

# The Impact of Cultural Factors on Online Consumer Behavior of Gen Z in Vietnam: A Study in Hanoi, Vietnam

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## Abstract

*This study focuses on analyzing the impact of cultural factors on the online shopping behavior of Generation Z in Vietnam. Based on a research model that includes independent variables (personal values, social influence, and cultural media influence), mediating variables (attitude and emotions towards online shopping), and dependent variables (online shopping behavior of Gen Z), the study was tested using structural equation modeling (SEM). The results show that cultural factors play an important role in shaping the shopping behavior of Gen Z. Personal values such as brand trust and the desire for self-expression have a positive impact on purchasing attitudes. Social influences from family, friends, and online communities strongly affect both attitudes and behaviors. In particular, advertising messages and media content that reflect Vietnamese culture create a deep emotional connection, which in turn stimulates shopping behavior. Moreover, attitudes and emotions during online shopping act as mediators, adjusting the relationship between cultural factors and purchasing behavior. These findings provide practical insights for businesses in developing appropriate marketing strategies, leveraging cultural factors to enhance promotional effectiveness and connect with Gen Z customers.*

**Keywords:** *Online Behavior, Gen Z, Culture, E-Commerce.*

## Introduction

In the global digital economy development context, e-commerce has become an indispensable component of the modern economy. According to eMarketer (2023), global e-commerce revenue is projected to reach USD 6.3 trillion by the end of 2024, underscoring the exceptional growth of this industry. Particularly, with advancements in technology and social media, the online shopping behavior of Generation Z (Gen Z) has emerged as a significant area of interest for researchers. Gen Z, born and raised in the era of technology, are not only influential consumers with substantial purchasing power but also pioneers in shaping new consumption patterns on digital platforms (Priporas et al., 2017). According to Nielsen (2023), Gen Z is considered the most impactful consumer group worldwide, characterized by their high-tech usage and online spending habits. In Vietnam, the rapid growth of e-commerce in recent years has raised critical questions about the role of cultural factors in shaping the online shopping behavior of this generation.

Among the factors influencing Gen Z's online purchasing behavior, culture plays an especially pivotal role. Hofstede (2001) emphasized that cultural values significantly shape consumers' decisions and attitudes across different contexts. Research by Zhang et al. (2020) demonstrated that factors such as individualism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance significantly impact how consumers interact with e-commerce platforms. For Gen Z, these factors may be even more critical due to the convergence of traditional and modern values in their generation. Culture not only affects how they perceive products but also influences how they engage with online platforms.

In Vietnam, Gen Z accounts for approximately 20% of the population and is projected to become the driving force of the online consumer market in the future (Statista, 2023). This age group not only has excellent access to technology but is also profoundly influenced by familial and community cultural values, particularly in making purchasing decisions. However, research on the impact of cultural factors on the online purchasing behavior of Gen Z in Vietnam remains limited. Existing studies have primarily focused

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on global markets or cross-country comparisons, leaving Vietnam's cultural nuances insufficiently explored (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021).

The objective of this study is to explore the relationship between cultural factors and the online shopping behavior of Gen Z in Vietnam, thereby providing strategic recommendations for e-commerce businesses. By integrating Hofstede's cultural framework with consumer behavior models, the study aims to offer new perspectives on the interaction between cultural factors and consumer behavior in Vietnam's digital transformation context. The findings of this research will not only provide valuable insights for marketing and business management fields but also contribute to the sustainable development of Vietnam's e-commerce sector. Additionally, this study seeks to enrich the theoretical foundation on consumer behavior in the context of Vietnam's unique cultural landscape.

## Literature Review, Theoretical Framework, and Research Methods

### *Literature Review*

Online shopping behavior has become one of the most extensively studied topics in the context of the global digital economy. Among these, the role of cultural factors is regarded as a crucial aspect in shaping consumer behavior, especially for Generation Z (Gen Z). Defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, Gen Z is characterized by their high adaptability to technology, sensitivity to information, and emphasis on cultural values in consumption decisions.

Numerous studies have highlighted the importance of culture as a key determinant in shaping individual consumer behavior. Hofstede (1980), in his cultural theory, affirmed that cultural values such as individualism vs. collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance profoundly influence consumer behavior. In the realm of online shopping, culture is seen as a critical factor in determining how consumers select products, brands, and transactional platforms. This foundational work has paved the way for subsequent research, including Kondratova and Goldfarb (2010), who emphasized the importance of culturally appropriate interface design in e-commerce platforms. This design significantly impacts user trust and perception, aligning with Hofstede's cultural dimensions model widely used to understand cultural differences in behavior, including online shopping habits.

