



A study on impact of social media usage on dupe consumption among Gen Z consumers

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Abstract

This study looks into how social media use affects Generation Z Indian customers' dishonest purchasing habits. Karl Pearson's Correlation Coefficient and Welch's One-Way ANOVA were applied to data from 104 respondents. The findings show a significant positive link between duplicate purchases and social media activity ($r = 0.526$, $p < 0.001$). The only demographic element that had a significant impact was occupation; gender, spending, and device type showed no discernible variations. Social media aspirational comparisons and influencer material play a key role in normalizing Gen Z's use of deception.

Keywords: Gen Z, dupe consumption, social media, aspirational consumption, india

Introduction

It is hard to scroll through Instagram or YouTube today without stumbling across a video that says "get the look for less" or "dupe vs. original." What was once a quiet, almost secretive shopping habit has become a full-blown cultural movement — and at the centre of it all is Gen Z. Born between 1997 and 2012, this generation has grown up with social media not as a luxury but as a way of life, and it has fundamentally changed the way they shop, aspire, and relate to brands [1, 2]. Social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Pinterest have evolved well beyond their original purpose of connecting people. Today, they function as powerful digital marketplaces where trends are created overnight, aspirations are constantly refreshed, and purchasing decisions are quietly but effectively shaped by influencers, algorithms, and peer communities [3, 4]. For Gen Z consumers, the line between what they see on their feed and what they want to own has never been thinner.

Aspirational consumption — the desire to own products that signal a higher social status or lifestyle than one currently enjoys — has long been a subject of interest in consumer behaviour research [5, 6]. It is especially visible among low- and middle-income consumers who wish to align themselves with affluent lifestyles despite real financial constraints. Studies focusing on Bottom of Pyramid (BOP) markets reveal that consumers often prioritize aspirational goods even over everyday necessities, driven by the need for social recognition and enhanced self-esteem [7]. Closer to home, Gupta and Srivastav (2016) found that aspirational consumption among urban consumers in India is strongly motivated by the desire to improve social standing and be perceived as part of a higher-status group [8].

This is precisely where dupe products enter the picture. A dupe — short for duplicate — is an affordable, legally available product that closely replicates the look, feel, and aesthetic of a luxury or premium brand, without the price tag [9]. Unlike counterfeit goods, which are illegal copies, dupes sit in a grey but broadly accepted space. They allow consumers to enjoy the symbolic and social value of aspirational products without the financial burden that comes with the originals [10, 11]. The growing popularity of dupe's points to something deeper than just budget-consciousness — it reflects a generational shift in how young consumers think about authenticity, value, and identity.

Social media has been the single biggest driver of this shift. Product haul videos, "dupe finds" content, influencer comparisons, and algorithm-curated recommendations have made dupe products more visible, more desirable, and easier to find than ever before [12, 13]. Research suggests that repeated exposure to idealized lifestyles and luxury aesthetics on digital platforms intensifies young consumers' aspirations while simultaneously lowering their perception of the gap between luxury and affordable alternatives [14]. In other words, social media does not just show Gen Z what they cannot afford — it shows them how to get something close enough, for a fraction of the cost [15, 16].

India makes for a particularly rich and relevant context for this study. With one of the world's youngest populations and a booming digital ecosystem, India's Gen Z cohort is among the most socially connected in the world [17]. Rapid urbanization, rising aspirations, and growing exposure to global lifestyle trends through social media have together created the perfect conditions for the dupe economy to thrive [18]. Young Indian consumers are increasingly savvy about brands, deeply influenced by digital content, and economically motivated to seek out alternatives that deliver similar social signals at lower costs.

Yet, despite how visibly this trend is playing out in everyday life, academic research has not quite caught up. Most existing studies on consumption behaviour have focused either on traditional luxury goods or on illegal counterfeit markets, leaving the dupe economy as a distinct and rapidly growing phenomenon without sufficient scholarly attention [19, 20]. There is also a noticeable absence of empirical research exploring how social media usage, affordability, and psychological satisfaction specifically combine to drive dupe consumption among Gen Z consumers in a developing market like India [21].

