

Introduction

Consumption behavior, which is generally understood to be the act of acquiring and utilising products and services in accordance with consumer needs, has become essential to satisfy not just bodily wants but also societal and psychological needs (Solomon et al., 2006). Customers engage in certain consuming patterns to produce the desired impact and perception in reference groups (Nabi et al., 2019). Visually appealing brands and products are bought by certain customers as status symbols (Sahin & Nasir, 2021). Consequently, rather than focusing on functional advantages, businesses develop differentiation strategies centered on enhancing their perceived significance (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). In addition to their practical advantages, brands and goods satisfy consumer needs for high-level expressions and offer symbolic and emotional advantages, and this urge enhances with the need to establish a status and identity through brand purchases that might convey social signals about the individual (O'Cass & Siahtiri, 2013). These consumer desires give rise to status consumption (SC). Clothing is one of the best ways to convey one's peer affiliation (Chen Yu & Seock, 2002).

Millennials, known as Gen Y, are the consumers born between 1981 and 1996 (Dimock, 2019). In general, millennials are thought to have a greater drive to get symbolic symbols that satisfy their consuming needs and denote their status (Chi et al., 2021). In addition to having a lot of disposable income (Noble et al., 2009), millennials value social and digital connections with their counterparts (Bednall et al., 2012) as well as show off their status by buying conspicuous products (Goldsmith et al., 2010). The past decade has seen a great deal of research on millennials by marketers, who have concentrated on their digital activity, value-driven consumption, and desire for genuine, experience-based interaction (Smith, 2012). Millennials differ from previous generations in their buying patterns, brand choices, personalities, beliefs, and overall life philosophy (Barton et al., 2014).

Although Gen Z consumers share a few characteristics with millennials (Seemiller & Grace, 2017), there is still a lot to learn about Generation Z (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018). So, the present study takes up the call from previous studies to explore Gen Z's shopping behavior

(Djafarova & Bowes, 2021) with regard to SC. Gen Z is a market category of great interest to marketers (Naumovska, 2017), since they outnumber Millennials by over a million and have purchasing power that is approximately six times that of previous generations (Dabija et al., 2019). Gen Z, also known as iGeneration, Post-Millennials, Gen Wii, or Next Gen (Raphelson, 2014; Turner, 2015), were born between 1997 and 2012 (Dimock, 2019). With 32 percent of the world's population, Gen Z has become the largest generational cohort (Spitznagel, 2020). Now, marketers are turning their attention to the Gen Z consumers, which is the fastest-growing consumer group (Goldring & Azab, 2021). About 450 million people in India are Gen Z, and 75 million of them purchase regularly (Roy, 2024). There are 66.37 million men and 60.34 million women covering the 15-19 age bracket, and 68.04 million men and 61.77 million women within the 20-24 age group, indicating a fairly balanced gender distribution in this cohort (ET Online, 2025). The size of the Indian apparel market was estimated at \$115.70 billion in 2024 and is expected to increase at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4%, from \$120.36 billion in 2025 to \$171.60 billion by 2034 (Unicommerce, 2026). The Gen Z population spends around \$860 billion, and by 2035, it is expected to grow to \$2 trillion, with the expenditure on fashion and lifestyle only estimated to be approximately \$45-50 billion, which is 47% of their overall consumption (Fibre2Fashion, 2024). Gen Z consumers have a purchasing frequency of 8-9 times per year as compared to the national average of 5-6 times (Dhanam, 2024). This is the hottest and youngest market category in terms of customers (Guo et al., 2024).

The Gen Z consumer group is conscious of their purchasing patterns and places a high value on creating distinctive and socially prestigious purchases. They deliberately seek social status with the brands they choose to purchase (Goldring & Azab, 2021). They use consumption to flaunt themselves and demonstrate to others "who they are?" (Shin et al., 2021). This segment may respond more favourably to brands that successfully portray their products as socially conscious and inspirational, provided luxury fashion fits with their aspirations for social status (Lyroni & Spais, 2024).

