareness and influencing product preferences among Gen-Z. This study offers insights for industry players to design effective marketing strategies and for policymakers to promote sustainable consumption.

## Introduction

With the rapid development of technology, consumer behavior has undergone significant transformation. One of the groups most affected by this change is Generation Z, consisting of individuals born between 1997 and 2012. This generation grew up in the digital era, where access to information is very easy and fast through various online platforms. This influences the way they interact with products and brands, as well as shaping their views on social and environmental issues. With a high awareness of sustainability issues, Generation Z is a pioneer in the

sustainable purchasing trend, which prioritizes ethical and environmental values in choosing products (Nurmalia et al., 2024). Sustainable purchasing is defined as consumer behavior that chooses products and services that have minimal impact on the environment and society. This phenomenon is increasingly important amid global challenges such as climate change, environmental pollution, and natural resource crises. Generation Z shows a strong commitment to sustainability by choosing products that are not only functional but also ethical. Many of them are willing to pay more for products that are environmentally friendly or produced with fair trade practices. This indicates that Generation Z considers not only price and quality factors, but also the social and environmental impact of the products they consume (Nurul Fitri et al., 2024). The role of online media in shaping sustainable purchasing behavior among Generation-Z is very significant. Social media, blogs, and other digital platforms are the main sources of information that influence their purchasing decisions. Generation Z often seeks information about products through online media, where they can find reviews from other users, recommendations from influencers, and various campaigns that support sustainability. The close connection with the virtual world allows them to gain deeper knowledge about products and brands, as well as the impacts caused by their consumption choices (Husna & Mairita, 2024). One interesting aspect of Generation Z's consumption behavior is their tendency to share information and experiences through social media. This generation is not only a passive consumer, but also actively participates in discussions about sustainability (Regina, 2024). They use platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter to share positive experiences with sustainable products, as well as to voice criticism of companies' practices that they deem unethical. In this way, online media serves as a tool for building communities that care about sustainability issues, creating a greater collective awareness of the importance of responsible consumption (Gusti Prasetyo, 2022). This study aims to gain a deeper understanding of sustainable purchasing trends among Generation Z,

focusing on their understanding of the issue through online media. Qualitative methods were chosen to explore the various perspectives and experiences of individuals in this group. Through in-depth interviews and content analysis from social media, this study will identify factors that influence their purchasing decisions and how online media shapes awareness of sustainability. It is important to examine how online media not only disseminates information but also influences consumer attitudes and behavior. Generation Z has a habit of searching for information independently and relying on recommendations from people they trust. Therefore, social media becomes a very influential platform in shaping their views on sustainable products. By studying their interactions on online media, we can gain deeper insights into how information about sustainability is disseminated and received by these young consumers (Gusti Prasetyo, 2022).

## **Theoretical Basis**

### **Online Media**

(Press, 2011) Online media is a means of communication and distribution of information based on the internet, allowing fast, interactive and widespread access to and distribution of content (Ii & Theory, nd). This media includes various platforms such as news websites, blogs, social media, video streaming, and digital applications that provide various types of information, ranging from news, entertainment, education, to business. Unlike traditional media such as television or newspapers, online media offers wrinkles in forms and formats, such as text, images, videos, and audio, which can be accessed anytime and anywhere through devices connected to the internet. In addition, online media allows direct interaction between users, for example through comment columns, discussion forums, or sharing features, so that users are not only consumers of information but can also act as producers and disseminators of information. The rapid development of digital technology has made online media the main source of information for many people in the

modern era, with the speed of distribution and ease of access as the main advantages.

Online media, also known as digital media, is a form of media that uses the internet and information technology to disseminate information. Online media offers various conveniences and speeds in conveying information globally. Basically, this media functions as a communication channel that utilizes digital technology to disseminate content in the form of text, images, videos, and sound in real-time.

Online media is any type of communication medium that relies on the internet network to disseminate information. According to McQuail, online media includes websites, blogs, social media, and other platforms that allow direct interaction and dissemination of information. Online media differs from traditional media because of its ability to overcome geographical limitations and its fast time in delivering information.

