

Understanding Gen Z Consumers' Attitudes and Intentions toward Showrooming Behavior

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With the rapid advancement in information technologies, retailers integrate omnichannel marketing strategies to provide consumers with low prices, good products, and unique shopping experiences. Omnichannel retailing brings changes to consumer decision-making processes. Consumers use online and offline channels simultaneously to maximize benefits during the product search, purchase, and aftersales stages (Flavián et al., 2020). Some consumers prefer to check out a product in a brick-and-mortar store but purchase it online. Likewise, showrooming refers to information search and service use in a physical store but purchasing products at another retailer's channel. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, consumers have used mobile devices and smartphones more frequently to shop. They search e-commerce sites using mobile devices while they shop in stores. The use of smartphones increases showrooming behaviors. Showroomers gather product information from a physical store and purchase the product online from another retailer. For that reason, showrooming has emerged as a significant challenge for brick-and-mortar stores. Gen Z consumers aged 16-26 like to shop in stores to try things on and having experiences (Ahn, 2024). Many studies highlight the negative impact of showrooming behavior. However, showroomers can make purchases on the same retailer's online channel. As a result, showroomers can provide omnichannel retailers with potential benefits. Whereas prior studies have examined factors driving showrooming, little is known about the positive consequences of showrooming. Further research is needed to offer valuable insights into the positive impact of showrooming. The study aims to examine the effects of various factors on attitudes and intentions toward showrooming behavior and the effect of intentions on retailer choice among Gen Z consumers.

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) suggests that an individual's intention to carry out a particular behavior serves as a predictor of the behavior itself (Ajzen, 1991). According to the TPB, individuals' behavioral intentions are influenced by their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). Attitude refers to an individual's overall evaluation of a particular behavior. Subjective norm refers to the influence of general social pressures to perform a particular behavior. Behavioral control refers to the degree of difficulty in performing a certain behavior. Intention is the willingness of an individual to perform or not perform a behavior, such as purchasing a product; typically used to assess marketing success (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Park et al., 2005). Prior studies have adopted the TPB to examine how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral controls influence intentions toward showrooming behavior (e.g., Arora et al., 2017; Rejón-Guardia & Luna-Nevarez, 2017). The study aims to examine the determinants and consequences of showrooming. Based on the comprehensive literature review (Arora et al., 2017; Chimborazo-Azogue et al., 2022; Chokkannan et al., 2020; Dahana et al., 2018; Fiestas & Tuzovic, 2021) and the TPB, seven hypotheses are developed: H1. Price consciousness has a positive effect on attitudes toward showrooming behavior. H2. Value

consciousness has a positive effect on attitudes toward showrooming behavior. H3. Perceived risk has a positive effect on attitudes toward showrooming behavior. H4. Attitudes have a positive effect on intentions toward showrooming behavior. H5. Subjective norms have a positive effect on intentions toward showrooming behavior. H6. Perceived behavior control has a positive effect on intentions toward showrooming behavior. H7. Intentions toward showrooming behavior lead consumers to choose (a) the same retailer that they visited and (b) different retailers.

Data were collected through an online survey using Qualtrics. College students aged 18-26 were recruited to study at a major Mid-southern university. The seven constructs (i.e., price and value consciousness, perceived risk, attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavior control, and intentions) were measured by adapting valid and reliable scale items from existing literature to ensure content validity. Four scale items measuring the retailer choice were developed in the study. The items asked whether participants showroom in retailer A's physical store, and then purchase products from retailer A's online store, or switch to another retailer's store or online website. Except for the demographic question, every scale item was scored on a 7-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

A total of 448 college students participated in the online survey. After eliminating incomplete or missing data, 383 responses were usable to analyze the data. Most participants were Caucasian or European American female college students (77%) with a median age of 21. They indicated they were active online shoppers. More than half of the participants (59%) preferred to visit a physical store when shopping for fashion products. EFA, using principal axis factoring with varimax rotation in SPSS 27.0, determined one factor for each variable based on an Eigenvalue greater than one criterion. All factor loadings were above .50 on one factor, and both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were above .70. The simple linear regression analysis results indicated that price consciousness significantly influenced attitudes ($\beta = .29, p < .001$), supporting H1. Value consciousness significantly influenced attitudes ($\beta = .35, p < .001$), supporting H2. Perceived risk significantly influenced attitudes ($\beta = .27, p < .001$), supporting H3. Attitudes significantly influenced intentions toward showrooming behavior ($\beta = .33, p < .001$), supporting H4. Subjective norms significantly influenced intentions ($\beta = .35, p < .001$), supporting H5. Perceived behavioral control significantly influenced intentions ($\beta = .16, p < .001$), supporting H6. Intentions significantly influenced the same retailer choice ($\beta = .52, p < .001$) and different retailer choices ($\beta = .47, p < .001$), supporting H7a and H7b. In addition, multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the effects of the three independent variables on attitudes. The results showed that the impact of value consciousness ($\beta = .23, p < .001$) and perceived risk ($\beta = .19, p < .001$) were significant on attitudes toward showrooming behavior. However, the effect of price consciousness was insignificant. The impact of attitudes ($\beta = .26, p < .001$) and subjective norms ($\beta = .30, p < .001$) were significant on intentions toward showrooming behavior, whereas the effect of perceived behavioral control was insignificant.

The findings show that value consciousness is more important than price consciousness in enhancing Gen Z consumers' attitudes, significantly influencing intentions toward showrooming behavior. Interestingly, social pressure and endorsement from friends and family have a higher impact than attitudes on intentions. The effect of intentions on the same retailer choice was more substantial than on different retailer choices. This finding means that Gen Z consumers who showroom tend to be loyal to the retailer. They will likely purchase fashion

products from the same retailer's online website after showrooming. Overall, the study provides valuable insights into the psychological and behavioral factors underlying Gen Z consumers' showrooming tendencies. By understanding the factors driving showrooming behavior, fashion retailers can implement measures that enhance the in-store experience, build customer loyalty, and encourage purchases within their channels. Retailers could also provide unique in-store experiences by offering creative product displays, knowledgeable staff, value-added products and services, and seamless omnichannel experience. Personalized shopping experiences could increase customer traffic in the store. Retailers can use these insights to develop strategies that positively operate showrooming behavior.

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