







“Affinity of Gen Z and Gen Y towards DTC brands: Role of online review and ratings and recommendation”

AUTHORS	Kharabela Rout  Zakir Hossen Shaikh  Sushree Debashree Debasmita Sahoo Priti Ranjan Sahoo  Kiran Cotha  Rashmi Ranjan Panigrahi 
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Kharabela Rout, Assistant Professor, Department of Marketing, Symbiosis Institute of Business Management, Symbiosis International (Deemed University), India.

Zakir Hossen Shaikh, Assistant Professor, Department of Finance and Accounting, College of Business Administration, Kingdom University, Bahrain.

Sushree Debashree Debasmitta Sahoo, Doctoral Scholar, KSOM, KIIT Deemed to be University, India.

Priti Ranjan Sahoo, Associate Professor, KSOM, KIIT Deemed to be University, India.

Kiran Cotha, Associate Professor, Institute of Management and IT (AIMIT), St Aloysius (Deemed to be University) AIMIT Centre, India.

Rashmi Ranjan Panigrahi, Associate Dean (Research and Development), XIM University, India. (Corresponding author)



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Kharabela Rout (India), Zakir Hossen Shaikh (Bahrain),
Sushree Debashree Debasmitta Sahoo (India), Priti Ranjan Sahoo (India),
Kiran Cotha (India), Rashmi Ranjan Panigrahi (India)

AFFINITY OF GEN Z AND GEN Y TOWARDS DTC BRANDS: ROLE OF ONLINE REVIEW AND RATINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

Abstract

Direct-to-consumer brands bypass the traditional distribution channel and directly market their products to their target consumers through the internet. In recent years, direct-to-consumer brands have become the preferred choice for Gen Y and Gen Z consumers during online shopping. This study aims to investigate the impact of online ratings and reviews, recommendations, and brand awareness on customer attitudes and brand trust towards direct-to-consumer brands, as well as the roles of brand trust and brand attitude in influencing the purchase intentions of Gen Z and Gen Y in India. This study employed a cross-sectional and quantitative research design, and primary data were collected from Indian Gen Z and Gen Y consumers who frequently purchase food from DTC brands online, providing relevant insights into the buying behavior of DTC brands. Self-administered questionnaire was designed and circulated online via email and LinkedIn platform. Data were collected from 8 December 2024 to 8 January 2025 in Bhubaneswar, a smart city in India. Furthermore, out of the 300 distributed questionnaires, 214 correctly filled questionnaires are considered for further data analysis. This study adopted Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling for data analysis. The study's findings suggest that review and ratings ($\beta = 0.124, p < 0.05$), recommendations ($\beta = 0.276, p < 0.001$), and brand awareness ($\beta = 0.475, p < 0.001$) all contribute to building brand trust. Further recommendations ($\beta = 0.298, p < 0.001$), brand awareness ($\beta = 0.475, p < 0.001$), and review and ratings ($\beta = 0.115, p < 0.05$) all have a positive influence on brand attitude. Furthermore, attitude ($\beta = 0.710, p < 0.001$) and brand trust ($\beta = 0.178, p < 0.05$) significantly influenced purchase intention. The findings of this study contribute to the existing body of knowledge on DTC brand buying behavior of Gen Z and Gen Y. This study also offers valuable insights for direct-to-consumer brand managers seeking to enhance the engagement and conversion rates of Gen Z and Gen Y consumers.

Keywords DTC, review, trust, attitude, brand awareness

JEL Classification M31, M39, M30

INTRODUCTION

The global advancement of online retailing accelerates the growth of the direct-to-consumer (DTC) retail model. The strategy of DTC retailing engages a disintermediation process, whereby brands bypass traditional channels or intermediaries to directly connect with customers through various online channels, including their own websites, social media platforms, and mobile applications. The DTC brands directly enhance the customer journey by adopting the growing online shopping behavior of customers and differentiating the brand experience. DTC model of retailing offers a competitive advantage to the brand in the competitive online retail industry by reducing operational costs and providing access to real-time customer data. Despite the rapid growth of DTC brands in the digital marketplace, research on consumer behavior toward these brands remains limited, and several research problems can be noted in the context of consumer behavior toward DTC brands.

