

EXPLORING GENERATION X AND MILLENNIAL CONSUMER BEHAVIORS REGARDING CREATIVE ECONOMY PRODUCT PROMOTION VIA WHATSAPP IN THE SOCIETY 5.0 ERA

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the differences in consumer behavior between Generation X and Millennials in responding to creative economy product promotions via the WhatsApp platform, using a qualitative approach based on a literature review. The main focus of this study is to conceptually examine how the characteristics of each generation influence how they respond to digital promotional messages delivered through personal communication media. The data analyzed comes from various library sources, including scientific journals, books, research reports, and recent articles related to consumer behavior, WhatsApp marketing, and the dynamics of the creative economy in the Society 5.0 era. The study results show that Millennials tend to be more responsive to visual, interactive, and fast-paced promotions, in line with their higher levels of technology adoption. Conversely, Generation X is more cautious and selective, and places great emphasis on the credibility of information sources. WhatsApp, with its direct and personal communication characteristics, has great potential as an effective digital promotional medium, especially if communication strategies are tailored to the characteristics of each generation. This research is expected to provide a conceptual contribution to the development of more targeted digital marketing strategies in the creative economy sector.

Keywords: *Consumer Behavior, WhatsApp Marketing, Generation X, Millennials, Creative Economy, Society 5.0*

Introduction

Amidst the rapid development of information technology, the use of social media in everyday life has become an inseparable part of people's activities, including in terms of consumption and purchasing decisions. (Paturrahman et al., 2023) WhatsApp, as one of the most popular communication platforms in Indonesia, is not only used for personal purposes, but has also become a fairly effective product promotion medium. (Priantoro, 2019). Generation X and Millennials as the two dominant age groups currently have different characteristics in utilizing technology, including in responding to promotions via social media. (Handijono et al., 2024). Consumer behavior of these two generations towards promotional messages via WhatsApp shows interesting dynamics, especially in the context of marketing creative economy products in the Society 5.0 era, where technology and human needs are optimally synergized. (Maddox & Kanthawala, 2023). The basic concepts in this research include consumer behavior, digital promotion, and the use of social media as a marketing channel. Consumer behavior refers to the mental, emotional, and behavioral processes involved in searching for, purchasing, using, and evaluating products or services. (Ardani, 2022) In this context, consumer response to promotions on WhatsApp is an important aspect to examine, as digital engagement does not always result in uniform purchasing decisions across generations. (Khafidin, 2020) Digital promotions via WhatsApp are often personal and interactive, providing a significant opportunity for creative economy players to approach consumers directly. (Handijono et al., 2024). WhatsApp has become the most widely used communication platform among Indonesians, with a penetration rate exceeding 91%. This figure is higher than Instagram (84.6%), Facebook (83%), and TikTok (77.4%). This trend demonstrates that social media serves not only as a means of maintaining social connections and entertainment, but also as a means of discovering new products and brands. Meanwhile, Generation X and millennials have different communication preferences and technology acceptance. According to (Mulyanti, 2021) Generation X, born between 1965–1980, tends to be more selective and

cautious in receiving digital messages, while the millennial generation (born between 1981–1996) is more adaptive to digital information and has a tendency to search for further information before deciding to buy. The purpose of this study is to explore and analyze the consumer behavior of Generation X and millennials towards the promotion of creative economy products via WhatsApp in the Society 5.0 era. This study also aims to identify factors that influence the effectiveness of promotions via WhatsApp and understand the differences in communication preferences between the two generations in the context of digital marketing. This research is crucial given the increasing role of the creative economy in national economic growth and the high level of WhatsApp usage among Indonesians. By understanding consumer behavior based on generational segmentation regarding the promotion of creative economy products, businesses and marketers can design more effective and targeted communication strategies. Furthermore, the results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of academic literature on digital marketing and consumer behavior in the Society 5.0 era.

