

FACTORS AFFECTING GEN Z'S PURCHASE BEHAVIOR IN THE NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY IN HANOI

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ABSTRACT:

This study examines the factors influencing Generation Z's purchase behavior within Hanoi's night-time economy, utilizing the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) theoretical framework. The findings indicate that attitude, perceived location safety, and trust significantly affect purchase behavior, with attitude exerting the strongest influence. Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and influencer marketing are shown to positively shape Gen Z's attitudes toward night-time consumption. However, these marketing strategies alone are insufficient in fostering trust and enhancing perceptions of location safety. Based on these insights, the study proposes several managerial and policy recommendations, including investing in visible safety infrastructure, ensuring consistent service quality to build trust, promoting authentic influencer engagement, and aligning digital marketing messages with on-site customer experiences.

Keywords: night-time economy, purchase behavior, S-O-R model, eWOM, influencer marketing, Gen Z, perceived location safety.

1. Introduction

The night-time economy (NTE), referring to economic activities taking place between 6 PM and 6 AM including dining, entertainment, retail, transport, and tourism, has emerged as a crucial driver of urban growth, cultural vibrancy, and economic development (Son et al., 2023). Internationally, cities like New York and Tokyo have demonstrated the sector's potential. New York's NTE contributes over \$35 billion annually and supports 300,000 jobs (Seijas et al., 2024), while

Tokyo generates over \$3.7 billion from its after-dark economy (An, 2024). These figures highlight the growing recognition of the NTE as a strategic tool to stimulate domestic demand, create jobs, and improve urban livability.

In Vietnam, the government has officially recognized the NTE's potential through Decision No. 1129/QĐ-TTg in 2020, aiming to diversify tourism offerings and extend consumer activity beyond daytime hours. Vietnam enjoys favorable conditions for developing this sector, including rich

culinary culture, political stability, vibrant tourism, and a growing middle class (Le, 2021; Song, 2023). Hanoi, as the political and cultural capital, plays a central role. The city welcomed nearly 28 million visitors in 2024, a 12.7% increase from the previous year, including a 34.4% surge in international arrivals (Pham, 2024). Yet despite initiatives such as pedestrian streets, night markets, and late-night tours (Vietnam National Authority of Tourism, 2023), the city's NTE remains underdeveloped due to fragmented planning, safety concerns, and limited consumer insight (Trang, 2025).

A key to unlocking Hanoi's NTE potential lies in understanding the behavior of Generation Z (Gen Z), born between 1997 and 2012. In Vietnam, Gen Z includes roughly 15 million people and is projected to account for one-third of the national workforce by 2025 according to the prediction of the General Statistics Office of Vietnam (Vietnam News, 2023). Moreover, they are expected to drive up to 40% of total consumer spending by 2030 (Delteil et al., 2021). As digital natives with distinct consumption values that emphasize experience, authenticity, and digital engagement, Gen Z has become a strategic focus for businesses and urban policymakers seeking to energize night-time markets.

While international studies on NTE often examine crime, noise, or policy frameworks (Wadds, 2015; Philpot et al., 2019), few have explored consumer behavior, particularly from the lens of younger generations. In Vietnam, existing literature (Son et al., 2023; Tran, 2021) has focused mainly on infrastructure, tourism, and governance. Even the few studies addressing youth behavior, such as Nguyen (2023), often use broad samples that include Millennials and older cohorts, failing to isolate Gen Z's unique motivations.

To fill this gap, the present study investigates the factors influencing Gen Z's purchase behavior in Hanoi's night-time economy using the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model. This framework conceptualizes behavior as a function of external stimuli (such as electronic word-of-mouth and influencer marketing), internal states

(attitude, trust, and perceived location safety), and response (purchase behavior). Given Gen Z's strong presence on social media and reliance on peer reviews and influencers, digital factors are likely to significantly shape their night-time consumption decisions.

This study aims to provide empirical evidence on how Gen Z in Hanoi perceives and engages with night-time economic activities, offering insights that can guide both policy development and business strategy. The findings are expected to help stakeholders align urban planning, safety measures, and marketing practices with Gen Z's expectations, contributing to a more vibrant and youth-driven night-time economy.

2. Hypothesis development

Building on previous studies with similar topics and the research objectives of this paper (Ajzen, 1991; Gefen, 2000; Li & Peng, 2021; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Roberts & Eldridge, 2012; Samudro & Hamdan, 2023; Shanbhogue & Ranjith, 2024), the study proposes the following model and research hypotheses:

H1: eWOM positively influences Gen Z's attitude towards night-time purchase in Hanoi.

