

DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY FOR MILLENNIALS AND GEN Z: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

This research aims to identify and analyse effective digital marketing strategies for millennials and Gen Z through a literature review. Both generations show characteristics of consumption behaviour that are highly influenced by the development of digital technology, with a high tendency towards visual, interactive, and authentic content on various social media platforms. The results of the study show that marketing strategies that promote personalisation, collaboration with influencers, and involvement in social and sustainability issues are better able to attract the attention and build loyalty of young consumers. In addition, the use of technology such as artificial intelligence, short videos, and mobile-first optimisation is a determining factor in the success of digital campaigns. By understanding the differences and similarities between the characteristics of millennials and Gen Z, companies can design digital marketing strategies that are relevant, innovative, and impactful in increasing engagement and sales in the digital era.

Keywords: Strategy, Digital Marketing, Millennial Generation, Gen Z, Literature Review.

Introduction

The development of digital technology has brought major changes in various aspects of life, including in the world of business and marketing. One of the most important transformations is the shift from conventional marketing to digital marketing, which is now the main strategy of many companies in reaching consumers. Digital marketing itself is an effort to market products or brands through the use of digital information technology, both using electronic and internet-based media (Siti Nurjanah & Rahmawati, 2023).

In Indonesia, the use of the internet and social media continues to increase rapidly. This has encouraged businesses, both large and small, to adapt by utilising digital platforms as a means of promotion and communication with consumers. This phenomenon does not only occur in big cities, but has also spread to various parts of the country along with the increasingly easy access to digital devices and high-quality internet networks (Brown & Davis, 2023).

Digital marketing offers various advantages over traditional marketing methods. One of the main advantages is the wider reach and ability to conduct targeted promotions to specific market segments. In addition, digital marketing allows for two-way communication between companies and consumers, so companies can be more responsive to market needs and preferences (Johnson & Wang, 2023).

Millennials and Gen Z are two groups of consumers who are very familiar with digital technology. They have grown up in an all-digital environment, so their consumption behaviour is heavily influenced by the development of information technology. Both generations are known to be active on various social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, and tend to search for product information online before deciding to buy (Lee & Kim, 2022).

These changes in consumer behaviour require companies to design relevant and effective digital marketing strategies. Beyond just being present on social media, companies also need to understand the characteristics, preferences and values that millennials and Gen Z uphold. Authentic, interactive and personalised content is key to attracting and building customer loyalty from these two generations. In addition, a successful digital marketing strategy for millennials and Gen Z must also be adaptive to the latest trends and technologies (Patel & Sharma, 2021). The use of influencers, short video content, social value-based campaigns, and the utilisation of augmented reality (AR) and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies are part of the growing innovations in the world of digital marketing. Companies that are able to innovate in their marketing strategies will have a greater chance of winning the hearts of young consumers (Andhika Rahman, 2023).

However, behind the great opportunities offered by digital marketing, there are also challenges that must be faced. Increasingly fierce competition in the digital realm requires companies to continue to adapt and improve the quality of content and services provided. In addition, data security and consumer privacy issues are also important concerns in today's digital era (Siti Nurul Afifah et al., 2024).

On the other hand, digital marketing also makes it easier for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to compete in a wider market. Through digital platforms, MSMEs can promote their products without having to spend a lot of money as in conventional marketing. This opens up new opportunities for economic growth, especially in the MSME sector which is the backbone of the Indonesian economy (Erlina Puspitaloka Mahadewi et al., 2023).

Thus, regarding digital marketing strategies for millennials and Gen Z, it shows that a personalised, data-driven and interaction-first approach is a key success factor. Companies that are able to build emotional connections with consumers through relevant and valuable content will find it easier to create loyalty and increase sales.

Research on digital marketing strategies for millennials and Gen Z is highly relevant amidst the changing dynamics of consumer behaviour and technological

developments. A literature review can provide a comprehensive overview of the trends, challenges, and opportunities that companies can utilise in designing effective marketing strategies.