Additionally, Zhang et al. (2014) elaborated on the role of cultural factors in the online context. Their findings revealed that in countries with high collectivist cultures, consumers tend to be strongly influenced by family and friends' opinions in purchasing decisions. Conversely, in highly individualistic nations such as the United States and Canada, consumer behavior is driven by autonomy and the desire to express individuality. Lim et al. (2020) further explored the influence of cultural communication factors, such as social media advertising and campaigns involving Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs), which significantly impact the online shopping behavior of younger generations. Specifically, advertisements reflecting local cultural values are often more positively received than globalized content. These findings underscore the integration of cultural elements in digital marketing strategies, highlighting the role of KOLs and online communities in shaping Gen Z's consumption habits (Kondratova & Goldfarb, 2010).

Yang et al. (2022) expanded this perspective by investigating the role of cultural communication in e-commerce. They found that localized cultural advertising and the involvement of KOLs increased consumer trust in online platforms. Similarly, Park et al. (2023), in their study of Gen Z in South Korea, demonstrated that traditional cultural values, combined with the influence of technology, significantly impact the use of social media as a shopping tool. In another study, Sharwani et al. (2019) in India emphasized the role of cultural trust in fostering brand loyalty in e-commerce. Shavitt, Lalwani, and Torelli (2006) further analyzed the differences in product value perception across cultures, noting that consumers in countries with high uncertainty avoidance often prioritize products with clear and reliable warranty policies. This emphasis becomes even more pronounced in online shopping contexts where consumers cannot physically inspect products.

In Vietnam, online shopping behavior has become a prominent research topic in recent years due to the rapid growth of e-commerce. According to the Vietnam E-Commerce Report (2023), Gen Z constitutes a significant proportion of online shoppers, heavily influenced by family, friends, and social media platforms compared to other generations.

Several studies have focused on the cultural factors influencing consumer behavior in Vietnam. Nguyen et al. (2021) emphasized the critical role of family in young consumers' purchasing decisions. Products associated with traditional values or family connections are often prioritized. Similarly, Do and Tran (2022) investigated the influence of cultural communication on Gen Z's consumer behavior. Their findings indicated that advertisements featuring images and stories reflecting Vietnamese culture, such as traditional ao dai or Tet customs, often attract attention and evoke positive emotions among young consumers.

Another study by Le et al. (2023) focused on the impact of social media and KOLs on Gen Z. This research highlighted that cultural elements on social media, including communication styles and brand imagery, significantly influence purchasing decisions in this generation. KOLs, particularly those who emotionally connect with their audience, are regarded as essential reference sources.

From the above studies, it is evident that cultural values play a vital role in shaping online shopping behavior. However, to address the practical context in Vietnam, further in-depth research is needed to explore the relationship between cultural factors and Gen Z's consumer behavior. This not only enriches the theoretical foundation but also provides practical insights for businesses to optimize their marketing strategies.

### *Theoretical Framework*

#### *Consumer Behavior Theory*

Consumer behavior refers to the process through which individuals select, purchase, and use products or services to satisfy their needs. According to Schiffman & Kanuk (2010), consumer behavior is shaped by external environmental factors such as family, friends, media, and cultural elements. In this study, the online shopping behavior of Gen Z in Vietnam is seen as a combination of cultural, social, and psychological factors influencing young consumers' purchasing decisions.

#### *Cultural Value Theory*

Hofstede (2001) demonstrated that culture significantly influences consumer behavior. Cultural values include norms, traditions, and customs that consumers adhere to. This is especially critical in the context of Gen Z's online shopping behavior in Vietnam, where traditional cultural values remain influential. Zhang & Zhao (2012) further emphasized that cultural factors affect how consumers choose products and brands, particularly in emerging markets like Vietnam.

#### *Social Influence Theory*

Cialdini (2009) argued that social influence is an indispensable factor in consumer behavior, especially for Gen Z, a demographic highly susceptible to social influences such as family, friends, and online communities. Lim, Ting, & Ng (2017) pointed out that for Gen Z, social factors—particularly the influence of social media platforms—play a crucial role in shaping online consumption behavior. These social relationships directly impact young consumers' brand and product choices, which is particularly evident in online shopping, where consumers can easily access opinions and advice from family, friends, and Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs).

