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JEL: M31, L66, D91, D12

INFLUENCE OF THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT ON DECORATIVE COSMETICS TRENDS

Abstract

Purpose: This paper aims to compare Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z, and show their similarities and differences between them as consumers in the decorative cosmetics industry. The digital environment has created a new trend in the industry, and this paper aims to show the differences in acceptance of those trends between the mentioned generations.
Methodology: An online survey was carried out on a sample of 445 female respondents from the Republic of Croatia. Primary research was conducted in March 2020 using the Computer Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI) method. IBM SPSS Statistics 25 software has been used for statistical analysis and related tests, including Chi-square and Kruskal-Wallis test.
Results: The respondents in this research are divided into three generations (Gen X, Gen Y, Gen Z), and this paper shows the differences between mentioned generations, what factors and what characteristics decorative cosmetics consumers find important in product selection, and what source of information they find relevant.

Conclusion: Differences in consumers' behavior between generations are significant, each generation has its own pattern of behavior that requires a custom marketing approach, and the digital environment presents a specific challenge.

Keywords: Decorative cosmetics, Digital environment, Generation X, Generation Y, Generation Z, Influencers

1. Introduction

Face and body care date back to ancient Egypt, and cosmetics gradually developed until the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. At the beginning of the 20th century, the era of modern decorative cosmetics has begun. During the early years of 20th century, make-up became fashionable in the United States and Europe, mostly promoted by stars performing in ballet and theater. However, the most important and influential development in the popularity of decorative cosmetics began with the movie industry in Hollywood. One of the most famous brands in the decorative cosmetics industry today is called Max Factor. Max Factor or Maksymilian Faktorowicz started to sell make-up to Hollywood movie stars. Max Factor also invented the word 'makeup' and introduced Society Makeup to the public, enabling women to look like their favorite TV actresses. In 1928 Max Factor unveiled the very first lip-gloss as well. After him, essential people in the decorative cosmetics industry were Eugene Schueller, founder of L'Oreal, who invented modern synthetic hair dye and sunscreen. T.J. Williams and his company Maybelline are important because of mascara manufacturing (Jain & Chaudhri; 2009: 164; Cosmetics Info, 2019). Eugene Schueller had a good understanding of the market and its needs. He not only understood the needs of the market but also created them, through his innovations but also his marketing activities. In the late 1920s, he extended his manufacturing production to body care, and this cosmetics branch of his company expanded over time, today being one of the market leaders. They published the magazine La Coiffure et les modes, and it was placed at the service of his innovations in this branch. Later that magazine became 'Women's magazine' that could be bought from vendors other than hair salons. Success was immediate, in December 1933 they sold more than 90.000 copies, compared to 8.950 in April 1932. The main goal of that magazine was the narrative of beauty imposed on women to pay attention to their appearance, and as a result, they would buy products that were recommended in the magazine (Geers, 2014). That was the beginning of the modern use of decorative cosmetics and marketing activities in that industry. Today the situation is significantly different, digital technologies changed the way people behave, how they access information and how they purchase things. Moreover, a significant number of small brands have appeared on the market of decorative cosmetics in recent years, which are rapidly becoming popular. Sch brands are not created by multinational corporations but celebrities like Rihanna, Kylie Jenner, blogger Emily Weiss or famous people from the industry such as make-up artist Charlotte Tilbury or Jeffree Star who is a make-up YouTube influencer. These stars and their brands have built their popularity through social media platforms and digital communication channels. Following the short historical overview of the decorative cosmetics industry in the introduction, this paper aims to explore the generational concept and differences between Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z as well as their specific purchasing preferences within the theoretical framework section. The results of the primary research are presented afterwards, focusing on the pattern of consumers' behavior in the decorative cosmetics industry for each of explored generation. Finally, the most important parts of the paper will be summarized in conclusion section with most important limitations and recommendations for future research.

2. Theoretical framework

Just as decorative cosmetics are a kind of expression of their character, so are the brands that consumers wear and use to represent the personality of that person. There are many brands on the global market today, and for every consumer there will be a brand which they can identify with. In the decorative cosmetics industry, indie brands stand out as a type of brand with which younger consumers can identify more. Indie brand is a generic term that could describe any independently owned company and represent entrepreneurs who are progressive, creative, and non-traditional in their communication with audience and marketing activities (Robinson, 2016). Indie brands meet specific needs and quite often are driven by passion. Indie brands are able to empathize with their audience where the implementation of feedback is crucial. Customer satisfaction is the center of indie companies because they are the reason for the emergence of these companies where consumers make products for consumers. Indie companies tend to create authentic stories which should resonate with their target audience (Hansen, 2018). Still, the trend that has been noticed in the last two years is the sale of indie brands to the multinational corporations after gaining world fame (Charlotte Tilbury brand was sold to Puig group, Kylie Cosmetics to Coty, Fenty Beauty to LVMH, Urban Decay to L'Oreal, Too Faced to Estee Lauder Companies) where they still retain their creative rights as creative directors and presidents. The reason for such an approach is probably the limited production capacity concerning the high demand in the global market (Butler, 2020). Russel et al. (2018)

