



# Consumer Trust In Digital Platforms And Its Impact On Online Buying Behaviour Among Gen Z – Shoppers

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Josheena Jose,<sup>2</sup>Reniya Joy, <sup>3</sup>Lakshmi Priya M

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor,<sup>2</sup>UG Student,<sup>3</sup>UG Student

Department of Commerce, Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda, Thrissur, University of Calicut,  
Kerala

**Abstract:** This study examines the influence of consumer trust in digital platforms on the online buying behaviour of Generation Z consumers. Using a descriptive research design, primary data were collected from 138 Gen Z respondents through a structured questionnaire. Statistical tools such as Spearman's correlation, regression analysis, ANOVA, and PROCESS Macro (mediation and moderation analysis) were employed using SPSS. The findings reveal that consumer trust has a significant positive impact on online buying intention and behaviour. Online buying intention partially mediates the relationship between trust and actual buying behaviour. The study highlights that dimensions of trust such as security and privacy, reliability and transparency, platform reputation, information quality, and peer influence are crucial determinants of online purchase decisions. The results provide valuable implications for e-commerce firms, digital marketers, and platform developers in designing trust-oriented strategies to enhance consumer engagement and loyalty.

**Index Terms** - Consumer Trust, Digital Platforms, Generation Z, Online Buying Behaviour, Purchase Intention, E-commerce

## Part I

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technologies and widespread internet accessibility have significantly transformed consumer purchasing behaviour. Online shopping has become an integral component of modern consumption patterns, providing convenience, variety, and accessibility. Among various demographic segments, Generation Z (individuals born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s) represents the most digitally engaged cohort. Their purchase decisions are strongly influenced by online reviews, social media content, platform usability, and perceived trustworthiness of digital platforms.

Despite their technological proficiency, Gen Z consumers often express concerns regarding data privacy, payment security, authenticity of information, and reliability of service. These concerns influence their purchase intention and actual buying behaviour. Consequently, understanding the role of consumer trust in shaping online buying behaviour has become essential. This study investigates how trust in digital platforms affects online buying behaviour among Gen Z consumers.

### 2. Review of Literature

Previous studies consistently emphasize the importance of trust in online consumer behaviour. Anderson and Srinivasan (2003) established that trust strengthens the relationship between e-satisfaction and e-loyalty. Bart et al. (2005) demonstrated that privacy, fulfilment, and brand reputation are significant predictors of online trust. Al Karim (2013) identified convenience and reliability as major motivators for online shopping adoption.

Ayuni (2019) highlighted that Gen Z consumers develop loyalty primarily through perceived value and trust. Hidayat et al. (2021) empirically confirmed that trust significantly predicts online purchase decisions. Vo et al. (2023) further revealed that trust plays both a mediating and moderating role in shaping online purchase intention among Gen Z. More recently, Singh (2024) confirmed that trust remains one of the most dominant psychological drivers influencing online buying intention. Saleem et al. (2025) also demonstrated that online reviews influence purchase behaviour primarily through the mechanism of trust.

The literature clearly establishes the theoretical importance of trust in digital environments. However, empirical evidence focusing specifically on Gen Z consumers in the Indian context remains limited, thereby justifying the relevance of the present study.

### 3. Statement of the Problem

Although Gen Z consumers are frequent users of digital platforms, their buying behaviour is often constrained by trust-related concerns such as payment insecurity, misuse of personal data, fake reviews, and delivery issues. Many platforms fail to clearly understand the factors that build trust among young consumers. Therefore, the study seeks to address the following problem: How does consumer trust in digital platforms influence the online buying behaviour of Generation Z consumers? This study aims to identify the key trust-related factors that affect Gen Z's buying decisions and to examine how trust impacts their willingness to shop online. The findings of this study are expected to help digital platforms improve trust, enhance customer experience, and encourage positive online buying behaviour among Gen Z shoppers.

