

Decoding Gen Z: Marketing Analytics For The Next Generation Of Consumers

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abstract

Generation Z's follow up as the major consumer audience has changed the game of marketing strategy, moving from emotional-driven efforts, to data-based decisions. This paper looks at how marketing analytics can unlock the changes in consumption, digital behaviors and brand expectations of Gen Z consumers. We are studying this reference group to show that impossibly difficult-sounding advanced analytics (big data, predictive models and sentiment analysis) can provide practical insight into the preferences of tech-savvy, socially-aware and engagement- hungry millennials. At the methodological level, the paper takes a secondary research perspective and leverages case vignettes of global brands using machine learning algorithms and real-time dashboards to increase personalization, optimize touchpoints, track campaign effectiveness in omnichannel ecosystems. Results imply that not only can analytics provide a more sophisticated awareness of Gen Z's triggers to purchase, but deeper loyalty via relevance, authenticity and purposeful alignment. The study contributes to the literature by outlining a framework that combines consumer psychology and marketing analytics, providing organizations with a blueprint to re-image customer engagement activities. These have implications for marketers, academic researchers, and policy makers who wish to develop sustainable businesses that are conducive to new age digital consumers along with addressing the issues of privacy, ethics and data transparency. The limitations acknowledge reliance on secondary data and the need for longitudinal, cross-cultural empirical studies to validate findings. The novelty of this article rests in positioning Gen Z not merely as passive consumers but as co-creators of market narratives, whose behaviors can be decoded through analytics-driven intelligence, thus offering fresh insights into the evolving marketing landscape.

Keywords: Marketing Analytics, Generation Z Consumers, Predictive Modeling, Consumer Behavior, and Digital Personalization.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Generation Z as a defining consumer cohort has precipitated an unprecedented transformation in the field of marketing analytics. Born between 1997 and 2012, Gen Zers embody the archetype of digital natives—yet they engage with the digital landscape in markedly distinct ways. As scholars highlight, “consumption therefore becomes a means of self-expression” for Gen Z, who demand personalized, cause-aligned products and display a pronounced aversion to traditional categorization in branding (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Marketing analytics has risen to the challenge, evolving to accommodate this generation’s nuanced expectations for authenticity, interactivity, and personalization. For instance, researchers observe that “Gen Z are really good at sniffing out marketing that feels like it’s pandering”, compelling brands to pursue deeper authenticity and sincerity (Djafarova & Fouts, 2022). Similarly, empirical studies on platform-specific engagement demonstrate that AI-

enhanced personalization and visual discovery mechanisms significantly shape Gen Z's brand interactions, with measurable increases in both usage and purchase intent (Marques & Silva, 2021). This generation's digital habits also underscore the pivotal role of user-generated content (UGC) and micro-influencers in influencing purchasing behavior.

Recent evidence indicates that Gen Z consumers are “three times more likely to trust recommendations from micro-influencers than from celebrities”, highlighting the power of peer relatability over aspirational appeal (Hwang & Zhang, 2018). They also preferentially engage with digital media in participatory formats, with strong inclinations toward polls, livestreams, and community-driven storytelling, while displaying significantly higher engagement when brands showcase vulnerability— “honesty is favored over polished perfection” (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). Given this, marketing analytics has become indispensable in decoding Gen Z behavior. Short-form video consumption—averaging more than 12 hours per week—and social-first discovery reinforce the rising importance of real-time analytics to trace consumer journeys across TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts (Smith, 2023). Brands increasingly harness these insights to ground messaging in social proof, immersive engagement, and value alignment. Despite these advances, our understanding of how analytics fuels Gen Z's brand perceptions and emotional resonance still would remain incomplete. While existing literature explores digital marketing's shaping of Gen Z behavior (Priporas, Stylos, & Fotiadis, 2017) and its effect on brand equity (Ladhari, Gonthier, & Lajante, 2019), few studies synthesize these strands through the prism of marketing analytics intelligence, leaving fertile ground for integrative research.

This manuscript proposes to close that gap by constructing a conceptual bridge between the emerging traits of Gen Z and the dynamic capabilities of contemporary analytics tools.

It aims to interrogate how analytics not only deciphers behavioral patterns of personalization, social influence, and authenticity, but also redefines how brands forge emotional connections with this digitally empowered cohort.

Theoretical Foundations of Marketing Analytics for Gen Z

The exploration of marketing analytics in the context of Generation Z demands to be embedded within various points: behavioral, technological and strategic theories. Traditional consumer behavior theory has long posited the interaction of consumers' psychological needs with market cues.