showed how make-up products have a differential effect on perceived age, and they compared women in their 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s, and it was the trigger to research marketing background on that topic. Baek (2019) showed that baby boomer generation is changing the decorative cosmetics market because the purchase of cosmetics has increased to 100% in women in their 60s and the same author researched their behavior, why they wear make-up, what products they use and how much they are spending on beauty products. Dalziel (2019) investigated female students' attitude towards beauty products. The aforementioned studies were a guide to investigating the differences between the generations on the decorative cosmetics market. It should be noted that there is a disagreement among various authors about the birth year boundaries of a specific generation. Pew Research Center suggested that Gen X starts from 1965, Gen Y from 1981, and Gen Z from 1997 (Dimock, 2019) while Stein (2013) argued that Gen Y is born between 1980 and 2000. In contrast, Lyons (2016) suggested that Gen X involved persons born between 1965 and 1979, yet Howe (2014) defined Gen X as the ones born between 1961 and 1981. The biggest disagreement is about setting boundaries for Gen Z, because Salesforce defined that Gen Z is born between 1997 and 2015, Deloitte claims it is from 1995 to 2012, McKinsey defined Gen Z as generation born between 1995 and 2010, and Pew Research Center defined them as generation born after 1996 (Parker & Igielnik, 2020; Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Gomez et al., 2018; Young, 2021). All the years cited mentioned in this paper for the definition of generations are by Williams and Page (2011) due to a uniform approach.

Generation X is also known as Baby Bust, Slackers, Why Me Generation or the Latchkey Generation, were born between 1965 and 1977, and today they are between 44 and 56 years old. They are children of the Baby Boomers generation known as workaholic generation, which is why Generation X are known as Latchkey generation, which means that they were coming to an empty home after school because their hard-working parents are away at work. Members of Generation X are less traditional than their parents, and they are more open-minded to multiculturalism and globalism. Even though this generation is highly educated, they are pessimistic and skeptical about almost everything, and they do not like teamwork as much as their parents. They are more non-team players and very often self-employed professionals (Williams & Page, 2011:7; Berkup, 2014:4). They educate themselves to achieve better careers and get higher incomes, not serve higher collective goals. Unlike Baby Boomers, Generation X does not live to work, but the opposite, they work to live, they rely solely on themselves instead of the team and the collective (Kindrick Patterson, 2007:19). Generation X is the bridge from old school to new school, they get digital and like mobile and social, but they are less self-centered about their tech devices and like to combine offline and online channels (Quad, 2017:11). Most of the Gen X members today are already parents and they spend a most of their money on products and services to set up households, on their children, and on savings for college for their kids (Williams & Page, 2011:7; Quad:2017:7). Gen X are economical, they love coupons but do not purchase a product until they have researched it, and they quit if they have any doubt about a product (Salesfloor, 2020). According to eMarketer, 86% of Xers said they would try a new brand if offered a coupon or discount for that product, and 64% of Xers are purchasing store brands, 34% would try a new brand because items they want are not available, and 33% to save money (Dolliver, 2021)

Generation Y, also known as Gen Y, Millennials, Echo Boomers, Why Generation, Net Generation, Gen Wired, We Generation, DotNet, Ne(X)t Generation, Nexters, First Globals, iPod Generation) were born between 1977 and 1994 (Williams & Page, 2011:7). Today Millennials are between 27 and 44 years old. In 2020, approximately 23% of the global population can be considered as Millennials (MSCI, 2020:5). In the United States, Millennials overtake Baby Boomers as America's largest generation (Fry, 2020). The last Statistical Report of Census of Population in Croatia reported there are approximately 1 million of Millennial population, that is almost one-quarter of the overall population in the country. Millennials in each country have different characteristics, but due to globalization, the Internet, social media, and the expanding of Western culture and speed of change in the late 20th century, Millennials worldwide are more similar to each other than the older generation within their nations. Gen Y members have higher rates of narcissism, materialism, and technology addiction than their predecessors (Kraljević & Filipović, 2017:6; Stein & Sanburn, 2013:26). Compared with older generations, Millennials are better educated than their predecessors, especially women, because 43% of Millennial women had obtained at least a bachelor's degree, and 36% of men have at least a bachelor's degree. Even though they have better education, they are delaying or foregoing marriage and live longer with their parents before moving to their own households (Bialik & Fry, 2019). According to Euromonitor International (2015:12-13), in clothing and make-up markets, Millennials are largely focused on value-for-money products such as *fast fashion* brands. Members of Generation Y find personalization and interactivity essential in the beauty care and the food industry. This demographic segment seems to like try-on technologies, skin analysis, and mirror apps for smartphones, also they like curated but interactive sales environments, whether retail or online.