Firstly, formation of consumers' attitudes and brand trust for DTC brands within the online retail environment is unclear. Prior research explored the impact of digital strategy and digital marketing on attitude and buying behavior towards DTC brands, but ignored some important aspects of digital platforms like reviews in social media and their own websites, ratings for the products and recommendations (RC) of others, which are important in shaping the attitude and buying decisions for DTC brands.

Secondly, as DTC brands are new-age brands and often operate within online marketplaces, they struggle with brand awareness (BA), which is a decisive factor in trust and attitude development. The existing literature is insufficient to provide a clear understanding of the mechanisms by which BA stimulates consumer trust and a positive brand attitude in the DTC context.

Thirdly, Gen Y and Gen Z are the digital consumers who purchase online more frequently than other generations. Previous research has emphasized these two generations in marketing research; however, there is still limited knowledge on how Gen Y and Gen Z utilize reviews, ratings, recommendations, and brand awareness to build attitudes and trust in DTC brands and make buying decisions.

Lastly, there have been minimal research studies conducted in emerging markets like India, where DTC brands are experiencing exponential growth, and the DTC market is valued at \$100 billion due to rapid digitalization, including smartphone adoption, access to mobile data, and internet at lower prices.

Hence, it is necessary to understand how reviews and ratings, recommendations, and brand awareness influence the attitudes and trust of Indian Gen Z and Gen Y consumers, as well as their purchase intentions towards DTC brands.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) model is a theoretical framework that seeks to explain how environmental stimuli influence the cognitive and affective state of an individual, in turn generating the response (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Kumar & Subathra, 2025). This theory has been widely used in various domains, such as strategic marketing and online shopping, to explain the interaction between consumers and their surrounding environment (Kakkar et al., 2025; Zhu et al., 2020). This study relies on the S-O-R framework and conceptualizes that online reviews and ratings, online recommendations, and brand awareness act as stimulus (S) for DTC consumers. Furthermore, consumers' attitudes and trustworthiness towards DTC brands represent the internal state of the organism (O), i.e., the consumers themselves. Lastly, the response (R) is defined as the consumer's decision to purchase a DTC brand.

In online retailing, reviews and ratings play a crucial role in consumer decision-making (Ngo et al., 2025). The review and ratings provide valuable insights to consumers about product quality and

benefits (Ray & Singh, 2025). In an online shopping environment, reviews involve the qualitative evaluation of consumers' experiences with a product by reading the posted comments and opinions of other consumers, based on their experiences with the product and service (Varga & Albuquerque, 2024; Banerjee & YK Chua, 2014). Furthermore, consumers can express their experience and satisfaction level quantitatively by adopting star ratings (Kovács, 2025). Star ratings typically measure the consumer experience, ranging from one star, which indicates the lowest level of satisfaction, to five-star ratings, indicating the highest level of satisfaction (Hu et al., 2012). Both reviews and ratings together contribute to the online reputation of direct-to-consumer (DTC) brands, which in turn influence the thoughts and behaviors of subsequent consumers (Zhang et al., 2014; Floyd et al., 2014). In this context, complementary reviews with high ratings from potential users can significantly enhance consumers' attitudes towards a brand, serving as social proof that validates and authenticates the value proposition of DTC brands, which help customers to trust these brands (Azhar et al., 2023; Lee & Ro, 2016; Kumar & Subathra, 2025). In summary, reviews

and ratings significantly influence consumers' attitudes and play a crucial role in fostering trust in DTC brands.

Recommendations for a product by other consumers on online platforms are a key element that can significantly affect a consumer's decision-making process (Blut et al., 2023; Anandhan et al., 2018). Recommendations typically refer to suggestions for buying or using a product made by peers or online user communities on online stores or social media, which are based on personal experiences and overall assessments of a brand (Cheng et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2009). Recommendation serves as a form of social endorsement, enhancing both the perceived value and credibility of a product or brand (Hussain et al., 2025). Hence, in the context of DTC brands, users can recommend the brand on social media and in online shopping stores, which may help other consumers form a positive attitude towards the DTC brand and enhance trust in DTC brands (Zhang et al., 2023).