### **Mass Communication Theory in Online Media**

In the context of online media, mass communication theory remains relevant, but has undergone some adjustments. One theory that is often used is the Agenda Setting Theory developed by McCombs and Shaw. In online media, this theory places more emphasis on the media's ability to direct public attention to certain issues, although in online media, users also have greater control over the information they consume (Kustiawan et al., 2022). In addition, the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Karunia H et al., 2021) developed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch is also relevant in online media. This theory states that media users actively choose media and content based on the needs and gratifications they want to fulfill, such as entertainment, information, or social interaction. In online media, users have more freedom to choose content according to their wishes.

Online media continues to grow along with the advancement of internet technology and mobile devices. The impact of online media is very significant in various aspects of life, including politics, economics, and

culture. In terms of politics, online media is an important tool for political campaigns and public discussions. In terms of economy, e-commerce and digital marketing have experienced rapid development with the presence of online media. Online media also presents challenges, such as data security issues, user privacy, and the spread of false information (hoaxes). Therefore, digital literacy is important to help users filter true and useful information.

## **Gen Z**

Generation Z (Gen Z) (Muhajirina et al., 2024) is a demographic group born after the millennial generation. The birth year boundaries for this generation vary across studies, but in general, they are individuals born between 1997 and the early 2010s. This generation is known as “digital natives” because they grew up in an environment filled with digital technology from an early age, such as the internet, social media, and mobile devices.

## **Gen Z Consumption Behavior Patterns**

Gen Z also has different consumption patterns than previous generations. They are more likely to seek experiences over material goods, and they pay more attention to the ethical values and social responsibility of the brands they support. According to studies, they prefer to buy products from companies that care about the environment and have ethical business practices. With access to information very quickly, Gen Z is more selective in choosing products and services. They tend to do in-depth research before making a purchase, and are heavily influenced by online reviews and recommendations from peers.

## **Gen Z Education and Career**

In the context of education, Gen Z shows a tendency to choose education that is more flexible and integrated with technology. They prefer online learning methods that allow them to learn at their own pace. In the

world of work, Gen Z tends to look for jobs that provide meaning and flexibility, as well as a balance between work and personal life.

### **The Role of Social Media in Gen Z's Life**

Social media plays a central role in Gen Z's lives. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Twitter are used not only for entertainment, but also as a tool to express themselves, find information, and communicate with others. Social media is also an important medium for them to shape their social and political identities, as well as rally support for issues they consider important.

### **Challenges and Hopes for the Future of Gen Z**

Gen Z faces complex challenges in the future, including economic uncertainty, climate change, and rapid technological developments. However, this generation is also considered an innovative and resilient generation, with great potential to create positive change in the world. They have hopes for a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable world.

### **Consumer Behavior Theory**

Theory (Syafriana et al., 2022) This discusses how individuals make purchasing decisions based on various internal and external factors. Consumer behavior is influenced by cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors. Cultural factors include the values, norms, and beliefs held by consumers, which can influence product preferences. Social factors include reference groups, family, and social roles that influence how consumers view products or services. Personal factors such as age, income, lifestyle, and occupation also influence preferences and ability to purchase. Psychological factors such as motivation, perception, learning, and attitudes and beliefs can influence purchasing decisions.

### **Market Signal Theory**

Market signal theory (Amanda et al., 2019) explains that purchasing

trends are influenced by signals given by producers to consumers. These signals can be in the form of prices, promotions, consumer reviews, or word of mouth. According to this theory, consumers do not have perfect information about the products available in the market, so they rely heavily on the signals they receive to decide which products to buy.

### **Utility Theory**

Utility theory in economics (Rahmawati & Husni Thamrin, 2021) explains that consumers make purchasing decisions based on expectations of the utility or satisfaction they will get from the product or service. Consumers tend to choose products that provide maximum value according to their preferences and budget. In the context of purchasing trends, this theory helps explain why certain products or services can become more popular than others when they offer higher utility to consumers.