Generation Z also known as Children of Internet, Baby Bloomers, 9/11 Generation, iGen, Digital Natives, .com Generation or Generation XD was born between 1995 and 2010. Today they are between 11 and 26 years old. The most defining characteristic of Gen Z are reliance, freedom, individualism, addiction to technology and speed, value individual expression and avoid labels, mobilize them themselves for a variety of causes and make decisions and relate to institutions in a highly analytical and pragmatic way. Some vital factors that defined this generation are the fact that their parents marry later and they raise them when they are more mature, this generation faced global terrorism, recession, economic uncertainty and they have been equipped with the technological devices since they were babies with access to the Internet. (Francis & Hoefel, 2018:2; Williams & Page, 2011:10; Berkup, 2014:223) Members of Generation Z are known for their character of being creative, multi-taskers, and instantly indulgent. However, at the same time this generation feels comfortable not having only one about themselves, but their search for authenticity generates greater freedom of expression and greater openness to understanding different kinds of people (Dimitriou & AbouElgheit, 2019:314.; Francis & Hoefel, 2018:2). When it comes to the beauty industry and decorative cosmetics, Gen Z is living in an age where brands are telling them – it's ok to be you, imperfection is beautiful and it is driven by the rise of influencer culture where Gen Z influencers tell Gen Z consumers how to look like the best version of themselves. For Gen Z members, it is important that their favorite brand provides products that are not tested on animals. They want straight-talking brands and messages with which they can identify (Hope, 2017). According to a report by Mashable (Lane, 2014), Gen Z members do not just talk about changing the world, they want actually to do it, 60% of them want their jobs to impact the world, and 76% are concerned about humanity's impact on the planet. Ahmad and Omar (2017) argued that these young consumers like to do things that make them unique, such as buying natural and eco-products just to be perceived differently from their friends. Gen Z members like more influencers than traditional celebrities, but even within these groups, they like to trust micro-influencers more than macro or mega influencers because Gen Z members want people or influencers who have similar interests and put their real, unedited, and authentic content (Wolf, 2020). According to a report by Google (O'Neil-Hart & Blumenstein, 2016) 70% of teenage (Gen Z) YouTube subscribers say they relate to YouTubers more than traditional celebrities, and 60% of them stated that they would follow advice on what to buy from their favorite YouTuber over their favorite TV personality.

Wang and Lee (2021), in their study, showed that social media influencers have a significant impact on consumers' new product acceptance intentions and it is even better when sponsorship is not displayed, except for general public influencers, in which case it is better when their sponsorship is displayed. Yüksel (2016) showed that make-up and beauty YouTube channels have content that was found to have a significant effect on perceived credibility, usefulness, and attitude toward the purchase and the purchase intention. Gupta et al. (2020), in their study, stated that Instagram influencer physical attractiveness significantly affects consumer purchase behavior. The same authors (2020) stated that a growing number of consumers are exploring blogs and reviews before purchasing, while 83% of Instagram users discover new products and services on that platform. It a channel to for inspiration, and depending on the level of user income, affordability of products is decided on. Swadia (2018), argued that there is relationship between advertisement and consumer awareness in the decorative cosmetics industry. However, there is no a relationship between the advertisement and perception because advertisement cannot create perceptions in the mind of the customers. The conclusion is that decorative cosmetics products are sensitive products where consumers are looking for a product that is suitable for their skin. Swadia (2018) continued to conclude that cosmetic companies should use content to create awareness for consumers because that first contact with the product is essential. It is especially important for young girls during their adolescence age when the development of attractiveness becomes a priority. Teenagers' (today - Gen Z members) struggles are magnified by unattainable ideals presented by the media, including the social media platforms. Their young skin is very sensitive, and they need to have credible sources of information for decorative cosmetics, such as dermatologists (Marcoux, 2000). The results of Dalziel's (2019) research showed that celebrities have a significant positive influence on female students' attitude towards beauty products, but the influence of salespeople also proved significant.

3. Primary research

According to Statista (2017), 67% of women and 0% of men in the United States use decorative cosmetics daily or several times a week. Consequently, it can be inferred that decorative cosmetics are intended primarily for women. Therefore, the primary research in this paper is focused exclusively on women. The aim of this research is to explore differences in consumer behavior in the decorative cosmetics industry among women of different generations. The research instrument was created for the purpose of this research and was largely based on input from industry professionals. The questionnaire consisted of 58 items related to 28 questions, where 23 questions were focused on the research topic, and 5 related to demographic variables. Mainly ordinal and nominal scales were used within closed-ended questions. The data collection was conducted in March 2020 using the Computer Assisted Web Interviewing

(CAWI) method. The time required to fill in the questionnaire was approximately 10 minutes and the survey was in the Croatian language. Non-probability quota sampling was used in order to obtain an adequate number of female respondents per Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z. The online survey was shared through social media platforms and email contacts who then shared the survey to their contacts that fit the respondent profile. The final sample consisted of N=445 female internets users from Croatia. For analysis of the collected data, IBM SPSS Statistics 25 and MS Excel were used. For testing differences between generations, the following statistical tests and methods were used: descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation for multiple response questions, Kruskal-Wallis test, and Chi-square test.
The goal of the paper was to reach a matching number of female respondents who are members of Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z to see similarities and differences between them. Out of a total of 445 female respondents that participated in the study, 144 respondents are members of Generation X (32,4%), 99 respondents are members of Generation Y (22,2%), and 202 respondents are members of the youngest generation in this comparison, Generation Z (45,4%). Although the sample is not evenly distributed across generations, the number of respondents per generation is large enough to enable the comparison between the subsegments.