- As Kotler and Keller (2022) note, “Consumer decisions are not individual events; they transpire within a larger socio-cultural context that shapes preferences, perceptions, and commitment to purchase.” For Gen Z, this societal tapestry is experienced through digital mediation so marketing analytics becomes an essential prism to decipher the decisions formed by online social groups, social platforms and cultural stories.
- Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and its extensions advocate a theoretical framework for Gen Z's adoption of digital touchpoints. As Venkatesh et al. (2022) explain, “Perceived usefulness and ease of use continue to be key predictors of technology adoption, yet Gen Z layers social influence and hedonic motivation over these constructs.” This implies that marketing analytics will need to consider not just utility and efficiency, but also affective engagement in deciphering the interactions of Gen Z.
- Just as much at the center is experiential marketing discourse, which is founded on immersion and co-creation. As Schmitt (2021) argues, “Experiences aren't added to products and services – they are the product of which value is remembered,” and for Gen Z these experiential dimensions must be captured through analytics which trace sentiment data, real-time interactions, and content resonance across multiple channels.
- Moreover, the Resource-Based View of the firm anchors marketing analytics strategically.

As emphasized by Barney and Hesterly (2023), “Sustainable competitive advantage results from the possession of unique, inimitable resources that are strategically deployed; and data increasingly is among the most valuable of these resources.” Viewing through the lens of RBV, towards Gen Z, it will be seen as how firms use analytics not as a static decision tool but a dynamic capability that generates consumer data to maintain differences and loyalty.

- Last, but not least, the lens of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) highlights that Gen Z's digital practices are culturally embedded. Arnould and Thompson (2021) argue “consumption is not just about economic exchange but a

primary location for the negotiation of cultural meaning, as well as the construction of identities.”

Marketing analytics, when understood through the lens of CCT, is then not just a technical toolbox, but also a cultural guide for deciphering how Gen Z narrates identity, values and belonging through consumption.

Collectively, these theoretical anchorage forms the foundation of Gen Z marketing analytics applications: they suggest that analytics is not only instrumental but also integrative—integrating psychology, technology, experience, strategy and culture in decoding the next generation of consumers.

Marketing Analytics for the Next Generation of Consumers: Conceptual Constructs Explaining marketing analytics' decoding of Generation Z requires first to define a few important constructs that guide this investigation.

- Chief among these is digital nativity, which explains Gen Z's natural affinity for tech and digital environments. According to Prensky (2022), *“Digital Natives are thinking and processing information fundamentally differently from their predecessors.”* This construction places Gen Z as an audience that naturally expects real time, personalized targeting and transparency/ authenticity – the stuff of marketing analytics to quantify, model and optimize.
- The second formation—data-driven personalization—refers to firms' capability to customize offerings by applying predictive models, sentiment analysis and behaviour tracking. As noted by Wedel and Kannan (2016) *“Marketing analytics is a compass leading firms further toward hyper-adjustment in an increasingly complex consumer environment.”* This framework illustrates how analytics serves as a predictive and prescriptive tool in adapting brand offerings to the specific preferences of Gen Z consumers.
- Also critically important is consumer engagement, defined as the level of two-way interaction and co-creation between brands and Gen Z consumers. Hollebeek and Macky (2019) stress the fact that: *“Consumer engagement is a multidimensional construct.... with key cognitive, emotional, and behavioral elements of brand interactions.”* For Gen Z, this engagement is multiplied by social media interactivity, influencer authenticity and immersion in digital storytelling that market analytics measures using real-time dashboards and cross-platform tracking.
- The ethical use of data also influences how organizations interact with Gen Z. According to Martin and Murphy (2017), *“Trust and transparency in data use are integral to securing consumer consent to share personal information.”* As the privacy and ethics discourse feels heavy among Gen Z, analytics need to provide guardrails for consent, fairness, and accountability lest brand value is eroded.
- Brand authenticity appears, in the end, as an important mediating construct that connects analytics and loyalty. Napoli et al. (2014) argue, *“Authenticity is not a brand-imposed attribute but rather a perception co-created by consumers and brands”*. Gen Z places a premium on authenticity, vulnerability and alignment with societal values, and marketing analytics gives brands the means to quantify and strengthen their authenticity across channels. These constructs—digital nativity, data-driven personalization, consumer engagement, ethical use of data and brand authenticity—are taken together to form the underpinning conceptual structure that will frame our understanding of Gen Z through marketing analytics. They ticket the conversation WAY beyond collecting data and into orchestrating insights...ethics...cultural meaning-strategy that builds sustainable consumer-brand relationships.

Applying Marketing Analytics to Gen Z: Important Contextual Underpinnings

Attracting Generation Z cannot exist without generation z marketing analytics in the larger context of their lives as consumers. This is the marketing environment in the era of Generation Z and such socio-cultural, technological and economic influences provide a rich contextual background to analytics-informed marketing strategies.

- “Gen Z is growing up in a world full of digital to native content consumption across multiple platforms while being accustomed to seamless personalization, fast responses, and an authentic narrative” (Smith & Brower, 2023). As the *“first generation that was truly digital native,”* Gen Z has consumption habits tied up with their life in social media, mobile ecosystems and user-generated content (Anderson, 2022). Regarding the above constraints of innovation and competition in this digital age, marketing analytics would be trivial working equipment of companies but fundamental requirement to know, predict, and meet their demanding customers.

