

The Role of Brand Awareness and Trust on Purchase Intent in Google Shopping Ads and Demographic Factor Influences among Millennials and Generation Z

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ABSTRACT

The proliferation of technology has given rise to novel marketing channels such as pay-per-click campaigns, social media advertising, and search engine optimisation. Google Shopping Ads is a format of Google Ads that enables e-commerce companies to promote their products directly in Google search results. The establishment of brand awareness and trust is a pivotal aspect of Google Shopping Ads, as it empowers enterprises to construct and market their brand within the consciousness of potential clientele, but there is a need for further research among young consumers. Millennials and Generation Z are more technologically advanced compared to older cohorts; digital and mobile technology and communications significantly influence their online shopping behaviour through their engagement with interactive marketing. Hence, the study investigates the effect of brand awareness and trust on purchase intent due to Google Shopping Ads among Millennials and Generation Z in South Africa, as well as the influence of Google Shopping Ads usage and demographic variables on purchase intent. The study employed a quantitative method and snowball sampling to collect data via an online questionnaire (self-administered) and survey, which resulted in the completion of 1 667 questionnaires. SPSS was used to analyse the data via confirmatory factor analysis and a generalised linear model. Significant findings revealed that brand awareness and trust showed a favourable association with purchase intent owing to Google Shopping Ads. A number of Google Shopping Ads usage (greater number of years, high frequency, and higher number of hours) and demographics (older age groups and lower education levels) variables were found to have a positive influence on

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purchase intent. Marketers could use keywords to efficiently identify audiences that display interest in products and services. Marketers should ensure that the Google Shopping Ads product and price information are analogous to their website plugins to mitigate differences, thereby fostering trust and promoting purchase intent. Hence, this study could assist marketers in understanding their target audience and delivering tailored messages using search engine platforms such as Google Shopping Ads, which could improve business performance and sustainability. Future studies could investigate alternative forms of sponsored search advertising and examine longitudinal and experimental methodologies for quantitative data collection.

Keywords: Google shopping ads; sponsored engine advertising; purchase intent; trust; brand awareness; millennials; generation Z.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The leading search engine in the world is Google, with a controlling share of the desktop (82%) and mobile (96%) markets. This translates to more than 6.3 billion searches per minute and over 105 million search queries per second (Chaffey, 2024; Mukherjee & Zalani, 2024). Gawron (2022) and Lewandowski and Schultheiß (2023) specify that 90% of people use Google. Many companies have realised how important it is to be at the top of search results for certain keywords, whether they are paid or organic (Mladenović et al., 2023; Chaffey, 2024; Lopezosa et al., 2024; Mukherjee & Zalani, 2024). Statista (2024) reveals that Google's advertising income amounted to \$224.5 billion in 2022 and increased to \$237.9 billion in 2023. Mladenović et al. (2023); Chaffey (2024); and Mukherjee and Zalani (2024); assert that Google functions as a tool that facilitates consumers in searching for information about products and/or services. Different types of web links, including organic and paid links, categorise search queries and form the foundation of search engine advertising. Google is a tool that facilitates users searching for information about products and/or services. Different types of web links, such as organic, sponsored, or paid links, categorise search queries. Google Shopping Ads fall under the category of Google search engine advertising paid or sponsored links, providing consumers with the ability to find, view, and evaluate various services and products (Engaio digital, 2024; WordStream, 2024).

Chaffey (2024) and Mukherjee and Zalani (2024) reveal that 77% of people use Google four or more times a day to search online, and 60% of search results are via mobile devices, while only 7% browse beyond the first search engine results page to find information. A majority of Google searches come from men (60%), while 40% come from women. Members of Generation Z (16–24-year-olds) displayed the highest usage of search engines such as Google (82.6%), followed by a mix of older Generation Z and Millennials aged 25–34 (80.9%) and 35–44 (80.3%), but the younger Generation Z cohort conducted searches on Google with the greatest frequency. Mukherjee and Zalani (2024) also indicate that a significant majority of young consumers (72.5%) regard information from Google as semi-trustworthy and trustworthy. Lewandowski and Schultheiß (2023) show

that users also demonstrate trust when they rely on the highest-ranking search results, and search engines are the most trusted sources among global users. Respondents who were younger and had a greater degree of education showed the highest level of awareness in relation to sponsored search advertising, but individuals with higher levels of education tend to have a more negative perception of search engine optimisation. Lewandowski and Schultheiß (2023) postulate that despite the significant financial investment in search engine optimisation and its substantial impact on acquiring information via search engines, there remains a need for further inquiry on the effect of search engine marketing and search engine optimisation on users' usage and demographical variables. Accordingly, this study aims to add to the existing knowledge on search engine brand awareness and trust, and the impact of demographical and usage variables on purchase intent (PI) due to Google Shopping Ads among Millennials (aged 28–37) and Generation Z (aged 18–27), who display the highest usage levels.

