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RESEARCH ARTICLE

**IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON THE GEN-Z CONSUMERS
BEHAVIOURAL ATTITUDE AND PURCHASE INTENTION TOWARD PERSONAL
CARE PRODUCTS**

K. Mohamed Imran¹ and T. Habeebur Rahman²

1. Assistant Professor and HEAD, Department of Business Administration, Islamiah College (Autonomous), Vaniyambadi.
2. Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, Islamiah College (Autonomous), Vaniyambadi.

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Abstract

Advancements in internet and communication technologies have prompted considerable changes in marketing techniques and customer behaviour. Social media has become a primary medium for establishing connections between businesses and consumers, as well as impacting multiple phases of the purchasing and decision-making process. Over the years, social media has gradually evolved into a crucial marketing platform affecting customer purchasing behaviour, particularly among urban Gen-Z consumers in India. The aim of this work is investigating the impact of social media marketing on the perspectives and buying behaviour of Gen Z consumers in the Chennai Region, Tamilnadu with a special focus on personal care products. The study included 480 respondents of Gen-Z category who regularly use personal care products and active in social media usage. Based on the popular theories like Theory of Reasoned Action and Theory of Planned Behaviour, the study identified the influencing variables in social media marketing. The variables included in the study were Targeted Advertisements, Engagement and Interactions, Referrals and Recommendations, Influencer Marketing, Discounts and Offers, and Brand Image. The study hypothesised that the influencing factors in social media advertising and marketing techniques have profound impact on the Behavioural Intention to Purchase and Actual Purchase of personal care products. The results of the empirical analysis have illustrated that social media significantly impacts each stage of the Gen Z's decision-making process, in particular the factors like Targeted Advertisements, Referrals and Recommendations, Engagement and Interactions have strong impact on the behavioural intention to purchase personal care products among Gen-Z consumers.

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Corresponding Author:- K. Mohamed Imran

Address:- Assistant Professor & HEAD, Department of Business Administration, Islamiah College (Autonomous), Vaniyambadi.

However, the study found that Brand Image was not a defining factor for the Gen-Z consumers, and they tend to alter brands that suit their needs. This flexibility allows them to seek out products that align more closely with their values and lifestyles, often prioritising authenticity and sustainability over traditional brand loyalty. The results of the study has implications for personal care companies and advertisement firms focussed in social media promotions and marketing.

Introduction:-

The utilisation of the internet, social media, mobile applications, and other digital communication technology has become integral to the daily lives of billions of individuals. General population and younger generation in particular are increasingly exposing themselves to digital and social media. This serves multiple objectives, including their duties as consumers as they seek information about products/services, acquire and utilise them, and share their experiences with others (Stephen, 2016). Businesses have reacted to this fundamental change by augmenting their use of digital marketing channels. In the contemporary digital landscape, social media has emerged as a potent instrument for marketing and communication, transforming the manner in which brands engage with and connect to consumers. Organisations increasingly utilise these digital channels to strengthen customer relationships, augment brand loyalty, and affect purchasing behaviour through personalised communications, influencer collaborations, and interactive marketing. Several past studies have highlighted that more than one-third of worldwide advertising expenditure are allocated to digital channels. Consequently, consumer marketing in future are poised to predominantly occur in digital environments, especially social media and mobile platforms. Consequently, it is essential for consumer research to analyse and comprehend customer behaviour in digital contexts (Alghizzawi, 2019).

Background:-

Growth of Social media Users:-

Globally, the number of social media users has seen tremendous growth in the recent past. Fedkina (2022) predicted that the number of people interacting with digital data daily—a primary driver for social media use—is forecasted to hit 6 billion in 2025. According to Jafar et al. (2023), there were roughly 4.26 billion social media users in 2021, this figure is projected to increase to nearly 6 billion by 2027. The Journal of Contemporary Clinical Practice (2024) estimated that the global social media users surpassed 4.9 billion, representing over 60% of the world's population as of Jan 2024. The general expectations are that the number of social media users in the worldwide would reach approximately 5.6 to 5.8 billion by 2026.