Gen Z consumers are also regarded as the hardest consumer demographics to target because of their

propensity to do a great deal of research and comparison shopping before making a final purchase ([Thangavel et al., 2022](#)). Euro Monitor predicts that by 2030, Generation Z will account for the largest market segment globally, therefore it makes sense for businesses to effectively engage with and establish enduring relationships with this group ([Kautish & Sharma, 2020](#)). Furthermore, gaining the loyalty of this generation will be difficult, particularly for well-established firms, because they are skeptical of prominent brands as well as their value propositions ([Gutfreund, 2016](#)). These young consumers are still difficult for high-end businesses to completely understand; thus, it is up to the company to adjust to Gen Z and find a solution ([Pastezeur, 2017](#)) thus, this segment requires greater focus on research ([Verma et al., 2023](#)).

According to [Schewe et al. \(2000\)](#), generational cohorts offer a better method of market segmentation than age alone since outside events have affected these various cohorts similarly. Additionally, it has been observed that customers often select various goods and services throughout their lives, and that preferences for clothing, furnishings, and activities also vary with age ([Solomon et al., 2006](#)). [Norum \(2003\)](#) asserts that there are generational disparities in consumer buying habits that require further attention. The degree of SC has not been investigated in relation to generational cohorts ([Eastman & Liu, 2012](#)). A deeper comprehension of the status consumers is essential, given the size and significance of this segment; therefore, by analysing the factors that influence SC with a focus on Generation Z, the present study is going to contribute significantly.

Review of Literature and Hypotheses Development

SC has been examined from a variety of perspectives and several measures, reasons, and outcomes of SC have been identified ([Eastman & Eastman, 2011](#); [Goldsmith et al., 2010](#); [Kim & Jang, 2014](#); [O'Cass & McEwen, 2004](#); [Sahin & Nasir, 2021](#); [Üstüner & Holt, 2010](#)). On the other hand, [Chen Yu & Seock \(2002\)](#), and [Shchudro \(2011\)](#) have developed the concept of shopping motivations which include recreation, recognition, sexual attraction (SA), aesthetic expression (AE), enhancement, conformity, and fashion expression [Anić et al. \(2018\)](#) have found a positive relationship of SA,

shopping for recreation (SR), recognition enhancement (RE) and AE with fashion innovativeness in buying clothes. Similarly, [Khan \(2020\)](#) found a positive relationship between these motivations and fashion consciousness and purchase intention in the fashion context. The present study primarily intends to examine the impact of these motivations on SC for Gen Z consumers. Although traditional motivators are important, to fully understand Gen Z's approach towards SC, it is necessary to look at new drivers because of their digital nativity, aesthetic consciousness, and identity-focused consumption patterns. Cloth purchases are heavily impacted by consumers' drive to accomplish their objectives ([Anić et al., 2018](#)). Hence, it is anticipated that the relationship of RE, SR, SA, and AE with SC among Gen Z consumers, the effect of SC on perception of elevated status (PES), and further an examination of the moderating role of gender in the said relationship will provide meaningful findings to design effective marketing strategies for Gen Z consumers.

RE and SC

RE refers to the actions and methods used by an individual to raise his perceived worth in the eyes of others. It entails actions that enhance how others perceive and appreciate an individual's accomplishments and standing. Every individual strives to have a unique social identity in the society ([Tian et al., 2001](#)). The desire of RE is also the driving force behind shopping motivations, and it is tied to uniqueness and self-expression traits ([Anić et al., 2018](#)). People's inclination to uphold or improve their social standing in comparison to their peers is amplified by enhanced recognition ([Eastman et al., 1999](#)). [Tajfel & Turner \(1979\)](#) have also argued that RE strengthens the social identity of a person, which leads to the consumption of status-laden products to validate that identity.

[Heaney et al. \(2005\)](#) viewed that status consumers focus on social comparisons with their fellow groups. Being grown up in digital era, young consumers put their pictures on social media to have their unique identity and impact on others ([Djafarova & Bowes, 2021](#)). Gen Z consumers want to present themselves in the best possible light ([Williams, 2015](#)). In line with the discussion in the preceding text, the study proposes the following hypothesis.

