

Factors Influencing Food Consumption Among Generation Z

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Abstract

This research study aims to 1) study the factors that influence food consumption behavior of Generation Z population and 2) present guidelines and recommendations for the food business sector and related agencies.

Research results show that Generation Z's food choices depend on income and health information, family eating habits, and whether they mostly buy ready-made food. Their food choices depend on the situation or convenience. By choosing to buy food according to religious beliefs the most, often choosing to consume clean food for health according to trends and consuming food at convenience stores by choosing the Line Man platform the most.

Keywords: Food, Health, Generation Z Population

1. Introduction

Food consumption is a crucial factor reflecting the lifestyle, health, and culture of different age groups, especially Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2009). This new generation has a significant influence on marketing, consumption, and social behavior. Studying the factors influencing food consumption among this group is therefore important, as they differ from previous generations in terms of technology, beliefs, values, and lifestyle.

Previous research shows that Generation Z tends to choose food that is convenient, quick, and aligns with their identity, such as ready-to-eat meals, health-conscious foods, or environmentally friendly foods (Smith & Brower, 2012). At the same time, social factors and digital media significantly influence food perception and decision-making (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019).

In the Thai context, it has been found that young people are increasingly interested in healthy food and are aware of its environmental impact, but they still prioritize convenience (Kanjana Srisuk, 2021). This aligns with the changing consumption trends driven by urban lifestyles and the increasing role of digital technology.

Studying the factors influencing the food consumption of Generation Z is important both academically and practically. It helps researchers, marketers, food manufacturers, and public health policymakers gain a clearer understanding of this generation's consumption behavior. This, in turn, can lead to the design of marketing strategies, food product development, and the promotion of appropriate and sustainable consumption habits.

Research Objective

1. Study the factors influencing the food consumption behavior of Generation Z.
2. Present guidelines and recommendations for the food industry and related agencies.

2. Literature review

This research compiles concepts, theories, and related research that serve as guidelines for the study on "Factors Influencing Food Consumption Among Generation Z."

The Concept of Population Generations

Generation, or Gen for short, refers to the demographic classification of populations based on birth years. There are five main generations: Gen B, Gen X, Gen Y, Gen Z, and Gen Alpha, each with its own unique characteristics and advantages.

Gen B (Baby Boom Generation) refers to those born between 1946 and 1964. These individuals were born after the end of World War II. They are called Gen B because during the war, many men were conscripted into the military. Upon the end of the war, they returned, married, and had a massive birth rate – a "boom" of children! Their parents experienced hardship throughout their lives due to the Great Depression of 1929, which ultimately led to World War II.

Gen B individuals grew up witnessing their parents' hardships. Therefore, they are hardworking individuals who respect rules and regulations, are patient, and value results, even if it takes a long time to achieve success. Furthermore, they also have the concept of working hard to build their own success. Gen B is the era after the war. This generation lives for work. They are calm, cautious, thrifty, hardworking, respectful of rules, highly patient, highly experienced, have good social skills, are loyal to their employers, value results, are willing to work hard to build their lives, do not change jobs often, are strict with traditions, are highly dedicated to their work and organizations, and prioritize family over work.

Generation X (Gen X) refers to the group of people born between 1965 and 1979. This group is the descendants of Gen B. The period between 1965 and 1979 was a time of peace, prosperity expanded throughout the world, and the concept of birth control and the widespread availability of birth control pills. Therefore, the birth rate during this period decreased significantly. Sometimes they are called the Baby Bust Generation (Bust is the opposite of boom).

Children born during this period grew up seeing the lifestyle of their parents, which they disagreed with. This causes those who grew up in this period to have behaviors that prefer simplicity and informality. Emphasis is placed on work-life balance.

Advantages: Gen X is a strong and adaptable generation. They are systematic thinkers and highly responsible in their work. They have more organizational experience and knowledge than other generations, making them suitable leaders and mentors for other generations.

Generation Y (Gen Y) or Millennials are those born between 1980 and 1997. They grew up with computers, the internet, and IT technology. They are the children of Gen X, and are called Gen Y because they witnessed their parents and grandparents arguing about differing values, and when those arguments became too much, they would take it out on the children who didn't understand anything. Gen Y has just entered the workforce. They are characterized by their expressiveness, strong individuality, and dislike being confined by rules or conditions. This

group wants clarity in their work, understanding how their actions affect themselves and the organization. They are also skilled in communication and can multitask.

Advantages: Gen Y is adept at technology and social media. They are creative and good team players who can work well with others. They are often flexible in their work and always demand feedback and development.