#### *Cultural and Consumer Behavior Interaction Theory*

Shavitt & Lim (2019) proposed a model combining cultural factors and consumer behavior, highlighting elements such as family values, religious beliefs, and social traditions as key determinants of purchasing

decisions. For Gen Z in Vietnam, this cohort is influenced strongly by traditional cultural elements while simultaneously adopting modern cultural factors through social media platforms and culturally relevant advertising campaigns.

### *Online Shopping Behavior Model*

Bhatnagar & Ghose (2004) proposed that online shopping behavior is influenced not only by psychological factors, such as shopping motivation but also by social and cultural elements. Factors like convenience, transaction security, and online cultural experiences can increase or decrease consumer satisfaction in online shopping. This model is particularly relevant for studying Gen Z, a generation known for its flexible consumption patterns and strong connection to modern cultural elements through online platforms.

### *Cultural Marketing Theory*

Kotler & Keller (2016) suggested that cultural marketing involves market approaches that leverage the specific cultural values of consumers. In this context, marketing strategies must be tailored to the cultural characteristics of the target audience. For Gen Z in Vietnam, understanding their cultural values will enable businesses to design appropriate advertising strategies, promotional campaigns, or products, thereby driving online shopping behavior.

## **Research Methods**

### *Qualitative Research*

Qualitative methods were employed to explore and identify the cultural factors characteristic of Vietnam's Gen Z. In-depth interviews were conducted with marketing and cultural experts. The findings provided a list of cultural factors influencing Gen Z's online shopping behavior, forming the basis for developing survey instruments.

### *Quantitative Research*

Quantitative methods examined the relationships between cultural factors and online shopping behavior. Based on observations, a survey questionnaire was designed and measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree; 5: strongly agree).

The sample size was determined following Hair et al. (2006), who recommend ensuring 4–6 respondents per observed variable. With a total of 32 variables, a reliable sample would require approximately 125 responses. Using non-probability sampling, 800 questionnaires were distributed to Gen Z respondents in Hanoi, Vietnam.

After the survey period, 673 responses were collected, of which 15 were invalid due to missing evaluations. The remaining 658 valid responses were analyzed using SPSS 26.0 and AMOS to test the research hypotheses, evaluate the model's fit, and examine the impact of cultural factors on the online shopping behavior of Gen Z in Vietnam.

## **Developing Hypotheses, Research Models, and Measurement Scales**

### *Research Hypotheses*

- *Personal Values*

Personal values are among the key factors shaping consumer behavior, particularly in culturally specific contexts. Schwartz (1992) emphasized the role of personal values in making decisions that align with societal norms and individual beliefs. Lim et al. (2020) highlighted that personal values, such as cultural preservation and environmental awareness, influence online shopping decisions, especially among Gen Z. Kondratova

and Goldfarb (2010) also noted that culturally aligned website designs foster consumer trust in e-commerce platforms. Hypotheses:

- **H1a:** Personal values positively influence attitudes toward online shopping.
- **H1b:** Personal values positively influence online shopping behavior through attitudes toward online shopping.
- *Social Influence*

The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) posits that social factors such as family and friends play a crucial role in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors. Shavitt and Barnes (2020) demonstrated that Gen Z is strongly influenced by peer groups, particularly when seeking reviews or sharing opinions on social media. Additionally, research by Lim et al. (2020) revealed that family and online communities are significant motivators shaping Gen Z's shopping habits. Hypotheses:

- **H2a:** Social influence positively affects attitudes toward online shopping.
- **H2b:** Social influence positively impacts online shopping behavior through attitudes toward online shopping.
- *Cultural Media Influence*

Hofstede's (2001) study on culture and consumption suggested that cultural symbols in advertising can enhance emotional engagement and increase purchase intention. Kondratova and Goldfarb (2010) argued that incorporating traditional cultural elements into web design and advertising strengthens consumer connection. Research by Nguyen et al. (2022) in Vietnam emphasized that media campaigns blending local cultural elements with modernity have strong appeal to Gen Z. Hypotheses:

- **H3a:** Cultural media influences positively affect attitudes toward online shopping.
- **H3b:** Cultural media influences positively impact online shopping behavior through attitudes toward online shopping.
- *Attitude toward Online Shopping*

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) identifies attitude as a key intermediary linking perception to actual behavior. Leong et al. (2018) showed that positive attitudes like convenience and enjoyable experiences are strong drivers of online shopping behavior. Shavitt and Barnes (2020) also highlighted that attitudes directly influence the behavior of young consumers. Hypothesis:

- **H4:** Attitudes toward online shopping positively impact online shopping behavior.