Research Methods

This research uses the literature review method by analysing various previous research results, scientific articles, and reliable sources relevant to digital marketing strategies for millennials and Gen Z. Data was collected through searches of accredited journals, scientific publications, and research reports published within the latest timeframe to ensure the novelty and relevance of the information (Xiao & Watson, 2019). Analyses were conducted thematically to identify trends, characteristics, and effectiveness of various digital marketing strategies that have been applied to both generations, so that a synthesis and strategic recommendations can be developed that are applicable to industry players (Jesson et al., 2021).

Results and Discussion

Characteristics of Millennial and Gen Z Consumers

The characteristics of millennial and Gen Z consumers have differences and similarities, especially in the context of consumption behaviour and response to digital marketing strategies. Millennials, born between 1981 and 1996, are known as a generation that is very familiar with technology and has made digitalisation a part of their daily lifestyle. They are used to using various digital devices, ranging from smartphones, laptops, to tablets, to support work activities, entertainment, and online shopping (Rini Oktaviani & Sri Wahyuni, 2025).

One of the key characteristics of millennial consumers is their tendency to prioritise experiences over possessions. They prefer to allocate spending on travel, dining or social activities rather than buying physical luxury goods. This phenomenon has fuelled the growth of the sharing economy and subscription-based services, such as music streaming, clothing rental, and ride-hailing apps (Kumar & Singh, 2021).

Millennials are also highly critical of social phenomena and tend to actively voice their opinions on social media. They do not hesitate to share their personal lives, experiences or information that they think is important with their social circles, making digital word of mouth a powerful force in influencing purchasing decisions in this group. In terms of media consumption, millennials prefer mobile phones over television and consider social media as a primary need. They trust user generated content (UGC) more than unidirectional information from companies. This makes reviews, testimonials, and recommendations from fellow consumers an important factor in building trust in a product or brand (Nguyen, 2021).

In addition, millennials tend to adopt cashless payment methods and like everything practical, fast-paced and instant. They are also multitaskers, able to do

several activities at once, such as listening to music while working and shopping online simultaneously. Awareness of environmental and sustainability issues is also growing among millennials. They look for brands that have a commitment to environmentally friendly practices and corporate social responsibility. Products that offer sustainability values tend to be more easily accepted by this group (Park, 2022).

Meanwhile, Gen Z, born after 1996, is a true digital native generation. They grew up amid the rapid development of information technology and the internet, so almost all of their activities are connected to digital devices and social media. Gen Z relies heavily on smartphones as the main tool for communicating, searching for information, and conducting online transactions (Dwi Lestari & Fajar Ramadhan, 2023).

Authenticity and transparency are important values for Gen Z. They prefer brands that are authentic, open and true to their personality. Gen Z is also very concerned about environmental and social issues, even willing to pay more for eco-friendly and sustainable products (Lee & Kim, 2022).

In terms of consumption behaviour, Gen Z tends to be more frugal and price sensitive. They grew up during the recession and saw the economic challenges their families faced, so they are more selective in spending money. However, they still prioritise unique and personalised experiences in every transaction (Evans & Carter, 2023).

Social media has a huge influence in Gen Z's life. They use platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube not only for entertainment, but also as a source of inspiration and reference before purchasing products. Influencers and micro-influencers become key role models that can influence their purchasing decisions (Fromm & Read, 2020).

Gen Z likes content that is short, concise and easy to digest. They are more responsive to short videos, memes and visual messages that get straight to the point. In addition, they also highly value personalisation of products or services that suit their individual preferences. In terms of brand loyalty, Gen Z tends to be less loyal than previous generations. They are open to trying new brands and products, especially those recommended by peers or influencers on social media. This makes it a challenge for companies to continue to innovate and maintain relevance in the eyes of Gen Z (Adhia Lovelyna Amani et al., 2024).

In general, both millennials and Gen Z demand speed, ease and convenience in the buying process. They expect a seamless digital experience, from product search to delivery, as well as responsive and personalised customer service. Companies that are able to fulfil these expectations will have a great chance of winning over both generations (Liu & Zhang, 2022).