Brand awareness is a pivotal factor in consumer buying decisions (Rossiter, 2014). Brand awareness can be defined as the extent to which a consumer can identify and recall a brand, which helps inform purchase decisions, positively influences their purchase intent, and fosters inclusive engagement with the brand (Dabbous & Barakat, 2020). As DTC brands predominantly operate in the online channel, awareness is typically lower compared to established brands that operate in both online and offline channels (Kavadas et al., 2007). DTC brands mainly rely on a Social Media Marketing (SMM) approach to expand awareness and familiarity among their target customers (Moncey et al., 2020; Nguyen, 2023). Consumers who are more familiar with a DTC brand are leaner towards developing a commentary attitude towards these brands (Langaro et al., 2018; Hsu et al., 2013), which augments the level of trust consumers have in the products offered by the brand. Hence, brand awareness acts as an important stimulus that can help consumers form a positive attitude and foster brand trust towards DTC brands.

In the context of DTC brands, purchase intention can be defined as the consumer's leaning towards purchasing DTC brands (Marmat, 2023). Attitude consists of cognitive, affective, and behavioral as-

pects, representing a consumer's overall assessment of an object, brand, or product (Ajzen, 1991). Attitude refers to the overall evaluation of a specific brand by the consumer (De Groot & Steg, 2007). Suitable brand attitude is perceptible by positive perceptions, supportive emotions, and keenness to connect with the brand. Several studies have established a positive relationship between brand attitude and purchase intention across various product categories (Singh et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2021). In the same vein, positive attitude towards DTC brands can positively influence the purchase intention towards DTC brands. Brand trust can be conceptualized as the willingness to place confidence in a brand's ability to fulfil its promises and stated functions (Sang & Cuong, 2025). Extensive research consistently demonstrates a strong, positive relationship between a consumer's trust in a brand and their likelihood of making a purchase (Husain et al., 2022; Punyatoya, 2014). Hence, consumers who trust a DTC brand often form more favorable impressions, consider its offerings of higher quality, and show greater affirmation in their purchasing decisions.

The current study aims to develop testable hypotheses and examine how reviews and ratings, recommendations, and brand awareness influence the attitudes and trust of Indian Gen Z and Gen Y consumers, as well as their purchase intentions towards DTC brands.

Hence, drawing on the literature review above and the S-O-R theory, the authors propose the following research hypotheses and research model (Figure 1) in the context of Indian Gen Z and Gen Y consumers. The following hypotheses relate to the review and ratings, recommendations, brand awareness, brand attitude, brand trust, and purchase intention of DTC brands:

H1a: Positive reviews and higher ratings positively influence consumers' attitudes toward DTC brands.

H1b: Positive reviews and higher ratings positively influence consumers' trust towards DTC brands.

H2a: Positive recommendations positively influence consumer attitude towards DTC brands.