Considering that none of the respondents completed a Ph.D. study, or just primary school, it was reduced to a division of three categories. More than half of Generation X members (54,2) stated that they have a master's degree, 9,2% have a bachelor's degree, and 36,6% of Gen X have completed high school. Millennials have a similar level of education as the prior generation, with more than half of them who stated that they have a master's degree (53,5%), a bachelor's degree was a little bit more popular for Millennials (17,2%) than for Gen X, and 29,3% of Millennials in this research stated that they had completed high school. It is a completely different story with Generation Z, a lot of them in this research are not even old enough to have master's degree, so just 21% have master's degree, 18,5% have bachelor's degree, and the remaining 60,5% so far completed just a high school, but some of them just started their academic education.

Table 1. Level of education

	Gen X (%)	Gen Y (%)	Gen Z (%)	Overall sample (%)
High School	36,6	29,3	60,5	45,6
Bachelor's degree	9,2	17,2	18,5	15,1
Master's degree	54,2	53,5	21,0	39,2

Source: Created by the authors based on the research

Employment of respondents who represent Generation X and Generation Z is very high, 97,9% for the oldest generation in this comparison and 90,7% for Millennials. Considering that the oldest representatives of Generation Z can only be 27 years old today, it could be expected that employment within that generation will be lower, or they will work as students. Respondents in this research have a very low rate of unemployment, 3,8% of the total number of respondents, even among the youngest generation in this comparison, the unemployment rate is low (5,1%). Most Generation Z respondents work as student employees (58,2%), and the remaining 36,7% of Generation Z respondents are employed.

Table 2. Employment status

	Gen X (%)	Gen Y (%)	Gen Z (%)	Overall sample (%)
Unemployed	1,4	6,2	5,1	3,8
Employed	97,9	90,7	36,7	78,2
Student employee	0,7	3,1	58,2	18,0

Source: Created by the authors based on the research

In order to understand the differences between generations, it is essential to compare their purchasing and financial power. According to the Croatian Bureau of Statistics (2021), the average monthly paid off net earnings per capita in paid employment in legal entities in the Republic of Croatia is 6.979 HRK. Table 3 shows how Generation X members have the highest financial power with 16,2% of them having monthly incomes over 13.000 HRK, 26,8% of them between 8.000 and 13.000 HRK, almost half of them (49,3%) have between 4.000 and 8.000 HRK, and just 7,7% have less than 4.000 HRK per month.

Table 3. Income level

	Gen X (%)	Gen Y (%)	Gen Z (%)	Overall sample (%)
Less than 4.000 HRK	7,7	13,3	75,6	37,4
4.001 – 8.000 HRK	49,3	61,2	22,1	40,8
8.001 – 13.000 HRK	26,8	18,4	1,7	14,3
More than 13.001 HRK	16,2	7,1	0,6	7,5

Source: Created by the authors based on the research

The assumption is that there is a strong link between income and the amount spent on make-up. As table 3 shows, members of Generation X have the highest income level, while the lowest income level is reported for Generation Z, which is quite logical considering their age. Table 4 shows how income and spending on decorative cosmetics are related. Kruskal-Wallis test (χ^2=8.936, df=2, p=,011) shows that there is a statistically significant difference between generations and their monthly spending on decorative cosmetics. Gen X members spend the most on make-up, while Gen Z spends the least. The post-hoc test shows that the difference between Gen X and Gen Z is statistically significant (adj. p=.015). More than ¾ of respondents of Gen Y and Gen Z stated that they spend less than 300 HRK per month, to be more precise, 78,6% of both mentioned generations. In the highest level of monthly spending, 7,1% of the Gen Y respondents stated that they spend 600 to 1000 HRK per month on cosmetics, and 5,1% of the Gen Z respondents stated the same thing. However, interestingly just 4,2% of respondents who are at least 44 years old spend that much money on decorative cosmetics although they have a higher level of income.