H2: eWOM positively influences Gen Z's trust in night-time purchase in Hanoi.

H3: eWOM positively influences perceived location safety in the night-time economy in Hanoi.

H4: Influencer marketing positively influences Gen Z's attitude towards night-time purchase in Hanoi.

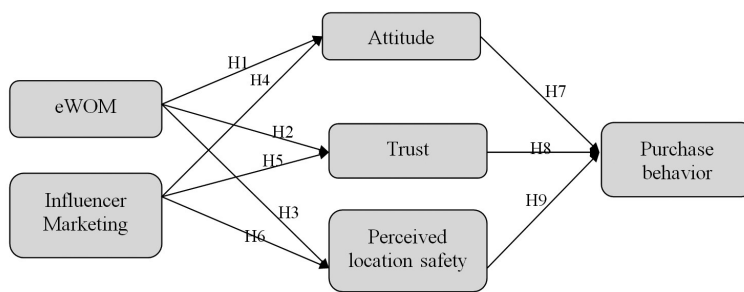
H5: Influencer marketing positively influences Gen Z's trust in night-time purchase in Hanoi.

H6: Influencer marketing positively influences Gen Z's perceived location safety in the night-time economy in Hanoi.

H7: Attitude positively influences Gen Z's purchase behavior in the night-time economy in Hanoi.

H8: Trust positively influences Gen Z's purchase behavior in the night-time economy in Hanoi.

H9: Perceived location safety positively influences Gen Z's purchase behavior in the night-time economy in Hanoi.

Figure 1: Proposed conceptual model

3. Method

This study used a quantitative approach to examine factors influencing Gen Z's purchase behavior in Hanoi's night-time economy, based on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework.

3.1. Questionnaire design

A structured questionnaire was developed using validated scales from prior studies. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The eWOM and influencer marketing constructs were adapted from Nurhidayati et al. (2020), Teng et al. (2014), and Nagori (2020). Attitude was measured using the scale by Soltani et al. (2020), trust from Benson et al. (2020), perceived location safety from Chau et al. (2024) and Su et al. (2021), and purchase behavior from Muflih and Juliana (2020). The questionnaire was translated using a forward and backward process and reviewed by academic experts to ensure clarity and cultural relevance.

3.2. Data collection

Data were collected online via Google Forms using convenience sampling. The target population included Gen Z respondents (aged 18–28) residing in Hanoi. A total of 202 valid responses were obtained, meeting the minimum sample size required for structural equation modeling.

3.3. Data analysis

Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was performed using SmartPLS 4.0. The measurement model was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Discriminant validity was evaluated using

the Fornell-Larcker criterion. The structural model was assessed based on R^2 , Q^2 , and the significance of path coefficients using bootstrapping (5,000 resamples). Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were used to check for multicollinearity.

4. Results

4.1. Demographic

A total of 202 valid responses were collected. The sample comprised 75.25% female and 24.75% male participants. Most respondents were aged 18–22 (80.20%), followed by 23–28 (14.36%), and 13–17 (5.45%). Regarding education, 89.11% were undergraduates, 6.93% had high school or lower qualifications, and 3.96% were postgraduates. In terms of income, 44.06% earned under 5 million VND per month, 25.74% earned between 5 and 10 million, 20.79% earned from 10 to 15 million, and 9.41% earned above 15 million. The sample size is adequate for PLS-SEM analysis.

4.2. Measurement model evaluation

The reliability and validity of all constructs were confirmed. As shown in Table 1, Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values for all constructs exceeded 0.7, indicating internal consistency. Convergent validity was supported as Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were above 0.5, and most outer loadings exceeded 0.7. Two items (AT4 = 0.633 and IM3 = 0.653) were retained since their removal would not improve AVE or CR significantly (Nguyen & Vu, 2022).

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. The Fornell-Larcker criterion entails that the square root of the AVE for every construct should be higher than the inter-construct links (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As displayed in Table 2, all constructs have satisfied the aforementioned conditions.

4.3. Structural model evaluation

In accordance with the structural model assessment procedure proposed by Hair et al. (2014), multicollinearity was examined by evaluating the variance inflation factor (VIF) values.