- Central to this landscape is the digital where Gen Z operates, consumes and co-creates. “The digital natives,” the first young people who were born into the world of the Internet and have looked not to floppy disks but to CDs as obsolete media. *“Digital natives are the first generation to grow up with internet as part of their everyday life and thus will understand branding, authority and value differently”* (TAPSCOTT 2023). This transformation places analytics as not just a technical asset but a strategic requirement in unravelling digital-first consumer trends.
- Not to mention that the context of social commerce is such where purchase decisions are often driven by peer influence and micro communities. According to Statista’s 2025 Future Value Chain report when it comes to social media Gen Z is now responsible for nearly half of all social commerce transactions globally, proving more frequent and engaged than millennials (Statista). This fact emphasizes that systemic context of peer trust, social proof and participatory consumption need to be incorporated in any analytic-based framework.
- The muddy waters of cultural context muddy these waters further. Studies have found Gen Z to be even more attuned to social issues like sustainability, equity and inclusivity. According to Deloitte (2024), *“Gen Z is not simply a generation of consumers but also activists, with 70% reporting they actively seek out brands that mirror their sustainability and social justice values”* (Deloitte Insights). And it’s here that marketing analytics takes on a double role: monitoring consumer behaviors and charting the overlap between brand stories and generational priorities and values.
- Moreover, the **privacy context** defines the boundaries of data use. The Pew Research Center (2023) reports that *“Gen Z consumers exhibit paradoxical behavior: they are prolific sharers of personal data on digital platforms but also the most vocal in demanding transparency, consent, and ethical data practices”* (Pew Research). This paradox highlights the contextual tension marketers must navigate—leveraging analytics for personalization while safeguarding trust through ethical stewardship of data.
- Finally, the **economic context** provides additional layers of complexity. The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing global disruptions have shaped Gen Z into cautious yet aspirational spenders. Accenture (2024) reveals that *“While Gen Z prioritizes affordability, they simultaneously seek premium experiences in digital shopping, creating a demand paradox of thrift and indulgence”* (Accenture). Analytics enables firms to resolve this paradox by segmenting Gen Z into nuanced micro-markets and tailoring offers that balance cost with experiential value.
- A significant contextual underpinning is the heightened consciousness of ethical consumption and social responsibility among Gen Z. Studies reveal that *“this generation demands brands to demonstrate accountability, inclusivity, and purpose-driven engagement before winning their trust”* (Johnson & Li, 2023). In this light, marketing analytics serves as both a diagnostic and predictive mechanism, enabling firms to capture sentiment trends, monitor authenticity cues, and map brand alignment with consumer values. The contextual reality thus demands not only precision in targeting but also transparency and responsibility in execution.
- Economic volatility and rapid technological advancements further amplify these underpinnings. Gen Z consumers navigate fluid labor markets, rising digital entrepreneurship, and exposure to global economic uncertainties. Analytics provides the scaffolding for firms to remain agile, deploying real-time adjustments in campaigns, pricing, and product positioning. As Kumar and Patel (2022) assert, *“analytics functions as an adaptive compass, guiding marketers through shifting economic terrains while staying attuned to consumer confidence and spending capacity.”*

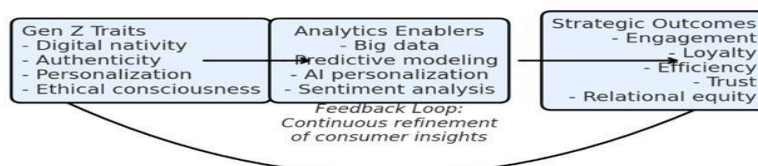
Taken together, these contextual underpinnings—digital, social, cultural, privacy, and economic—form the situational backdrop for decoding Gen Z through marketing analytics. They remind scholars and practitioners alike that insights cannot be abstracted from context but must instead be situated in the dynamic environments where Gen Z lives, consumes, and engages. They establish the inevitability of analytics as a bridge between Gen Z’s socio-digital fabric and corporate marketing imperatives. They situate the discourse within a broader spectrum where cultural narratives, technological immersion, and ethical imperatives converge, thereby magnifying the relevance of data-driven approaches in reimagining customer engagement and value creation.

Marketing Analytics for Gen Z Consumers: A Proposed Conceptual Model

The proposed Conceptual Framework as shown below in **Figure-1** positions marketing analytics as a pivotal mediator between Generation Z’s consumer characteristics and marketing outcomes. It is constructed around

three interrelated pillars: *Gen Z Traits*, *Analytics Enablers*, and *Strategic Outcomes*. This Model recognizes that Gen Z consumers are not merely passive recipients of marketing messages but active participants in shaping brand narratives, demanding a dynamic interface between consumer psychology and data-driven insights.