Table 4. Monthly spending on decorative cosmetics

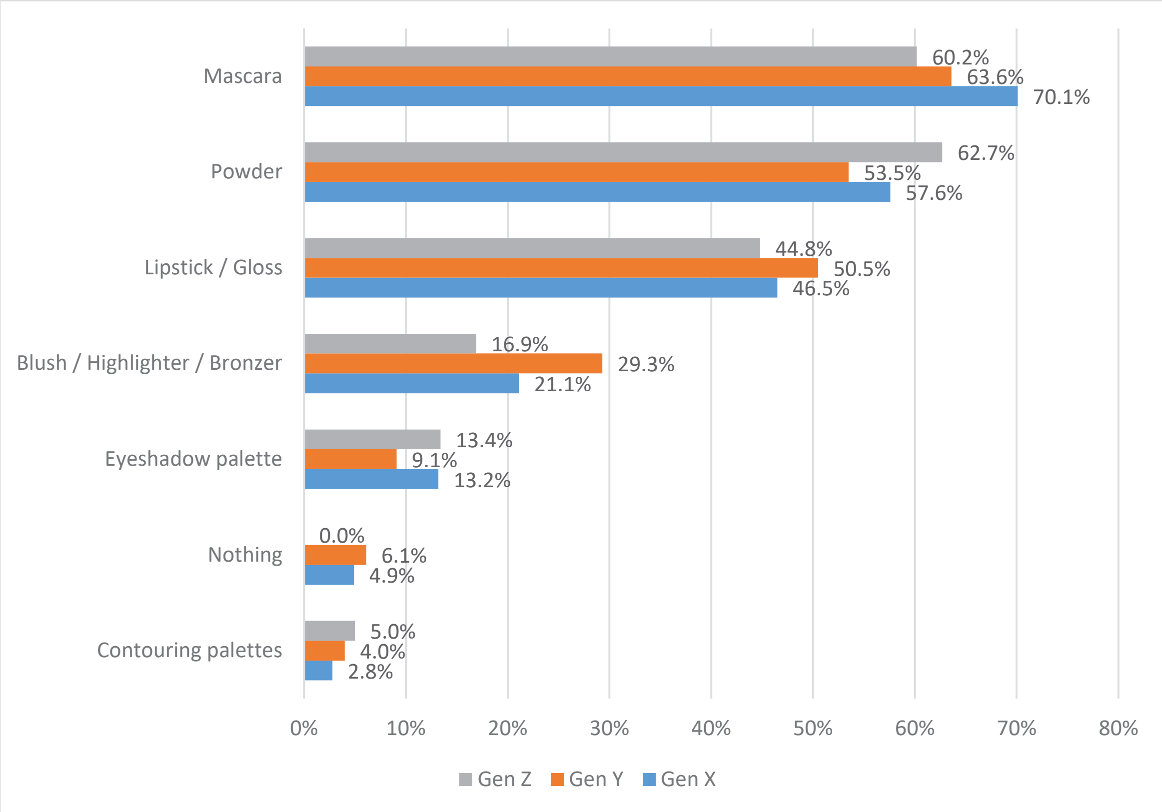
	Gen X (%)	Gen Y (%)	Gen Z (%)	Overall sample (%)
Less than 300 HRK	63,9	78,6	78,6	73,7
301 – 600 HRK	31,9	14,3	16,3	21,0
601 – 1.000 HRK	4,2	7,1	5,1	5,3

Source: Created by the authors based on the research

According to the study made by research company Dscout, the average smartphone user touches his or her smartphone device 2,617 times every day, but that is average. Category of heavy smartphone users, which include top 10%, touch their smartphone device more than 5,400 times every day (Winnick, 2016). Following this level of smartphone useage, it is understandable why 44,2% of our total number of respondents stated that the use Internet all day long, and that Internet usage include smartphones, computers, tablets, smart TVs, and all other Internet-connected devices. As expected, the younger the respondents are, they spend more time on the Internet. Gen Z members stated that 57,8% of them use the Internet all day long, 31,2% of them stated that they use the Internet approximately 3 hours per day and just 11,1% of them stated that they use Internet approximately 1 hour per day. Quite opposite is situation with Generation X where 53,1% of the respondents stated that they use Internet 1 hour per day, 21% of them stated that their average Internet usage is 3 hours per day and 25,9% stated that they use Internet all day long. Millennials have their average Internet use between the two mentioned generations with 26,3% of them use Internet approximately 1 hour per day, 30,3% of them use it 3 hours per day and remaining 43,4% stated that they use Internet all day long. Kruskal-Wallis test (χ^2=61.688, df=2, p<,001) shows that there is a statistically significant difference between generations and their daily Internet use. Furthermore, post-hoc test shows there are statistically significant differences between all the generations (GenX-GenY adj. p<.001; GenX-GenZ adj. p<.001; GenY-GenZ adj. p=.014).

Figure 1 shows what decorative cosmetics products respondents purchase the most, and generational differences might not be as expected. Considering that the members of the oldest generation in this study can be at least 43 years old, and the oldest members of Gen Z can be 26 years old, it was expected that their purchasing habits of decorative cosmetics are not the same. The difference between them in the use of lipstick or gloss is 1,7 percentage points, in the use of eyeshadow palettes is 0,2 percentage points, in the use of contouring palettes is 2,2 percentage points, in the use of blush, highlighter or bronzer is 4,2 percentage points, and in the use of powder is 5,1 percentage points, which is the biggest difference between them in favor of Generation Y. Millennials seem to like to use lipstick or gloss and blush, highlighter or bronzer more than other two generations, especially in comparison with Gen Z, because Chi-square test (X^2=7.927, df=2,p<0.05) shows a statistically significant difference between Gen Y and Gen Z in using those products. On the other hand, Millennials do not prefer powder and eyeshadow palettes as much as the other two generations. Mascara is a favorite product of decorative cosmetics for Gen X and Gen Y, but the youngest generation is this study, Gen Z, prefers powder in comparison with mascara by 2,5 percentage points.

Figure 1. Most commonly used cosmetic products



Source: Created by the authors based on the research

Table 5 shows the characteristics of the product in general that influence their buying decision. All three generations included in this study stated that quality is the most important product characteristic that influence purchasing behaviou: 79,2% of Gen X, 81,8% of Gen Y, and 82,2% of Gen Z, with no significant difference between them. The second most important characteristic for all three generations is price, but with is a statistically significant difference. Namely, 59,4% of Gen Z respondents reported price as an important factor which is significantly higher that other two generations, tested with the Chi-square test (X^2=16.917, df=2, p<0.01). Still, it was expected considering that they are the youngest and have the lowest income. Another statistically significant relationship between generations and these factors is related to design of products. Chi-square test (X^2=7.139, df=2, p<0.05) shows that Gen Z members care more about the design, compared to Gen X. There is also a statistically significant difference related to discounts, deals, and sale. Chi-square test (X^2=11.359, df=2, p<0.01) shows that the youngest generation, Gen Z, finds discounts and sales more important than Gen X members which is also expected because they are the youngest and have the lowest income.