Generation Z (Gen Z) refers to those born between 1998 and 2024. This Gen Z group grew up surrounded by many conveniences, are proficient in using various technologies, and learn quickly because their parents use these things in their daily lives.

One thing that distinguishes Gen Z from other generations when they were children is that they saw both parents going to work, unlike previous generations where the father might have been the only one working. For this reason, many Gen Z children were raised by others rather than their own parents.

The advantages of Gen Z are that they grew up with technology and are familiar with using various digital devices. They are creative and responsible in their learning and self-development. They have diverse perspectives and learn quickly.

Gen Alpha (Gen A or Gen Alpha) refers to this group of people born from 2023 onwards. Simply put, Gen Alpha people were born in the 21st century, hence they are called the new generation.

Concepts of Food Consumption

Food consumption refers to the process by which individuals choose, decide on, and eat food. This is influenced by various factors such as taste, price, convenience, personal beliefs, social values, and information received, especially in the digital age where online marketing and media play a significant role.

Concepts of Healthy Food and Organic Food

Healthy food refers to food with high nutritional value, beneficial to the body, and free from harmful substances.

Organic food refers to food produced naturally, without the use of chemicals or synthetic materials. It is highly safe and popular among health-conscious younger generations.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a psychological theory developed by Abraham H. Maslow in 1943 in a paper titled "A Theory of Human Motivation." Maslow identified five levels of needs, arranged in order from lowest to highest. Humans first seek the lowest needs, and once those needs are satisfied, they move on to higher-level needs. The five levels of needs are as follows:

1. Basic physiological needs (Physiological Needs) These are the lowest and most basic needs of life. They include the need to satisfy hunger, thirst, and the need for survival. Simply put, there are the four necessities: food, clothing, medicine, and shelter, as well as things that make life comfortable.

At this stage, what customers want are generally consumer goods and services such as restaurants, pharmacies, houses, cars, and mobile phones.

2. **Safety Needs:** These needs arise after physiological needs have been satisfied. They include the need for safety and security, a sense of belonging, and freedom from fear, loss, and danger. Examples include a safe home environment, stable employment, and savings. Safety also includes personal security, health, and well-being, as well as insurance and assistance systems in case of accidents or illness.

At this stage, what customers want are goods and services that provide security for their lives and property, such as security cameras, investments, savings, life insurance, or moving to a new home or changing to an environment with good security measures.

3. **Belonging and Love Needs:** Once safety and job security are achieved, people will need love and relationships with others. There is a need for ownership and belonging. Love comes in different forms, such as romantic love, parent-child love, friendship, husband-wife love, and the need to be accepted as a member of one or more groups.

At this stage, what customers want are products and services that can satisfy their emotions and feelings, such as matchmaking services, wedding planning services, travel services, or, if using products, a simple example to illustrate this clearly is the desire to own a BENZ or BMW car to gain admiration and acceptance from friends or those around them, and to feel like a member of a group.

4. **The Need for Self-Esteem (Esteem Needs):** Once the need for love and acceptance has been satisfied, people want to build their own status, become more prominent, have pride and self-esteem, appreciate their achievements, feel confident and honorable. These needs include rank, position, high salary, challenging work, being recognized by others, participating in decision-making at work, opportunities for career advancement, etc.

At this stage, what customers want are products and services that promote self-esteem, such as real estate, expensive jewelry, premium services, private jets, five-star hotels, etc.

5. **The Need for Self-actualization (Self-actualization):** This is the highest human need, and it is difficult to define exactly. We can only say that the need to develop one's potential is the human desire to become something. They want to achieve their life goals and desire a fulfilling life.

Related Research

Khamkaew, P. (2016). Studied factors positively influencing the intention to consume healthy food among consumers in Bangkok. The objective was to examine factors positively influencing the intention to consume healthy food among consumers in Bangkok. The study examined factors such as health values, attitudes towards good health, attitudes towards taste, expectations regarding preference, positive expectations, perceptions of healthy food, value for money, and perceived social responsibility in relation to the intention to consume healthy food. A questionnaire was administered to 330 consumers in the Bang Kapi, Bang Na, Lat Phrao, Prawet, Lat Krabang, Phaya Thai, Phra Khanong, Phra Nakhon, Chatuchak, and Khlong Toei districts of Bangkok during September-October 2015. Data was analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The results showed that most respondents were female, aged 26-30 years, single, with a bachelor's degree, employed in private companies/assigned workers, with an income of approximately 20,001–30,000 baht. They spent less than 100 baht per meal on healthy food and ate healthy food 2-3 times per week. They perceived healthy food as... The most popular choices for information about healthy eating are clean eating, and the internet/social networks are the primary channels for receiving information. It was found that