Several studies postulate that there are practical and theoretical gaps regarding digital transformation, business performance, and sustainability (Machado, et al., 2020; Martínez-Peláez et al., 2023; Melo et al., 2023; Ying & Jin, 2023). Hence, a number of authors propose that further investigation is necessary to investigate various aspects of sponsored engine marketing, advertising, and search engine optimization, which could improve that business performance and sustainability (Chen & Sénéchal, 2023; Mladenovi et al., 2023; Lopezosa et al., 2024; Skalkos et al., 2024). Studies primarily focus on various aspects of search engine marketing in industrialised nations, particularly the United States and Western Europe. Therefore, Duffett and Charles (2024), Lopezosa et al. (2024), and Skalkos et al. (2024), recommend conducting additional research in other countries. Chen and Sénéchal (2023) advise that future studies on search engine marketing should employ quantitative research, and Mladenović et al. (2023) suggest that larger sample sizes should be utilised in search engine-related research. Mladenović et al. (2023) and Skalkos et al. (2024) confirm that additional inquiry is necessary to examine a wider range of usage determinants and variables, as well as the effect of users' habits and emotions on search engine marketing. Lastly, Lewandowski and Schultheiß (2023) infer further search engine marketing analysis of awareness and trust, as well as demographic variables such as education, gender, and age. Therefore, to bridge the aforementioned gaps and expand on existing research, the primary research objectives for the investigation are the following:

- To examine the influence of brand awareness and trust on PI through Google Shopping Ads among Millennials and Generation Z in South Africa.
- To establish what impact usage variables have on PI due to Google Shopping Ads among Millennials and Generation Z.
- To establish the effect of demographical variables on PI regarding the use of Google Shopping Ads among South African Millennials and Generation Z.

9.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Search engine advertising: Search engine advertising consists of sponsored or paid advertising, which allows companies to develop and display advertisements on search engine results pages. Gawron (2022) indicates that consumers conduct searches via various keywords, which prompts the search engine to show relevant advertisements positioned at the bottom or top of the search engine results page. The advertisements endeavour to depict appropriate products or services in response to consumer searches. Search engine advertising can be more effective than search engine optimisation if the sponsored advertisements are well developed. Google Shopping Ads are a type of search engine advertising, that shows products and their prices in their respective search engine results pages. The cost of search engine advertising differs based on the competition and target market (Hopkins, 2024; Sahni & Zhang, 2024; WordStream, 2024). Companies can use pay-per-click models to pay for search engine advertisements, though they are only charged when customers click on the advertising. Sahni and Zhang (2024) and WordStream (2024) show that keywords, competition, advertisement relevance, quality level, and the company's maximum bid are the primary factors that determine the price of each ad click.

Companies must set up accounts in order to run a search engine advertisement, which may include Bing Ads or Google Ads. Subsequently, they need to select specific keywords they want to focus on, create the advertisement content, and limit the bid and cost of their advertisements (Gawron, 2022; Hopkins, 2024; WordStream, 2024). Search engine advertising offers a number of advantages to companies, which include enhanced visibility, precise audience targeting, and measurable outcomes (Hopkins, 2024). These tools enable companies to analyse a specific target audience in terms of their behaviour and intent during their search processes, thereby increasing the chance of successful conversions. In addition, companies are able to monitor and evaluate their advising effectiveness by using different types of metrics, which include conversion rates, click-through rates, and return on investment (Hopkins, 2024; Sahni & Zhang, 2024). To conclude, search engine advertising is a highly efficient strategy for companies to boost their online presence, increase sales and leads, and grow website traffic (Gawron, 2022). WordStream (2024) asserts that companies can realise the advantages of search engine advertising and attain their marketing objectives by strategically developing appropriate keywords and advertisements, selecting a relevant target audience, and meticulously optimising and monitoring their online advertising campaigns.