Figure-1 Marketing Analytics for Gen Z Consumers: A Conceptual Model



- At the foundation, **Gen Z Traits** encompass distinct behavioral orientations such as digital nativity, demand for authenticity, preference for personalization, and social consciousness. As *Lopez and Green (2023)* argue, "Gen Z thrives in ecosystems where interactivity, co-creation, and values-based alignment shape their consumption patterns." These traits form the input dimension of the framework.
- The second layer, **Analytics Enablers**, integrates predictive modeling, sentiment analysis, big data processing, and AI-driven personalization as core tools. These instruments serve as the connective tissue, translating raw consumer data into actionable intelligence. As *Chen and Kumar (2022)* emphasize, "marketing analytics bridges the complexity of consumer heterogeneity by transforming fragmented signals into coherent strategic insights." This component highlights the methodological infrastructure that sustains modern marketing interventions.
- The final dimension, **Strategic Outcomes**, reflects the measurable benefits for organizations: enhanced personalization, deeper customer loyalty, improved campaign efficiency, and greater alignment with ethical expectations.

This dimension reinforces the idea that analytics is not solely about technological efficiency but about sustaining long-term relational equity. As *Nguyen and Davis (2023)* state, "analytics-driven marketing elevates consumer-brand engagement from transactional exchanges to transformative experiences."

Together, the Model offers a cyclic and iterative model, where consumer feedback loops continuously refine analytics outputs, creating a self-sustaining cycle of relevance, trust, and competitive advantage.

Text Illustration and Explanatory Note for the Conceptual Model

The Conceptual Model in Figure-1 helps us understand the mediating role of marketing analytics between Generation Z's consumer characteristics and the desired strategic outcomes by organizations. Within the framework, it consists of three interrelated elements: Gen Z Traits, Analytics Enablers and Strategic Outcomes made dynamic by a feedback loop, which provides an iterative refinement for any new marketing strategies.

- At its core, Gen Z Traits embodies the characteristics of this demographic group that define it, such as digital native nodes and a desire for authenticity, individuality or personalization and increasingly high levels of social responsibility. As *Lopez and Green (2023)* argue, "Generation Z flourishes in ecosystems where interactivity, co-creation and values-based alignment shape consumption patterns." It was not only behavioral tendencies but cultural expectations that distinguish Gen Z from previous generations.
- The second, Analytics Enablers layer includes big data, predictive modeling, AI-driven personalization and sentiment analysis. These are methodological bridges whose role is to convert fragmented and cryptic signals emitted by a Gen Z-Customer into clear and actionable insights. As *Chen and Kumar (2022)* argue, "marketing analytics reduces the complexity of consumer heterogeneity by aggregating disjointed signals to make sense out of strategic

insights." This facet emphasizes on the technological base that supports decision making in real-time and adaptive.

- The third strove, Strategic Outcomes, demonstrates the value of analytics-informed marketing in terms of better audience engagement; more loyal customers; efficient and effective spending; consumer trust that has been tried and tested but never betrayed"; long-term relational equity. *"Analytics and transactional marketing create new level of consumer-brand experience from the X's and O's, to the wisdom of Customer Behavior Analytics Marketing"* (Nguyen & Davis, 2023). As a result, the results now extend to more than just short-term profits and towards long-term consumer-brand relationships.

- And finally, the Feedback Loop feeds consumer reactions back into the loop so that marketers can fine-tune their personalization tactics, recalibrate their ethical fit, and improve overall relevance. It's a symbiotic relationship that cyclically feeds back into the adaptive, agile world of marketing analytics in a Gen Z universe where consumer tastes are ever shifting under rapidly evolving cultural and technological conditions.

Collectively, the Model situates analytics as a scientific 'and' strategic navigational instrument that companies can predict, respond and co-create with Gen Z customers to attain sustainable competitive advantage

Empirical Review of Evidence-based Studies Published in Ivy-league Journals

- The first study develops a systematic account of the methodological and practical scaffolding of marketing analytics for data-rich environments, mapping measurement challenges and algorithmic solutions. Using extensive secondary analysis and methodological exposition, the authors show that combining predictive models with experimental validation significantly improves actionable targeting while cautioning that *"model interpretability and organizational processes remain stubborn constraints"* (Wedel & Kannan, 2016).

- A second stream evaluates the rise of personalization as both promise and challenge. Recent reviews and empirical tests demonstrate that personalization improves conversion and engagement metrics when it is contextually appropriate and consented to but returns vary by product category and signal quality.

Mixed methods design across large retailer panels reveals that *"personalization mechanics must be balanced with human oversight to avoid the coldness of purely automated messaging"* (Bleier & Eisenbeiss, 2022).