The scenario in India with respect to active social media users is no different. As of early 2026, there are approximately 500 million active social media user identities in India, representing about 34.3% of the total population (DataReportal, 2026). Researchers suggest the number of people interacting with social networks could reach 900 million by the end of 2026, driven by the expansion of the digital population which now exceeds 1 billion internet users (Coralbees, 2026). Over 588 million users in India are active consumers of short-video content (IAMAI, 2026).

In contrast to other nations, the expense of internet access is relatively low in India. In 2025, India's internet user count surpassed 950 million, mostly propelled by swift advancements in rural connection, heightened consumption of short videos, and growing acceptance of artificial intelligence. Concurrently, smartphone usage rose to 85.5%, thereby broadening its digital ecology. By 2026, India's digital populace is projected to surpass 900 million active users, making it the second-largest online viewership worldwide. IAMAI survey indicated that rural India comprises 57 percent of India's active internet users, approximately 548 million individuals (IAMAI, 2026). The report further noted that the social media adoption is more pronounced among younger demographics, solidifying their position as a principal catalyst of digital engagement. The IAMAI report stated that quick commerce is driving a significant transformation in the online shopping habits of Indians, with social commerce following closely, as the e-commerce landscape evolves beyond conventional online marketplaces. Among urban users, 230 million individuals (56 percent of the urban active internet population) engaged in online shopping in the previous year, with quick commerce and social commerce rising in popularity alongside established marketplaces.

Social media Platforms in India:-

Social media applications in India are becoming integral to discourse, entertainment, commerce, and education. Video calls, messaging application functionalities, and short-form videos in vernacular languages garner substantial engagement in both urban and rural markets.

Various reasons, such as cheaper data plans, the proliferation of localised content, and a vibrant community of content creators, contributed to the popularity of social media applications. Intensive engagement is observed among specialised communities on leading social media platforms in India, particularly on short-video applications. Businesses choose solutions such as WhatsApp Business for immediate communication with consumers, as the application facilitates rapid connections and fosters high-trust interactions. Brands that comprehend the optimal timing for hashtag usage on social media can enhance trend amplification and more precisely target audience segments. The following social media platforms are most popular in India

Instagram – India’s Most Active Social Platform:-

Instagram facilitates brief videos, visual narratives, and creator-focused initiatives. Brands utilise it to connect with communities, while influencers enhance their postings by identifying optimal posting times on Instagram.

YouTube – The Undisputed Video Giant:-

YouTube captivates millions of visitors from all age demographics each hour. It possesses a robust recommendation engine that promotes extended viewing durations, rendering it indispensable for video dissemination and brand narrative.

WhatsApp – India’s Default Communication App:-

WhatsApp continues to be the most favoured messaging application among Indians. This platform facilitates conversations, broadcasts, communities, and video calls, which accounts for the widespread use of the WhatsApp Business feature by firms to maintain client connectivity.

Facebook – Still Strong Among 25+ Audience:-

Facebook persists in appealing to older demographics, whether for groups, conversations, or events. Brands that recognise the advantages of social media marketing frequently utilise Facebook and other channels for efficient engagement.

Snapchat – Popular Among Teenagers and Gen Z:-

Snapchat captivates Generation Z through augmented reality filters, brief films, and expressive content types. With an increasing user base, it continues to be one of the most utilised social networking applications in India.

X (Twitter) – Real-Time Conversations:-

X remains pertinent for immediate news, popular subjects, and expert analysis. The immediacy of its nature appeals to professionals, journalists, and companies seeking live engagement.

LinkedIn – Professional Networking Leader:-

LinkedIn facilitates the growth of professional networks and is extensively utilised for career advancements and business-to-business communication. Numerous experts who recognise the significance of branding in business utilise LinkedIn to disseminate knowledge and establish authority.

ShareChat – Regional Language Powerhouse:-

ShareChat exerts significant influence via regional languages and user-generated content. Its extensive penetration in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities provides brands with significant access to Indian viewers.

Moj / Josh – Short Video Entertainment:-

These platforms facilitate rapid, captivating short-form videos that attract youthful users in search of imaginative pleasure. Their creative communities consistently draw millions of monthly active users.

Pinterest – Visual Inspiration Platform:-

Pinterest continues to be a favoured platform for lifestyle, décor, fashion, and DIY exploration. It is frequently utilised by audiences seeking novel concepts and selected visual stimuli.