H₁: RE promotes SC among Gen Z consumers.

SR and SC

Shopping for recreation means buying products for enjoyment and not for necessities. [Bellenger & Korgaonkar \(1980\)](#) defined recreational shoppers as those who enjoy shopping as a leisure-time activity. The demand for the products that enhance one's status is increased by the leisure component of shopping ([Miller, 1998](#)). This suggests that when consumers perceive shopping as a recreational activity, they are more inclined to purchase the products that offer social prestige. [Belk \(1988\)](#) claimed that status products also serve as a tool for social signalling because of the enjoyment that comes with purchasing, which increases its symbolic value. The fundamental mechanism by which a consumer describes a product or activity is improving and expressing oneself ([Guiry, 2006](#)), and the main objective behind the SC is also to signal the high status and prestige to others through the acquisition of status-laden products ([Sahin & Nasir, 2021](#)).

A deeper recognition of the value of leisure in one's life is seen in younger generations ([Coşkun & Dilmac, 2024](#)). For example, research about Millennial medical students in Australia revealed that the most important non-biomedical element promoting their health is leisure time spent in natural settings ([Young et al., 2018](#)). For Gen Z, shopping is closely linked to the enjoyment and relaxation that come with the retail experience ([Bellman et al., 2011](#); [Chen et al., 2022](#)). Therefore, there is a possibility that SR will have a positive influence on the consumption of status products. Although the notion of recreation has received a lot of attention, but not much research that focuses exclusively on Gen Z group has been carried out ([McGinnis et al., 2021](#); [Mehlhaf, 2019](#)). Hence, the study proposes that:

H₂: SR leads to increased SC among Gen Z consumers.

SA and SC

The functions of brands and products in relationships and attracting another gender have received very little attention in consumer research. There are only few studies which have considered the purchase behaviour of

consumers which is directed towards attracting the other gender ([Anić et al., 2018](#)). According to the literature, fashion products trigger sexual orientation and attraction, along with highlighting the disparities between men and women, and enhance their mutual desire ([González & Bovone, 2012](#)). Most heterosexual women have an attraction for males whose status may be inferred from their physical appearance ([Buss, 1994](#)). Furthermore, men spend a substantial amount of money on gifts they buy for women ([Heilman et al., 2012](#); [Saad & Gill, 2003](#)). Men and women both use products to enhance their attractiveness ([Bloch, 1981](#); [Hyllegard et al., 2005](#); [Segal & Podoshen, 2013](#); [Workman & Lee, 2011](#)). However, literature has reported no significant differences between the consumption patterns of males and females ([Martin & Turley, 2004](#); [O'Cass & McEwen, 2004](#)). According to [Wang & Griskevicius \(2014\)](#), men use expensive goods to signal tempting romantic partners, while women use them to terrorize prospective opposing women. There are only a few studies which have considered the purchase behaviour of consumers which is directed towards attracting the other gender ([Anić et al., 2018](#)). The discussion in the preceding section provides a base for setting the following hypothesis.

H₃: Gen Z consumers indulge in SC for SA.

AE and SC

AE refers to all the ways or activities through which an individual tries to express his values or ideas. The goal is to convey as many values as possible in such a way that the expression can stand alone as a focal point of interest rather than a vehicle for pursuing other interests ([Gotshalk, 1954](#)). According to [Danto \(1974\)](#), AE is a type of communication that conveys deeper ideas and interpretations than just visual appeal. The symbolic worth of products is a major factor in SC, which is frequently amplified by their aesthetic qualities rather than their useful elements ([Veblen, 1899](#)). [Wagner \(1999\)](#) argued that an AE basically corresponds to the customer's perception of appearance. Furthermore, brands that use strong aesthetic components can increase their attractiveness and prestige ([Keller & Lehmann, 2006](#)).