Google Shopping Ads incorporate additional details compared to text advertisements, employing the price, visuals, store name, and headline. Furthermore, search engine advertisements are constrained to a single search result page and website, whereas multiple Google Shopping Ads can be displayed depending on the relevant search result (Engaioigital, 2024; Sahni & Zhang, 2024). Consequently, Google Shopping Ads have enhanced the likelihood of ads getting clicked on. A prior investigation discovered that paid

links positioned in the upper right section of a search query result (positioned above the organic results) garner the highest level of conversions among Millennials and Generation Z consumers (Balça & Casais, 2022; Lewandowski & Schultheiß, 2023; Engaiodigital, 2024). Furthermore, studies indicate that both text and display advertisements enhance their efficacy and investment returns as time progresses. Nevertheless, the findings consistently indicate that display advertisements enhance search conversion rates, but additional inquiry is required on young consumers and different types of search engine advertising (Kireyev et al., 2016; Balça & Casais, 2022; Lewandowski & Schultheiß, 2023; Engaiodigital, 2024; Sahni & Zhang, 2024). Hence, this study seeks to contribute to prior discourse by assessing the effect of various consumer attitudes due to Google Shopping Ads among young consumers in South Africa.

Theoretical models: The hierarchy of effects model has garnered significant interest from scholars and marketing practitioners as a comprehensive framework for elucidating advertising mechanisms and, consequently, serves as a basis for evaluating advertising efficacy (Nzeku & Duffett, 2021; Christian et al., 2022; Miraki et al., 2022). Hu et al. (2009) characterise the hierarchy model as three high-involvement attitudes in the sequence of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural attitudes. Lavidge and Steiner (1961) further subdivide attitudes into the comparison of product and service information, the emergence of beliefs (awareness and knowledge) that contribute to a favourable or unfavourable evaluation (liking and preference), and thoughts that conclude with PI and purchase. The present investigation focused on two components of the hierarchy of effects framework, namely cognitive and behavioural aspects, with a specific emphasis on awareness and PI. Ducoffe (1995) developed the advertising value model, a fundamental component of digital marketing that takes into account annoyance/irritation, perceived value, and credibility/trust. Several other studies (Stewart et al., 2018; Ngo et al., 2022) supported the research's expectation that a digital platform (e.g., Google Shopping Ads) would positively influence the trust and PI relationship. In summary, this research aimed to expand the existing literature in developing countries by exploring the impact of Google Shopping Ads by considering the brand awareness, trust, and PI associations of young consumers in South Africa.

Hypothesis development: The research question is, "What influence do brand awareness and trust have on PI due to Google Shopping Ads among Millennials and Generation Z in South Africa?" is addressed by three hypotheses.

Martins et al. (2019) disclose that brand awareness refers to the power or memory of the brand node, as expressed by customers' willingness to remember or identify the brand in various circumstances. Trust is also critical in Google Shopping Ads because consumers are unable to physically evaluate products before buying them, which significantly influences their behaviour (Ngo et al., 2022). Febriyantoro (2020) shows a positive association between YouTube advertising trust and brand awareness among young consumers. Seo et al. (2020) prove that social media results in a positive trust and brand awareness relationship among the majority of younger consumers. Puspaningrum (2020),

Dos Santos and Duffett (2021); Hafez (2021), Haudi et al. (2022), and Marthinus et al. (2024) confirm that social media marketing results in brand awareness, which positively influences trust among respondents. A majority of the aforementioned studies suggest further research among countries and/or different digital platforms.

H1. Brand awareness positively influences trust due to Google Shopping Ads among Millennials and Generation Z.

It takes time for consumers to recognise or recall a brand, and constant promotion and progression are necessary to elevate brand awareness (Bodkin et al., 2016). Cheng et al. (2017) suggest that improving consumer awareness of a company's brand leads to more brand keyword searches, resulting in increased search advertising success. Furthermore, previous empirical research found a direct positive influence between brand awareness and PI (Alwan & Alshurideh, 2022; Kharisma et al., 2022). However, there is a need for further research areas that identify the determinants of brand awareness in diverse online advertisement applications and contexts to predict PI (Hutter et al., 2013).

H2. Brand awareness positively influences PI through Google Shopping Ads among Millennials and Generation Z.