### **Diffusion of Innovation Theory**

Everett Rogers developed this theory which explains how innovations or new products are adopted by consumers in a society. According to this theory, there are five categories of adopters (Mulyati et al., 2023): a) Innovators (early adopters); b) Early adopters (first adopters); c) Early majority (early majority); d) Late majority (late majority); e) Laggards (latest adopters) In the context of purchasing trends, this theory explains how new products or innovations can spread and be adopted by consumers at various stages. Understanding the spread of innovation helps companies plan marketing strategies according to target consumer groups at each stage.

### **Research Methods**

The research method in this proposal uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to understand sustainable purchasing trends

among Gen Z through online media. This study collected primary data through in-depth interviews with Gen Z participants in Wonokerto District who actively use online media to purchase sustainable products. The selection of participants was carried out by purposive sampling, focusing on the age range of 18-25 years, and involving the use of social media and e-commerce platforms in their shopping activities. In addition, researchers conducted participatory observations in the participants' social and digital environments to record patterns of behavior and interactions related to sustainability. Secondary data were obtained from various documentation, articles, reports, and online campaigns related to sustainability. Data analysis techniques were carried out thematically to identify factors that influence purchasing decisions and the role of online media in forming sustainability awareness. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing information from interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure the validity of the data.

## **Result and Discussion**

In this chapter, the researcher will describe and explain the data and research results regarding the problems formulated in Chapter I. The results of this study were obtained by in-depth interview techniques directly to informants as a form of direct search and documentation in the field. Then the researcher also used observation techniques as a way to complete the data that had been found. This study focuses on Sustainable Purchasing Trends Among Gen Z: Understanding Through Online Media. Researchers also use a qualitative approach to see the natural conditions of a phenomenon. This approach aims to gain understanding and describe complex realities. Research with a qualitative approach is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words based on people or observed behavior (Charismana et al., 2022).

### **The Influence of Online Media on Gen Z's Awareness of Sustainable Purchasing**



The results of this study indicate that (Julia et al., 2024) online media has a significant influence on Gen Z's awareness of sustainable purchasing. From interviews conducted with two sources, namely Naura, Aira, it was found that social media such as Instagram and TikTok play an important role in providing information about environmentally friendly products. All three agreed that the content presented through this media not only provides information, but also educates them about sustainability issues. Naura emphasized the importance of the role of influencers in disseminating information (Gratitude & Salsabila, 2022), while Aira and Salsa stated that they were more selective in choosing products thanks to the education they received through online media.

A respondent named Aira shared her views on how online media shapes her awareness of sustainability. "I find it easier to find information about sustainable products through social media, especially Instagram," she said. Aira considers social media as a source of relevant and up-to-date information about sustainability. She feels educated by the content shared by influencers. Aira also emphasized that recommendations from influencers greatly influence her purchasing decisions. "When an influencer I follow recommends a particular product, I tend to trust it," she said. This shows that trust in influencers can change the way Gen Z chooses the products they consume. Aira feels that influencers' opinions greatly influence her decisions.

That she often discusses with her friends about environmentally friendly products. "I feel more connected to my friends when we discuss sustainability issues," she said. These discussions encourage her to be more concerned and critical of the products she buys. Aira believes that having a community that cares about sustainability issues can increase collective awareness among Gen Z. However, Aira also noted that not all of the information she encounters online is reliable. "I often feel confused by the amount of conflicting information," she said. This shows that although online media has many advantages, there are also challenges that Gen Z

must face in selecting information. Aira emphasized the importance of critical thinking skills in understanding information.