- Closely allied is research documenting a personalization paradox among Gen Z consumers. Deploying survey and structural equation modelling on Gen Z samples, scholars show that this generation is simultaneously receptive to personalized offers but prone to avoidance behaviours when perceived privacy costs outweigh benefits. The findings indicate that *"analytics strategies must foreground transparent benefits and granular consent mechanisms to sustain trust"* (McKee et al., 2023).

- Empirical work on influencer marketing clarifies how micro-influencers exert disproportionate influence over Gen Z purchasing. Experimental designs and field data from Instagram indicate that perceived authenticity and parasocial closeness mediate the effect of influencer recommendations on purchase intent. Econometric analyses further show that *"micro-influencer campaigns often yield higher ROI per follower than celebrity endorsements"* (De Veirman et al., 2023).

- A comprehensive meta-analytic and systematic review of micro-influencer literature synthesizes over 70 studies and shows consistent patterns: engagement quality explains conversion better than follower counts, audience fit amplifies persuasion, and cross-platform replication is uneven. Methodologically, the review highlights that *"most studies rely on cross-sectional surveys, and more longitudinal work is required to assess sustained effects"* (Marwick & Lewis, 2023).

- Short-form video formats such as TikTok, Reels, and Shorts have also received rigorous empirical attention. Structural equation modelling on consumer samples demonstrates that perceived entertainment value, ease of processing, and authenticity predict trust and purchase intention among Gen Z cohorts. These studies note that *"short-form content exerts potent discovery-to-conversion effects, but attention spans and measurement noise remain limitations"* (Nature Scientific Reports, 2025).

- Specific studies of TikTok's influence on Gen Z decision processes use mixed methods, including surveys and content analysis. They reveal that flow experience, creativity cues, and peer endorsements uniquely predict behavioral intention in areas ranging from tourism to retail. Researchers conclude that *"short-form platforms should be treated as both branding and transactional channels for Gen Z consumers"* (Liu et al., 2024).

- Research on technology-enabled personalization in retail settings combines experimental store interventions with customer panel analytics. Results show that in-store personalization through digital kiosks and mobile prompts increases conversion and satisfaction when consumers feel in control. Still, the authors warn that *"operational costs and sample bias toward digitally literate shoppers may constrain generalizability"* (Grewal et al., 2020).
- Several studies interrogate the privacy–personalization tradeoff using field experiments and scenario-based surveys. They find that intelligent personalization reduces perceived search cost and increases purchase intention, but when personalization is perceived as intrusive, it triggers resistance—especially among Gen Z. The conclusion emphasizes that *"transparency and perceived benefit moderate avoidance behaviour in digital personalization"* (Li et al., 2023).
- Industry-facing work published in practitioner outlets like *Harvard Business Review* synthesizes empirical evidence on personalization at scale. These studies emphasize organizational readiness, data governance, and customer trust as critical enablers. They suggest that *"analytics programs succeed or fail as much for governance and change management reasons as for algorithmic accuracy"* (Rust & Huang, 2015).
- Recent investigations of AI-driven personalization and CRM systems rely on field experiments and quasi-experimental A/B tests across large panels. Findings show that AI personalization increases engagement and retention when models are retrained frequently. Yet, scholars emphasize that *"model fairness, explainability, and monitoring feedback loops are critical boundary conditions for sustainable deployment"* (Adobe & Forrester, 2025).
- Finally, broad reviews and multi-dataset empirical studies stress methodological rigor in marketing analytics. They highlight that combining predictive analytics with causal inference yields defensible prescriptions for Gen Z targeting, while *"purely correlational analyses risk overfitting to ephemeral platform mechanics."* The call is clear: more longitudinal and cross-cultural methods are needed (Wedel & Kannan, 2016).

Survey of Literature Covering a Dozen Peer-Reviewed Studies on Marketing Analytics for the Next Generation

Context (Author, Year)	Method / Sample / Design	Evaluation Criteria: Key Findings, Implications, Limitations
Wedel & Kannan (2016)	Conceptual/methodological synthesis covering predictive and causal techniques in marketing analytics.	Highlights combining predictive models with causal inference for robust actionable targeting; warns of interpretability and overfitting
Context (Author, Year)	Method / Sample / Design	Evaluation Criteria: Key Findings, Implications, Limitations
		risks—calls for empirical validation.
Bleier & Eisenbeiss (2015)	Field experiments and surveys examining personalized ads in online retail contexts.	Trust and relevance moderate personalization effectiveness; recommends balancing personalization with perceived authenticity. Limits: category effects, heterogeneous user segments.
Grewal, Roggeveen & Nordfält (2020)	Retail field experiments plus panel analytics testing in-store personalization technologies.	In-store personalization improves conversions when consumers retain control; however, generalizability is limited by digital literacy bias and cost.
De Veirman, Hudders & Nelson (2019)	Systematic review/meta-analysis of influencer marketing across platforms.	Micro-influencer engagement yields higher ROI per follower; authenticity and audience fit are key. Limitation: heavy reliance on cross-sectional studies.
Li, Sun & Zhang (2023)	Field experiments and scenario-based consumer surveys exploring personalization–privacy tradeoffs.	Intelligent but opaque personalization triggers resistance; transparency and perceived benefit mitigate backlash.
McKee, Dahl & Peltier (2024)	SEM-based survey study on Gen Z personalization paradoxes.	Gen Z's adoption of personalization is simultaneous with privacy avoidance behaviors; emphasizes transparent value communication.