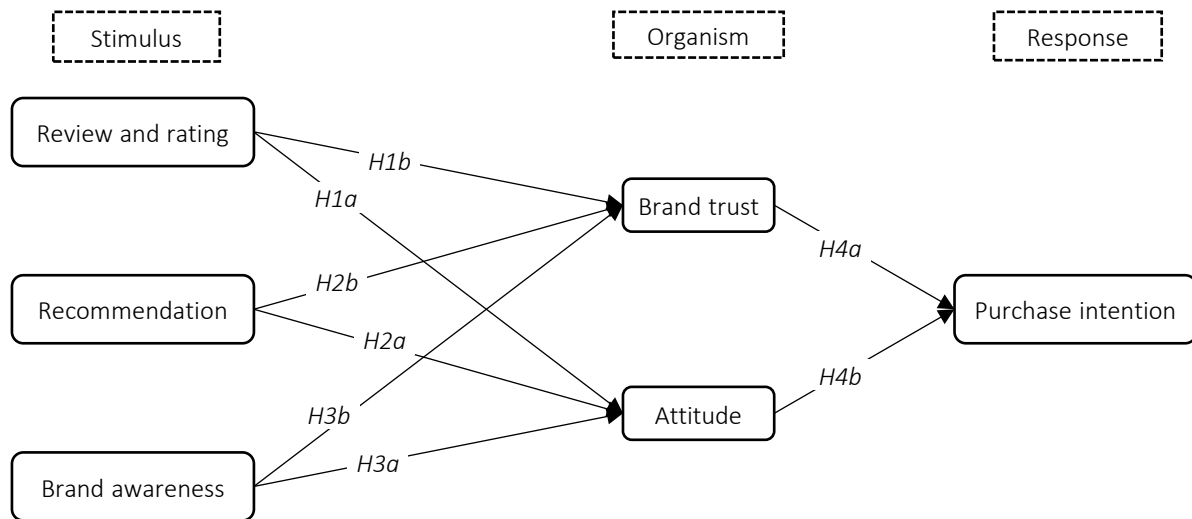


Figure 1. Research model

- H2b: Positive recommendations positively influence consumer trust towards DTC brands.*
- H3a: Higher brand awareness positively influences consumer attitude towards DTC brands.*
- H3b: Higher brand awareness positively influences the trust towards DTC brands.*
- H4a: Brand trust positively influences the purchase intention towards DTC brands.*
- H4b: Attitude towards DTC brand positively influences the purchase intention of DTC brands.*

2. METHODOLOGY

The current study employed a cross-sectional research design and utilized quantitative data analysis methods to statistically validate the conceptual model. Previously validated scales were adopted to measure the constructs of this study (Table 2). Self-administered, structured online questionnaire was designed for this study. The survey questionnaire contained 20 statements to calibrate dependent and independent constructs, which were measured using a seven-point Likert scale. The first section of the questionnaire contains demographic information, including gender, birth year, education level, and frequency of DTC shopping per month.

In India, digital native behavior, strong social media influence, and the desire for personalization

and transparency influence Gen Z and Gen Y to purchase DTC brands. Gen Z (born between 1997 and 2012) and Gen Y (born between 1981 and 1996) have grown up alongside the internet (Theocharis et al., 2025), making online shopping more comfortable for them. Hence, Gen Z and Gen Y are the most important segments for DTC brands, as they can provide accurate responses based on their rich experience with DTC brands in the online shopping context. Due to the popularity of DTC food brands among young consumers in India, this study selected food DTC brands across various categories, including chocolate bars, dry fruits, cookies, and plant-based snacks. The respondents responded to the survey questions based on their experience with these food DTC brands.

The current study employed a convenience sampling technique for primary data collection from Indian Gen Z and Gen Y consumers. The self-administered questionnaire was designed using the “Google Forms” platform and distributed online through multiple platforms, including LinkedIn and personal email addresses of the respondents.

In line with the procedure outlined by Mu and Yi (2024) for data collection on DTC brands, this study clearly explains the meaning of DTC brands, providing examples and images of various food DTC brands in the first section of the questionnaire. Respondents were encouraged to read the explanation carefully before responding to the questions. This study obtained consent from every respondent before they com-

Table 1. Characteristics of the respondents

Demographics items	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	138	64.30%
	Female	76	35.70%
Generation	Gen Z	128	60.00%
	Gen Y	86	40.00%
Education level	Graduate	181	84.50%
	Master's/PhD/Intermediate	33	15.50%
Monthly food DTC brand purchases	1-4 times	128	60.00%
	4-7 times	59	27.60%
	7-10 times	15	7.10%
	More than 10 times	12	5.6%

pleted the questionnaire and clearly outlined the ethical parameters, including confidentiality and the voluntary nature of their involvement. Data were collected from 8 December 2024 to 8 January 2025 in Bhubaneswar, a smart city in India. This study distributed more than 300 online questionnaires among Gen Y and Z consumers who frequently purchase food DTC brands, and 214 correctly completed questionnaires were selected for data analysis. This study analysed the demographic characteristics of respondents (Table 1).

This study utilized the Smart PLS 4 software package to perform PLS-SEM analysis. This study divided the results into two phases. In the first phase, this study assessed the measurement

models to verify the validity and reliability of the constructs. In the second phase, it assessed the structural model to test the proposed hypotheses of the study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The reliability and validity of exogenous and endogenous constructs of the model are examined in this study. Alpha and CR values indicate that all constructs have exceeded the threshold limit of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2019; Table 2). AVE is calculated to check the convergent validity of the constructs in this study. All the constructs have crossed the threshold value of AVE, which is 0.5 (Hair et al., 2019; Table 2).

