

Determinants of Social Media Adoption and Engagement Among Generation Z in India: An Analytical Study of Behavioural and Technological Factors

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Abstract—

Social media has become an integral part of daily life for Generation Z, influencing communication, information sharing, entertainment, and social interaction. As digital natives, Generation Z users actively engage with social media platforms; however, the level and nature of their engagement vary significantly, and understanding what drives adoption and sustained engagement is important for both academic research and practical decision-making. This study, titled “Determinants of Social Media Adoption and Engagement Among Generation Z in India,” develops and empirically tests a conceptual model examining how perceived usefulness, social influence, perceived enjoyment, attitude toward social media, perceived ease of use, and privacy and security concerns influence social media adoption and engagement. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 150 Generation Z social media users across India, and analyzed using descriptive statistics, reliability testing, and multiple regression analysis in SPSS. The results show that perceived usefulness, social influence, perceived enjoyment, attitude toward social media, and perceived ease of use each have a statistically significant positive relationship with social media adoption and engagement, jointly explaining 68 percent of the variance in the outcome, while privacy and security concerns exert a significant negative influence. Perceived enjoyment emerged as the strongest predictor, underscoring the centrality of entertainment and emotional gratification to Generation Z’s digital behaviour. The findings confirm an integrated, empirically validated framework linking behavioural and technological determinants to adoption and engagement, offering practical guidance for platform developers, marketers, and policymakers seeking to design user-centric and secure digital environments.

Keywords—*Social Media Adoption; Social Media Engagement; Generation Z; Perceived Usefulness; Perceived Enjoyment; Social Influence; Privacy and Security Concerns; Technology Acceptance Model*

I. Introduction

A. Introduction

Social media has become an integral part of everyday life for Generation Z, shaping how they communicate, access information, follow trends, and express their identities. In India, the spread of affordable smartphones and low-cost internet has strengthened this connection, making social media a dominant space for social interaction and self-expression among young users. Although usage is widespread, levels of engagement differ considerably: some users actively create content and interact with others, while many engage only passively, indicating that adoption alone does not explain social media behaviour. Instead, engagement is shaped by individual perceptions, emotional experience, peer influence, and technological factors such as ease of use and privacy

protection. This study examines the key behavioural and technological factors that influence social media adoption and engagement among Generation Z in India, aiming to provide insights of value to academics, digital marketers, and platform developers.

B. Background of the Study

Social media has evolved into one of the most influential forces shaping modern society, acting as a space where people build relationships, share experiences, and construct personal identities. For Generation Z, it is deeply integrated into everyday routines, and the continuous introduction of short-form video, live streaming, and algorithm-driven content has increased its appeal. In India, the expanding digital economy, affordable smartphones, and widespread network coverage have enabled social media to penetrate beyond urban centres into semi-urban and rural areas. As a digital-native cohort, Generation Z

relates to social media not just as a means of staying connected but also as a source of belonging, recognition, and validation through likes, comments, shares, and follower counts, while remaining highly selective about which platforms are worth their attention. Alongside this intensifying usage, concerns about data privacy, online safety, and algorithmic influence have gained prominence, and research suggests that when users feel uncertain about the security of their information or overwhelmed by platform complexity, their engagement may decline. Existing studies have often examined adoption or engagement in isolation, focusing on either behavioural motivations or technological features, whereas real-world usage reflects an interaction between the two — motivating the present study's integrated examination of the determinants of social media adoption and engagement among Generation Z in India.

C. Research Problem

Social media is so deeply embedded in the daily lives of Generation Z that much of the existing research stops at describing how much it is used rather than why users adopt particular platforms and remain actively engaged with them. A further limitation is that prior studies have often examined behavioural aspects (enjoyment, attitude, peer influence) and technological elements (ease of use, system features) separately, even though real-life usage reflects a simultaneous response to both. Findings from Western contexts or mixed-age samples may also not accurately reflect Indian Generation Z users, whose digital maturity, cultural context, and sensitivity to online experience differ. In addition, growing awareness of privacy, data security, and platform transparency raises the question of how these concerns interact with positive factors such as enjoyment and usefulness to jointly shape adoption and engagement. The central research problem addressed in this study is therefore the lack of an integrated, context-specific understanding of the behavioural and technological determinants of social media adoption and engagement among Generation Z in India.