Thus, by deeply understanding the characteristics of millennial and Gen Z consumers, companies can design more effective, relevant and impactful digital marketing strategies. An approach that prioritises experience, authenticity,

sustainability, and the utilisation of technology and social media are key to attracting and retaining consumers from these two generations.

Digital Marketing Trends and Strategies

Digital marketing trends and strategies for millennials and Gen Z continue to evolve as consumer behaviour changes and technology advances. One of the key trends is the increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI) in digital marketing. AI is used to personalise user experience, analyse consumer behaviour data and optimise advertising campaigns to make them more relevant and effective for young audiences (Wang & Xu, 2023).

The use of video marketing is also increasingly dominant, especially on platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram Reels. Videos are considered more engaging, easy to understand, and capable of increasing engagement and sales conversions. Short video content is a favourite as it is easily shared and quickly consumed by the younger generation who have short attention spans. In addition, visually appealing content is key in marketing strategies for Gen Z and millennials. Platforms such as Instagram and YouTube are top choices as they emphasise the power of visuals. Brands need to develop bite-sized content such as Instagram Stories and Reels to stay relevant in the eyes of young consumers (Seemiller & Grace, 2021).

Interactivity is also an important trend. Young consumers favour content that allows them to participate, such as polls, quizzes or social media challenges. These interactive features not only increase engagement, but also give brands insight into their audience's preferences (Martinez & Torres, 2021).

Collaboration with influencers and micro-influencers is increasingly effective in reaching millennials and Gen Z. Influencers who have relevant audiences and values that align with brands can increase credibility and expand marketing reach organically (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022).

Authenticity and transparency are highly valued by both generations. Brands that are able to deliver messages in an honest, authentic and human-centred manner will find it easier to gain the trust and loyalty of young consumers. Strong and meaningful storytelling is very effective in building an emotional connection with the audience. Social and sustainability issues are also a major concern. Millennials and Gen Z tend to be more loyal to brands that care about social and environmental issues. Campaigns that promote social values, diversity, and environmental responsibility will resonate more with young consumers (Muhammad Iqbal & Riska Amelia, 2024).

Another growing trend is the utilisation of the metaverse and immersive technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR). Brands are starting to establish a presence in the metaverse to create interactive and immersive experiences that appeal to millennials and Gen Z, such as virtual try-on for beauty products or virtual tours of properties (Smith & Anderson, 2021).

User-generated content (UGC) is also becoming an important pillar in digital marketing strategies. Young consumers trust peer-generated content more than traditional advertising. Brands that encourage and showcase UGC can build strong communities and increase credibility in the eyes of the audience. Mobile-first optimisation is essential as the majority of millennials and Gen Z access the internet through mobile devices. Websites, apps, and digital content should be optimised to be easily accessible, responsive, and provide a seamless user experience on mobile devices (Chen & Lee, 2022).

The integration of e-commerce with social media is also increasingly prevalent. Features such as "View Shop" on Instagram or direct shopping on TikTok make it easy for young consumers to make purchases without leaving the social media platforms they use daily (Garcia & Lopez, 2022).

Finally, building digital communities is an effective long-term strategy. Brands that are able to create spaces for interaction, whether through online groups, forums, or virtual events, can increase consumer loyalty and engagement. A solid community can also become brand advocates who promote products organically. By adopting these trends and strategies, brands can more effectively reach, engage and build long-term relationships with millennial and Gen Z consumers in the ever-changing digital marketing era.

Comparison of Strategy Effectiveness in Millennials vs Gen Z

A comparison of the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies on millennials and Gen Z shows fundamental similarities, but also significant differences in preferences, behaviours and responses to marketing approaches. Both generations are highly connected to digital technology, but the way they interact with marketing content and make purchases has its own characteristics (Kumar & Singh, 2021).