### 4. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the relationship between consumer trust and online buying intention among Gen Z consumers.
2. To analyse the effect of consumer trust on online buying behaviour.
3. To assess the mediating role of online buying intention between trust and behaviour.
4. To examine the moderating influence of demographic variables on the relationship between trust and buying behaviour.

### 5. Hypotheses

1. H1: Consumer trust has a significant positive relationship with online buying behaviour among Gen Z consumers.
2. H1: Online buying intention mediates the relationship between consumer trust and online buying behaviour.
3. H1: Demographic variables significantly moderate the relationship between trust and online buying behaviour.

### 6. Research Methodology

#### 6.1 Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive research design using a quantitative approach.

#### 6.2 Sources of Data

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed online. Secondary data were collected from journals, books, and published research studies.

#### 6.3 Sample Design

Convenience sampling was adopted. The sample consisted of 138 Gen Z respondents aged between 18 to 27 years who actively engage in online shopping.

## 6.4 Tools for Analysis

Data analysis was performed using SPSS and PROCESS Macro. The tools employed included descriptive statistics, Spearman's correlation, regression analysis, ANOVA, and mediation and moderation analysis.

## Part II

## 7. Results and Discussions

The study is grounded in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which postulates that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use influence behavioural intention. In digital commerce, trust functions as a critical psychological mechanism that reduces perceived risk and enhances behavioural intention. The conceptual framework of the study assumes that consumer trust positively influences online buying intention, which in turn influences online buying behaviour. The study was conducted among 138 Gen Z respondents (18–27 years). The majority belonged to the 18–21 age group, with almost equal gender representation. Most respondents were undergraduate students with relatively low to moderate monthly income levels, and a larger proportion belonged to semi-urban backgrounds. This demographic profile confirms that the sample appropriately represents digitally active Gen Z consumers.

### Normality

The One-Sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov test indicated that the data were not normally distributed ( $p < 0.05$ ). Hence, non-parametric techniques were appropriately adopted. Spearman's rank correlation was used to test relationships, while regression, ANOVA, mediation, and moderation analyses were applied to test causal effects.

### Correlation Analysis

Spearman correlation results indicated that all dimensions of consumer trust includes security and privacy, reliability and transparency, platform reputation, information quality, and peer reviews/social influence exhibited significant positive relationships with online buying intention ( $p < 0.01$ ). Online buying intention also showed a strong positive relationship with online buying behaviour ( $\rho = 0.635, p < 0.01$ ). This confirms that higher trust leads to stronger intention and increased actual purchase behaviour.

### Regression Analysis

Simple linear regression analysis confirmed that consumer trust significantly predicts online buying behaviour. The model was statistically significant ( $F = 84.070, p < 0.001$ ), and trust explained approximately 38.2% of the variation in online buying behaviour ( $R^2 = 0.382$ ). The standardized beta coefficient ( $\beta = 0.618, p < 0.001$ ) indicates a strong positive effect of trust on behaviour. The regression model used in the study can be expressed as:

$$OBB = \alpha + \beta(CT) + \varepsilon$$

Where:

- OBB = Online Buying Behaviour (Dependent Variable)
- CT = Consumer Trust (Independent Variable)
- $\alpha$  = Regression constant (intercept)
- $\beta$  = Regression coefficient representing the effect of consumer trust
- $\varepsilon$  = Error term

Based on the study results, the estimated regression equation becomes:

$$\text{Online Buying Behaviour} = 4.024 + 0.166(\text{Consumer Trust})$$

This equation indicates that for every one-unit increase in consumer trust, online buying behaviour increases by 0.166 units, confirming the positive and significant impact of trust.