Consumers are more inclined to click on advertising that promotes familiar brands because it creates a form of trust and familiarity (Gupa & Mateen, 2014). Customers tend to compare search engine advertising with other forms of digital advertising, which they perceive to be more trustworthy and appear more reliable. This is understandable, as customers generally have a sceptical attitude (Balioglu, 2020). Stewart et al. (2018) endeavoured to offer an academic elucidation of how customers react to online marketing, encompassing search activities. The results indicate that consumers hold a positive view of trust and credibility and respond positively to the use of online advertising and marketing, leading to an increased likelihood of PI. Nevertheless, in spite of investigations on trust and PI in an array of digital interactive environments (Febriyantoro, 2020; Cabeza-Ramírez et al., 2022; Duffett et al., 2024), there is a necessity for inquiry that considers Google Shopping Ads and search engine advertising.

H3. Trust positively influences PI owing to Google Shopping Ads among Millennials and Generation Z.

Demographic and usage factors: Chaffey (2024) and Mukherjee and Zalani (2024) indicate that approximately 60% of Google queries are done on a mobile device, and Google accounts for 96% of all mobile search results. Quantitative research has shown the existence of favourable relationships between mobile device access, PI, and positive interactions with sponsored search ads (Balça & Casais, 2022; Han et al., 2022). A comparative analysis considered the online ad sales revenue that Meta and Google generate (Mishra & Mategaonkar, 2023). The majority of survey respondents had made online purchases for more than five years, so the higher the frequency of consumption, the higher the PI. Several

researchers found that increased frequency of usage and PI were positively associated across various digital platforms and countries (Kim et al., 2019; Vasudevan & Kumar, 2019). Vasudevan and Arokiasamy (2021) showed that Malaysians spend more time online and are more inclined to buy online. Several other studies verify these findings across digital platforms and countries (Marthinus et al., 2014; Vasudevan & Arokiasamy, 2021; Tunshevavong, 2022). This study aims to address scant research on the relationship between the usage factors of Google Shopping Ads and behavioural attitudes through cross-tabulation analysis. Hence, this investigation seeks to address the research question, "What impact do usage variables have on PI as a result of Google Shopping Ads among South African Millennials and Generation Z?"

Mishra and Mategaonkar (2023) also found that males were more likely than females to act on online advertisements. However, the research revealed that females had higher Google Ads conversion rates. Balça and Casais (2022) also reveal that customers with the highest potential to convert purchases were aged between 16 and 44 years, but the ages between 35 and 44 were the highest in certain developing countries. Mishra and Mategaonkar (2023) confirm that those between the ages of 23 and 40 showed the greatest sales potential for Google and Meta. Matharu et al. (2018) and Kizgin et al. (2021) established that more education had a positive effect on Millennials' PI traditional marketing services, but they did not focus on Google Ads or underdeveloped nations. Therefore, the goal of this investigation is to answer the following research question: "What influence demographical variables have on PI due to Google Shopping Ads among South African Millennials and Generation Z?"

Research methodology: The investigation used a quantitative approach, and the literature review was a mechanism for providing better insight into and clarification of previous investigations. Stockemer (2019) explains that quantitative techniques not only allow researchers to numerically define a certain occurrence but also assist in determining relations between two or more variables. Quantitative techniques are research procedures that employ numerical data to rationalise a phenomenon, derived from impartial scales of measurement for the units of analysis known as variables. This research employed a descriptive research design for the quantitative data collection using a questionnaire via a survey to substantiate the influence of brand awareness and trust on PI due to Google Shopping Ads. Survey analysis is concerned with describing, documenting, assessing, and understanding the circumstances of a community (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Accordingly, this inquiry also intended to examine the impact of Google Shopping Ads usage and demographic variables on PI among Millennials and Generation Z cohorts.

This investigation's research population consisted of Millennials (aged 28–37) and Generation Z (aged 18–27), which was further restricted to electronics e-commerce consumers of Google Shopping Ads in South Africa. Snowball is a non-probability sampling technique that seeks to access difficult-to-reach information via recommendations from one individual to another via a chain of reference to the next (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Initially, Initially, respondents from CPUT were requested to provide the contact information of other potential

participants and/or distribute the self-administered questionnaire, primarily through electronic means but also through physical means, in order to reach a wider number of Millennials and Generation Z throughout South Africa. The study aimed to secure a large sample size to compensate for the non-probability sampling method and ensure an adequate number of respondents for each cross-tabulation analysis of Google Shopping Ads usage and demographic factors related to the PI of Millennials and Generation Z. The Raosoft sample size calculator suggests a sample size of 385 (the confidence level was 95% and the margin of error was 5%) based on the Millennial and Generation Z search engine user populations in South Africa. However, Bujang et al. (2018) posit that larger sample sizes are necessary for observational studies that use regression analysis, so we opted for a larger sample size to ensure a minimum quota (250) for each age group. The research achieved an excellent rate of response by employing the aforementioned sampling technique, resulting in a final sample size of 1 667 respondents.