D. Research Questions and Objectives

In line with the research problem, the study addresses the following research questions: (1) How does perceived usefulness influence social media adoption

and engagement among Generation Z? (2) What role does social influence play in shaping social media adoption and engagement? (3) To what extent does perceived enjoyment affect adoption and engagement? (4) How does attitude toward social media impact adoption and engagement behaviour? (5) How does perceived ease of use influence adoption and engagement? (6) What is the influence of privacy and security concerns on adoption and engagement?

Correspondingly, the objectives of the study are to examine the influence of perceived usefulness, to analyse the role of social influence, to assess the impact of perceived enjoyment, to evaluate the effect of attitude toward social media, to determine the influence of perceived ease of use, and to examine how privacy and security concerns affect social media adoption and engagement among Generation Z in India.

E. Significance of the Study

This study looks beyond surface-level usage indicators to identify the behavioural and technological factors that meaningfully influence adoption and engagement, shifting the discussion from how much social media is used to why it is used in specific ways. Academically, it integrates behavioural and technological perspectives into a single analytical framework for Generation Z in India, an area where prior literature remains fragmented. Practically, the findings can guide social media companies, digital marketers, and platform managers in designing interfaces that are intuitive, enjoyable, and aligned with user expectations while addressing privacy and data-security concerns, helping them avoid investing in features and campaigns that attract initial attention but fail to sustain engagement. The study is also relevant to policymakers concerned with digital governance, youth well-being, and data protection, supporting the design of balanced regulations and digital-literacy initiatives grounded in evidence rather than assumption.

II. Literature Review

A. Overview

This review synthesizes prior theoretical and empirical work on social media usage, technology adoption, and user engagement, with particular attention to

Generation Z. While social media adoption has been widely studied, existing research often examines individual factors in isolation, producing a fragmented understanding. This chapter reviews key theories of technology adoption and prior studies of perceived usefulness, social influence, enjoyment, attitude, ease of use, and privacy concerns, and identifies a lack of integrated studies examining these factors together, particularly among Indian Generation Z users — a gap that motivates the present study's conceptual framework and hypotheses.

B. Social Media Adoption and Engagement

Adoption reflects the decision to accept social media as a regular part of daily routines, while engagement reflects how deeply users involve themselves once on a platform — liking, commenting, sharing, posting, and interacting with others. Early research treated adoption itself as the outcome of interest, but many users who adopt a platform remain passive, prompting greater attention to engagement as a reflection of emotional connection and ongoing participation. Adoption and engagement are closely related but not identical: some users adopt a platform because it seems useful or popular yet engage little if they do not find it enjoyable or socially rewarding, while others begin with limited interaction and become more engaged as they build social networks. For Generation Z, who are highly comfortable with technology but also highly selective, engagement is a dynamic process that can shift quickly based on platform experience. This study treats social media adoption and engagement as a combined dependent variable, reflecting the reality that Generation Z chooses not only whether to join a platform but how actively and meaningfully to participate in it.

C. Perceived Usefulness

Perceived usefulness reflects the extent to which individuals believe social media meaningfully supports their daily activities. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) identifies perceived usefulness as a central predictor of technology adoption, and for Generation Z this extends beyond communication to discovering trends, accessing educational content, and exploring career-related opportunities. Empirical work links platforms perceived as useful for maintaining

relationships and accessing timely information to higher adoption and continued usage, although some scholars argue that once adoption becomes habitual, enjoyment and social interaction may play a more dominant role than usefulness alone. In the Indian context, the multifunctional use of social media for communication, entertainment, and academic support strengthens the relevance of perceived usefulness to both adoption and engagement.

D. Social Influence

Social influence captures how peers, friends, family, classmates, and online communities shape an individual's decision to adopt and engage with social media. It is strongly supported by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), both of which hold that individuals are more likely to adopt a technology when significant others endorse it or when social norms encourage participation. For Generation Z, participation is frequently motivated by the desire to stay connected, avoid missing group conversations, and take part in trending activities, and influencers and content creators extend this effect by shaping platform popularity. In India, the collective nature of social relationships and rapid diffusion of online trends make social influence an especially strong driver of both adoption and the intensity of engagement, although its impact may moderate over time as users develop personal routines and preferences.