Table 1. Convergent validity and multicollinearity

	CA	CR	AVE	λ		VIF	
				Min	Max	Min	Max
Attitude	0.742	0.833	0.557	0.633	0.838	1.116	1.417
Influencers	0.795	0.868	0.625	0.653	0.854	1.116	1.116
Location safety	0.907	0.931	0.729	0.817	0.874	1.116	1.231
Purchase behavior	0.808	0.874	0.634	0.759	0.82	1.231	1.417
Trust	0.873	0.922	0.797	0.881	0.903	1.116	1.408
eWOM	0.885	0.908	0.624	0.738	0.865	1.116	1.116

Table 2. Fornell-Larcker criterion

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Attitude	0.746					
Influencers	0.325	0.790				
Location safety	0.379	0.107	0.854			
Purchase behavior	0.613	0.384	0.477	0.796		
Trust	0.501	0.158	0.372	0.484	0.893	
eWOM	0.322	0.323	0.027	0.272	0.015	0.790

As shown in Table 2, all VIF values were below the threshold of 3, showing no sign of collinearity issue.

Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was used to test the hypotheses. As shown in Table 4, H1, H4, H7, H8, and H9 have p-value < 0.05 or statistical significance at the 95 % level and are supported.

Meanwhile, the remaining four hypotheses are rejected due to the p-value > 0.05

The model's explanatory power was moderate, with an R² of 0.468 for purchase behavior. R² values for attitude, trust, and perceived safety were lower (0.158, 0.027, and 0.011, respectively), indicating

Table 3. Structural model

Relationships	Path coefficient	t-value	p-value	Results
eWOM → Attitude	0.243	2.661	0.008	Accepted
eWOM → Trust	-0.041	0.393	0.694	Rejected
eWOM → Location safety	-0.008	0.083	0.934	Rejected
Influencers → Attitude	0.246	3.053	0.002	Accepted
Influencers → Trust	0.171	1.949	0.051	Rejected
Influencers → Location safety	0.110	1.182	0.237	Rejected
Attitude → Purchase behavior	0.431	5.714	0.000	Accepted
Trust → Purchase behavior	0.175	2.666	0.008	Accepted
Location safety → Purchase behavior	0.249	3.829	0.000	Accepted

Table 4. The coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive power (Q^2)

Variable	R^2	Q^2
Attitude	0.158	0.079
Trust	0.027	0.016
Perceived Location Safety	0.011	0.005
Purchase Behavior	0.468	0.285

room for model improvement. Q^2 values were positive across all constructs, confirming predictive relevance.

4.4. Discussion

The results show that electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and influencer marketing significantly influence attitude but have limited impact on trust and perceived location safety. Specifically, eWOM significantly improves attitude ($\beta = 0.243$, $p < 0.01$), and influencer marketing also positively affects attitude ($\beta = 0.246$, $p < 0.01$). This confirms that digital communication channels are effective in shaping Gen Z's emotional evaluation of night-time activities. For digital-native consumers, positive online reviews and influencer content enhance the attractiveness of night-time experiences, such as visiting night markets or clubs. These findings are consistent with prior research highlighting the persuasive power of peer-generated content and social endorsement (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

However, neither eWOM nor influencer marketing significantly affects trust or perceived location safety. The path coefficients from eWOM to trust ($\beta = -0.041$, $p = 0.694$) and to perceived safety ($\beta = -0.008$, $p = 0.934$) were both statistically insignificant. Similarly, influencer marketing did not significantly impact trust ($\beta = 0.171$, $p = 0.051$) or perceived safety ($\beta = 0.110$, $p = 0.237$). These results suggest that while digital content is effective for attitude formation, it does not sufficiently reduce uncertainty or risk perception. This contrasts with some previous studies that found eWOM and influencer messages can enhance trust or reduce perceived risk (Amarullah et al., 2022; Li & Peng, 2021). In the

night-time economy context, Gen Z may require direct experience or more tangible signals, such as security presence or lighting infrastructure, to feel safe and build trust.

Turning to internal factors, attitude emerges as the strongest predictor of purchase behavior ($\beta = 0.431$, $p < 0.001$). This is consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior and previous literature, confirming that positive emotional evaluations drive intention and action. Gen Z consumers who perceive nightlife as exciting, enjoyable, or meaningful are more likely to spend and participate. This reflects identity-driven and socially expressive consumption patterns typical of Gen Z (Shanbhogue & Ranjith, 2024).

Trust also has a significant but smaller effect on purchase behavior ($\beta = 0.175$, $p = 0.008$). While not the primary motivator, trust helps reduce psychological resistance, particularly in uncertain environments. These findings align with the view that trust acts as a threshold condition for participation, especially when physical safety or service reliability is in question (Gefen, 2000; Sutrisno, 2022).