Millennials tend to be more loyal to brands they trust. They seek meaningful experiences from brands and tend to consider value, quality, and reputation before making purchasing decisions. Marketing strategies that highlight storytelling, social values, and customer experience have proven effective in reaching millennials. In contrast, Gen Z is more demanding of authenticity and speed. They have grown up in an era of instant and open information, and are highly responsive to authentic, visual and interactive content. Gen Z tends to switch brands more easily and is less loyal than millennials, so brands must continue to innovate to stay relevant in their eyes (Siti Nurjanah & Rahmawati, 2023).

In terms of platforms, millennials are still active on Facebook and Instagram, while Gen Z spends more time on TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. Research shows that TikTok has the highest engagement and conversion rates among Gen Z, followed by Instagram, while Facebook is starting to lose traction with this group (Ni Putu Eka Yuliani & I Made Arya Dwi Putra, 2024).

Effective marketing content for millennials is usually long articles, educational videos, and social value-based campaigns. They value informative and inspirational content that can enrich their knowledge or make a positive impact. In contrast, Gen Z prefers short video content, memes, and interactive challenges that are entertaining and easy to share (Brown & Davis, 2023).

Influencer marketing strategies are effective for both generations, but with different approaches. Millennials trust influencers who have credibility and expertise in a particular field, while Gen Z connects more with micro-influencers who are considered more authentic and relatable. In terms of spending behaviour, millennials tend to be more stable and planned. They pay attention to their monthly expenses and shop more often for basic necessities on a regular basis. Meanwhile, Gen Z tends to be FOMO (fear of missing out) and impulsive, easily influenced by trends and make spontaneous purchases based on recommendations on social media (Johnson & Wang, 2023).

Millennials are more comfortable with online transactions that require patience, such as waiting for delivery. Gen Z, on the other hand, prefers instant and flexible experiences, so omnichannel marketing strategies-ordering online and picking up at physical stores-are more effective for them. Both millennials and Gen Z value authentic content and peer reviews. However, Gen Z is more active in producing and sharing user-generated content (UGC), so brands that encourage consumer participation will find it easier to build a community among Gen Z (Lee & Kim, 2022).

Adjustment of communication style is also important. Millennials respond well to communicative, educational and inspirational messages, while Gen Z prefers a relaxed, humorous and to-the-point communication style. Social and sustainability issues are a plus for both generations, but Gen Z is more vocal and critical in assessing whether brands actually live up to those commitments or are just marketing gimmicks (Patel & Sharma, 2021).

In general, the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies on millennials and Gen Z can be enhanced by incorporating short, visual and interactive content, and engaging relevant influencers. However, adjustments to platforms, communication styles and personalised approaches are crucial to maximise impact on each generation. By understanding these differences and similarities, companies can design digital marketing strategies that better target, increase engagement and build loyalty among both millennials and Gen Z.

Conclusion

An effective digital marketing strategy for millennials and Gen Z should emphasise content that is authentic, concise and relevant to the latest trends on social media. Both generations are highly active on digital platforms, but have low attention spans and are easily distracted, so digital marketing that is short, contains humour, popular music, and involves influencers has proven to be more effective in capturing

their attention and building engagement. In addition, interactive approaches, such as polls, quizzes or social media challenges, can also increase engagement and strengthen the relationship between brands and young consumers.

Adjusting the communication style is a key factor, where the message must be communicative, visual and easy to understand to suit the millennial and Gen Z characters who prefer visual content over long literacy. Sensitivity to social issues and sustainability is also a plus, as both generations tend to be more loyal to brands that show concern for these issues. The use of data and digital technology, such as content personalisation and the use of algorithms, further strengthens the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in reaching this segment.

Overall, the success of digital marketing for millennials and Gen Z is heavily influenced by the integration of technological innovation, content creativity, and a deep understanding of their digital preferences and behaviours. Companies that are able to keep up with trends, build authentic communications, and actively engage consumers in various digital interactions will have a greater chance of increasing brand awareness, loyalty, and sales in today's digital era.

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