Table 2. Validity and reliability of the constructs

Scale	Items	Factor loading (λ)	VIF	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Source
ATT	ATT1	0.857	1.826	0.841	0.904	0.759	Jain et al. (2017)
	ATT2	0.875	2.062				
	ATT3	0.882	2.191				
BA	BA1	0.851	1.415	0.702	0.869	0.769	Lu et al. (2014)
	BA2	0.903	1.415				
PI	PI1	0.860	2.235	0.869	0.911	0.721	Becerra and Badrinarayanan (2013)
	PI2	0.891	3.098				
	PI3	0.926	3.709				
	PI4	0.701	1.558				
RC	RC1	0.722	1.405	0.815	0.890	0.731	Azhar et al. (2023)
	RC2	0.916	2.692				
	RC3	0.913	2.571				
RR	RR1	0.762	1.448	0.830	0.900	0.750	Azhar et al. (2023)
	RR2	0.927	3.297				
	RR3	0.901	3.019				
BT	TRT1	0.886	3.011	0.904	0.930	0.728	Becerra and Badrinarayanan (2013)
	TRT2	0.700	1.769				
	TRT3	0.895	3.962				
	TRT4	0.915	4.561				
	TRT5	0.851	2.823				

Table 3. HTMT ratio and Fornell-Larcker criterion

	ATT	BA	PI	REC	RR	TRT
ATT						
BA	0.806					
PI	0.971	0.591				
REC	0.687	0.734	0.568			
RR	0.469	0.484	0.356	0.511		
TT	0.833	0.836	0.773	0.678	0.476	
ATT	0.871					
BA	0.624	<i>0.877</i>				
PI	0.840	0.472	<i>0.849</i>			
REC	0.581	0.566	0.503	<i>0.855</i>		
RR	0.394	0.367	0.301	0.425	<i>0.866</i>	
TT	0.733	0.676	0.699	0.597	0.415	<i>0.853</i>

Note: The values presented in italic style refer to the Fornell-Larcker criterion.

Table 4. Hypotheses testing results

Hypotheses	Beta coefficient (β)	t-statistics	p-value	Decision
H1a: RR → ATT	0.115	2.514	0.031	Supported
H1b: RR → BT	0.124	2.192	0.028	Supported
H2a: RC → ATT	0.298	4.610	0.000	Supported
H2b: RC → BT	0.276	4.481	0.000	Supported
H3a: BA → ATT	0.413	7.346	0.000	Supported
H3b: BA → BT	0.475	8.340	0.000	Supported
H4a: ATT → PI	0.710	11.655	0.000	Supported
H4b: BT → PI	0.178	2.942	0.003	Supported
R²				
PI	0.721			
ATT	0.477			
BT	0.537			

Fornell-Larcker criterion (Table 3) was used to assess discriminant validity. This refers to the value of the square roots of AVE values presented diagonally, which should be higher than the off-diagonal correlation values among the constructs. This confirms the discriminant validity of the constructs. This study also calculated the HTMT ratio to assess the discriminant validity of the constructs (Hair et al., 2019; Table 3). Factor loadings for each item have also been calculated in the study, and they have exceeded the threshold of 0.708 (Hair et al., 2019; Table 2).

A non-parametric hypothesis testing method was performed using 10,000 bootstraps (Hair et al., 2019). The results of the hypothesis testing revealed that RR → BT (β : 0.124, sig < 0.028), RC → ATT (β : 0.298, sig < 0.000) RC → BT (β : 0.276, sig < 0.000), BA → ATT (β : 0.413, sig < 0.000), BA → TRT (β : 0.475, sig < 0.000), RR → ATT (β : 0.115, sig < 0.031), ATT → PI (β : 0.710, sig < 0.000) and BT → PI (β : 0.178, sig < 0.003) are positive and significant-

ly impact the attitude, brand trust and purchase intention (Table 3). The R² (coefficient of determination) value for PI is 0.721 (Table 4), indicating that trust and attitude explain 72% of the variation in purchase intention towards DTC brands. Furthermore, the R² for attitude is 0.477 (Table 4), indicating that ratings and reviews, brand awareness, and recommendations explain 47.7% of the variation in attitude. Furthermore, the R² value for trust is 0.537 (Table 4), indicating that ratings and reviews, brand awareness, and recommendations collectively explain 53.7% of the variation in trust.