Characteristics of Generation Z Consumers:-

Generation Z is prominently referred to consumer demographic born between the mid-1990s to the early 2010s. They have become a significant component of the workforce. Generation Z's consumer traits often exhibit their realistic attitude towards finances and education. Generation Z is gaining significant influence regarding purchasing

power and disposable income. Additional significant impacts are their proclivity for technology, their commitment to social concerns, and a pronounced individualistic tendency.

Generally, Generation Z exhibits the following consumer behaviours:

- They are typically 'educated customers' who frequently conduct research and evaluate alternatives prior to making a purchasing choice.
- They are generally less loyal to certain companies, opting instead to seek the most advantageous offers.
- They prioritise brand ethics and business responsibility to a greater extent than Millennials.
- Among all generations, they are the most inclined to engage in shopping using social media.
- Although Generation Z is mindful of prices, they are not as focused on cost as certain preceding generations.
- Products and companies must demonstrate a combination of value, quality, and ethical behaviours to engage the Gen Z consumer.
- They prefer customised shopping experiences that can be adapted to their specific preferences.

Notably, Generation Z wields considerably greater influence over the consumer market than their real purchasing power would imply. They significantly impact their parents' purchasing choices and broader product trends.

Statement of the Problem:-

In the modern digital environment, marketing techniques have grown more complex due to the ever-increasing impact of Generation Z. This generation, termed "digital natives," has unique problems and opportunities for marketers due to their technological proficiency and distinctive buying behaviours. Marketers have slowly started moved away from traditional marketing tactics and accustoming to a variety of tools and methods to get new customers' attention or keep current customers. One of the most popular trends in marketing theory and practice recently has been using social media to market. This approach allows brands to engage directly with their audience, fostering a more personal connection. By leveraging platforms companies can create tailored content that resonates with their target demographic. Marketing managers often use the behavioural intention to purchase as one of important inputs to forecast futures sales and to determine what actions had to be taken that will impact consumers' actual purchase. Social media has revolutionized the promotion and marketing of products through social media applications like Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, X(Twitter), etc.

Research Model:-

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), developed by Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen in 1975, is a fundamental psychological model used to predict how consumers will behave based on their pre-existing attitudes and behavioural intentions. In the context of consumer purchase intention, TRA suggests that a person's decision to buy a product is the direct result of their Intention to perform that behaviour. Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) has been employed in numerous studies to analyse consumers' buying patterns and intentions (Armutcu et al., 2024).

This study adopted the Theory of Reasoned action (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2000) and Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) to develop the conceptual model that investigates the impact of influencing factors like Targeted Advertisements, Engagement and Interactions, Referrals and Recommendations, Influencer Marketing, Discounts and Offers and Brand Image on the Behavioural Intention to Purchase and Actual Purchase of personal care products by Gen-Z consumers.