Gen Z consumers' intent to express themselves aesthetically influences the consumption patterns (Shin et al., 2021). Gen Z consumers are more concerned about aesthetics and value uniqueness and self-expression, and the same is reflected in their fashion choices. They strive diligently to design distinctive styles that capture their individuality and values (Castillo, 2026). Although it is propositioned that AE encourages SC, but the same has not been examined much empirically, especially among Gen Z, and thus, the following hypothesis is postulated.

H₄: The desire for AE motivates Gen Z consumers for SC.

SC and PES

The phrase "PES" refers to the way in which individuals think that their access to high-profile status items, financial standing, or other factors have elevated their social standing (Veblen, 1899). The studies argued that the motive behind the consumption of socially visible and status-laden products is to enhance one's social status (Nabi et al., 2019; Sahin & Nasir, 2021). Griskevicius et al. (2010) reported that the perception of elevated social status is linked to the consumption of high-priced green items. Kohlová & Urban (2018) confirmed a connection between the consumption of green products and PES. Nabi et al. (2019) and Sahin & Nasir (2021) asserted that the

motive behind the consumption of socially visible and status-laden products is to enhance one's social status. In continuity of this discussion, it is asserted that SC builds PES among Gen Z consumers, and thus the study tests the following hypothesis.

H₅: SC leads to the PES

Gender as moderator between the Shopping Motivations and SC

Gender has a significant impact on the clothes that individuals choose to wear (Bohdanowicz & Clamp, 1994). The literature has shown that both men and women use status products as means of social identity, entice a partner, amplify dominance and visibility (Eastman & Liu, 2012; Sundie et al., 2011; Tifferet & Herstein, 2012; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014). Though the literature about the role of gender as a moderator between the motivations of SC is limited, but it is expected that men and women have different motivations for SC. Thus, the following hypothesis is formulated for testation.

H_{6a, b, c, d}: Gender moderates the relationship between RE, SR, SA, AE, and SC.

Research Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the research framework, which highlight the constructs and the relationship among these constructs being examined in the present study.

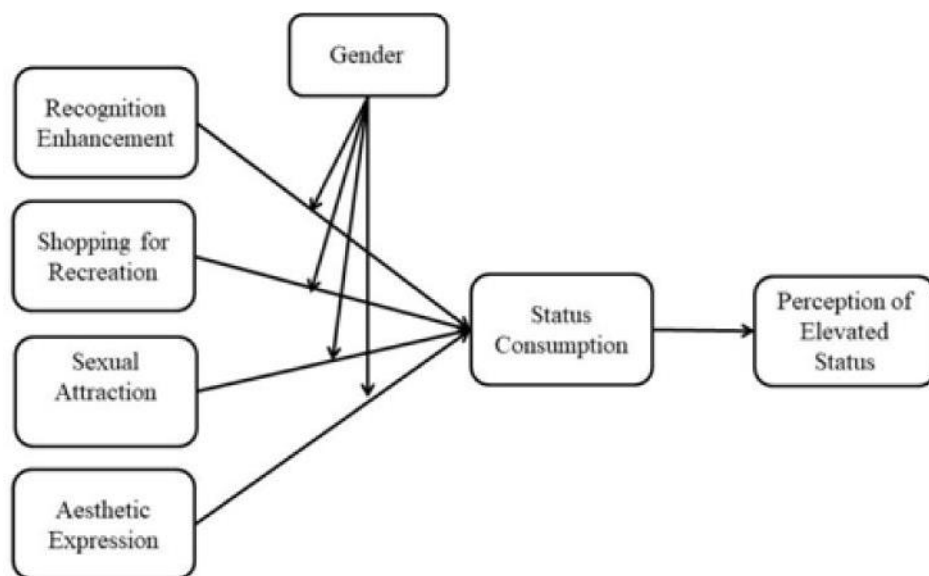


Figure 1: Research Framework

Methodology

The present study examines RE, SR, SA, and AE as motivators of SC, the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between antecedents and SC, and the influence of SC on PES among Gen Z consumers.