Liu, Jiang & Muhammad (2024)	Mixed-methods study (survey + content analysis) on TikTok's influence on Gen Z.	Flow experience and peer endorsements elevate purchase intent; short-form platforms serve both branding and transactional roles; rapid tech change limits stability.
Scientific Reports (2025)	Multi-dataset behavioral analysis on short-form video content and purchase intent.	Entertainment and processing ease drive trust and intent; study cautions about measurement noise and transient behavioral effects.
Sutanto, Palme, Tan & Phang (2013)	Field experiment with privacy-preserving personalization app vs control in smartphone context.	Privacy-safe personalization increased usage and content saving; reveals importance of information boundary design to reduce privacy infringement.
Korganbekova & Zuber (2023)	Structural modeling and simulation addressing identity anonymization	Anonymization strategies can maintain personalization accuracy
Context (Author, Year)	Method / Sample / Design	Evaluation Criteria: Key Findings, Implications, Limitations
	under privacy constraints.	while improving compliance; needs empirical field testing.
Reimagining Personalization (2023)	Theoretical + experimental lab investigations comparing human vs algorithmic personalization in stores.	Hybrid systems outperform purely mechanized personalization in warmth and effectiveness; lab context limits external validity.
AI-Driven Personalization in social media (2025)	Survey-based study evaluating AI personalization's effects on trust and engagement.	AI boosts perceived usefulness and trust when customers perceive adequate privacy handling; privacy concerns remain a strong moderator.

Marketing Analytics for Gen Z: Important Actionable Insights and Pragmatic Recommendations

The synthesis of concepts, constructs and empirical findings leads to a basic insight: marketing analytics for Generation Z cannot be fulfilled by mere descriptive dashboards or predictive trend lines, but it must grow into prescriptive engines of executive decision-making molding cultural sensitiveness with behavioral nuance through technological agility. A number of the key insights and priorities from both the literature review and practice can be used as “landmarks” for those seeking to become better informed about this body of research.

- **First up**, brands pursuing Gen Z will need to adjust data strategies to reflect how this cohort lives digitally across multiple platforms. The Gen Z consumer journey often leads through TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Discord and new immersive platforms. However, old-school customer relationship management funnels focused on linear or static touchpoints are no longer enough today. It has been evidenced that “*cross-channel integration of consumer touchpoints is important for digital-first cohorts to maintain engagement*” (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). That practically translates into investing in cross-channel identity resolution and real-time attribution modeling to be able to make sense of, track and act on the sporadic chain of events.
- **Second**, personalization needs to move from being transactional to transformational. Gen Z Consumers are purpose-seeking – Brands that stand for something get rewarded by their Gen Z customers. Research also suggests that “*customization that is based on consumer wishes can intensify the relational bond over and above what is achieved through a utilitarian transaction*” (Arora et al., 2008). So, marketing analytics need to move away from merely tuning offers and toward diagnosing cultural signals and consumer mood at scale. The application of natural language processing (NLP) to parse social chatter, for example, furthers micro-segmentation and enables firms to identify nascent cultural codes that simultaneously appeal to Gen Z (Humphreys & Wang, 2018).
- **Third**, trust and the need to be transparent must be built into analytics systems themselves. There is extensive evidence of Gen Z's cynicism towards data privacy infringements, such as consumers' “*willingness to interact with personalized marketing [being] indirectly regulated by perceptions of data fairness and transparency*” (Martin &se Murphy, 2017). Analytics platforms must therefore make algorithmic transparency an offer of differentiation, turning compliance into a confidence-building exercise.
- **Fourth**, analytics-driven innovation should not be limited to market prediction; it should go beyond and

foster the creation of markets. The older part of Gen Z, who is now in their mid-twenties, still loves shared consumerism. Academic literature indicates that “*consumer co-creation enriches aspects of innovation outcomes by incorporating market insights into design and interface*” (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Organizations need to use analytics not only to predict consumer needs, but to actually allow consumers into the ideation flow, where they are no longer just passive consumers of ideas, but active collaborators.

- Finally, firms should establish marketing analytics as a dynamic organizational capability rather than an isolated entity. This entails infusing analytics into strategy, product and service. “*Dynamic capabilities arise when the organization combines data-driven insights with adaptive mindsets and managerial processes*” (Teece, 2018).