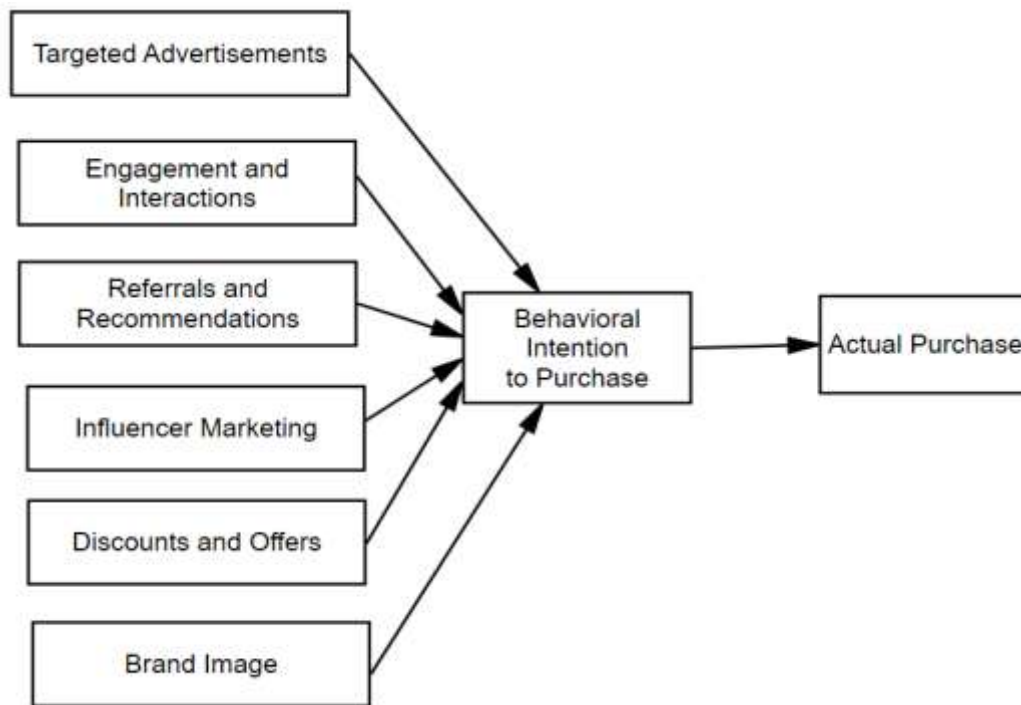


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Hypothesis:-

Based on the research model, following hypothesis were framed for the study:-

- Targeted advertisements in social media has significant effect on the behavioural intention to purchase of personal care products.
- Referrals and Recommendations in social media has significant effect on the behavioural intention to purchase of personal care products.
- Discounts and offers in social media has significant effect on the behavioural intention to purchase of personal care products.
- Engagement and interactions in social media has significant effect on the behavioural intention to purchase of personal care products.
- Influencer Marketing in social media has significant effect on the behavioural intention to purchase of personal care products.
- Brand Image in social media has significant effect on the behavioural intention to purchase of personal care products.
- Behavioural intention to purchase in social media has significant effect on actual purchase of personal care products.

Research Design:-

Methodology:-

This work adopted quantitative methodology and descriptive research as employed in which a structured survey instrument designed and standardised by the authors was used to collect primary data from Gen Z customers using personal care products regularly. The data were collected from respondents in the Chennai Region of Tamil Nadu. A mix of convenience and snowball sampling strategy was employed to encompass a diverse array of individuals from both urban and semi-urban areas. The survey aimed to assess critical variables in social media marketing and advertising like “Targeted Advertisements (TA)”, “Engagement and Interaction (EI)”, “Referrals and Recommendations (REF)”, “Influencer Marketing (IM)”, “Discounts and Offers (DO)”, “Brand Image (BI)”, and “Purchase Intention (PI)”. The data collected from the respondents was analysed using SPSS 25.0 software package and structural model was validated using AMOS 21.0 software.

Population and Sample:-

The population of the study consisted of Gen-Z consumers from the Chennai Region, Tamil Nadu who regularly purchase and use personal care products (skin care, body care, hair care, color cosmetics, anti-aging products, etc.). The respondents were contacted through online medium and emails along with link for Questionnaire. Prior to data collection, it was ensured that the respondents have fair knowledge and experience in online purchases.

The sample size for the study was determined using the sample size determination calculations (Cohen, 2025). It was observed that the minimum sample size should be greater than 384. As a result, it was planned to collect data from 600 Gen-Z consumers through non-probability sample method. The study adopted a mix of purposive and snow ball sampling technique in which each respondent was asked provide at-least five references (future sample) for further data collection. Out of the 600 questionnaires, a few response sheets had incomplete entries and contained errors, and were therefore not considered for inclusion in the final sample. Thus, the final study only included 480 respondents. The calculated nett response rate was 80.0%. Data on the demographic characteristics of survey participants is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics (N=480)

Parameter	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	160	33.33
	Female	320	66.67
Qualification	Under Graduation	310	64.58
	Post-Graduation	170	35.42
Occupation	Student	180	64.4
	Private Employee	110	14.4
	Self-Employed	70	12.2
	Homemaker	120	8.9
Income (Per Annum)	Below 4L	130	27.08
	4L – 8L	180	37.50
	8L – 12L	92	19.17
	Above 12L	78	16.25
Preferred Social media	Instagram	172	35.83
	Facebook	60	12.50
	Youtube	68	14.17
	Snapchat	55	11.46
	WhatsApp	60	12.50
	X(Twitter)	45	9.38
	LinkedIn	20	4.17