Table 5. The most important product characteristic that influence the buying decision

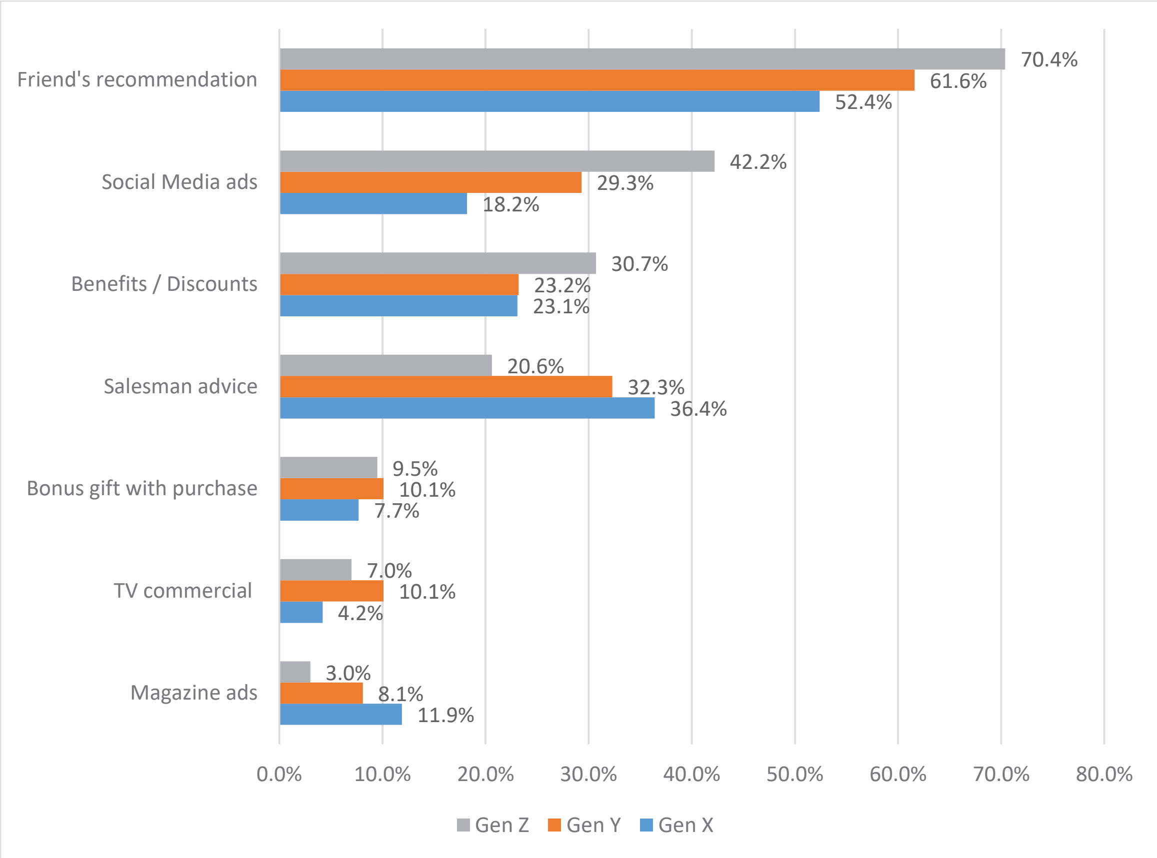
	Gen X (%)	Gen Y (%)	Gen Z (%)
Price	38,9	41,4	59,4
Quality	79,2	81,8	82,2
Design	3,5	10,1	11,4
Country of origin	5,6	3,0	5,0
Discounts and deals	11,1	20,2	25,7
Brand	26,4	33,3	32,2

Source: Created by the authors based on the research

Figure 2 shows the most influential factors that individuals recognize as relevant in their intention to purchase a product. For all three generations in this study, the recommendations from friends are the most relevant factor. With more than 70% (70,4%), Gen Z members have the highest confidence in friend's recommendation, 61,6% of Gen Y respondents, and 52,4% of Gen X respondents stated that friend's recommendation is an important factor for them. However, Chi-square test (X^2=10.597, df=2, p<0.01) shows that there is a statistically significant difference between Gen X and Gen Z members, members of younger generation find friend's recommendation more important. On the other hand, Generation X and Generation Y suggest that advice from the salesman is the second most important factor that influences the buying decision, but Gen Z does not. There is a statistically significant difference between Gen X (36,4%) and Gen Z (20,6%), which is tested with Chi-square test (X^2=11.538, df=2, p<0.01). For 20,6% of the Gen Z, advice from the salesman is the fourth most picked factor, 30,7% of them thinks that benefits and discounts are more important. On the other hand, new generations like new trends, so 42,2% of Gen Z members believe social media ads, and there is a statistically significant difference between them and Gen X there, Chi-square test showed (X^2=21.892, df=2, p<0.01) that there is a significant relationship between trust in social media platforms and generations. The least important factors are TV commercials, bonus gifts with purchases, and ads in magazines. Interestingly, TV commercial is an important factor for 4,2% of Gen X, 7,0% of Gen Z, and 10,1% of Gen Y members, with no significant difference. In contrast, Chi-square test (X^2=10.370, df=2, p<0.01) showed a difference related to importance of magazine ads: Gen

X (11,9%) find magazine ads more important than Gen Z (3,0%). It can be observed that younger generation rather trust friends and social media ads, while older generation perceive salesman advice and magazine ads more positively.