This study sets out to bridge that gap. It examines the relationship between social media usage and dupe consumption behaviour among Gen Z consumers in India, and investigates whether demographic factors such as gender, occupation, monthly spending, and primary device usage play any significant role in shaping these patterns. Primary data was collected from 104 respondents through a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale, and analysed using Welch's One-Way ANOVA and Karl Pearson's Correlation Coefficient.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents a review of relevant literature, establishing the theoretical and contextual foundation of the study. Section 3 details the research methodology, including the research design, sampling procedures, data collection instrument, and analytical techniques employed. Section 4 presents and discusses the results in depth. Finally, Section 5 concludes the study and suggests directions for future research.

Objectives

1. To Study Social Media Usage on Gen Z Consumers
2. To Study the Impact of Social Media Usage on Dupe Consumption

Review of Literature

Researchers are studying why people buy copycat luxury products. They want to know what drives this behaviour and how it relates to media and consumer culture. Early studies found that people's attitudes toward luxury goods are influenced by social and personal factors. A survey of 300 students in Singapore showed that social pressure and the idea that cheaper products are of quality are key predictors of positive attitudes toward fake luxury brands. The study also found that these attitudes directly affect buying intentions. Another study of 655 consumers in Shanghai looked at how prior experiences with luxury goods. Real or fake. Affect attitudes toward fake luxury brands. The study suggested that fake luxury products might actually increase desire for goods by making more people aware of the brand. Some researchers grouped luxury consumers into three classes: patricians, parvenus and poseurs. They found that the poseur class was driven by both purchases and brand prominence while parvenus were motivated by brand prominence but not fakes. A study comparing consumers in Shanghai and Taipei found that collectivism influenced attitudes toward fakes in Shanghai but not in Taipei. The study also found that status consumption and integrity were positively related to attitudes in both groups. Researchers also looked at how luxury brand consumers respond to fakes in their environment. They found that affordability and aspirational motives were central to why consumers accepted or rationalized purchases. The role of media in shaping consumer behaviour has attracted growing attention. A case study found that social media influencers can promote luxury products normalize purchases and shape consumer attitudes. Recent doctoral research examined the ethical dimensions of dupe purchasing behaviour. The study found that consumers see dupes as an acceptable middle ground between fakes and authentic luxury goods.

Research Gap

The existing literature on dupe luxury consumption has made significant contributions. However, several gaps remain. One major gap is the lack of research on the market, which is one of the fastest-growing luxury and aspirational consumer economies. Another gap is the separation between counterfeits and dupes. Most studies treat these categories interchangeably. Focus exclusively on one. Young consumers, students and Gen Z are also underrepresented in primary empirical research on this topic. The role of media in dupe and counterfeit consumption is widely acknowledged, but it has largely been treated as a descriptive or theoretical variable. The impact of awareness and consumer knowledge on dupe and counterfeit

purchasing behaviour is also underdeveloped. Finally, the methodological reliance, on quantitative approaches limits the depth of insight into the psychological, emotional and social motivations underlying dupe and counterfeit consumption. The present study aims to address these gaps by investigating the attitudes, motivations and purchase intentions of Indian consumers toward dupe and counterfeit luxury products.

Materials and Methods

The study used a questionnaire to collect data about media usage and dupe consumption behaviour among Gen Z consumers in India. This study looks at how social media affects the way young people in India buy products. The study is divided into two parts: one part looks at the basics of who the respondents what they do on social media and what they buy and the other part checks if the things we found are statistically significant.

The people in this study are Gen Z consumers in India, which means they were born between 1997 and 2012. These young people have grown up with smartphones and social media which makes them a good group to study when it comes to buying products. We chose India for this study because it is a place where people are getting money moving to cities and getting more interested in global lifestyle trends. This creates an environment to study dupe consumption behaviour. To be part of this study respondents had to use media platforms like Instagram or YouTube know about dupe products and make buying decisions based on what they see online.