The demographic profile of the respondents shows that the majority of the Gen-Z consumers of the study were female (66.67%) and male accounted for 33.33%. Majority of the respondents were below 25 years (40.7%). The majority of respondents (64.58%) were undergraduates and 35.42% of respondents have a post-graduate qualification. Occupational profile indicates that 64.4% of the respondents were students and 14.4% were employed in private companies, 12.2% were self-employed and 8.9% of the respondents were homemakers. The annual income level showed that about 37.50% of the respondents have reported earning between Rs. 4L to Rs. 8L, while 27.08% of the respondents have income below Rs. 4L. 19.17% of the respondents have income Rs.8L – Rs. 12L. 16.25% of the respondents have income exceeding Rs. 12L per year. Instagram (35.83%) was identified as the predominant social media among the Gen-Z respondents of the study, followed by Youtube (14.17%), Facebook (12.50%) and WhatsApp (12.50%). Interestingly, Snapchat (11.46%) has evolved as a dominant social media among the Gen-Z population unlike other generations.

Results and Discussion:-

Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics of the variables of the study. The parameters measured were mean (M), standard deviation (SD), Skewness and Kurtosis. In addition, the reliability of the variables was also measured using Coefficient of reliability namely, Cronbach's Alpha. Skewness and Kurtosis were used in the study to check the normality of the data. Skewness value between +/- 3.0 and kurtosis value between +/- 3.0 is acceptable for measuring psychometric constructs (Hair et al., 2010). Since the values for Skewness and Kurtosis are well below the specified criteria, the data adhere to the conditions of normality and permit the effective execution of parametric tests.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Analysis (N=480)

Variable	No. of Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's Alpha
Targeted Advertisements	6	3.95	0.69	-0.92	0.98	0.842
Engagement and Interactions	6	4.18	0.55	-1.06	1.50	0.912
Referrals and Recommendations	6	3.72	0.71	-0.40	0.53	0.824
Influencer Marketing	6	3.92	0.61	-1.04	2.20	0.764
Discounts and Offers	6	4.01	0.56	-0.46	0.61	0.844
Brand Image	6	4.09	0.62	-1.17	2.23	0.862
Behavioural Intention to Purchase	4	3.86	0.67	-0.73	1.04	0.922
Actual Purchase	4	4.04	0.68	-1.19	2.19	0.902

From the above table, it can be inferred that Engagement and Interactions (M=4.18, SD=0.55) are the highly rated variables in social media influencing the consumer purchase of personal care products. This was followed by Brand Image (M=4.09, SD=0.62), Actual Purchase (M=4.04, SD=0.68) and Discounts and Offers (M=4.01, SD=0.56). Targeted Advertisements received a mean rating of 3.95 with a standard deviation of 0.69, and Influencer Marketing (M=3.92, SD=0.61) received optimal mean ratings. Behavioural Intention to Purchase (M=3.86, SD=0.67) and the variable, Referrals and Recommendations (M=3.72, SD=0.71), received comparatively lower mean ratings. The reliability of the influencing factors in social media marketing for personal care products was measured using the coefficient of reliability, called "Cronbach's alpha" (Table 2). The Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.764 to 0.912, surpassing the minimum threshold of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978). Thus, all the variables of the study have satisfied the conditions for reliability. The validity of the scale was ensured by measuring content validity and face validity using the expert's opinion method. These findings indicate a robust framework for analysing the impact of social media on consumers' behaviour in the personal care sector.

Evaluation of Conceptual Model:-

The conceptual model of the study was validated using structural equation model (SEM) analysis in AMOS 21.0 software (Figure 1).