The outcomes of this study provide critical insights into the factors influencing the purchase intentions of Gen Y and Gen Z consumers toward DTC brands, as viewed through the lens of the S-O-R (Stimulus-Organism-Response) framework. The outcomes reveal an interesting relationship between review and rating-based stimuli, brand awareness, trust, and consumer attitudes, highlighting statistically significant hypotheses.

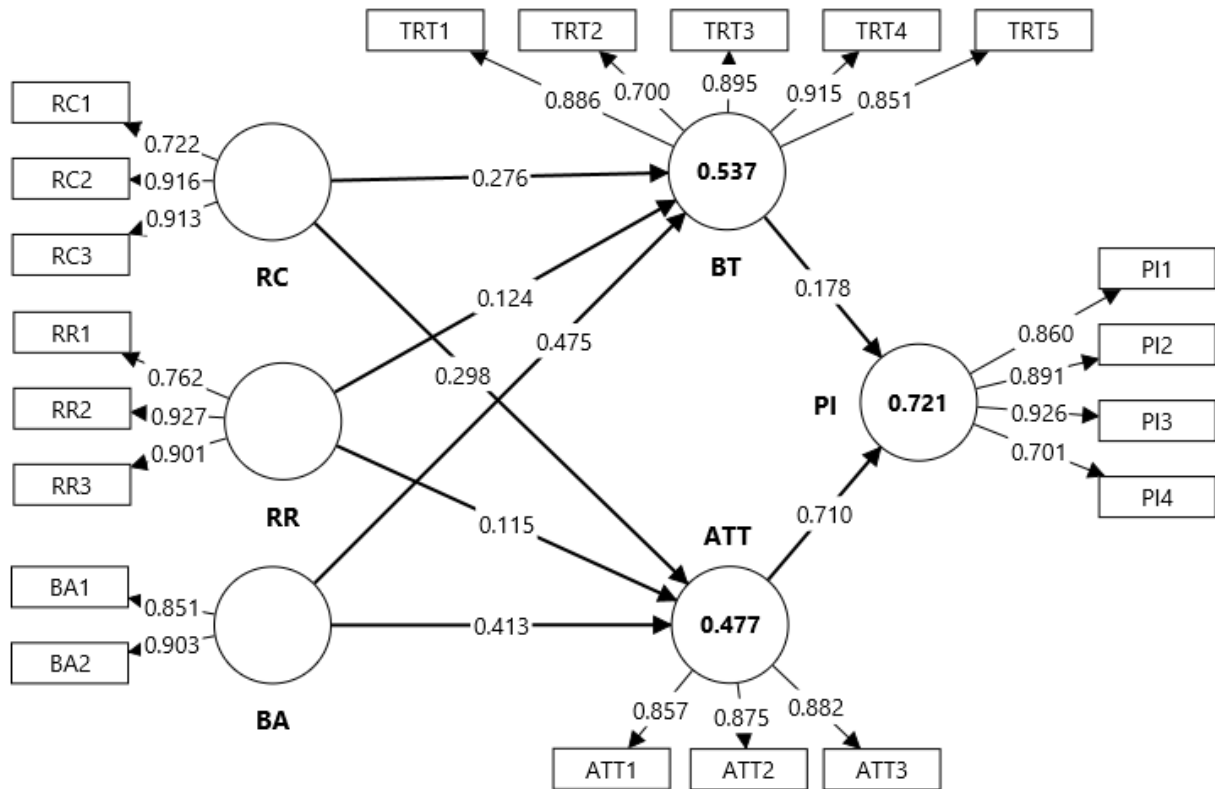


Figure 2. Structural model with path coefficients and factor loadings

Firstly, RR positively and significantly influence brand trust (*H1b*: $\beta = 0.124$, $p < 0.028$), which contradicts the study by Azhar et al. (2023). Moreover, the interaction between reviews and ratings in shaping consumer attitudes (*H1a*: $\beta = 0.115$, $p < 0.031$) is statistically significant, aligning with the results of Lee and Ro (2016). The result suggests that while Gen Z and Gen Y rely on reviews and ratings to assess brand’s reliability and trustworthiness (Hussain et al., 2025), these cues are also crucial to shape their overall positive attitude toward the brand, possibly due to the authenticity of online reviews maintained by the DTC brands in their own website and in the third-party e-commerce platforms (Zablocki et al., 2019).