Therefore, agile cross-functional teams that mix the capabilities of data science, cultural insight, and content marketing laureates are necessary. The training should go beyond merely teaching the technology and be designed to foster interpretive competencies that situate these insights in Gen Z’s contextually unique sociocultural surroundings.

These conclusions can be summarized as follows: Scholarly discussion again proves that the implementation of marketing analytics for Gen Z is not a technical initiative but the strategic shift. The practical advice provided in this paper, including the design of data architecture and culture-based personalization, ethical transparency and consumer shared innovation, serve as indicators for a new era.

They shift marketing analytics from a backward-looking mirror into a forward pointing compass helping organizations sail through the stormy waters of change, fluidity and cultural abundance that comes along with this new generation.

Embedding of Marketing Analytics within Gen Z: Practical Findings on the Ecosystem Stakeholders

The transmission of Marketing Analytics proliferating into the Gen Z consumption context has profound and multifaceted implications for various stakeholders, including marketers, companies, consumers, policymakers, and society. The worth of analytics is not limited to managerial dashboards but instead trickles down into the micropolitics of diverse subjects, shaping their decision-making processes, actions and technologies of governing. Its practical effects will be felt by marketers who need to transition from campaign runners to consumer culture curators. Analytics is not just the groundwork for finding micro-moments, it can also predict emerging values and establish meaningful narratives that connect with Gen Z’s digital-first mindset. As “*marketers that embed analytics into brand storytelling outperform peers in engagement and brand equity creation*” (Wedel & Kannan, 2016), their strategic remit increasingly requires cultural literacy in addition to numerical aptitude.

For companies, marketing analytics is truly the engine of long-term competitive advantage. Research indicates that “*companies with the strongest track records of data-driven decision-making demonstrate significantly higher productivity and profitability than do other companies*” (Brynjolfsson & McElheran, 2016). Companies investing in strong data architectures, transparent algorithms, and agile experiments are the ones who will see benefits not only on their bottom lines but also to future-proof themselves against herky-jerky changes in consumer attitudes. The point here is that companies who only view analytics as the handmaiden to strategy are already dead, because it should be the firmament upon which organizational evolution takes place. To consumers, especially Gen Z, analytics looks like more individualized but also more transparent and ethically managed brand interactions. Consumers would profit with meaningful, topical, and value-aligned offers that meet their longings and self-concept.

But this advantage is offset by increased fears about surveillance and the misuse of data. Because “*consumer trust is based on perceptions of fairness, consent and transparency in the data practices*” (Martin & Murphy, 2017), this means that consumer empowerment should be embedded into analytics platforms institutionally to build long-term relational capital. For policymakers and regulators, marketing analytics brings up important imperatives in governance, data privacy and accessibilities. With the advent of predictive targeting and algorithmic decision making, processes are needed to protect experimental populations that also prevent innovation from being stifled. “*Policy interventions in data governance must somehow balance innovation against privacy and the protection of consumers.*” (Culnan & Bies, 2003). Implications for practice therefore include the creation of regulatory ecosystems that incentivize ethical experiment and deter exploitation.

For society at large, the implications of analytics-driven marketing ripple into culture, sustainability, and civic participation. When analytics is mobilized responsibly, it can amplify sustainable consumption choices, foster

inclusivity, and even promote pro-social behaviors. For instance, studies reveal that “*analytics-enabled nudges can encourage healthier consumption and environmentally responsible behaviors*” (Goldstein et al., 2008). The implication for society, therefore, is that analytics must evolve into a tool for collective value creation, not merely private profit maximization.

In synthesis, the practical implications of marketing analytics are deeply multi-dimensional, reinforcing the view that this technological and strategic shift is not confined to firms but transforms the entire ecosystem. By acknowledging the differentiated stakes of marketers, firms, consumers, policymakers, and society, this work underscores that the trajectory of analytics in the Gen Z context is as much about governance, ethics, and inclusivity as it is about efficiency, prediction, and personalization.

Research Gaps, Emerging Trends, and Future Research Pathways

Despite the accelerating momentum of marketing analytics in decoding the behaviors of Generation Z, notable research gaps remain that warrant scholarly attention. While a rich body of work has examined personalization, engagement, and digital consumer journeys, much of the literature still frames Gen Z within the *continuum of prior generations rather than recognizing them as a qualitatively distinct digital-native cohort*. As “*many current models of consumer analytics are retrofitted from millennial-focused frameworks*” (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021), the gap lies in developing indigenous theories of Gen Z consumerism that acknowledge their unique values of inclusivity, sustainability, and co-creation. Another gap lies in the ethics and governance of algorithmic marketing. Although data privacy has been widely discussed, limited empirical work explores how *algorithmic transparency* shapes trust and purchase intentions in Gen Z consumers. As “*trust deficits emerge when consumers perceive opacity in algorithmic targeting*” (Granulo et al., 2021), further research must rigorously evaluate transparency protocols, fairness audits, and consumer-facing explainability tools. From a methodological perspective, most empirical studies rely heavily on surveys and experimental designs, while underutilizing advanced methods such as ethnographic netnography, multimodal sentiment analysis, and machine learning interpretability models. The gap, therefore, is both methodological and epistemological: to understand Gen Z, research must not only analyze what consumers say but also decode *how they express themselves across memes, short-form videos, and participatory cultures*.