Theoretical review

1. Consumer Behavior Theory

Consumer behavior refers to the decision-making process and actions individuals take in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products or services to satisfy their needs and desires (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010). Factors influencing consumer behavior include psychological factors (motivation, perception, learning), social factors (reference groups, family), and personal characteristics such as age and lifestyle. In the digital context, consumers are increasingly influenced by media interactivity, speed of information access, and message personalization, especially in applications such as WhatsApp that enable direct communication between businesses and consumers. Consumer behavior is the study of the processes individuals, groups, and organizations use to select, purchase, use, and evaluate products or services to meet their needs and desires (Kotler & Keller, 2008, in Firmansyah et al., 2022). This process encompasses a wide range of activities, from information search and evaluation of alternatives to purchasing decisions. Understanding consumer behavior is crucial for marketers as it forms the basis for designing effective marketing strategies. According to Kotler (2005), consumer behavior is influenced by several key dimensions, including problem recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, and purchasing decisions. Firmansyah et al. (2022) outline three main factors influencing consumer behavior: cultural factors, social factors, and personal factors.

1. Cultural Factors

Cultural factors include the values, beliefs, and norms that shape basic consumer behavior. Culture influences how consumers recognize needs, interpret information, and make product choices.

The three main indicators in cultural factors are:

- a. Culture: A system of values and norms passed down through families and social institutions.
- b. Subculture: A group with particular characteristics, such as nationality, religion, race, or geographic region.
- c. Social class: Stratification of society that influences consumption patterns and brand preferences (Kotler, 2005; Arnolds & Thompson, 2005, in Firmansyah et al., 2022).

Marketers who understand cultural factors can predict consumer acceptance of a product, because culture plays the most fundamental role in purchasing behavior (Setiadi, 2010, in Firmansyah et al., 2022).

2. Social Factors

Social factors relate to the influence of groups and social interactions on purchasing decisions. The social environment influences consumers' attitudes, values, and lifestyles.

The main dimensions of social factors include:

- a. Reference group: A group that influences behavior directly (face to face) or indirectly.
- b. Family: As a primary reference group that has a significant influence on purchasing preferences.
- c. Role and status: An individual's position in a group influences consumption patterns (Kotler, 2005; Anoraga, 2000, in Firmansyah et al., 2022).

Social factors can introduce new lifestyles, influence self-concept, and create social pressure that influences brand choice (Usman Effendi, 2016, in Firmansyah et al., 2022).

3. Personal Factors

Personal factors reflect individual characteristics that influence purchasing behavior. These variables are typically stable over a life cycle, although they can change gradually. Personal factor indicators include:

- a. Age and life cycle stage: Different consumption needs and preferences at each life stage.

- b. Occupation and economic conditions: Influence the types of products purchased.
- c. Lifestyle: A pattern of living reflected in activities, interests, and opinions.

Personality and self-concept: Psychological characteristics that differentiate individuals in consumption patterns (Lamb, 2001, in Firmansyah et al., 2022). Marketing needs to adapt its product strategy to the personal characteristics of the target market in order to meet their needs effectively (Darmawati et al., 2007, in Firmansyah et al., 2022).

2. Generation Theory

This theory was introduced by Strauss and Howe (1991) and explains that people born within a certain time period (cohort) have similar characteristics, values, and social experiences. Generation X (born 1965–1980) tends to be independent, values privacy, is selective about information, and prioritizes rationality and source credibility in making decisions. The Millennial generation (born 1981–1996) is known as digital natives, is familiar with technology, likes visual content and interactive experiences, and is open to innovation and rapid change. These differences have a significant impact on how each generation responds to digital marketing strategies, including through messaging applications such as WhatsApp. (Zis et al., 2021). People born and raised in the same time period experience similar historical, social, and technological events—thus forming values, attitudes, and behavioral patterns that are relatively distinctive compared to other cohorts. This theory is often used as a framework for analyzing differences in consumer preferences, work styles, and communication styles across generations, but recent literature also cautions against overly broad generalizations due to intragenerational variation and local contexts. (Ahmad, 2020). Based on the findings of the Indonesia Millennial Report (2019), as many as 70.4% of millennials obtain the latest information—including economic and political issues—through social media.