Aira finally concluded that online media has changed her perspective on sustainable purchasing. "Now I am more selective when buying products, and I try to choose more environmentally friendly ones," she said. This shows that awareness formed through online media helps Gen Z make more environmentally responsible choices. Observational data, interviews, and documentation supporting these findings indicate that social media provides quick and easy access to information about sustainable products. An interview with Naura revealed that influencers who discuss sustainability greatly influence her decision to purchase environmentally friendly products. Aira added that social media creates a space for discussion that encourages her to care more about the issue. Salsa also noted that sustainability campaigns on social media made her more aware of the impact of each purchase she makes. Documentation analyzed from various online campaigns also shows an increase in awareness of sustainability issues among Gen Z.

That online media is very influential in shaping awareness of sustainability. "I often find information about eco-friendly products on Instagram and TikTok," she said. She feels that these platforms provide easy access to the latest information on environmental issues. Naura also added that content that educates about sustainability makes her more aware of the impact of the products she consumes. The importance of influencers in spreading information. "When I see influencers talking about a particular product, I feel more confident to try it," he said. This shows that recommendations from influential people on social media can change Gen Z's views and consumption behavior. He feels that influencers can bridge difficult-to-understand information into something easier to understand.

Online communities allow for deeper interactions. "I often engage in discussions in the comments section, and it helps me gain different

perspectives,” she said. These interactions not only increase her knowledge but also create a sense of community among those who care about sustainability issues. She realizes that not all information in online media is reliable. “Sometimes it’s hard to distinguish between true and false information,” she said. This shows the challenges that Gen Z faces in navigating information in the digital age. Naura believes that digital literacy is essential to help them choose the right information. “Now I prefer environmentally friendly products even though the price is a little higher,” he said. This shows that awareness created through online media can change consumption behavior to be more responsible.

In theory, the influence of online media on consumer behavior can be explained through Agenda Setting Theory and Uses and Gratifications (Rozi, 2023). According to McCombs and Shaw, online media plays a role in shaping public perception of certain issues, in this case sustainability. Generation Z, who grew up in the digital era, tends to use online media to meet their information and social interaction needs. This is in accordance with the Uses and Gratifications theory which states that individuals actively choose media to meet their needs, including obtaining information about sustainability. Thus, online media is not only a source of information, but also influences consumer attitudes and behavior towards sustainable purchasing.

The findings of this study are in line with previous research. Research shows that social media such as Instagram and TikTok have become the main source of information for Gen Z regarding sustainable products (Akbar & Hasyim, 2024). Gen Z’s motivation to purchase sustainable products is influenced by social factors, including recommendations from influencers on social media. This study strengthens these findings by confirming that online media plays a major role in shaping Gen Z’s awareness of sustainability issues and influencing their consumption behavior.

## **Gen Z's Perception of Sustainable Purchasing Trends Promoted Through Online Media**

The findings of this study indicate that Gen Z has a positive perception of sustainable purchasing trends promoted through online media. From interviews conducted with informants, namely Sinta, it is known that social media, especially Instagram and TikTok, are the main platforms in influencing their views on environmentally friendly products. All three informants agreed that the information presented by influencers and campaigns on social media greatly helped them understand the importance of buying sustainable products. Naura stated that this sustainability trend is not just a lifestyle but an important part of their identity as responsible consumers.

The results of interview and observation data processing support these findings. Sinta emphasized that social media provides quick access to obtain information related to sustainable products. Through influencers, Sinta feels more confident in choosing the promoted products. Salsa also added that sustainability campaigns that are widely promoted on social media influence her views and consumption preferences (Abednego et al., 2021). Documentation of online campaigns involving influencers and educational content shows that messages about sustainability are successfully reaching Gen Z and making them more aware of the social and environmental impacts of the products they consume (Asean, 2024).

One of the respondents named Sinta has a good understanding of the concept of sustainable purchasing. According to her, sustainable purchasing is "Buying goods that are produced in an environmentally friendly way and consider social impacts, such as products that use recycled materials or minimal use of plastic. Also, it is important that the product is made by a company that pays attention to workers' rights and work ethics."