Figure 2. Important factors that influence the buying decision



Furthermore, Table 6 shows the factors that respondents find essential when choosing a brand. It is expected that the members of the youngest generation in this comparison care the most about how famous is the brand (50,2%), and the results of the Chi-square test (X^2=8.501, df=2, p<0.05) shows that there is a statistically significant difference between Gen Y and Gen X members where Gen Z members famous brand find significantly more important. On the other hand, members of Gen X would care more than younger generations about the tradition of the brand. The most common answer for Millennials was a good experience with other products of a brand (38,4%), but at the same time Millennials state more often that they like to try something new (34,3%). Interestingly, Gen Y members care about previous experiences the most, and the second most common answer is about trying something new and getting some new experiences. It was not expected that the oldest generation in this comparison would have the highest percentage on the answer about trying something new, but it is a little bit of surprise that less than a third of Gen Z respondents (31,8%) stated that would like to try something new because younger generations usually exhibit a tendency for new experiences. Even though only a small percentage of respondents (regardless of the generation) feels that the higher price means better quality, Chi-square test (X^2=7.854, df=2, p<0.05) showed a statistically significant difference between Gen Z (8,0%) and Gen X (1,4%) where younger generation agree with that statement significantly more.

Table 6. The most important decorative cosmetic factors about a brand that influence the buying decision

	Gen X (%)	Gen Y (%)	Gen Z (%)
Famous brand	39,6	33,3	50,2
Brand with tradition	36,1	29,3	24,4
I like to try something new	22,9	34,3	31,8
Higher prices means better quality	1,4	4,0	8,0
Good experience with other products of a brand	33,3	38,4	36,8

Source: Created by the authors for the research

Previous tables and figures focused on product characteristics, communication attributes and brand elements that have an influence on consumer behavior, while Table 7 shows the most important characteristics of decorative cosmetic products that have an influence on purchasing decision. The most important characteristic is the simple and easy way of using the product, and that is the most common answer for Gen X (81,3%), for Gen Y (74,4%), and Gen Z (68,7%). All three generation stated that simplicity is the most important characteristic in decorative cosmetics. However, there is a statistically significant difference between Generation X and Generation Z because the Chi-square test (X^2=7.340, df=2, p<0.01) revealed that Gen X members find the simplicity in using decorative cosmetics significantly more important than Gen Z members. The second most important thing for all three generations is that decorative cosmetic products are affordable to them (45,8% of Gen Z, 34,3% of Gen Y, and 26,4% of Gen X). Similar to previous findings, Chi-square test (X^2=13.601, df=2, p<0.01) showed that Gen Z members are significantly more price-sensitive compared to Gen X, whch is in line with initial expectations. Furthermore, 29,4% of Gen Z find important that decorative cosmetic products are not tested on animals, compared to 16,7% of Gen X and 19,2% of Gen

Y. Chi-square test (X^2=8.487, df=2, p<0.05) showed that it is a statistically significant difference in favor of Gen Z who care significantly more for animals than Gen X members.

Table 7. The most important characteristics of decorative cosmetic products that influence the buying decision

	Gen X (%)	Gen Y (%)	Gen Z (%)
Simple and easy to use	81,3	74,4	68,7
Didn't test on animals	16,7	19,2	29,4
Innovative and different	11,8	15,2	16,4
Affordable	26,4	34,3	45,8
Nobody has it	0,0	3,0	2,5
Trendy	4,9	11,1	12,4

Source: Created by the authors for the research

The most common source of decorative cosmetics information for respondents in this study are digital channels. Nevertheless, some generations prefer digital channels more than others. Chi-square test (X^2=46.055, df=4, p<0.01) suggested that Gen Z members prefer digital channels significantly more than other two generations. However, at the same time, they do not prefer TV and magazine ads as much as Gen X, or flyers of drugstores or perfumeries comparted to both Gen X and Gen Y.

Table 8. The most common source of decorative cosmetics information

	Gen X (%)	Gen Y (%)	Gen Z (%)
Perfumery / Drugstore flyers	31,4	28,6	12,1
TV ads and magazines	20,7	12,2	6,1
Digital channels	47,9	59,2	81,8

Source: Created by the authors for the research

Furthermore, influencers are game-changers in the decorative cosmetics industry, and the issue of influencers in the marketing of decorative cosmetics is fundamental. Considering that influencers are a relatively new trend, it can be excepted that younger generations will accept that new trends better and faster than older generations. Table 9 shows the difference between those generations and how trendy they are in this area of a digital environment. Results of the Chi-square test (X^2=90.144, df=2, p<0.01) show that there is a statistically significant difference between generations. Generation Z members (63,1%) are followers of social media influencers in the most considerable percentage, significantly more than Gen Y members (29,3%) and Gen X members (13,9%). However, there is also a significant difference between Millennials and Gen X members.