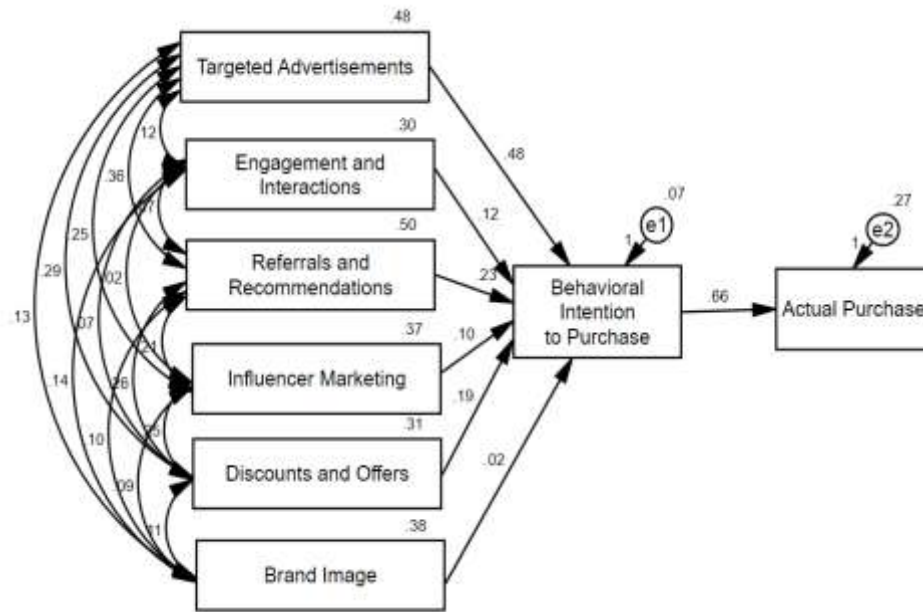


Figure 2: Evaluation of Structural Model

Table 3 Regression Estimates

Dependent Variable		Predictor Variable	Beta Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p-value
Behavioural Intention to Purchase	<---	Targeted Advertisements	0.50	0.03	16.24	0.00
Behavioural Intention to Purchase	<---	Engagement and Interactions	0.10	0.03	5.04	0.00
Behavioural Intention to Purchase	<---	Discounts and Offers	0.16	0.04	4.76	0.00
Behavioural Intention to Purchase	<---	Referrals and Recommendations	0.24	0.03	8.96	0.00
Behavioural Intention to Purchase	<---	Influencer Marketing	0.09	0.03	3.32	0.00
Behavioural Intention to Purchase	<---	Brand Image	0.02	0.02	0.94	0.35
Actual Purchase	<---	Behavioural Intention to Purchase	0.64	0.04	18.42	0.00

Table 3 displays the regression estimates showing the impact of different influencing factors in social media marketing on behavioural intention to purchase and actual purchase of personal care products. Below are the summarized findings of the hypothesis testing.

- Targeted Advertisements in social media ($\beta=0.50$, $p=0.00$) has significant and positive effect on the Behavioural Intention to Purchase of personal care products. The hypothesis “Targeted advertisements in social media has significant effect on the behavioural intention to purchase of personal care products” was accepted ($p\text{-level} = 0.01$).
- Referrals and Recommendations in social media ($\beta=0.24$, $p=0.00$) has significant and positive effect on the Behavioural Intention to Purchase of personal care products. The hypothesis “Referrals and Recommendations in social media has significant effect on the behavioural intention to purchase of personal care products” was accepted ($p\text{-level} = 0.01$).
- Discounts and Offers in social media ($\beta=0.16$, $p=0.00$) has significant and positive effect on the Behavioural Intention to Purchase of personal care products. The hypothesis “Discounts and offers in social media has

significant effect on the behavioural intention to purchase of personal care products” was accepted (p-level = 0.01).

- Engagement and Interactions in social media ($\beta=0.10$, $p=0.00$) has significant and positive effect on the Behavioural Intention to Purchase of personal care products. The hypothesis “Engagement and interactions in social media has significant effect on the behavioural intention to purchase of personal care products” was accepted (p-level = 0.01).
- Influencer Marketing in social media ($\beta=0.09$, $p=0.00$) has significant and positive effect on the Behavioural Intention to Purchase of personal care products. The hypothesis “Influencer Marketing in social media has significant effect on the behavioural intention to purchase of personal care products” was accepted (p-level = 0.01).
- Brand Image in social media ($\beta=0.02$, $p=0.35$) has no significant effect on the Behavioural Intention to Purchase of personal care products as the p-value is greater than 0.05. The hypothesis “Brand Image in social media has significant effect on the behavioural intention to purchase of personal care products” was REJECTED (p-level > 0.05).
- Behavioural Intention to Purchase in social media ($\beta=0.64$, $p=0.00$) has significant and positive effect on Actual Purchase of personal care products. The hypothesis “Behavioural intention to purchase in social media has significant effect on actual purchase of personal care products” was accepted (p-level = 0.01).