From this statement, we realize the importance of several important aspects of sustainability, namely environmental sustainability and social sustainability (Pangaribuan & Idrianita, 2024). This shows that Sinta

considers sustainable purchasing not only about product materials, but also the production process, including worker welfare. Sinta observed that the trend of sustainable buying is increasingly being promoted on social media, especially on Instagram and Tik-Tok. Some of her opinions on this trend are "Nowadays, many brands are promoting eco-friendly products through Instagram or TikTok. They often use influencers who show a sustainable lifestyle, such as shopping for recycled or local goods."

Noting an increase in sustainable product campaigns through influencer marketing (Brand et al., 2024). She feels that social media promotion is very effective because Gen Z can easily connect with influencers they admire. However, she also expressed concerns about the transparency of some brands "Sometimes I'm skeptical, because not all brands are truly eco-friendly. Some just follow the trend without really caring, like green washing."

The existence of the green washing phenomenon (Plantbottle & Susiari, 2016) which is the practice where companies claim to be more environmentally friendly than they actually are for marketing purposes. This makes it more selective in assessing sustainability claims promoted by brands in online media. The Influence of Social Media on Purchasing Choices with social media playing a big role in Sinta's purchasing decisions. She said that she often gets inspiration about sustainable products from the influencer accounts she follows "I often see posts from influencers I follow about sustainable products, like clothes made from recycled materials or bags made from vegan leather. From there I was interested in trying it."

Sinta also stated that despite being interested in the trend, the price factor is still one of the obstacles, namely "Sustainable products are usually more expensive than regular ones. I am interested in buying, but often think twice if the price does not match the student budget." Promotion on social media (Puspitarini & Nuraeni, 2019), Sinta pointed out that price

considerations are still an obstacle to the full adoption of sustainable purchasing among Gen Z, especially those who are still students.

**Sustainable Brand Criteria** According to Sinta when asked about what makes a brand considered sustainable, Sinta emphasized several important factors: a) **Eco- Friendly Materials:** Products must use recyclable or environmentally friendly materials. "I usually look for materials that are organic or recycled. So it's not just used once and then thrown away."; b) **Transparent Production Process:** Sinta emphasized the importance of transparency in the production process, including worker conditions. "I trust brands more that explain how their products are made, including where the materials come from and how they treat their workers."; c) **Official Certification:** According to Sinta, brands that have sustainability certification are more trustworthy. "If they have a certificate from a clear institution, I am more confident in buying. Because that's a sign that they are not just promoting."

In theory, Gen Z's perception of this sustainable purchasing trend can be explained by the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Karunia H et al., 2021). Based on this theory, Gen Z as active users of social media use the platform to seek certain gratifications, in this case information about products that are in accordance with sustainability values. Social media content that is relevant to sustainability trends fulfills their information needs for environmentally friendly products, thus influencing their consumption behavior. The Agenda Setting Mass Communication Theory also supports this view, where online media plays a major role in directing public attention to sustainability issues and shaping consumer opinion.

The findings of this study are supported by previous studies stating that social media, especially Instagram and TikTok, are very influential in increasing awareness of sustainable products among Gen Z. Research shows that Gen Z tends to buy products that are in line with sustainable values after seeing recommendations from influencers on social media. Thus, these findings strengthen the evidence that online media plays an

important role in shaping Gen Z's perception of sustainable purchasing trends, which in turn influences their consumption behavior.

### **Online Media Has Long-Term Influence on Sustainable Purchasing Habits Among Gen Z**

The results of this study indicate that online media has a long-term influence on sustainable purchasing habits among Gen Z. From interviews conducted with sources, namely Intan, it was revealed that consistent exposure to sustainability content on social media such as Instagram and TikTok shaped their habits to be more selective in choosing products. Naura revealed that after being exposed to campaigns about environmentally friendly products, she began to integrate sustainability values into every purchasing decision, especially in choosing products that are more environmentally friendly and ethical.