Their activity on these platforms is quite high, with status updates frequency 2–5 times a day (79.50%), 6–8 times a day (52.5%), and more than 8 times a day (3.2%). The most widely used social media include Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Meanwhile, for instant messaging applications, WhatsApp is the most dominant, used by 97.1% of respondents, with around 79% accessing it immediately after waking up. The report also revealed that millennials are classified as heavy social media users with a usage duration of 4–6 hours per day, with 49% even categorized as addicted users who spend more than 7 hours a day. This phenomenon is an important concern for all parties and elements of the nation to seriously examine. In the context of communication, Millennials and Gen Z show a clear shift compared to previous generations: both prioritize digital channels—especially visual-based social media and short videos—as the main space for interaction, information, and identity formation. (Pujiyanto & Sulistiyowati, 2016) Gen Z tends to seek authenticity, short-form, and interactive content, and trusts influencer or micro-influencer recommendations and visual/narrative-style formats (stories, Reels, TikTok) more than long-form text or traditional media. Millennials remain active on a wider variety of platforms but are also following the trend of personalization and digital experiences. This shift has a direct impact on marketing communications, education, and public relations strategies, which must shift to a data-driven approach, two-way interactions, and emotionally resonant content. (Pujiyanto & Sulistiyowati, 2016).

3. Creative Economy Concept

The creative economy is an economic activity that relies on creativity, ideas, and innovation as the primary source of added value. According to the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (2020), the creative economy subsector includes fashion, culinary arts, crafts, film, animation, music, and others. Creative economy products typically possess high cultural value and originality, so their promotional strategies require an emotional and personal approach. WhatsApp, as a direct communication medium, can be utilized by creative economy actors to introduce products with personal narratives, customer testimonials, and social-proximity-based promotions. The Society 5.0 era brings significant changes to the patterns of creative economic activity, where the integration of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, and the Internet of Things (IoT) is used to create greater added value. In this context, the creative economy relies not only on human creativity and innovation but also leverages technology to expand market reach, increase production efficiency, and enrich the consumer experience. (Fatmawati, 2019) Digital platforms enable creative entrepreneurs to market their products globally without the need for a physical store, opening up broader opportunities for creative MSMEs across various regions.

Creative economy subsectors such as fashion, culinary arts, music, film, animation, and crafts can now be packaged in engaging and easily accessible digital formats for consumers. For example, fashion designers can market their collections through social media and e-commerce with the help of augmented reality technology, while music artists can leverage streaming platforms to reach listeners worldwide. (Syahsudarmi,

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2019)This approach aligns with the spirit of Society 5.0, which focuses on solving social problems through technological innovation that remains human-centered. On the marketing side, promotional strategies in the digital 5.0 era require creative economy players to build more personal and relevant interactions with their audiences. WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and other instant messaging platforms can be utilized to deliver storytelling-based content, customer testimonials, or promotions tailored to consumer preferences.(Galuh et al., 2022)Utilizing analytical data allows creative actors to more accurately understand purchasing behavior and market interests, allowing for more targeted promotional campaigns. With the combination of creativity, innovation, and technology, the creative economy in the digital 5.0 era has great potential to become a driving force for inclusive and sustainable economic growth.(Tahar et al., 2022).

Relevant Previous Research

No	Researcher & Year	Research Focus	Key Findings	Relevance
1	Roth-Cohen, Rosenberg, & Lissitsa (2022)	Generation X, Y, Z's response to mobile ads	Gen-X is more skeptical and risk-averse, millennials and Gen-Z prefer ads that are entertaining and not intrusive.	Providing generational insights into digital promotional formats (relevant for WhatsApp)
2	Yadav, Singh, & Dash (2022)	The influence of digital marketing on purchase intention of Generation X & Y (FMCG)	Gen Y is more responsive to interactive and visual content; Gen X emphasizes trust and values.	The context of cross-generational purchasing behavior in digital marketing
3	Permatha & Suartini (2021)	Factors influencing brand switching behavior of Generation X and Millennials in the smartphone market	Gen X is influenced by quality and price; Millennials are more influenced by brand image and e-WOM.	Relevant in promoting the creative economy via IM (WhatsApp) and e-WOM
4	Dewinatalia & Irwansyah (2022)	Young consumer behavior towards digital marketing (SLR review)	The younger generation goes through the awareness to post-purchase stages through digital marketing.	Providing a series of young consumer behaviors towards digital content that can be adapted on WhatsApp
5	Study in Zimbabwe (2024)	Gen Z consumers' attitudes towards marketing communications via instant messaging (MIM apps)	Personalization, credibility, interactivity, and media richness positively influence Gen Z attitudes; informativeness and entertainment do not, and irritation has a negative effect.	Providing effective message parameters for promotions via WhatsApp for Millennials/Gen Z
6	Firdaus et al. (2022)	Gen Z's co-creation experience in mobile commerce	Positive co-creation increases E-WOM; mobile platform quality matters.	Provides guidance on important digital engagement mechanisms for creative promotions via IM.