Table 4 presents the values for goodness of fit indices for the validation of structural model of the study.

Table 4 Goodness of FIT - AMOS Model

Variables	Obtained Value	Recommended Value
Chi square value	14.115	-
p-value	0.028	-
Chisq/df	2.35	<5.0 (Schumacker and Lomax, 2004)
RMSEA	0.053	<0.09 (Hair et al. 2011)
RMR	0.007	<0.08 (Hair et al. 2011)
GFI	0.95	>0.90 (Hair et al. (2011)
AGFI	0.93	>0.90 (Hair et al. (2011)
CFI	0.95	>0.90 (Hair et al. (2011)
TLI	0.94	>0.90 (Hair et al. (2011)
RFI	0.92	>0.90 (Hair et al. (2011)
NFI	0.96	>0.90 (Hu, Bentler, 1999),

The above table demonstrates that the measured values for different parameters clearly comply with the specified values mentioned in the literature. Consequently, the model is considered to exhibit a strong fit. The computed values for different indices including GFI (Goodness of Fit Index), AGFI (Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index), CFI (Comparative Fit Index), TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index), NFI (Normed Fit Index), and RFI (Relative Fit Index) are well above the recommended threshold of 0.9 (Hair et al., 2011). The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) decreased below the 0.08 threshold, indicating that the model is highly accurate and can be regarded as an ideal fit (Hair et al., 2011). Similarly, RMR (Root Mean Square Residual) value for the model is below the threshold limit of 0.08 (Hair et al. (2011). Overall, the obtained values for model fit indices and measurements fall within the acceptable range, confirming that the structural model is validated.

Conclusions:-

Understanding the perspectives of customers and their needs is important for any marketing strategy. Social media marketing has become an indispensable part of human life. Social media enables marketers to directly reach intended customers of all ages, particularly millennials and Gen-Z. These platforms allow for targeted advertising and personalised content, fostering stronger connections with these demographics. As a result, brands can engage with their audiences in real time, adapting strategies to meet their evolving preferences.

This influence of social media marketing not only shapes Gen Z consumer perceptions but also enhances engagement and loyalty through continuous interactions. As brands respond to these changes, they must strategically utilise social media to cultivate stronger connections with their audience. Generation Z individuals respond favourably to tailored communications through social media and seek to perceive the worth of their purchases. Integrating special offers and rewards with social media will enhance the ability to engage Gen Z target demographic. Alternatively, marketers can leverage Gen Z's preference for micro-influencers and social media. Assigning distinctive referral codes to pertinent micro-influencers for dissemination among their followers holds significant promise as a promotional marketing strategy. Selecting micro-influencers judiciously to cultivate a robust Gen Z clientele should be given utmost priority. However, it is important to note that Generation Z exhibits a lack of brand loyalty. It is essential to remain vigilant in order to maintain their attention with innovative offers, products, and exemplary customer service. Generation Z individuals are pragmatic and well-informed consumers; therefore, it is essential to provide them with products / services and promotions that possess genuine value. Additionally, they are highly conscious of social issues, therefore marketers should consider strategies to make your business more socially conscious. Gen-Z consumers routinely transition between channels; therefore, it is advisable to adopt an omnichannel strategy to gain access to this vast market.

Limitations:-

The study was conducted with a comparatively smaller sample of 480 respondents. The future study could focus on incorporating a larger with diverse population comprising of Millennials, Gen X, Baby Boomers etc. The effect of different demographic variables on the influencing factors in social media marketing could be taken in future studies to gain deeper understanding of consumer preferences and buying behaviours.

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13. A primary difficulty in digital advertising is limited brand awareness. In the extensive realm of online information and products, a brand's capacity for consumer recognition and recall has emerged as a critical determinant of success.