Sample and Context

Clothing has been selected as a product category for the study because clothing enables people to fit in with popular subcultures or fashion trends, which increases social worth and wins peer acceptability, especially among younger populations ([Eastman et al., 2013](#)). A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data from the respondents. Convenience cum snowball sampling was used to identify respondents from Punjab's major cities who wear status-laden clothing. The data was collected from 368, but after removing incomplete data sets and outliers, 297 responses were found usable and were analysed. All the respondents were born between 1997 and 2000, holding graduate degree only or post graduate degree also. The percentage of male respondents was 45.12 percent, and of female respondents was 54.88 percent.

Measurement

To measure the shopping motivation variables, 2 items for RE, 3 items for SA, 2 items for SR, and 2 items for AE were adapted from [Anić et al. \(2018\)](#). 5 items for measuring SC were adapted from [Goldsmith et al. \(2010\)](#). The PES was measured through a 4-item scale adapted from [Drèze & Nunes \(2009\)](#). A five-point Likert scale, which ranged from "1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree", was used to seek responses from the respondents.

Results

Common Method Bias (CMB)

After the collection of primary data, it is essential to ensure that the data is free from systematic bias ([Podsakoff & Organ, 1986](#)), which is frequently observed in self-administered questionnaires. Single factor of [Harman \(1976\)](#) was used to evaluate the CMB. Using SPSS software, the key component extraction strategy of a single fixed factor without rotations was followed. It was found that there is just one component that contributes 35.32% of the variation; thus, there does not exist CMB.

Measurement Model, Reliability, and Validity

"Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)" using "SmartPLS 4.1.1" software is used to analyse the research model ([Ringle et al., 2014](#)). To validate the measurement model, the reliability, discriminant validity, and convergent validity of the measures were examined and approved. Composite reliability analysis and Cronbach's α were used to assess the concept measures' internal consistency and reliability. Table 1 shows that the Cronbach's α and composite reliability both exceeded .70 ([Hair et al., 2019](#)), confirms the reliability of the measures.

Average variance extracted (AVE) and standardised factor loadings were examined to confirm the convergent validity ([Fornell & Larcker, 1981](#)). The factor loading of each measuring item is above 0.70, composite reliability exceeds 0.70, and average variance extracted (AVE) is above 0.50, confirms the convergent validity ([Fornell & Larcker, 1981](#); [Hair et al., 2019](#)).

The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) and the Fornell and Larcker criterion are the two methods used to determine the discriminant validity ([Hair et al., 2014](#)). The criterion has been satisfied since each construct's AVE is greater than the squared correlation of all other constructs, as recommended by [Fornell & Larcker \(1981\)](#) (Table 1). Additionally, all the model's HTMT values are considerably less than 0.90 (Table 2). Thus, the constructs' discriminant validity has been proved. The highest VIF value is 2.876 for an item of SC and all the other VIF values are lower than the threshold limit of 3.3, which indicates there is no collinearity problem.

Hypothesis Testing

The structural model is evaluated using three specific criteria: Construct cross-validated redundancy (Q^2), Coefficient of determination (R^2), and path coefficients ([Hair et al., 2021](#)). The value of Q^2 indicates the research model's predictive relevance and is supposed to be greater than zero. With an SC'S Q^2 value of 0.412 and PES' Q^2 value of 0.354, the research model's predictive relevance is established. R^2 indicates the research model's predictive

Table 1: Reliability and Validity Measures

Construct	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's α	rho_A	CR	AVE
Recognition enhancement	RE1	0.945	0.863	0.872	0.936	0.879
	RE2	0.929				
Shopping for recreation	SR1	0.927	0.737	0.800	0.881	0.787
	SR2	0.846				
Sexual attraction	SA1	0.907	0.881	0.914	0.925	0.805
	SA2	0.916				
	SA3	0.868				
Aesthetic expression	AE1	0.938	0.867	0.867	0.938	0.883
	AE2	0.941				
Status consumption	SC1	0.732	0.839	0.864	0.886	0.610
	SC2	0.763				
	SC3	0.813				
	SC4	0.883				
	SC5	0.701				
Perception of elevated status	PES1	0.735	0.824	0.848	0.883	0.656
	PES2	0.899				
	PES3	0.778				
	PES4	0.819				

Source(s): Author's Calculations

Table 2: Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio of Correlations

Constructs	RE	SR	SA	AE	SC
RE					
SR	0.232				
SA	0.052	0.159			
AE	0.195	0.557	0.083		
SC	0.250	0.653	0.400	0.510	
PES	0.233	0.612	0.518	0.342	0.740

Source(s): Author's Calculations

accuracy, and it must be between 0 and 1 (Henseler et al., 2009; Hair et al., 2011). Here, the R^2 value of SC is 0.432, and the R^2 value of PES is 0.423; hence, the predictive accuracy is also established.