The structure of the research instrument was mainly based on Duffett's research (2015b, 2017). The questionnaire comprised multiple-choice, closed-ended questions related to Google Shopping Ads usage and demographic information. The Likert scale items assessed attitudes by utilising the Google Shopping Ads constructs on a five-point Likert scale. The research obtained the constructs from various sources, including brand awareness (Duffett, 2020), trust (Ponte et al., 2015), and PI (Duffett, 2015, 2022; Ghouse et al., 2022). To improve the questionnaire's face and content validity, a digital expert (a professor in marketing) reviewed its usage, demographic, and construct variables, and the questionnaire was also pre-tested among 50 Millennial and Generation Z respondents (university students). The study utilised various digital platforms, such as WhatsApp, SMS, Facebook, and email, to disseminate the questionnaire. The research predominantly conducted the survey using Google Forms to ensure its ease and clarity for various subsets of the Millennial and Generation Z populations, considering differences in age, gender, and educational variables.

The research conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using SPSS, as explained in the following section. The validity and reliability statistics were assessed using the average variance extracted (AVE), factor loadings (FL), Cronbach's Alpha (α), composite reliability (CR) values, and the component correlation matrix versus the square root of AVE. The following section provides a detailed description of the statistical evaluation of the three hypotheses using linear regression analysis. The study used Wald's Chi-Square (X^2), as well as the Bonferroni pairwise measures to look at how the Generation Z participants might use Google Shopping Ads on PI in different ways. The research also employed a generalised linear model (GLM) to investigate the impact of demographic factors on PI (Duffett, 2018). The following section presents the results.

9.3 FINDINGS

Descriptive statistics: The results indicate that a majority of respondents accessed Google Shopping Ads via a laptop, desktop, or smartphone; a majority

always used emojis; over half rarely or sometimes engaged in brand messages that included emojis; a little over half used Google Shopping Ads for two years or less; a majority used Google Shopping Ads for one hour or less; and an overwhelming majority used Google Shopping Ads sometimes or often. The main demographic variables included a relatively equal distribution of gender between males and females, a majority who were 18–27 years old, and a majority who had completed school and held a higher qualification. Table 9.1 offers an overview of the main Google Shopping Ads usage and demographic variables.

Table 9.1. Google shopping ads usage and demographic variables

Variables	Usage and demographic variables	n	%
Access	Laptop/desktop	655	39.3
	Smartphone	702	42.1
	Tablet	299	17.9
	Other	11	0.7
Length of usage	≤ 1 Year	307	18.4
	2 Years	540	32.4
	3 Years	471	28.3
	4 Years	168	10.1
	≥ 5 Years	181	10.9
Usage frequency	Rarely	238	14.3
	Sometimes	730	43.8
	Often	572	34.3
	Always	127	7.6
Usage hours	< ½ hour	353	21.2
	½-to-1 hour	620	37.2
	2 hours	469	28.1
	3 hours	175	10.5
	≥ 4 hours	50	3.0
Gender	Male	855	51.3
	Female	812	48.7
Age	18–22	343	20.6
	23–27	557	33.4
	28–32	487	29.2
	33–37	280	16.8
Education	Grade 8–11	65	3.9
	Grade 12	117	7.0
	Completed Grade 12	356	21.4
	Diploma or certificate	487	29.2
	Degree	494	29.6
	Postgraduate degree	148	8.9

Confirmatory factor analysis: To evaluate the reliability and validity, the study performed a CFA, as indicated in Table 9.2.

The FL and AVE results derived via the CFA analysis were greater than 0.6, so were greater than the recommended limit of 0.5. This demonstrates a high level

of consistency, as evidenced by the data presented in Table 9.2. Each of the Cronbach's α and CR results surpassed the appropriate limit of 0.7, suggesting a significant degree of consistency internally, as they had values above 0.8. The mean averages of the constructs were all above 3.50, indicating generally favourable attitudes. This indicates that respondents generally agreed (based on a five-point Likert scale) that Google Shopping Ads resulted in brand awareness, trust, and purchase intent (Table 9.2).