Observational and documentation data obtained support these findings. In an interview, Aira explained that she did not only buy sustainable products once, but continued to do so after getting information from influencers and communities on social media. Salsa added that her involvement in online discussions and following sustainability campaigns carried out by brands on social media made her more aware of the environmental impact of the products she purchased. Documentation of digital campaigns that include calls for responsible consumption also indicates that Gen Z increasingly considers sustainability an important aspect of their consumption habits (Al-azhar et al., nd).

The results of an interview with Intan, a 21-year-old student, showed that online media has a significant influence on sustainable purchasing habits among Gen-Z. Intan revealed that through platforms such as Instagram and Tik-Tok, she is regularly exposed to content that promotes environmentally friendly products. Initially, her interest in sustainable products was sparked by trends and influencer recommendations, but over time, consistent exposure to this content has

shaped her perspective on the importance of choosing more sustainable products. Online media, according to Intan, also provides direct access to more transparent information from various brands regarding the production process, raw materials used, and sustainability certifications they have. This makes her more confident in the sustainability claims of products, and ultimately influences her long-term shopping decisions.

The discussion of the interview results shows that online media has a long-term influence on changes in sustainable purchasing habits among Gen Z, as experienced by Intan. Repeated exposure to content that promotes sustainable values can internalize new awareness, where initially Gen Z may only be interested because of the popularity of the promoted product, but over time, they become more critical in considering the environmental impact of the products they buy. In Intan's case, the influence of social media influencers and reviews from other consumers on online platforms made her more educated and more aware of the importance of choosing environmentally friendly products. This proves that online media is not only a platform for popularizing trends, but also forming more responsible and sustainable shopping habits.

Theoretically, the Uses and Gratifications Theory can explain how online media plays a role in forming these long-term habits. According to this theory, Gen Z uses online media not only to seek entertainment, but also to obtain information relevant to their values, such as sustainability. Continuous exposure to content that supports sustainable purchasing through social media reinforces more responsible consumption habits. In addition, the Agenda Setting Theory (Efendi et al., 2023) shows that online media has the ability to direct public attention to sustainability issues, which ultimately shapes consumer perceptions and habits in the long term.

The findings of this study are in line with previous research studies by revealing that although initially triggered by trends, sustainable purchases among Gen Z can turn into long-term habits thanks to the consistent influence of social media. Long-term exposure to educational



content about sustainability on online media encourages Gen Z to continue to purchase sustainable products consistently. These results support the conclusion that online media plays a significant role in creating a lasting impact on Gen Z's consumption habits.

## Conclusion

The study highlights that Generation Z, born in the digital era, is showing significant changes in their consumption behavior, especially related to awareness of social and environmental issues. They are increasingly choosing products that not only meet functional needs but are also produced in an ethical and environmentally friendly manner. This reflects their increasing commitment to sustainability, which has become an integral part of their identity as consumers. Online media, including various social media platforms, play a significant role in this process, serving as the main source of information that influences their purchasing decisions. Generation Z actively seeks information through reviews, recommendations from influencers, and discussions in digital communities, allowing them to make more informed and responsible decisions. However, despite the high interest in sustainable products, Generation Z faces challenges in finding transparent information about the social and environmental impacts of the products they choose. Many brands still lack clarity about their sustainability practices, making it difficult for consumers to make the right choice. Therefore, it is important for companies to increase the transparency and accessibility of information related to the sustainability of their products, so as to build trust among these young consumers.

The results of this study also provide valuable insights for industry players to formulate more effective marketing strategies that are oriented towards sustainability values. By understanding the factors that influence Generation Z's purchasing decisions, companies can create more engaging and relevant campaigns, and leverage the potential of online media as a tool

to raise awareness of sustainability. On the other hand, policymakers can use these findings to design educational programs that support more environmentally friendly consumption practices, as well as encourage collaboration between the private sector and the community to create a greater impact. This research not only enriches the literature on consumer behavior, but also contributes to efforts to create a more environmentally conscious and responsible society in choosing products. Thus, it is hoped that the findings and recommendations of this study can encourage positive changes in consumption patterns among the younger generation, as well as provide guidance for various stakeholders to support sustainability in business practices and daily life.

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