We could not ask every Gen Z consumer in India to participate so we carefully chose a group of 104 respondents to represent the population. Of these respondents 73 were female 27 were male. 4 Did not want to say what their gender was. Most of the respondents were students, followed by undergraduates, working professionals, self-employed individuals, school students and others. They spent amounts of money each month from less than ₹2,000 to more than ₹10,000. This mix of backgrounds helps make the findings more reliable.

We used a -probability convenience sampling method, which means we chose respondents based on who was available and willing to participate. This method is often used in social science research when we want to learn about what people think and how they behave. We used channels like social media and college networks to find our respondents.

The questionnaire was divided into three parts: background, social media usage and dupe consumption behaviour. We used a five-point scale to measure what respondents thought and felt with 1 being "Disagree" and 5 being "Strongly Agree". This scale is commonly used in survey research.

After collecting the data, we used two tools to analyse it. We used Welch's One-Way ANOVA to see if demographic factors like gender, occupation and monthly spending affect media usage and dupe consumption behaviour. We also used Karl Pearson's Correlation Coefficient to see how social media usage and dupe consumption behaviour are related. The analysis showed a positive relationship between social media engagement and dupe purchase behaviour.

We had three hypotheses to guide our analysis

H₀₁: There is no association between the demographic profile of the respondents and their social media usage.

H02: There is no significant association between the demographic profile of the respondents and their dupe consumption behaviour.

H03: There is no impact of social media usage on dupe consumption behaviour, among Gen Z consumers.

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Factors	Dimensions	Percentage
Age	14 – 17 Years	1.0
	18 – 21 Years	55.8
	22 – 25 Years	33.7
	26 – 29 Years	9.6
Gender	Female	70.2
	Male	26.0
	Prefer not to say	3.8
Current Status	School Student	1.9
	Undergraduate Student	19.2
	Postgraduate Student	53.8
	Working Professional	14.4
	Self-employed	6.7
Monthly Spending	Other	3.8
	₹0 -2,000	52.6
	₹2,001 – 10,000	34.7
	₹10,000 – 25,000	-
Primary Device Used	₹25,000	12.6
	Mobile Phone	91.3
	Laptop	6.7
	Tablet/Desktop	1.9

The study, based on responses from 104 participants, shows that young people, especially Gen Z, spend a lot of time on social media and often buy dupe products. Female participants used social media slightly more than males, but the difference was very small, meaning people of all genders use social media in a similar way. Undergraduate students were the most active users and buyers of dupes

compared to others. Factors like monthly spending and the type of device used did not make much difference in social media usage or buying behaviour. Overall, the results suggest that the more people use social media, the more likely they are to purchase dupe products, mainly because they are influenced by trends, reviews, and online content.

Table 2: Table Showing Significant Difference between Demographic Profile of the Respondents and Social Media Usage

Category	Group	N	Mean	SD	F	p-value
Gender	Female	73	3.32	0.789	2.52	0.105
	Male	27	2.97	0.622		
	Prefer not to say	4	3.20	0.163		
Occupation	School Student	2	2.80	0.566	4.28	0.034*
	Undergraduate	20	3.47	0.874		
	Postgraduate	56	3.25	0.644		
	Working Professional	15	3.29	0.752		
	Self Employed	7	2.86	0.862		
Monthly Spending	Other	4	2.20	0.400	0.833	0.445
	₹0-2000	12	3.13	0.959		
	₹2001-10000	33	3.34	0.657		
	₹10001-25000	50	3.14	0.780		
Primary Device	₹25000+	0	-	-	0.514	0.683
	Mobile Phone	95	3.23	0.773		
	Laptop	7	3.06	0.360		
	Tablet	2	3.20	0.283		
	Desktop	0	-	-		

*p < 0.05 (Welch's One-Way ANOVA)

Interpretation of Differences Between Demographics and Social Media Usage

We started looking at how people’s backgrounds affect what they do on media. This started with a test called Welch’s One-Way ANOVA. The results are in Table [2]. When it comes to gender. Whether someone is female male or does not want to say. People tend to use media in similar ways. The numbers show this: F = 2.52, p = 0.105. It is also similar with how money someone spends each month. This does not really change how they use media: F = 0.833, p =

0.445. Even the devices people use. Like a smartphone, tablet or laptop. Do not make a difference in how they are online: F = 0.514, p = 0.643. So social media use is much the same for Gen Z no matter what.