Table 9.2. CFA – Google shopping Ads CONSTRUCTS

Google Shopping Ads constructs and items		M	SD	FL	AVE	CR	Cr. α
Brand awareness (BA)	BA1	3.60	1.009	0.874	0.615	0.863	0.804
	BA2	3.54	1.061	0.872			
	BA3	3.69	0.919	0.720			
	BA4	3.81	0.865	0.647			
Trust (TR)	TR1	3.59	0.955	0.812	0.641	0.877	0.815
	TR2	3.53	0.892	0.846			
	TR3	3.55	0.901	0.745			
	TR4	3.59	0.957	0.798			
Purchase intent (PI)	PI1	3.70	0.914	0.739	0.651	0.903	0.866
	PI2	3.72	0.951	0.856			
	PI3	3.69	0.945	0.821			
	PI4	3.77	0.946	0.835			
	PI5	3.80	0.981	0.775			

Table 9.3. Correlation component matrix

Constructs	BA	TR	PI
Perceived ease of use	0.784		
Perceived usefulness	0.476	0.801	
Purchase intent	0.414	0.475	0.807

Table 9.3 presents the correlations between the constructs and the squared root AVE levels for each construct. The presence of discriminant validity was established by determining that the squared root of AVE for the constructs was higher than the correlations among the constructs.

Linear regression: The linear regression provided support for H1 and H2, revealing that brand awareness had a favourable effect on trust ($t=22.646$, $\beta=0.485$, $p<0.001$) and PI ($t=19.153$, $\beta=0.425$, $p<0.001$). The linear regression provided support for H3, indicating that trust had a positive impact on PI. A significant association was revealed between trust and PI, with a t-value of 22.277, a beta coefficient of 0.479, and a p-value of less than 0.001. In addition, the factors of brand awareness and trust together explained 27.85% of the variation (R^2) in PI, with brand awareness alone accounting for 23.50% of the R^2 in trust. Valchanov (2023) posits that an R^2 of greater than 20% is good for the social sciences, which indicates that this study's overall model's explanatory

power is satisfactory and supports the abovementioned findings. Fig. 9.1 visually depicts the hypotheses and variance.

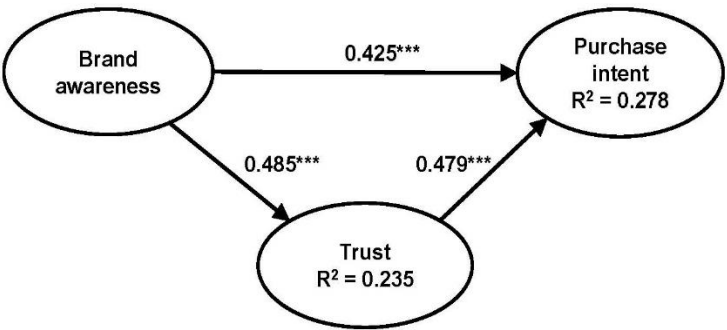


Fig. 9.1. Linear regression
 *** $p<0.001$; ** $p<0.01$; * $p<0.05$

Generalised linear model: The Bonferroni post hoc analysis and Wald’s X^2 were applied to establish whether significant differences exist between the EDM usage of Generation Z respondents and also the demographic factor influences on PI via a GLM (Duffett, 2018). A low Wald’s X^2 score indicates minimal difference between projected and observed outcomes, whereas high scores indicate significant differences in the outcomes (Biswal, 2024). As shown in Table 9.4, the Wald X^2 test revealed a significant difference ($p<0.001$) for PI ($M=3.74$, $SD=0.765$). This confirmed that there were many significant differences in EDM usage and demographic factors.

Table 9.4. Google shopping Ads usage and demographic variables influence on PI

EDM usage and demographic factors	X^2	df	PI
Access	2.359	3	0.501
Length of usage	12.298	4	0.015*
Usage frequency	28.240	3	0.001***
Usage hours	17.840	4	0.001***
Gender	3.387	1	0.066
Age	19.934	3	0.001***
Education level	22.742	5	0.001***

*** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

Usage length risk ($p<0.05$): Respondents who engaged with Google Shopping Ads for ≤ 1 year ($M=3.65$, $SE=0.077$) and 3 years ($M=3.63$, $SE=0.070$) displayed less favourable PI attitudes than respondents who engaged with Google Shopping Ads for $\geq$ five ($M=3.82$, $SE=0.081$) (refer to Table 9.4).

Usage frequency ($p<0.001$): Respondents who always ($M=3.78$, $SE=0.085$), often ($M=3.82$, $SE=0.070$), and sometimes ($M=3.74$, $SE=0.070$) clicked on Google Shopping Ads displayed more positive PI attitudinal responses than those who rarely ($M=3.47$, $SE=0.082$) clicked on them (refer to Table 9.4).