Table 1. Relevant Previous Research

Research methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review to explore differences in consumer behavior between Generation X and Millennials regarding the promotion of creative economy products through the WhatsApp application. This approach was chosen because it can provide an in-depth understanding of social phenomena based on the search and analysis of various relevant and up-to-date literature sources. The data in this study comes from secondary sources, collected through searches of scientific journals, books, research articles, official reports, and online publications available in databases such as Google Scholar, Mendeley, ScienceDirect, and national journal portals. The criteria used for the literature were publications within the last five years (2019–2024), and relevance to the topics of consumer behavior, digital marketing, WhatsApp marketing, and the characteristics of Generation X and Millennials.

Results and Discussion

First, responses to digital promotions show clear differences between Generation X and Millennials. The majority of literature indicates that Millennials are more responsive to promotional messages that are visual, interactive, and fast-paced. This characteristic makes them more likely to engage with WhatsApp campaigns that utilize images, short videos, and compelling calls to action. This finding aligns with Strauss and Howe's (1991) generational theory, which explains that differences in characteristics between generations shape different communication preferences, as well as the view of Zis, Effendi, and Roem (2021) that younger generations tend to prioritize visual-based digital media.

Second, credibility and detailed information are key determinants for Generation X in responding to promotions. They tend to be selective and cautious, and require clear information such as product specifications, pricing, quality assurance, and customer testimonials before making a purchase decision. This supports Kotler and Keller's (2016) finding that source credibility and message clarity influence consumers' perceptions and levels of trust in promotions.

Third, WhatsApp, as a personal communication medium, is considered to have significant potential for promoting creative economy products. Features such as direct messaging, product catalogs, and two-way interactions enable businesses to build emotional connections with consumers. For Millennials, the ease of sharing visual and interactive content is a plus, while for Generation X, professional and informative communication is more effective. This view aligns with Handijono, Gunarto, and Sutrisna (2024), who emphasize the importance of tailoring promotional formats to the characteristics of the target audience.

These results are also consistent with research by Yadav, Singh, and Dash (2022), which found that Millennials are more responsive to interactive and visual content, while Generation X prioritizes trust and values. However, unlike general quantitative studies, this research highlights the importance of a qualitative approach based on literature review to understand consumers' personal meaning and emotional engagement with promotions. This suggests that relevant marketing strategies in the Society 5.0 era must integrate technology and emotional connection to build consumer loyalty.

Conclusion and suggestions

Conclusion

Based on the results of the literature review, it can be concluded that there are quite significant behavioral differences between Generation X and Millennials in responding to creative economy product promotions via the WhatsApp platform. Millennials tend to be more open to interactive, visual, and fast-paced digital promotions, due to their character growing up in a digital environment. Meanwhile, Generation X shows a tendency to be more selective and critical in responding to promotional messages, with an emphasis on the credibility of the sender and the clarity of the information. WhatsApp, as a personal communication medium, has proven to have significant potential as a promotional channel, primarily due to its ability to reach consumers directly and in a two-way fashion. However, the effectiveness of using WhatsApp as a promotional medium depends heavily on the alignment of communication strategies with the characteristics of the target generation. Therefore, understanding generational differences is key to designing a relevant and targeted digital marketing approach, particularly for creative economy products that rely on emotional connection with consumers.

Suggestion

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that creative economy businesses segment their audiences by generation and tailor their promotional communication styles to each group's preferences. For Millennials, engaging visual content, interactive messaging, and storytelling will be more effective. Meanwhile, for

Generation X, an emphasis should be placed on informative, clear messages, demonstrating credibility and testimonials from trusted sources. This adjustment of communication strategies is crucial so that digital promotions via WhatsApp not only reach consumers but also build trust and increase their purchasing potential.

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