Things change when you look at what people do for work. Students who are undergraduates use media the most. Their average score is 3.47. People who work come next with a score of 3.29. Students who are in graduate school come after that with a score of 3.25. The people who are labelled as "use social media the least with an average score of 2.20.

These numbers suggest that younger students are probably spending time online. Why is this? Maybe it is because their friends have influence on them or because they notice trends faster or because they have more free time when they are in college.

Looking at these results it is clear that people’s backgrounds do affect how they use media. Some things, like age or gender do not make a difference. But what someone does for work is important. It really affects how Gen Z uses media. Social media behaviours are still pretty consistent, for Gen Z. Their job type influences social media behaviours.

Interpretation of Significant Differences in Dupe Consumption Levels Across Demographic Variables

A closer look at how age, gender, and background shape duplicate buying habits in Gen Z started with a Welch’s One-Way ANOVA. Findings from that test appear in Table

[3]. Despite differences in background, results stay nearly unchanged. Gender does not shift outcomes much, with values sitting close together. Occupation shows even less movement, almost flat across roles. Money spent each month makes little variation either, barely nudging the numbers. The type of device people use brings about no real change too. Scores hover around 3.0 to 3.3 everywhere you look. This steady pattern repeats regardless. of group. Nearly every segment leans slightly toward choosing dupes. Uniformity stands out more than contrast here Surprisingly, this pattern shows up again and again - buying lookalike items cuts right through differences in age group trends. Whether someone works full time or part time makes little difference. Even when income levels shift, the behaviour stays steady. Phone users, laptop users, doesn’t matter. Male, female, nonbinary - same habits appear. What stands out? The habit spreads wide, without skipping pockets. It sticks close to how this generation moves as one.

Table 3: Table Showing Significant Difference between Demographic Profile of the Respondents and Dupe Consumption Levels

Category	Group	N	Mean	SD	F	p-value
Gender	Female	73	3.32	0.757	1.03	0.385
	Male	27	2.97	0.826		
	Prefer not to say	4	3.20	0.265		
Occupation	School Student	2	2.80	0.283	0.148	0.976
	Undergraduate	20	3.47	0.982		
	Postgraduate	56	3.25	0.737		
	Working Professional	15	3.29	0.738		
	Self Employed	7	2.86	0.574		
	Other	4	2.20	0.829		
Monthly Spending	₹0-2000	12	3.13	1.049	0.0132	0.987
	₹2001-10000	33	3.34	0.711		
	₹10001-25000	50	3.14	0.746		
	₹25000+	0	-	—		
Primary Device	Mobile Phone	95	3.23	0.800	0.0212	0.979
	Laptop	7	3.06	0.236		
	Tablet	2	3.20	0.071		
	Desktop	0	-	—		

*p < 0.05 (Welch's One-Way ANOVA)

Looking at what turned up, the idea that who people are doesn’t really affect whether they buy dupes holds true across every group checked. The data didn’t show strong links between personal traits and using imitation products. Each category tested backed this outcome. What stands out is how consistent the pattern remains no matter which trait is viewed. Even when broken down by age, income, or education, the result stays flat. There's little signal that background shapes these choices. So the starting assumption ends up standing. No real connection emerges clearly from the numbers gathered.

Table 4: Correlation between Social Media Usage and Dupe Consumption

Variable	Pearson’s r	df	p-value
Social Media Usage x Dupe Consumption	0.526	102	<0.001

Interpretation of the Correlation Between Social Media Usage and Dupe Consumption

A link between how much people use social media and their buying of dupes? That was checked using a math method by Karl Pearson. See Table [4] for what came out. Starting off, results show a clear middle-level link between how much Gen Z uses social media and their buying of dupe

items - number sits at r = 0.526, df = 102, p less than 0.001. When screen scrolling goes up, so does interest in alternatives; drop the online time, and that pull fades too. That tiny p value underlines it is unlikely down to chance. Strong backing comes through given how tight the threshold runs.

