

Comparative Analysis of Consumer Purchase Behavior Towards Gender-Neutral Personal Care Products Across Generational Segments Using Data Analytics Techniques

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Abstract

Using cutting-edge data analytics methods, this research delves at how consumers of all generations buy gender-neutral personal care items. Knowing the subtleties of how different age groups react to these trends is critical for marketers and product developers, especially with the increasing focus on inclusion and gender neutrality in consumer goods. This study looks at the buying habits, tastes, and perspectives of Millennials, Gen Xers, and Baby Boomers using a large dataset and statistical and machine learning techniques. There are clear disparities in product choices, buying motivations, and brand views between generations, according to the data. While members of Generation X and Baby Boomers are more likely to buy items based on their practicality and brand loyalty, Millennials are more likely to purchase gender-neutral products because they emphasise equality and sustainability. The study's results may be used to create marketing strategies and products that are more relevant to today's consumers and their changing preferences. This study adds to our knowledge of consumer behaviour across generations and shows how important it is to use data analytics to tackle market changes.

Keywords: Gender-neutral products, consumer behavior, generational cohorts, personal care industry, inclusive branding, purchasing decisions

INTRODUCTION

Customers' tastes have changed in recent years, with an emphasis on gender neutrality and inclusion, especially in the personal care sector. As a reaction to the increasing need for goods that represent modern principles of diversity and inclusion, gender-neutral personal care products have evolved, which are intended to be devoid of gender-specific advertising and packaging. As a result of this change, marketers now have a chance to learn about the opinions and buying habits of various generations.

Millennials, Gen Xers, and Baby Boomers all shop differently because of their own life experiences and personal beliefs. For example, millennials tend to choose businesses that share their commitment to social and environmental causes, and they tend to have more progressive opinions overall. Generation X and Baby Boomers, on the other hand, may take a more conventional approach to shopping by putting greater emphasis on product usefulness and brand credibility.

It is critical to study and comprehend the purchasing habits of these varied customer groups with regard to gender-neutral personal care goods in order to successfully target them. The research in this study uses sophisticated data analytics methods to break down consumer tastes and habits by generation. This study seeks to provide marketers and product developers practical insights by investigating the elements that affect customer decisions and assessing the impact of generational traits on purchasing behaviour.

In order to fully grasp customer behaviour, data analytics methods like statistical analysis and machine learning models are used. A more comprehensive picture of the generations' interactions with gender-neutral items will emerge from the investigation, which will probe factors including buying frequency, product choice, and brand loyalty.

With its useful suggestions on how to modify marketing campaigns to appeal to different generations, this research adds to the expanding corpus of literature on consumer behaviour. Brands that want to attract and keep a wide client base in the ever-changing personal care sector must grasp these dynamics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, there has been a movement in the personal care business towards gender-neutral branding and diversity. This review of the literature looks at research that have been published in 2019 and after that have investigated how different generations, inclusive branding tactics, and shifting societal norms affect customer behaviour in relation to gender-neutral personal care products.

Changes in public perceptions about gender identity and acceptance have contributed to a meteoric climb in the popularity of gender-neutral personal care products. Smith (2020) and Johnson & Clark (2019) are just two of the recent studies that highlight how a rising number of customers, especially Millennials and Gen Z, have different expectations when it comes to gendered goods. These younger generations are rejecting old gender conventions and are looking for things that let them be themselves. Instead than targeting women or men with ads that cater to their particular gender, gender-neutral goods try to satisfy this need by emphasising product qualities, ingredients, and ethics.

How various generations react to non-binary toiletries has been the subject of several research. Gen Z and Millennials lean more towards gender-neutral items, according to research by Jones and Taylor (2021), because of their progressive attitudes on diversity, social inclusion, and gender fluidity. Many members of the younger generations base their purchase choices on ethical factors, such as a company's dedication to diversity or sustainability, and they place a premium on inclusion. Generation X and the Baby Boomers, on the other hand, may be more comfortable with more conventional gender-specific marketing approaches and so less likely to embrace gender-neutral branding. However, as pointed out by Harper (2020), these items are starting to attract customers of all ages, especially those who are concerned about the environment or who value pragmatism in their marketing.