Usage hours ($p<0.001$): Respondents who used Google Shopping Ads for half an hour or less ($M=3.54$, $SE=0.074$) showed lower favourable PI attitudes than respondents who used Google Shopping Ads for half an hour to 1 ($M=3.75$, $SE=0.068$), 2 ($M=3.72$, $SE=0.071$), and 3 hours ($M=3.79$, $SE=0.083$) (refer to Table 9.4).

Age ($p<0.001$): Respondents who were aged 23–27 ($M=3.70$, $SE=0.070$), 28–32 ($M=3.78$, $SE=0.070$), and 33–37 years ($M=3.78$, $SE=0.072$) had more positive PI predispositions in comparison to respondents aged 18–22 years ($M=3.55$, $SE=0.074$) due to Google Shopping Ads (refer to Table 9.4).

Education level ($p<0.001$): Grade 12 ($M=3.86$, $SE=0.072$) respondents displayed more favourable PI attitudinal responses versus those who had completed a degree ($M=3.65$, $SE=0.067$) and a postgraduate degree ($M=3.75$, $SE=0.084$) owing Google Shopping Ads (refer to Table 9.4).

9.4 DISCUSSION

The results showed that among Millennial and Generation Z respondents, Google Shopping Ads had a favourable impact on the hypothesised brand awareness and trust relationship (refer to Fig. 9.1). Several inquiries confirmed that various social media platforms result in positive brand awareness and trust associations (Puspaningrum, 2020; Hafez, 2021; Haudi et al., 2022), but did not specifically consider sponsored search, search engine advertising, or Google Shopping Ads. As a result, this study fulfils their mandate for more research on different digital platforms and countries among young consumers. The data indicated that Google Shopping Ads had a favourable influence on brand awareness and PI associations among Millennial and Generation Z respondents (refer to Fig. 9.1). Cheng et al. (2017) report that by increasing consumer awareness of a company's brand, customers will conduct more brand keyword searches, resulting in improved search advertising success. Several quantitative studies (Alwan & Alshurideh, 2022; Kharisma et al., 2022) also confirmed that brand awareness and PI were linked in a positive way among samples mostly made up of Millennials and Generation Z. However, these studies mostly looked at different digital platforms and countries. Therefore, this study addresses Hutter et al.'s (2013) call for additional research to identify the factors that influence brand awareness in various online advertising applications and contexts in order to predict PI. This finding demonstrated that Google Shopping Ads resulted in positive trust and PI associations among Millennial and Generation Z respondents (refer to Fig. 9.1). This finding is logical, as consumers need to have a sense of trust to complete the buying cycle. Several other studies found similar links between trust and PI for different types of online marketing platforms, mostly among young people (Stewart et al., 2018; Duffett & Maraule, 2024).

However, none of those studies specifically looked at search engine advertising, so this study meets their request for more research on different digital platforms and countries.

This study indicated that Google Shopping Ads had a beneficial influence on more experienced respondents in terms of PI. Mishra and Mategaonkar (2023) confirm this finding since they also found that respondents who made online purchases for prolonged periods displayed higher PI tendencies. The results indicate that Millennials and Generation Z respondents who clicked on Google Shopping Ads more frequently displayed more positive PI sentiments. Kim et al. (2019) and Vasudevan and Kumar (2019) confirm that there is a positive correlation between increased usage frequency and PI on different online conduits and in various countries. In this study, young respondents who used Google Shopping Ads for a higher number of hours had a more positive effect on PI. Several additional studies confirm that young respondents who spend a greater amount of time across various online channels are more likely to make online purchases (Duffett et al., 2019; Vasudevan & Arokiasamy, 2021; Tunshevavong, 2022). The findings revealed that Millennials and older Generation Z respondents exhibited more positive PI tendencies than younger Generation Z respondents due to Google Shopping Ads, which is a rational supposition since older respondents generally have greater financial means. Several other studies support this finding that Millennials and older members of the Generation Z cohort display the greatest PI across various search advertising channels (Balça & Casais, 2022; Mishra & Mategaonkar, 2023). Google Shopping Ads had a more positive influence on respondents with higher education levels, whereas other studies found that higher education levels increased PI sentiment across various digital platforms, but these do not specifically focus on sponsored search advertising or developing countries.