#### *Research Model*

Based on the hypotheses outlined above and by integrating findings from related studies both domestically and internationally, the proposed research model examines the impact of cultural factors on the online shopping behavior of Gen Z in Vietnam in Figure 1 below:

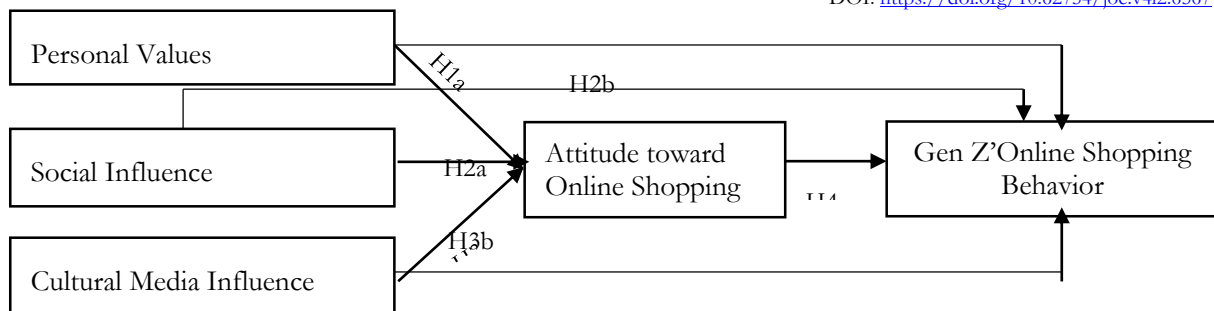


Figure 1. Research Model

Resource: The author

#### Development of Research Measurement Scales

Based on the theoretical framework, research hypotheses, and the proposed model, combined with in-depth interviews with marketing and cultural experts, the study establishes the official measurement scales as Table 1 follows:

Table 1. Research Measurement Scales

Factors	Scale Code	Item Description	References
Personal Values (PV)	PV1	I shop online as it helps express my personal style.	Schwartz (1992); Lim et al. (2020); ĐĐ et al. (2022).
	PV2	I prioritize products that align with family cultural values.	Schwartz (1992); Lim et al. (2020); ĐĐ et al. (2022).
	PV3	I choose products that support environmental protection.	Schwartz (1992); Lim et al. (2020); ĐĐ et al. (2022).
	PV4	I trust brands that promote values consistent with cultural heritage.	Schwartz (1992); Lim et al. (2020); ĐĐ et al. (2022).
Social Influence (SI)	SI1	My family encourages me to shop online.	Ajzen (1991); Shavitt & Barnes (2020); Lim et al. (2020).
	SI2	I am influenced by my friends when selecting online products.	Ajzen (1991); Shavitt & Barnes (2020); Lim et al. (2020).
	SI3	I often refer to reviews and comments on social media before making a purchase.	Ajzen (1991); Shavitt & Barnes (2020); Lim et al. (2020).
	SI4	Opinions from online communities strongly influence my purchasing decisions.	Ajzen (1991); Shavitt & Barnes (2020); Lim et al. (2020).