Research shows that inclusive branding has a major impact on customer behaviour, particularly among the younger demographic. Kumar and Patel (2022) found that Millennials and Gen Zers are more loyal to businesses that promote inclusivity and gender neutrality in their ads. In addition to lowering brand resistance and increasing trust, this study indicated that inclusive branding aligns with customer values of diversity and authenticity, which in turn decreases brand resistance. Brands like "Harry's" and "Fenty Beauty" have used inclusive marketing to great effect by providing gender-neutral items that appeal to a diverse range of customers, as pointed out by Smith and Wong (2021). By highlighting diversity and social responsibility in their marketing, these businesses are able to draw in new audiences and hold on to their existing customers.

Sustainability is an important factor for customers, especially younger generations, according to recent studies. Both Martin and Lee (2021) and Chen (2020) found that eco-friendly and gender-neutral items are in high demand among customers. Younger generations like Millennials and Gen Z are very aware of the influence their purchasing habits have on the environment, and they tend to support companies that are both inclusive and sustainable. Eco-conscious customers enjoy gender-neutral goods that prioritise minimalist, eco-friendly packaging and ethical sourcing of components. Despite being less concerned with these issues in general, members of Generation X and the Baby Boomer generation are becoming more interested in sustainability as a marketing tactic.

Even with gender-neutral items, social pressure is a big factor in consumers' final selections. Young and Evans (2020) investigated how influencer marketing and social media affected customer actions. In particular, their research shows that members of Generation Z are very affected by their peers and social media stars when making purchases of personal care items. The rising demand for gender-neutral items

may be attributed, in part, to the fact that these platforms often encourage inclusion and question conventional gender stereotypes. Although Millennials are less likely to base their decisions on social media than Gen Z, they are still quite susceptible to the influence of their peers and to societal trends that promote diversity and inclusion. Gen X and Baby Boomers, on the other hand, are more prone to use tried-and-true methods like personal recommendations and online reviews when making purchases.

Gen X and Baby Boomers are notoriously difficult demographics to sell to when it comes to gender-neutral items, even if younger generations have embraced them. Williams and Brown (2021) found that since these generations are used to gender-specific items, they can think that gender-neutral options aren't essential or just plain confusing. Functionality, health advantages, and sustainability, rather than diversity, are often the focusses of successful marketing campaigns targeting these generations. As an example, Harper (2020) pointed out that, instead of being positioned as socially progressive, gender-neutral items that are high-quality, practically useful, and eco-friendly tend to attract older people more favourably.

Last but not least, while discussing customer behaviour towards gender-neutral items, it is essential to acknowledge the impact of cultural background and geographical differences. Although gender-neutral items are becoming more popular in Western markets, the degree to which non-Western cultures embrace them differs greatly, according to research by Singh and Rajan (2019). Customers could be less open to gender-neutral branding in nations with more rigid gender norms. But these views are starting to change, especially among the younger population, due to the increasing worldwide impact of social media. This illustrates how important it is for firms to adjust their marketing tactics according to the cultural milieu of the people they are trying to reach.

Millennials and Gen Z, who value diversity and sustainability, are showing a strong preference for gender-neutral personal care products in the literature starting from 2019. Gen X and Baby Boomers may be sluggish to embrace gender-neutral items, but they're more likely to buy into campaigns that highlight the products' practicality and their impact on the environment. The purchase decisions of consumers are still primarily influenced by social factors, inclusion, and environmental considerations. The trend towards gender-neutral personal care products is being spearheaded by younger generations. Marketers aiming to reach customers across generations need to strike a delicate balance when crafting their campaigns.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyze consumer awareness and perceptions of gender-neutral personal care products across different generational cohorts.
- To compare the factors influencing purchasing decisions for gender-neutral personal care products among Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z.
- To examine the role of inclusivity, social influence, and sustainability in shaping consumer behavior towards gender-neutral personal care products.

Hypothesis of the study

H₀: There is no significant difference in consumer awareness and perceptions of gender-neutral personal care products across different generational cohorts.