The recommendations of other customers, peers and influencers demonstrate a substantial and significant effect on both attitude (*H2a*: $\beta = 0.298$, $sig < 0.000$), which is in line with the previous study by Hsu et al. (2013), and brand trust (*H2b*: $\beta = 0.276$, $p = 0.003$), which stand with findings of the study by Azhar et al. (2023), which corroborate with the previous study indicating that peer and influencer endorsements play a more persuasive role in shaping consumer perceptions (Zhang et al., 2025).

The recommendations of others have higher impact on brand trust as compared to the review and ratings of others. This indicates that other’s opinion (peer or influencer) is more reliable for Gen Z and Gen Y consumers (Wahyuningsih et al., 2022) than ratings and review to trust on DTC brands. These customers may read review and ratings of others to evaluate and judge the value of the product and build initial trust, but before buying, the customers might rely strongly on others opinion because the Gen Z and Gen Y find influencers opinion match their lifestyle or other peers give more reliable feed because he or she has real time experience with the DTC brands (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019).

In the same vein, the recommendations of others have a high impact on attitude as compared to reviews and ratings. This difference is because, with the help of others’ reviews and ratings, Gen Z and Gen Y customers can make informed decisions about products by evaluating their pros and cons. However, recommendations provide customers with a better way to judge a product and shape a stronger attitude towards it.

However, these findings may contribute to strengthening the existing body of knowledge on reviews, ratings, and recommendations. However, the negative aspects of these concepts cannot be ignored; for example, if a customer has a negative experience with the product (i.e., DTC brands), it leads to negative comments about the brand (Lysenko-Ryba & Zimon, 2021), hence DTC brand managers need to focus on loyal customers and influencers to spread positive comments about the brands. In the same vein, this study argues that it evaluates the online review and ratings in a positive review context, but the reviews are not always positive, and ratings are not always high; hence, this study contradicts the study on negative reviews and their impact on consumer behavior (Le & Ha, 2021). When the positive reviews and high ratings elevate the customer trust and shape the positive attitude, at the same time, it can reduce the trust and create a negative attitude for the customers; hence, the DTC brands need to manage the reviews and ratings by nurturing more loyal customers (Lee & Ro, 2016).

Furthermore, brand awareness substantially and significantly affects both attitude ($H3a$: $\beta = 0.413$, $p < 0.000$), in line with the findings by Foroudi (2019), and trust ($H3b$: $\beta = 0.475$, $\text{sig} < 0.031$) that is in line with the study by Utama and Ambarwati (2022), underscoring its fundamental role in consumer decision-making, i.e., for Gen Z and Gen Y, as familiarity with a brand reduces perceived risk and enhances credibility. Brand awareness affects attitude formation for DTC brand, because awareness is generated through positive e-WoM and digital marketing where DTC brands communicate the positive aspects about the brands so