<b>Cultural Media Influence (CMI)</b>	<b>CMI1</b>	I am attracted to online ads that reflect traditional cultural styles.	Hofstede (2001); Kondratova & Goldfarb (2010); Đỗ et al. (2022).
	<b>CMI2</b>	I often buy products featured in videos or livestreams by KOLs.	Hofstede (2001); Kondratova & Goldfarb (2010); Đỗ et al. (2022).
	<b>CMI3</b>	I favor brands that associate their image with cultural values.	Hofstede (2001); Kondratova & Goldfarb (2010); Đỗ et al. (2022).
	<b>CMI4</b>	Cultural elements in advertising foster a sense of closeness and increase my trust in the products.	Hofstede (2001); Kondratova & Goldfarb (2010); Đỗ et al. (2022).
<b>Attitude toward Online Shopping (ATOS)</b>	<b>AT1</b>	I find online shopping convenient and time-saving.	Fishbein & Ajzen (1975); Leong et al. (2018).
	<b>AT2</b>	I trust the quality of online products/services.	Fishbein & Ajzen (1975); Leong et al. (2018).
	<b>AT3</b>	I enjoy online shopping because of the diversity of products.	Fishbein & Ajzen (1975); Leong et al. (2018).
	<b>AT4</b>	I feel comfortable conducting transactions via online platforms.	Fishbein & Ajzen (1975); Leong et al. (2018).
<b>Online Shopping Behavior (OSB)</b>	<b>OSB1</b>	I frequently shop on familiar online platforms.	Lim et al. (2020); Đỗ et al. (2022).
	<b>OSB2</b>	I spend significant time researching products before making a decision.	Lim et al. (2020); Đỗ et al. (2022).
	<b>OSB3</b>	I prioritize brands with clear return policies.	Lim et al. (2020); Đỗ et al. (2022).
	<b>OSB4</b>	My frequency of online shopping has increased recently.	Lim et al. (2020); Đỗ et al. (2022).

*Source: Compiled by the author.*

This scale ensures the robustness and relevance of the study while aligning with established theoretical foundations and the specific cultural context of Gen Z in Vietnam.

## Research Results

### *Testing Consistency and Convergent Validity of the Research Measurement Scales*

To evaluate the consistency and convergent validity of the official research scales, the study employs Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Cronbach's Alpha reliability tests. The results demonstrate the following:

**First**, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the five components in the model (four independent variables and one dependent variable) show the following results:

- All components have Cronbach's Alpha > 0.6.
- Each observed variable in every component also has Cronbach's Alpha > 0.6 and item-total correlation > 0.3.
- This confirms that the 25-item scale meets reliability standards, with no variables excluded from the model.

**Table 2. Summary of Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients of the Components**

Observed Variable	Mean of Scale if Item Deleted	Variance of Scale if Item Deleted	Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
<b>1. Personal Values (PV), Cronbach's Alpha = 0.885</b>				
PV1	20.13	12.550	0.764	0.880
PV2	19.89	12.133	0.755	0.882
PV3	19.86	13.065	0.684	0.872
PV4	20.12	12.804	0.757	0.881
<b>2. Social Influence (SI), Cronbach's Alpha = 0.874</b>				
SI1	11.95	4.273	0.731	0.792
SI2	11.70	4.305	0.657	0.826
SI3	12.01	4.537	0.706	0.805
SI4	11.99	4.458	0.672	0.818
<b>3. Cultural Media Influence (CMI), Cronbach's Alpha = 0.856</b>				
CMI1	15.63	8.355	0.665	0.848
CMI2	15.92	8.681	0.702	0.839
CMI3	15.73	8.350	0.662	0.849
CMI4	15.67	8.344	0.676	0.845
<b>4. Attitude toward Online Shopping (AT), Cronbach's Alpha = 0.832</b>				
AT1	19.50	15.130	0.841	0.823
AT2	19.47	16.119	0.794	0.829
AT3	19.47	15.643	0.801	0.828
AT4	19.51	15.746	0.817	0.826
<b>5. Gen Z's Online Shopping Behavior (OSB), Cronbach's Alpha = 0.890</b>				
OSB1	19.34	8.992	0.706	0.862
OSB2	19.30	9.576	0.630	0.874
OSB3	19.27	8.910	0.717	0.860
OSB4	19.29	9.339	0.690	0.865

*Source: Results from data processing.*

**Second**, results from Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) indicate:

**Eigenvalues for all five components exceed 1**, with the smallest eigenvalue at 1.728. This confirms that the factors are suitable for summarizing observed variables effectively.

The dependent variable analysis yields an eigenvalue of 3.516 (>1) and a cumulative variance explained of 65.538%. This indicates that the observed variables account for 65.538% of the variation in Gen Z's online shopping behavior in Vietnam.



Table 3. EFA Results Summary for Research Variables

Factor	Eigenvalue	Explained Variance (%)	Cronbach's Alpha
Personal Values (PV)	9.215	41.15	0.885
Social Influence (SI)	2.759	9.918	0.874
Cultural Media Influence (CMI)	1.913	7.532	0.856
Attitude toward Online Shopping (ATOS)	1.728	7.073	0.832
Online Shopping Behavior (OSB)	3.516	65.538	0.850

Source: Results from data processing

**Third**, EFA results for the 20 observed variables across the four independent components use factor extraction with Varimax rotation:

- **KMO = 0.908 > 0.5** indicates that factor analysis is appropriate.
- **Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05)** confirms significant correlations among the observed variables.
- Factor loadings for all variables are above 0.725 (>0.5).