9.5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The inquiry' first objective investigated the effect of brand awareness and trust on PI through Google Shopping Ads among Millennials and Generation Z in South Africa. The study found that there were beneficial associations between the three consumer attitude constructs. As a result of Google Shopping Ads, young consumers demonstrated that brand awareness and trust resulted in an increase in their PI predisposition. The primary purpose of Google Shopping Ads is to drive conversions; however, since the ads display the company's name, there is also a secondary objective of brand awareness. One strategy to increase brand awareness through Google Shopping Ads is to clearly display the company's name and incorporate it into the product's name. Marketers and companies must endorse the right product and use apt pricing so that young cohorts will trust Google Shopping Ads. If consumers engage with search advertising and navigate to websites where the process and products diverge from the initial presentation, the user may become cautious. Websites could utilise plugins to avoid potential product and pricing deviations. Transparency has emerged as an important attribute an organisation can possess. This is especially significant if a consumer requires replacement or repair under warranty or if they choose to

return a purchased item. Should they complete the transaction online, their level of distrust may significantly increase. Implementing clear and transparent return processes enables organisations to cultivate trust, customer loyalty, and repeat purchases.

This investigation's second research objective was to ascertain the influence of usage variables on PI through Google Shopping Ads among Millennials and Generation Z. The inquiry, more experienced users, high levels of use frequency, and long online usage hours led to the most favourable PI inclination due to Google Shopping Ads. More knowledgeable consumers may be able to distinguish between organic listings and sponsored ads, regardless of their degree of experience. Google Shopping Ads must be competitively priced and relevant to the user's online search in order to enhance the likelihood of a purchase. Advertisers and companies should focus on ensuring that their Google Shopping Ads accurately link the right keywords or search inquiries as a means to increase Google Shopping Ads' user frequency and usage hours. Additionally, small and medium-sized enterprises or nonprofit organisations could employ the services of marketing service-learning programmes (Cromhout et al., 2021; Cromhout & Duffett, 2022; Duffett & Cromhout, 2022c; Duffett et al., 2023a) or student-run agencies (Duffett & Cromhout, 2022a; 2022b; Duffett et al., 2023b) to provide support with online marketing, especially for those who do not have the necessary proficiency, skills, and knowledge (Duffett & Thomas, 2024; Thomas & Duffett, 2024).

This study's third research objective assessed the impact of demographical variables on PI through Google Shopping Ads among South African Millennials and Generation Z. The study concluded that Google Shopping Ads significantly enhanced the positive PI attitudes of older Generation Z and Millennials, as well as less educated respondents. To successfully target a specific age group, marketers and companies can adjust the age criteria within the demographic part of Google Shopping Ads, effectively excluding other age groups from viewing the ad. To effectively target consumers based on their degree of knowledge, marketers and companies must define their audience targeting for education levels with three types of audiences: affinity, which reaches users based on their passions and interests; in-market, which reaches users based on their recent PI; and life events, which reaches consumers when they are in the midst of significant life milestones, such as having recently graduated (Đurica, 2024).

9.6 LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Future research could explore other types of sponsored search advertising, as this study solely focused on Google Shopping Ads. This study employed a cross-sectional survey and quantitative self-reported data to assess brand awareness, trust, and attitudes towards PI. However, it is important to note that this approach may introduce potential bias in the collected data. Therefore, future studies should explore experimental and longitudinal methods of quantitative data collection to mitigate potential bias (Chaturuka et al., 2020; Duffett & Miller, 2022). A qualitative investigation possesses the capacity to extract more

comprehensive and intricate responses from participants, thereby allowing researchers to delve into a broader spectrum of factors that can influence the perception of Google Shopping Ads among young consumers. The investigation focused solely on South Africans belonging to the Generation Z and Millennial cohorts. Future research should focus on studying the younger members of the Generation Z cohort (10–17 years old) and older cohorts like Generation X in South Africa, as well as other countries and different demographic groups (Duffett, 2015a, 2016; Edu et al., 2021; Ionescu et al., 2023). This suggestion will provide more complete information about other generations, regions, and cultures. Machado, et al. (2020), Duffett and Wakeham (2023), Martínez-Peláez et al. (2023), Melo et al. (2023), and Ying and Jin (2023) propose that research should consider business performance, digital transformation, and sustainability, which could also be investigated in search engine advertising.

CONFERENCE DISCLAIMER

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DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

The authors declare that they used QuillBot Premium to identify and correct language, grammar, and spelling errors in the manuscript. The authors also used Turnitin to assess the originality of the manuscript and found it to be at a satisfactory level.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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