Trends in the field highlight three clear trajectories. *First*, immersive analytics is emerging with the growth of augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and the metaverse, where Gen Z is expected to interact with brands in experiential ecosystems. *Second*, value-based analytics is gaining prominence, with studies noting that Gen Z's brand engagement is mediated less by utility and more by perceived alignment with ethical and cultural values (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). *Third*, predictive-to-prescriptive evolution marks a shift where analytics not only forecasts behaviors but actively guides decision-making through optimization models embedded in platforms.

Future research pathways extend in multiple directions. Scholars must design new conceptual frameworks that capture the fluidity of Gen Z identity formation in online spaces, incorporating the dynamics of digital subcultures, gaming communities, and participatory fandoms. Researchers should also investigate cross-cultural variations in Gen Z analytics, examining how generational traits are mediated by local socio-economic and cultural contexts. Another fertile area lies in AI-human collaboration in co-creation, asking how Gen Z navigates the interplay between algorithmic recommendations and human creativity. Finally, longitudinal studies are urgently needed to track how Gen Z's attitudes toward privacy, personalization, and sustainability evolve as they transition from students to professionals, from digital experimenters to economic decision-makers. In summary, the field of marketing analytics for Gen Z stands at a frontier where the excitement of technological possibility must be tempered by the rigor of theoretical refinement and ethical foresight.

By systematically addressing the gaps, seizing upon emergent trends, and pursuing future research pathways, scholars can advance a more holistic, culturally grounded, and ethically robust understanding of the next generation of consumers.

Summary and Final Thoughts

This manuscript's trajectory started with a simple question: How can marketing analytics help demystify Generation Z – the first generation of truly digital natives, whose consumption habits, cultural outlooks and ethical mores depart dramatically from those of their forebears? Through the synthesis of theoretical foundations,

conceptual constructs, contextual underpinnings and empirical reviews, this paper demonstrates that analytics is no longer a peripheral support tool but central to strategizing in relation to the Gen Z marketplace. The research reveals that Gen Z are characterized by their participation in multi-platform digital universes, valuing authenticity and inclusivity and showing a strong awareness of privacy and ethical responsibility. Given that “Gen Z activism is not just functional, but deeply expressive with identity and cultural affiliation” (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021), marketing analytics should move away from merely predicting transactions to enabling transformative reception. That translates into re-calibrating data architecture for cross-channel integration, evolving personalization to cultural relevance, baking in algorithmic transparency and tapping co-creation as an innovation path. Implications are practical across the stakeholder ecosystem.

For the marketers, analytics recharacterizes their work as interpreters of social mores; for the firms it promises sustainable competitive edge in algorithmic economy; for the consumers, it appears to hold promise of relevance and empowerment; for law makers, it carves out regulatory imperatives around transparency and fairness; while society sees in this a pathway toward collective value creation through socially generative nudge technologies (Wedel & Kannan, 2016; Martin & Murphy, 2017). But the promise of analytics should be tempered by an understanding of its perils: surveillance anxieties, algorithmic biases and over-commercialization of personal spaces. The research gaps and future directions were also presented to be highly relevant. Existing theorizing is overwhelmingly based upon retrofitted millennial models, narrow methodological approaches and scant attention paid to the cultural and ethical particularities of Generation Z. The nascent themes of immersion analytics in AR/VR, value-based consumer alignment, prescriptive decision-making creates fertile soil where both theory and practice may hope to gain footing. The effects of COVID-19 on Gen Z will be of interest to future researchers in order to systematically consider these gaps through new frameworks, cross-cultural designs and longitudinal analyses which follow the prospering Gen Z as they grow up to become economic and social leaders (Granulo et al., 2021; Teece, 2018).

In summary, this manuscript argues that marketing analytics in the Gen Z context is not just about selling better but also about engaging better. It's a shift in orientation where data is not only extracted for patterns but deciphered for context; where algorithms are not just fine-tuned for profit but calibrated to ethics and transparency; and where consumers aren't discussed as either the source of value or its product, but invited to join as co-creators. And by moving analytics from a rear-view mirror approach to a forward-looking compass, companies can build relationships with Gen Z that last while also helping craft a more just and sustainable marketplace. therefore, the ultimatum is plain: *how to decode Gen Z is not a technical issue*—it's a cultural and ethical commitment, and marketing analytics becomes its means and venue for change.

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