As a goodness-of-fit measure, the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) is employed

to prevent model misspecification (Hu & Bentler, 1998). According to Henseler et al. (2014), a value less than 0.10 is regarded as a good fit. Here, the value of SRMR is 0.09, thus ensuring the model fit. The analysis of path coefficients shows that RE ($\beta = 0.096$; t-values > 1.96 , $p < 0.05$), SR ($\beta = 0.392$; t-values > 1.96 , $p < 0.01$), SA ($\beta = 0.309$; t-values > 1.96 ,

$\rho < 0.01$) and AE ($\beta = 0.213$; t-values > 1.96 , $\rho < 0.01$), have been found having a positive effect on SC, thus, supporting H₁, H₂, H₃ and H₄. SR has been found to be the most significant motivator of SC among the respondents of the present study, followed by SA, AE, and RE. Further, the results indicate that SC ($\beta = 0.650$; t-values > 1.96 , $\rho < 0.01$) significantly positively affect the perception of elevated personal status, hence supporting H₅.

Partial Least Squares-Multiple Group Analysis (MGA)

The heterogeneity prevails when there are notable variations in the modelled relationships among multiple groups of respondents (Hair et al., 2014). Furthermore, comparing different respondent groups is beneficial from a theoretical and practical standpoint, and that excluding heterogeneity might jeopardise PLS-SEM results and could possibly provide false conclusions (Hair et al., 2012; Becker et al., 2013). The MGA emphasises how data set variability yield fresh insights by utilising categorical moderating factors. Henseler et al. (2009) suggested that for a particular PLS path coefficient to be considered significantly

different across groups, the p-value must be less than 0.05 or more than 0.95 in PLS-MGA.

Table 4 shows that gender groups differ significantly regarding the effects of RE on SC; thus, H_{6a} is supported. Female group shows higher effect of RE on SC than males, whereas no significant differences are revealed between males and females regarding the effects of SR, SA, and AE on SC. Hence, H_{6b, c, and d} are not supported.

Discussion

The findings reveal that among the shopping motivators of SC, SR has been found to be the biggest motivator, followed by SA, AE, and RE. All four motivators examined for their effect on SC explained 43.2 percent of the variance in SC, and further, SC explained 42.3 percent variance in PES.

The findings reveal that SR is a significant motivator for SC among Gen Z consumers, which is in line with the findings of Eastman et al. (2013), who found SC positively related with recreational shopping styles of Millennials. Park (2018) found that recreational shopping motivation significantly influences shopping excitement, which can be

Table 3: Path Analysis

Hypothesis	Path relationship	(β)	SD	T Statistics	P values	Result
H1	RE $\rightarrow$ SC	0.096	0.046	2.095	0.036	Supported
H2	SR $\rightarrow$ SC	0.392	0.033	11.920	0.000	Supported
H3	SA $\rightarrow$ SC	0.309	0.045	6.832	0.000	Supported
H4	AE $\rightarrow$ SC	0.213	0.041	5.223	0.000	Supported
H5	SC $\rightarrow$ PES	0.650	0.028	23.622	0.000	Supported

Source(s): Author's Calculations

Table 4 : PLS-MGA Results for Gender Groups

Relationships	Difference (Male - Female)	p-value	Result
RE $\rightarrow$ SC	-0.251	0.010	Supported
SR $\rightarrow$ SC	-0.058	0.470	Not supported
SA $\rightarrow$ SC	0.041	0.653	Not supported
AE $\rightarrow$ SC	0.141	0.097	Not supported

Source(s): Author's Calculations

associated with status-seeking behaviours, especially in environments like malls where social visibility is high.