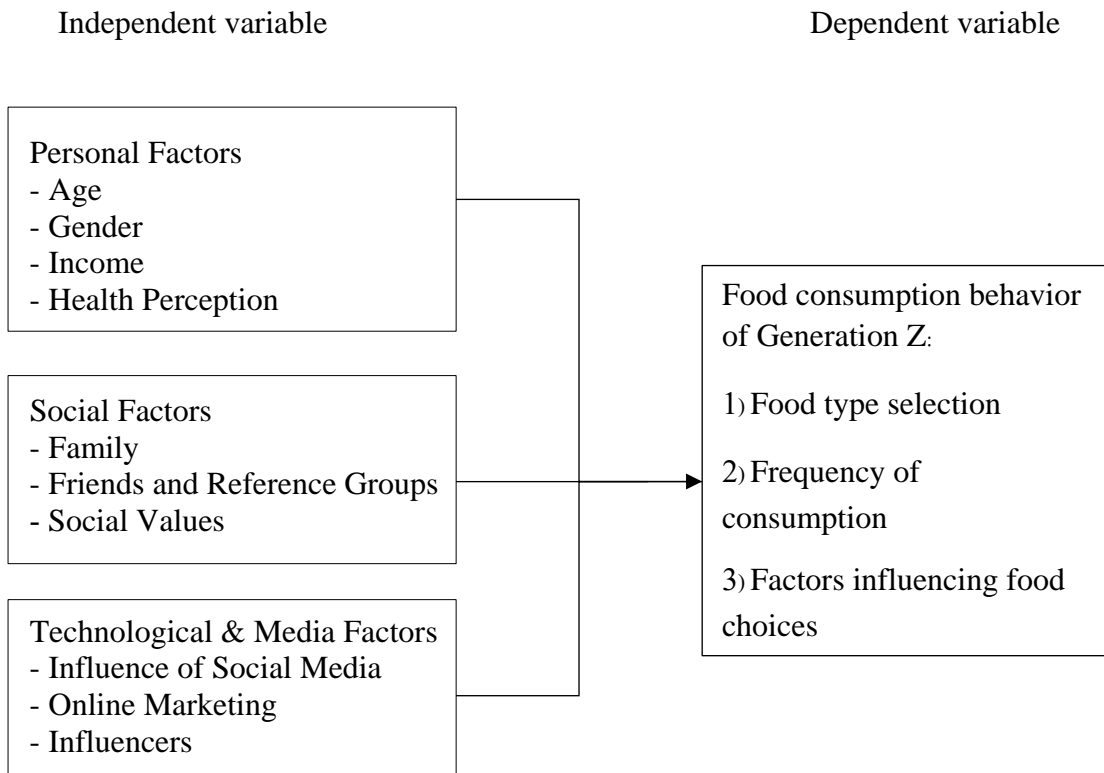
only health values, attitudes towards taste, expectations regarding preference, and perceptions of healthy food had a significant positive influence on the intention to consume healthy food in Bangkok (83.9%, statistically significant at the .01 level). Healthy food restaurant operators should focus on promoting healthy values, improving the taste of healthy food, offering diverse menus, raising awareness of healthy food benefits, and making healthy food suitable for all ages to further enhance the intention to consume healthy food.

Warasilp, S., & Kiariyo, C. (2020). studied “Food Consumption Patterns of Students at Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon.” The research aimed to 1) study the personal factors of students at Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon, 2) study the food consumption patterns of students at Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon, and 3) study the relationship between personal factors and food consumption patterns of students at Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon. The sample consisted of 385 undergraduate students in the regular program at Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon, obtained through stratified random sampling. The research instrument was a questionnaire. The statistical methods used to analyze the data included frequency, percentage, and chi-square.

The results concluded that: 1) The study of personal factors revealed that most students were female, 20 years old, studying in their second year of the Faculty of Business Administration, and had a daily income of less than 200 baht. 2) The study of food consumption patterns of students at Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon found that the reason for choosing lunch was often based on the price, which was not too expensive. Most students choose single-dish meals, including stir-fried basil pork, clear soup, fried pork, and noodles. For fast food, students prefer sausages. For snacks, students choose papaya salad. For drinks, most students drink water. The average price per meal is 51-100 baht. Students consider the location and convenience of the restaurant when choosing food. Most choose to eat at restaurants within their faculties or the university. Friends are a significant factor in food decision-making. The main ingredients consumed are meat and meat products. Furthermore, the relationship between personal factors and food consumption patterns of students at Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon was found to be statistically significant at the .05 level: academic level correlated with the preferred lunch type, faculty correlated with the preferred lunch type, price per meal, and location of lunch consumption. Students’ daily income was also statistically significant at the .05 level. From this research, Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon and nearby restaurants can use the data obtained to develop and improve their food services to meet the needs of their students.