Something like these lines up with what we’re looking at here - the idea that apps like Instagram and YouTube push Gen Z toward buying knockoffs. Haul videos pop up, then reviews show side-by-side shots, influencers toss in suggestions; these things add up. Not far off from real thing but cheaper? That version often wins out when choices get made. A steady stream of clips and posts quietly steers picks, especially when budget swaps copy big-name items. Looking at these results, it becomes clear the idea that social media doesn’t affect dupe buying doesn’t hold up. Instead, how much young people use social platforms ties closely to their tendency to buy dupes. This pattern shows up clearly in the data. For Gen Z, more time online links with higher chances of choosing imitation products. The connection isn’t weak or occasional - it stands out consistently across responses. So, the original assumption loses ground when faced with real user habits. What we see instead is a strong pull between scrolling feeds and picking affordable look-alikes.

Key Findings

When it comes to jobs people use media for different amounts of time. Students use it the most at 3.47 hours give or take 0.874. This difference is clear when you look at the numbers. When it comes to whether men or women use it more the numbers are the same. How money someone has does not make a difference either. The type of device someone uses also does not change their habits.

On average people use duplicates around 3.0 to 3.3 times no matter what group they are in. Whether someone is a man or a woman does not really change this number. What job someone has also does not make a difference. These numbers stay the same across jobs. When you look closely these factors do not really matter. The results are the same no matter who you look at.

About half of the people who spend time online tend to buy imitation goods. There is a connection between the amount of time people spend online and the number of purchases they make. This pattern is clear when you look at the data. People become more interested in these products because social media shows them alternatives not because of ads. Social media platforms do not directly promote products but they make it seem normal to copy things. Every time someone scrolls they see examples of this, which slowly changes what they think is acceptable.

Actionable Suggestions

If you want to reach students you should start with what's already popular online. Videos on Instagram get attention because people trust their friends more than ads. Posts that seem real and not staged spread quickly. The best way to reach adults is through shared moments, not fancy campaigns. What works is what comes from within their circle not from outside.

Brands can team up with influencers to build trust by talking about the value of their products. Of trying to be the cheapest they can focus on quality that people can afford. These partnerships can shift the focus to what lasts not what sells quickly. The message is clear: good products do not have to be expensive. By doing this brand can make it hard for copycats to keep up. The value of a product becomes more than its price. It becomes about reputation.

You can start by looking at how users react on one app, another. Like TikTok and then Instagram. To see what gets their attention. You can adjust your posts based on what you find without using the approach everywhere. Pay attention to differences in how people respond and let that guide your changes. Try times or tones where it fits naturally. Stay alert to changes in comments or views, over time and use that to shape your move.

Conclusion

The study of Gen Z behaviour shows that Gen Z has a good understanding of Dupe Consumption. This means Gen Z knows about buying counterfeit products. Gen Z uses media platforms a lot. The study found that Gen Z is very good at buying these kinds of products. This is a part of what Gen Z does online.

The study also found some things about how different groups of people behave.

- **Occupation is a factor:** what Gen Z does for work affects how they use the internet. Students who are still in school use the internet a lot to buy dupes.

- **Men and women are not that different:** women use media a bit more and buy dupes a bit more but it is not a big difference.
- **Where people live and how much money they have does not matter:** Gen Z buys products no matter what.
- **The device Gen Z uses does not matter:** whether they use a phone or a laptop they still buy dupes.

The study shows that media and buying dupes are connected. When Gen Z uses media more they also buy more alternative products. This is because social media has influencer content, reviews and comparisons that make Gen Z want to buy these products. Social media makes it easy for Gen Z to find and buy alternatives to expensive products. So people who want to understand what Gen Z buys need to know that social media is a part of it. Social media does not just show what Gen Z likes it also helps Gen Z decide what to buy. It does not matter what Gen Zs background is social media has an influence, on what they buy. Gen Z likes to scroll through media and buy affordable products that look like the expensive ones.

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