SA has been found to be a significant motivation for SC that indicates that Gen Z use material possessions to enhance their physical attractiveness and romantic desirability. Men tend to display more material possessions, which appeal to women, as this shows that they expect to spend money on the women they love, to start a family (Zhao et al., 2017). Yuan & Zheng (2019) studied 354 Chinese undergraduates and found that women with activated mate-attraction motives expressed higher willingness to pay for conspicuous luxury items, mediated by a need to enhance attractiveness. Also, to compete with other women (Segal & Podoshen, 2013; Zhu et al., 2023) and to show their identity and status to their romantic partners, women invest in status goods more overtly than men (O'Cass, 2004).

AE is also found to have a significant positive relationship with SC among Gen Z consumers. They wish to develop distinctive identities that embody their individuality, values, and perspectives (Davies, 2020), and they do not mind being different (Van den Bergh et al., 2024). They are identity searchers who are image sensitive, pursue a wide range of interests, and have a taste of different kinds of experiences (Lendvai et al., 2022). Considering this generation's exposure to digital platforms (like Instagram and Facebook), products that facilitate aesthetic presentation support both perceived social standing and self-expression (Neufeld-Wall, 2023).

Gen Z consumers buy stories, identities, and standards instead of products (Fromm & Read, 2018), and they differ significantly from previous generations (Thangavel et al., 2022). The significant relationship between RE and SC is an outcome of the deep-rooted desire of Gen Z for social validation. Gen Z consumers use SC to reflect their emphasis on personal identification over adhering to social standards (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Being the digital natives, Gen Z consumers use social media to express themselves through valuable possessions with the peers of similar interests (Harahap et al., 2023) and expect instant feedback in the form of likes, comments, and shares (Dolot, 2018).

SC has further been found having significant effect

on perception of elevated personal status owing to their strong need for identity expression, social validation, and attraction to others of the opposite gender. Contrary to their ancestors, Gen Z group have the most materialistic consumers (Flurry & Swimberghe, 2016) and they express themselves through their fashion purchases (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). Building on the social identity theory, consumers express their social status through symbolic marketplaces and peer connection, which gives them a sense of personal value (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Status-oriented goods and lifestyle standards serve as a means for Gen Z customers to develop their own sense of self-worth and identity. By engaging in such behaviors, individuals not only meet their externally visible expectations but also improve their psychological well-being by becoming more competent and desirable, which raises their position in society.

The gender has been found significantly moderating the relationship between RE and SC, as female group is having stronger effect than male group. Females are more prone than males to participate in SC when it comes to pursuing social recognition and acceptance. This may be due to the reason that female consumers' purchases are based on their emotional reactions, interpersonal connections, and perceived social standing (Chetioui & El Bouzidi, 2023). Conversely, men purchase for cost-benefit, affordability, and usefulness, and how well their persona suits it (Jamal & Lodhi, 2015). In the Gen Z setting, where social media increases exposure and social approval, young women may utilise expensive, branded, or stylish products as tools for enhancing themselves in digital and social worlds, improve their social image, and obtain affirmation (Handa & Khare, 2013).

Whereas the absence of moderating effect of gender on the relationship of SR, AE, and SA with SC shows the same inclination of both genders towards these motivations. These findings confirm the literature on blurring gender effects across various behavioural contexts (Brownie, 2017; Ruppanner & Huffman, 2014). Among younger generations, SR as a way to vent emotions has evolved into a gender-neutral kind of entertainment. Gen Z males are just as interested in shopping as women were in earlier generations, when it was more frequently seen as a way for women to explore, develop their identities, and to perceive stress. Such leisure

activities are similarly linked by both genders to the acquisition of status-signaling goods, particularly when shared in peer or social contexts. Gen Z accepts more flexible definitions of beauty, which lessens the gender-based disparity in the way that SA influences SC. AE, which is frequently conveyed via apparel, accessories, and personal styling, is equally significant for males and females in Gen Z culture. Regardless of gender, platforms such as Instagram and Pinterest encourage aesthetic sensibility among all of its users. As a result of this change, the impact of AE on SC is the same for both genders.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