Table 4. KMO and Bartlett's Test Results

<b>KMO of the Research Sample</b>	<b>0.908</b>
<b>Bartlett's Test</b>	$\chi^2 = 5008.208$
<b>Degrees of Freedom (df)</b>	454
<b>Sig.</b>	0.000

Source: Results from data processing

These results confirm that EFA is valid and statistically significant for the observed variables and dependent variable (Online Shopping Behavior).

The results of the reliability and factor analysis validate the convergent value of the proposed model. The observed variables effectively represent the research constructs, ensuring the appropriateness of the model for further empirical analysis.

#### *Model and Hypothesis Testing*

Based on the results of the EFA, the extracted factors of the research concepts were subjected to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS software to identify the relationships between them. The results show that:

CMIN/DF = 1.013 < 3, GFI = 0.901 > 0.9, CFI = 0.999 > 0.9, TLI = 0.999 > 0.9, RMSEA = 0.008 < 0.06, PCLOSE = 1.000 > 0.05. According to Hu & Bentler (1999), these indices indicate that the model fits the dataset well. This means the model is a good fit for the data. The CFA results meet the required standards.

The results in Table 5 show that the Beta coefficients for the observed variables are all greater than 0.5, with a significance level of  $p < 0.001$ , allowing us to conclude that all the observed variables are significant in the model. The independent variables have a direct effect on the dependent variable, which is Gen Z's online shopping behavior (Hair et al., 2009).

Table 5. CFA Relationships between Factors in the Model

Influencing Factor	Standardized Beta Coefficient	Statistical Significance Level
PV2	.858	***
PV4	.846	***
PV3	.873	***
PV1	.831	***
SI4	.834	***
SI2	.825	***
SI1	.808	***
SI3	.818	***
CMI3	.824	***
CMI2	.757	***
CMI1	.732	***
CMI3	.718	***
AT1	.847	***
AT2	.825	***
AT4	.813	***
AT3	.806	***
***P < 0.001		

Source: Results from data processing

## Conclusion

The research has achieved important results, contributing to clarifying the role of cultural factors in influencing the online shopping behavior of Generation Z in Vietnam. Based on the process of structural equation modeling (SEM) testing and regression analysis, several key conclusions are drawn as follows:

**Personal Values:** Personal values, including trust in brands, the desire to express individuality, and adherence to cultural norms, have a significant impact on attitudes and online shopping behavior. This is consistent with previous studies (Hofstede, 2001; Zhang & Zhao, 2012), emphasizing that individuals whose value systems align with the cultural characteristics of the product tend to select brands that reflect those values.

**Social Influence:** The roles of family, friends, and online communities are crucial factors in Gen Z's purchasing decisions. The analysis reveals that social influence not only directly affects purchasing behavior but also indirectly influences it through attitudes and emotions during the shopping process. This supports the findings of studies by Nguyễn & Nguyễn (2021) and Lim et al. (2017).

**Cultural Media Influence:** Media factors, particularly content used by KOLs or brands, have a strong impact on Gen Z. Advertising messages that highlight cultural elements, such as traditional images, customs, or local symbols, create a deep emotional connection with the younger generation. This aligns with the findings of Đỗ and Trần (2022).

**Role of Mediating Variables:** Attitude toward online shopping and emotions during the shopping experience play an important mediating role, moderating the relationship between cultural factors and purchasing behavior. Positive emotions and favorable attitudes regarding convenience, safety, and online service quality have promoted purchasing behavior and increased the frequency of shopping among consumers.

**Overall Impact on Gen Z's Online Shopping Behavior:** Gen Z's online shopping behavior in Vietnam is influenced by a diverse set of factors, with cultural elements playing a prominent role. The most influential factor is cultural media influence, followed by personal values, and lastly, attitude toward online shopping.

## Suggestions for Future Research

Although the study has clarified the role of cultural factors in online shopping behavior, there are still some limitations. Future research could expand the survey population to include other generations or delve deeper into the differences between Gen Z groups in different regions of Vietnam. Additionally, the use of qualitative research methods could be expanded to explore other cultural aspects influencing the final consumer's online shopping behavior.

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