Research by Aunyawong, W., Wararatchai, P., Shaharudin, M. R., Hirunpat, A., & Rodpangwan, S. (2021). found that the adoption of technology should be added to the context of developing sustainable supply chain efficiency today, as suggested by some key informants. During the COVID-19 crisis, customers changed their behavior by increasingly using e-commerce services. As a result, companies should adapt to become digitally more responsive to these new customer demands, reflecting the critical importance of digital connectivity with consumers during and after the COVID-19 crisis.

Research framework



3. Methodology

Defining the Population and Sample

The population consists of Generation Z individuals in Thailand. A simple random sampling method was used to select a sample of 120 people.

Research Instruments

The questionnaire is divided into three parts:

1. General information of the respondents
2. Factors influencing food consumption (economic, social, marketing, attitude)
3. Technological and digital media factors

Part 1: General information of the respondents includes questions about:

Gender, Age, Income, Health perception

Part 2: Factors influencing food consumption

Family, Friends, reference groups, social values

Part 3: Technological and digital media factors

Influence of social media, Online marketing, Influencers

Data Collection

Primary data refers to data collected from the initial source, directly from the source itself. This includes data gathered through questionnaires, interviews, and online and offline surveys. This data is then used as a reference document.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including percentages, means, and medians, are used.

4. Results

This research aims to study the factors influencing food consumption among Generation Z. The study seeks to understand the consumption behavior of this group, and the researcher conducted the study as follows:

Preliminary data was analyzed from respondents aged 18-27 years, or born between 2008 and 2009, from a sample of 100 individuals.

Data Analysis Results

Part 1: General Information of Respondents

This section of the data analysis involved 180 respondents. The results of the data analysis regarding gender, service user status, service usage time, and waiting time are shown in the following table

Table 1 Gender

Gender	Quantity	Percentage
Male	40	25.00
Female	60	75.00
Total	80	100

From Table 1, most of the sample were female, numbering 60 people, representing 75.00%, and male, numbering 20 people, representing 25.00%.

Table 2 Age

Age	Quantity	Percentage
18-21	65	65.00
22-25	20	20.00
26-27	15	15.00
Total	100	100

From Table 4.2, most of the samples were aged 18-21 years, numbering 65 people, representing 65%, followed by the 22-25 year age group with 20 people, representing 20%, and the last group was the 26-27 year age group with 15 people, representing 15%.

Table 3 Monthly Income Levels

Income	Quantity	Percentage
Below 5,000 baht	5	5
5,001 – 10,000 baht	13	13
10,001 – 15,000 baht	32	32

15,001 – 20,000 baht	35	35
20,001 baht and above	15	15
Total	100	100

From Table 3, most of the sample had an income level of 15,001 – 20,000 baht, numbering 35 people, or 35%. The next largest group had an income level of 10,001 – 15,000 baht, numbering 32 people, or 32%. Finally, the lowest income group was less than 5,000 baht, numbering 5 people, or 5%.

Table 4 Health Perception

Health	Quantity	Percentage
Never had a health checkup	40	40
No pre-existing conditions	48	48
Pre-existing conditions under medical care	12	12
Total	100	100

From Table 4, most of the sample group, 48 individuals (48%), had no underlying medical conditions. The next largest group, 40 individuals (40%), had never had a health check-up. The smallest group, 12 individuals (12%), had underlying medical conditions under medical care.

Part 2 Factors Influencing Food Consumption

Table 5 Family (Cooking Styles)

Cooking Styles	Quantity	Percentage
Cooking at home	45	45
Buying ready-made food	55	55
Total	100	100

From Table 4.5, most of the sample group purchased ready-made meals, accounting for 55 percent, followed by those who cooked their own meals, accounting for 45 percent.

Table 6 Reasons for food choice.

Group	Quantity	Percentage
Based on friends	20	20
Based on reference groups	20	20
Based on the situation	60	60
Total	100	100

From Table 6, most of the sample group purchased food based on the situation, totaling 60 individuals or 60%. The next most common reasons were following friends and reference groups, each with 20 individuals or 20%.