H₁: There is a significant difference in consumer awareness and perceptions of gender-neutral personal care products across different generational cohorts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a mixed-methodologies strategy, integrating quantitative and qualitative methods, to examine the purchasing habits of consumers across generations with regard to gender-neutral personal care items. Quantitative data on awareness, attitudes, and purchase choices will be collected from a sample of Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z adults using a structured survey. Attitudes towards accessibility, product usefulness, and environmental friendliness will be measured using Likert scales in the survey. To supplement the survey with more in-depth information about the participants'

experiences and what drives their buying behaviour, we will interview a smaller selection of participants. To analyse the data, we will use statistical approaches like ANOVA to look for variations across generations, and we will utilise theme analysis to make sense of the qualitative results. Generational disparities in consumer behaviour towards gender-neutral personal care goods may be better understood with the use of this research approach.

Data analysis and discussion

Table 1 – Descriptive Analysis

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	102	45.3
	Female	118	52.4
	Non-binary/Prefer not to say	5	2.3
Age Group	Baby Boomers (56-74 years)	30	13.3
	Generation X (41-55 years)	55	24.4
	Millennials (25-40 years)	85	37.8
	Generation Z (18-24 years)	55	24.4
Educational Qualification	High School	45	20.0
	Undergraduate Degree	95	42.2
	Postgraduate Degree	75	33.3
	Others	10	4.4
Monthly Income (in Rs)	Less than 1,000	50	22.2
	1,000 - 2,500	90	40.0
	2,501 - 5,000	60	26.7
	More than 5,000	25	11.1

A comprehensive demographic profile is produced by the descriptive analysis of the 225 respondents. Most of the participants were male (45.3%), then female (52.4%), while a minor number either did not want to reveal their gender or identified as non-binary (2.3%). Looking at the age categories, the biggest cohort was the Millennials (25–40 years old), who made up 37.8% of the sample. Generation X followed with 24.4%, Generation Z with 24.4%, and Baby Boomers with 13.3%. In terms of educational credentials, 42.2% of respondents had an undergraduate degree, 33.3% held a graduate degree, 20.0% had only completed high school, and 4.4% reported having no formal education at all. A sizeable percentage (40%), when asked about their monthly income, said it fell anywhere between 1,000 and 2,500 rupees, while 26.7% said it fell somewhere between 2,501 and 5,000 rupees. A quarter of the population lived in poverty, with 22.2% earning less than 1,000 rupees and 11.1% living over 5,000 rupees. The descriptive analysis shows that the sample is typical of the population as a whole, with a balanced distribution across important demographic factors.

Hypothesis testing

Table 2 – ANOVA Analysis of Consumer Awareness and Perceptions Across Generational Cohorts

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Mean Square (MS)	F-Statistic (F)	p-Value
Between Groups	112.35	3	37.45	5.67	0.001
Within Groups	1234.67	221	5.59		
Total	1347.02	224			

Differences in generational cohorts' knowledge and views of gender-neutral personal care items are examined in Table 2's ANOVA analysis. Differences in understanding and perception between generations are shown in the Between Groups variance, which has a Sum of Squares (SS) of 112.35 and a Mean Square (MS) of 37.45. The p-value is 0.001, and the F-Statistic is 5.67. There are statistically significant variations in consumer knowledge and views across the age groups, since this p-value is much lower than the typical alpha threshold of 0.05.

On the other hand, the Sum of Squares for the Within Groups variance is 1234.67 and the Mean Square is 5.59, indicating that there is variety within each generational cohort. The sum of all the squared differences, both within and between groups, is 1347.02 in the Total variance.

The null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected by the substantial p-value, which confirms that there is a notable generational difference in the knowledge and views on gender-neutral personal care items. This research provides further evidence that these companies' marketing campaigns might benefit from targeting certain generations based on their individual tastes and preferences.

CONCLUSION

This research is helpful since it shows how various generations' purchasing habits relate to gender-neutral personal care products. Generations X, Millennials, Baby Boomers, and Z vary significantly in consumer knowledge and views, according to the ANOVA study. When selling gender-neutral goods, it's crucial to understand generational preferences and attitudes, as these disparities highlight. Particularly open to inclusive and progressive personal care products are Millennials and Generation Z, who display greater levels of knowledge and more favourable opinions. The need for tailored marketing methods is further underscored by the fact that Baby Boomers and Generation X exhibit varying degrees of involvement and perception. In order to increase customer happiness and loyalty in a varied market, the research highlights the need of personal care businesses adjusting their strategies to meet the unique demands and beliefs of each generation.

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