that Gen Z and Gen Y consumers form positive attitude (Dae Ham et al., 2008; Rossiter, 2014). However, brand awareness has little higher impact on brand trust as compared to the attitude, Gen Z and Gen Y consumers may trust more on brand they aware, and the trust may gradually increase once they use DTC brand. Notably, attitude towards the brand emerges as the significant predictor of purchase intention of Gen Z and Gen Y ($H4a$: $\beta = 0.710$, $\text{sig} < .000$) for the DTC brand, which is in line with the previous study by Singh et al. (2024), reaffirming the centrality of positive brand perceptions in driving consumer behavior. This result strongly aligns with Theory of Planned Behavior, which states that a strong behavioral attitude drives behavioral intention (Ajzen, 1991). Further, the significance of brand trust in influencing purchase intention ($H4b$: $\beta = 0.178$, $\text{sig} = 0.003$) aligns with the study by Tan et al. (2022) and attributed that increasing transparency of online marketplaces, where Gen Z and Gen Y prioritize tangible factors such as price, convenience, and product attributes (Ghouse et al., 2024), along with brand trust. The attitude has a higher impact on purchase intention compared to brand trust, which probably signifies that, as DTC brands are less trusted by Gen Z and Gen Y before they purchase due to negative views and negative e-WoM, strong perception or attitude plays a more significant role when purchasing DTC brands. The above findings provide empirical support for the significance of reviews and ratings, as well as other recommendations and consumer attitudes, in influencing purchase intention for DTC brands, while also highlighting the role of trust in consumers' buying decisions for these brands.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to investigate the impact of online ratings and reviews, recommendations, and brand awareness on customer attitudes and brand trust towards direct-to-consumer brands, as well as the roles of brand trust and brand attitude in influencing the purchase intentions of Gen Z and Gen Y in India. The study's results indicate that reviews and ratings, online recommendations, and brand awareness positively and significantly affect attitudes towards food DTC brands. Brand awareness is the strongest predictor of attitude towards food DTC brands. Further, this study found that trust towards DTC brands was positively affected by reviews and ratings, online recommendations, and brand awareness. Brand trust is strongly developed through brand awareness among DTC brands. Lastly, both attitudes towards DTC brands and trust in DTC brands positively influence purchase intention towards DTC brands.

The results of this study provide valuable insights for DTC brand managers aiming to enhance the engagement and conversion rates of Gen Z and Gen Y consumers. It has given the brand a strong impetus in terms of attitude and trust. DTC brands should prioritize and capitalize on strategic branding initiatives, such as digital advertising, influencer partnerships, and consistent brand messaging, to build a strong mental connection with consumers. Additionally, the notable role of recommendations suggests that brands should actively foster referral programs, word-of-mouth marketing, and influencer endorsements to develop consumer trust and positive brand attitudes. Although ratings and reviews have been found to stimulate trust and attitudes significantly, brands should emphasize transparency in their customer feedback mechanisms, ensuring that review authenticity is maintained to foster consumer trust and create a positive perception of the products among consumers.

Furthermore, given the consequence of attitude on purchase intention, DTC brands should emphasize sculpting positive consumer attitudes through persuasive storytelling, personalized experiences, and high-quality content that resonates with Gen Y and Gen Z audiences. Finally, as brand trust significantly drives purchase intention, managers should recognize that while trust remains important, other factors such as pricing, product uniqueness, and seamless customer experience may play a more decisive role in actual purchase decisions. By aligning marketing strategies with these findings, DTC brands can effectively optimize their digital presence, enhance consumer relationships, and drive long-term loyalty in an increasingly competitive e-commerce landscape.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Kharabela Rout, Zakir Hossen Shaikh, Rashmi Ranjan Panigrahi.

Data curation: Sushree Debashree Debasmita Sahoo.

Formal analysis: Kharabela Rout, Sushree Debashree Debasmita Sahoo.

Investigation: Kharabela Rout, Rashmi Ranjan Panigrahi, Sushree Debashree Debasmita Sahoo, Priti Ranjan Sahoo, Kiran Cotha.

Methodology: Kharabela Rout, Rashmi Ranjan Panigrahi, Sushree Debashree Debasmita Sahoo.

Supervision: Rashmi Ranjan Panigrahi, Zakir Hossen Shaikh, Priti Ranjan Sahoo and Kiran Cotha.

Validation: Kharabela Rout, Sushree Debashree Debasmita Sahoo and Priti Ranjan Sahoo.

Writing – original draft: Kharabela Rout, Zakir Hossen Shaikh, Sushree Debashree Debasmita Sahoo, Priti Ranjan Sahoo, Kiran Cotha and Rashmi Ranjan Panigrahi

Writing – review & editing: Kharabela Rout, Zakir Hossen Shaikh, Sushree Debashree Debasmita Sahoo, Priti Ranjan Sahoo, Kiran Cotha and Rashmi Ranjan Panigrahi,

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