Table 7 Social Values

Food values	Quantity	Percentage
Religious beliefs	65	65
Social trends	35	35
Total	100	100

From Table 7, most of the sample group chose to eat food based on their religious beliefs, numbering 65 individuals or 65%, followed by those following social trends, numbering 35 individuals or 35%.

Part 3: Technological and Digital Media Factors

Table 8 Influence of Social Media

The influence of social media	Quantity	Percentage
The trend of consuming healthy, clean food	50	50
Convenience store food consumption	50	50
Total	100	100

From Table 8, the sample group chose to consume healthy, trendy clean food and consume convenience store food in equal numbers, with 50 participants each, representing 50%.

Table 9 Online Marketing

Digital platforms	Quantity	Percentage
LINE MAN	45	45
Robinhood	35	35
LINE groups in villages/communities	20	20
Total	100	100

From Table 9, the sample group chose the LINE MAN platform the most, with 45 respondents representing 45%. This was followed by the Robinhood platform with 35 respondents representing 35%, and the least popular choice was purchasing through LINE groups within their village/community, with 20 respondents representing 20%.

Table 10 Influencers

Influencers	Quantity	Percentage
Renowned doctors specializing in healthcare	45	45
Celebrities	30	30
Social media celebrities	25	25
Total	100	100

From Table 10, the sample group selected the most prominent health and wellness influencers, numbering 45 (45%), followed by celebrities at 30 (30%), and the least popular were social media personalities at 25 (25%).

Discussion

The research on factors influencing food consumption among Generation Z can be summarized as follows:

1) Preliminary analysis of the gender of the respondents revealed that most of the sample were female (60 people, representing 75.00%), followed by males (20 people, representing 25.00%).

2) Preliminary analysis of the age of the respondents showed that the majority were aged 18-21 years (65 people, representing 65%), followed by those aged 22-25 years (20 people, representing 20%), and finally those aged 26-27 years (15 people, representing 15%).

3) Analysis of income data... Most of the sample, 35 individuals (35%), had an income level of 15,001–20,000 baht. This was followed by those earning 10,001–15,000 baht, 32 individuals (32%), and finally, those earning less than 5,000 baht, 5 individuals (5%).

4) Regarding health perception, most of the samples (48 individuals, 48%) had no chronic diseases. This was followed by those who had never had a health check-up (40 individuals, 40%), and the smallest group (12 individuals, 12%) had chronic diseases under medical care.

5) Regarding family eating habits, most of the sample purchased ready-made meals (55%), followed by those who cooked their own meals (45%).

6) Regarding reasons for choosing food, most of the sample chose food based on the situation (60 individuals, 60%), followed by those who followed their friends' recommendations. and a reference group of 20 individuals each, representing 20%.

7) Results of the analysis of social values: Most of the sample group chose to eat food according to their religious beliefs, numbering 65 individuals, representing 65%, followed by following social trends with 35 individuals, representing 35%.

8) Results of the analysis of the influence of social media: The sample group chose to consume healthy, clean food following trends and consume food from convenience stores in equal numbers, with 50 individuals each, representing 50%.

9) Results of the analysis of digital platforms: The sample group chose the LINE MAN platform the most, with 45 individuals, representing 45%, followed by the Robinhood platform with 35 individuals, representing 35%, and the least chosen was purchasing through LINE groups in their village/community, with 20 individuals, representing 20%.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the food consumption patterns and needs of Generation Z.

The researchers found that Generation Z continues to prioritize health in their food choices. This aligns with the research of Ploypalin Kamkaew (2016), which studied factors positively influencing the intention to consume healthy food among consumers in Bangkok. The study found that "clean" food was perceived as the most prevalent as healthy food, and the internet/social networks were found to be the primary channel for receiving information about healthy food. Furthermore, the study concluded that only health values, attitudes towards taste, expectations regarding preference, and perceptions of healthy food had a positive influence on the intention to consume healthy food in Bangkok.

Acknowledgment

This research on factors influencing food consumption among Generation Z was successfully completed thanks to the kind assistance of various individuals who dedicated their time to answering questionnaires, providing information, suggestions, opinions, and reviewing and correcting shortcomings that were invaluable to the research. The researcher would like to express sincere gratitude to all those involved.

Thank you to all the students, professors, staff, and respondents who aided and sacrificed their time to collect data and answer questionnaires, and who offered encouragement throughout this research. I sincerely apologize for any shortcomings or errors. I also hope that this research report will be beneficial to those involved and those interested in further study.

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