Table 9. Followers of social media influencers

	Gen X (%)	Gen Y (%)	Gen Z (%)
No	86,1	70,7	36,9
Yes	13,9	29,3	63,1

Source: Created by the authors for the research

Following the topic of influencers, it is important to know how many of them follow the trends created by influencers or at least how many of them are aware of the influence that influencers have on them. Just 10,1% of Gen X members stated that they follow the trends created by social media influencers, 27,1% of Gen Y members, and 46,9% of Gen Z members. There is no big difference between following the influencers and following trends created by them within Gen X and Gen Z members, but there is 16,2 percentage points within Gen Z. Still, once again there is a statistically significant difference between those generations on this issue. Results of the Chi-square test (X^2=90.144, df=2, p<0.01) show that Gen Z members follow trends created by social media influencers significantly more than other two generations, and Gen Y members significantly more than Gen X members.

Table 10. Followers of trends created by social media influencers

	Gen X (%)	Gen Y (%)	Gen Z (%)
No	89,9	72,9	53,1
Yes	10,1	27,1	46,9

Source: Created by the authors for the research

Table 11 shows the impact that influencers have on respondents' shopping habits. In the previous table, it can be seen that those who follow influencers do not necessarily follow trends created by social media influencers, at least by respondent perception. However, now it can be seen that even those who follow the trends do not necessarily perceive that these trends have an impact on their shopping habits. Once again, the biggest difference in perception of influencers is within Gen Z where 63,1% of them confirmed that they follow influencers, but only 33,2% of them stated that influencers have an impact on their shopping habits. Similar to the previous two questions about influencers, results of the Chi-square test (X^2=30.060, df=2, p<0.01) show that there is once again a statistically significant difference between generations. The shopping habits of Gen Z members are significantly more affected by social media influencers than members of the other two generations. However, other generations are also statistically different from each other, and just 7,9% of Gen X members think that influencers have some impact on their shopping habits compared to 21,9% of Millennials who think so.

Table 11. Impact of influencers on shopping habits

	Gen X (%)	Gen Y (%)	Gen Z (%)
No	92,1	78,1	66,8
Yes	7,9	21,9	33,2

Source: Created by the authors for the research

According to Biloš et al. (2021), respondents tend to suggest that they follow social media influencers, but they are much more reserved about suggesting that influencers have an impact on their shopping habits. However, when the question is modified to ask if influencers have an impact on shopping habits of their friends and family, the data suggests significantly higher scores. However, influencer marketing is changing the industry and creating a whole new sector in the beauty industry, but they have better results with Gen Z than older generations, especially Gen X members who are not following this trend at a larger scale.

4. Conclusion

As a conclusion to the comparison between Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z, it can be observed that each generation has its own pattern of behavior. Technological progress in the last 50 years or so is happening extremely fast, probably the fastest in human history. It was expected that in such an environment, each new generation is significantly different from the previous one. In this paper, the differences between observed generations in the decorative cosmetics industry are explored, as well as the important factors in product selection, source of

information for those products, and their involvement in modern trends with social media influencers who are game-changers of this industry. The paper provides arguments for statistically significant differences between generations, and especially the differences between Gen X and Gen Z. Many generation-related presumptions based on literature review have been well-illustrated in the collected data.
Members of Gen Z tend to have lower income, seek information online, and are quite price-sensitive. They also state to care that products are not tested on animals, like to try something new or trendy, and like famous brands. On the other hand, Gen X members like to ask the salesperson for advice, read magazines and love drugstore flyers, most of them do not follow social media influencers and love brands with tradition. In contrast, Millennials are somewhat in-between these generations as they have some similarities with Gen X and the others with Gen Z. The obtained results show that differences between generations are significant, and each generation requires a different marketing approach. The digital environment continuously provides new opportunities for communication with the target audience, and marketers need to be up to date with modern communication capabilities but also have a custom approach for those specific preferences, especially regarding the digital platforms.

There are several important research limitations related to this paper that should be taken into consideration in the process of drawing conclusions. The most important limitation is related to the sample distribution and sampling technique. Namely, due to non-probability sampling technique, the generalization of findings is very limited. Another important limitation is related to the used item scale type which affected the use of possible statistical tests and, consequently, the direction of the provided analysis. The other limitation is that sample is county specific which also may affect the generalizability of findings. In addition, the paper focuses on 3 generation segments while Baby-boomers are not included. Future research efforts of this topic may additionally include Baby-boomers as a specific subsegment and also should include a more adequate sampling distribution regarding respondent age, place of residence, and preferably other socio-demographic characteristics. The used sample recruitment techniques pose some risks regarding the collected data quality and utilizing other sampling options should be explored. Furthermore, self-reporting survey items should be reconsidered due to potential respondent subjectivity or bias. In addition, researchers may focus on a more diversified number of brands and products, expanding the target audience and/or exploring the influence of recent pandemic on specific generations.

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