The findings of the study provide substantial contributions to the body of research on SC by demonstrating how Gen Z consumers' status-oriented behaviour is influenced by RE, SR, SA, and AE. The study demonstrates the relevance of the established theories, such as conspicuous consumption theory ([Veblen, 1899](#)) and social identity theory ([Tajfel & Turner, 1979](#)), in a contemporary, digitally-mediated, youth-focused setting.

Crucially, the study flips the emphasis from conventional status indicators (such as materialism and wealth) to more symbolic and experiential determinants. It demonstrates that Gen Z customers seek status to improve their emotional fulfilment, personal identity, and physical beauty in addition to socio-economic signaling. This expands the conceptual framework of SC and encourages future scholars to include experiential consumption models, evolutionary theory, and aesthetic psychology into status-based consumption literature.

Managerial Implications

Fashion merchants are looking for strategies to boost the consumption of prestige items in India's highly competitive market, which is characterised by a strong emphasis on status. Because fashion is changing so quickly, product life is getting shorter, thus managers must engage customers at the earliest. Customers' shopping motivations are crucial in influencing their consumption of status goods and creating a sense of social elevation.

Retailers of status items must thus utilise aggressive marketing strategies to get consumers to use their products. Products that enable Gen Z to exhibit their uniqueness and aesthetic preferences should be created by marketers. Enhancing recognition turned out to be a powerful motivation, indicating that initiatives that offer social validation through influencer collaborations, user-generated content, and sharing product experiences will strike a deep chord. Pop-up shops that are immersive, gamified, and community-focused platforms may make shopping a socially engaged activity.

Retailers should segment customers into recreational and task-oriented buyers to customise communications and experiences, pay attention to status-driven groups, and create settings that are exciting. They should create stores that arouse feelings by including interactive technology, music, fragrances, and immersive displays. Brands should highlight its connection to leisure and individuality. To replicate the thrill of in-person shopping, incorporate aspects of surprise and pleasure, such as virtual try-ons or spin-to-win discounts. To increase status appeal, marketers must promote influencer collaborations and user-generated content. Unplanned purchases are more common among recreational consumers. This may be leveraged through limited-time promotions and strategic product placement.

Policy Implications

With social validation and beauty standards playing a major role in SC, particularly on the internet, Gen Z consumers need to be educated about digital impact, self-worth, and financial demands. Marketing and media literacy programs have to be incorporated into educational institutions. Additionally, high-status goods generally are luxury goods which fetch higher tax rates. The 28% tax rate on luxury goods, for instance, helps to increase tax revenue. The government can boost tax income by increasing the demand for these items by encouraging their usage. Spending exponentially on status products is a component of SC. To increase the domestic demand for status products, policymakers must create their policies to promote the consumption of these

goods and spending habits. Consequently, economic growth will be stimulated. Policy makers can promote the domestic industries by producing these status items, which will create job opportunities for young individuals. China's home appliance subsidies, for instance, are designed to encourage domestic demand and assist regional producers. Considering the beliefs of Generation Z, governments and non-governmental organisations ought to encourage sustainable and ethical products, therefore elevating eco-conscious consumption to a status and identity symbol.

Limitations and Scope for Further Studies

Although this study offers insightful information on the factors influencing SC in Generation Z, it should be noted that it has several limitations, especially when considering the complexity and variety of this generation. Data was collected from a limited geographical area. Hence, these findings may not be generalised to other geographical areas. Future studies can examine the same model on a different sample and geography. Even though Gen Z is sometimes referred to as a single cohort, it really includes both teens and young adults and spans a broad age range (usually 1997-2012). Groups, consisting of high school students vs working professionals or those living in rural versus metropolitan areas, may have quite different reasons for consuming status. Age and life stage variations, which might influence the reasons why Gen Z engages, were not taken into consideration in this study.

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