### Regression Results for Mediation Analysis

Path	Relationship Tested	B	SE	$\beta$	t-value	p-value	Result
a	CT → OBI	0.542	0.061	0.642	8.89	< .001	Significant
c (total effect)	CT → OBB	0.166	0.018	0.618	9.17	< .001	Significant
b	OBI → OBB (controlling CT)	0.294	0.057	0.517	5.16	< .001	Significant
c' (direct effect)	CT → OBB (with OBI)	0.089	0.022	0.331	4.05	< .001	Reduced but Significant

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p
CT → OBB (total effect)	0.618	0.382	84.07	< .001
CT + OBI → OBB (mediation model)	0.702	0.493	65.284	< .001

Effect	Boot Effect	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI	Mediation
CT → OBI → OBB	0.159	0.038	0.091	0.238	Significant (No zero in CI)

Mediation analysis revealed that consumer trust significantly predicted online buying intention ( $B = 0.542$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Consumer trust also had a significant total effect on online buying behaviour ( $B = 0.166$ ,  $p < .001$ ). When both consumer trust and online buying intention were entered into the regression model, online buying intention remained a significant predictor of online buying behaviour ( $B = 0.294$ ,  $p < .001$ ), while the direct effect of trust was reduced but remained significant ( $B = 0.089$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The bootstrapped indirect effect was significant (Boot Effect = 0.159; 95% CI [0.091, 0.238]), confirming that online buying intention partially mediates the relationship between consumer trust and online buying behaviour.

Moderation analysis was conducted using an interaction regression model. The results indicate that consumer trust significantly predicts online buying behaviour ( $\beta = 0.532$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The demographic variable (income) also showed a significant main effect on online buying behaviour ( $\beta = 0.241$ ,  $p = .006$ ). Importantly, the interaction term between consumer trust and income (CT × Income) was statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.219$ ,  $p < .001$ ), confirming the presence of a moderation effect. This implies that the strength of the relationship between consumer trust and online buying behaviour varies across income groups, with higher-income respondents exhibiting a stronger trust-behaviour relationship.

### Part III

## 8. Findings

The statistical analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between all dimensions of consumer trust and online buying intention. Regression analysis confirmed that consumer trust significantly predicts online buying behaviour. Mediation analysis demonstrated that online buying intention partially mediates the relationship between trust and behaviour. The findings confirm that trust is both a direct and indirect determinant of online buying behaviour among Gen Z consumers.

### □ **Consumer trust significantly influences online buying behaviour.**

The regression results confirmed that consumer trust has a strong positive effect on online buying behaviour among Generation Z respondents ( $\beta = 0.618$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This indicates that higher levels of trust lead to increased likelihood of online purchases.

□ **Consumer trust significantly predicts online buying intention.** Mediation analysis showed that consumer trust strongly affects online buying intention ( $B = 0.542$ ,  $p < .001$ ), suggesting that trust plays a crucial psychological role in shaping purchase willingness.

□ **Online buying intention partially mediates the trust–behaviour relationship.** The mediation results revealed that online buying intention transmits part of the effect of trust to buying behaviour. This confirms that trust not only has a direct effect but also an indirect effect through behavioural intention.

□ **Demographic variables moderate the trust–behaviour relationship.** Moderation analysis demonstrated that income significantly alters the strength of the relationship between consumer trust and online buying behaviour (interaction term  $\beta = 0.219$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The effect of trust is stronger among respondents with higher income levels.

□ **Trust dimensions such as security, privacy, and platform reliability are critical.** Respondents indicated higher purchase confidence when platforms demonstrated secure payment systems, transparent policies, and reliable delivery mechanisms.

□ **Gen Z consumers are highly influenced by peer reviews and online information.** The study found that authentic reviews and social influence significantly contribute to trust formation and purchase decisions.

## 9. Suggestions to E-commerce Platforms and Marketers

- Strengthen data privacy and payment security mechanisms.
- Enhance transparency in policies and operations.
- Promote authentic reviews and reduce fake feedback.
- Improve customer service responsiveness.

## 10. Conclusion

The study concludes that consumer trust is a critical determinant of online buying behaviour among Generation Z consumers. Higher levels of trust significantly enhance purchase intention and actual buying behaviour. Digital platforms that prioritize transparency, security, and user experience are more likely to attract and retain Gen Z consumers. The study provides valuable insights for researchers and practitioners seeking to understand the evolving dynamics of digital consumer behaviour.

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