Finally, perceived location safety has a strong and significant influence on purchase behavior ($\beta = 0.249$, $p < 0.001$). Gen Z consumers who feel safe in a location are more likely to engage in night-time activities. This confirms that safety is not only a risk-avoidance concern but also an enabler of economic participation. The result reinforces previous findings that investments in public infrastructure such as lighting, late-night transport, and visible policing can positively impact behavior (Roberts & Eldridge, 2012; Samudro & Hamdan, 2023).

5. Conclusions and implications

This study enhances understanding of Gen Z's purchase behavior in Hanoi's night-time economy using the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework. By integrating digital stimuli (eWOM and influencer marketing) with psychological mediators (attitude, trust, and perceived location safety), it finds that attitude most strongly influences purchase behavior, followed by

location safety and trust. While eWOM and influencer marketing significantly affect attitudes, their impact on trust and safety perceptions is statistically insignificant. This suggests that while digital marketing is effective in shaping attitudes, it is not sufficient to build trust and safety perceptions, which are essential in experiential and risk sensitive environments.

Extending S-O-R into the night-time context, this study reaffirms eWOM and influencer marketing as key external stimuli. Importantly, it highlights perceived location safety as a valuable theoretical addition. Unlike prior studies focused on trust and attitude, this research shows that spatial perceptions also act as crucial mediators. Including perceived safety improves the model's explanatory power in urban night-time environments. The structural model supports the S-O-R premise, confirming that internal states, especially attitude, drive behavior. This study contributes to the limited literature on Gen Z in non-Western night-time settings, validating S-O-R in digitally and spatially complex environments.

Managerial and policy implications include

prioritizing location safety through visible infrastructure like lighting and late-night transport to address Gen Z's concerns. Businesses should build trust by ensuring service consistency, transparent pricing, and authentic feedback mechanisms, as digital marketing alone is insufficient. Influencer marketing should emphasize authenticity and value alignment, using relatable content to build credibility. Additionally, digital messages must reflect actual experiences, as consistency is vital for maintaining trust and engagement.

Despite offering valuable insights, this study has limitations. Conducted solely in Hanoi, its findings may not generalize to other contexts. Future research should test the model in diverse regions to improve external validity. The convenience sample, mostly undergraduates, limits representativeness; broader sampling is recommended. The model's limited explanatory power for perceived safety suggests that adding variables like infrastructure or socio-cultural factors, or applying alternative theories, may yield deeper insights into Gen Z's behavior in night-time economies ■

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CÁC YẾU TỐ ẢNH HƯỞNG ĐẾN HÀNH VI MUA SẮM CỦA GEN Z TRONG NỀN KINH TẾ ĐÊM TẠI HÀ NỘI

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TÓM TẮT:

Nghiên cứu này phân tích các yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến hành vi mua sắm của Gen Z trong nền kinh tế đêm tại Hà Nội, dựa trên khung lý thuyết Kích thích - Tổ chức - Phản ứng (S - O - R). Kết quả cho thấy thái độ, cảm nhận về mức độ an toàn của địa điểm và niềm tin đều có ảnh hưởng đáng kể đến hành vi mua sắm của Gen Z, trong đó thái độ là yếu tố tác động mạnh nhất. Truyền miệng điện tử (eWOM) và marketing qua người ảnh hưởng được xác định là có tác động tích cực đến thái độ của Gen Z đối với việc tiêu dùng vào ban đêm. Tuy nhiên, hai yếu tố này khi đứng độc lập lại chưa đủ để xây dựng niềm tin và nâng cao cảm nhận về mức độ an toàn của địa điểm. Từ những phát hiện này, nghiên cứu đề xuất một số khuyến nghị về quản lý và chính sách, bao gồm đầu tư vào cơ sở hạ tầng an toàn để nhận biết, đảm bảo chất lượng dịch vụ ổn định để củng cố niềm tin, thúc đẩy sự tham gia chân thực của người ảnh hưởng, và đảm bảo sự nhất quán giữa thông điệp tiếp thị số và trải nghiệm thực tế tại địa điểm.

Từ khóa: nền kinh tế đêm, hành vi mua sắm, mô hình Kích thích - Tổ chức - Phản ứng (S - O - R), Gen Z, cảm nhận về mức độ an toàn của địa điểm.