E. Perceived Enjoyment

Perceived enjoyment reflects the intrinsic pleasure, fun, and emotional satisfaction users derive from social media, distinct from the functional value captured by usefulness. Research on hedonic technologies shows that enjoyment is one of the strongest predictors of continued engagement in entertainment-based digital environments, particularly among younger users, and social media platforms are deliberately designed around short videos, memes, filters, and personalized recommendations that sustain emotionally rewarding experiences. For Generation Z, enjoyment is closely tied to self-expression and social interaction, and positive emotional experiences reinforce engagement and turn usage into a daily habit — though enjoyment can also decline if content becomes repetitive,

prompting users to shift to platforms offering fresher experiences. In the Indian digital context, the rise of short-form video and influencer-driven entertainment has made enjoyment an increasingly central determinant of retention among young users.

F. Attitude Toward Social Media

Attitude toward social media represents an individual's overall positive or negative evaluation of using these platforms, shaped by prior experience, perceived usefulness, enjoyment, social influence, and trust. The Theory of Planned Behaviour explains that attitude significantly shapes behavioural intention and actual behaviour, and Generation Z users who hold favourable attitudes are more likely to adopt platforms, participate actively, and sustain engagement through posting, sharing, and commenting. While some scholars note that habitual usage may reduce the conscious role attitude plays in everyday decisions, negative experiences such as online harassment, misinformation, or privacy concerns can still weaken attitudes and reduce engagement intensity, underscoring attitude's continuing mediating role between perception and behaviour.

G. Perceived Ease of Use

Perceived ease of use reflects the extent to which a platform feels simple, intuitive, and requires minimal effort to navigate. Alongside perceived usefulness, TAM identifies ease of use as a fundamental determinant of technology adoption, and for Generation Z — who frequently switch between multiple apps and expect fast, visually appealing experiences — usability functions less as a differentiator and more as a baseline expectation. Even highly engaging content may fail to hold attention if a platform is difficult to use, and user-friendly design has been shown to significantly influence how long young users remain active. Ease of use also indirectly strengthens engagement by enhancing perceived usefulness and satisfaction, making it an essential technological determinant in the present framework.

H. Privacy and Security Concerns

Privacy and security concerns capture users' worry about the protection of personal information, including fears of data misuse, unauthorized access, and lack of

transparency in data handling. Although Generation Z is highly active online, research shows growing awareness of the long-term consequences of sharing personal information, and rather than causing users to abandon platforms altogether, privacy concerns more often reshape how openly and actively they engage — for example by limiting personal disclosures or engaging more passively. Studies present mixed findings on the strength of this effect, with some showing a strong negative influence on engagement and others suggesting continued usage persists despite concern due to habit or lack of alternatives, but there is broad agreement that privacy and security concerns act as a limiting rather than an enabling factor in engagement behaviour.

I. Theoretical Integration, Research Framework, and Hypotheses Development

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) explains why Generation Z users are more comfortable with platforms that are simple to navigate and add value to their daily lives, while the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) captures how attitudes and social influence from friends and peer groups shape adoption and engagement. Perceived enjoyment is included to reflect the intrinsic, entertainment-driven motivation that distinguishes much of Generation Z's social media use, and privacy and security concerns are included to reflect users' need for trust and control in an environment of growing data-protection awareness. Integrating these perspectives, the research framework proposes that behavioural factors (perceived usefulness, social influence, perceived enjoyment, and attitude toward social media) and technological factors (perceived ease of use and privacy and security concerns) jointly influence social media adoption and engagement among Generation Z in India, giving rise to the following hypotheses:

H1: Perceived usefulness has a significant positive influence on social media adoption and engagement among Generation Z.

H2: Social influence has a significant positive influence on social media adoption and engagement among Generation Z.

H3: Perceived enjoyment has a significant positive influence on social media adoption and engagement among Generation Z.

H4: Attitude toward social media has a significant positive influence on social media adoption and engagement among Generation Z.

H5: Perceived ease of use has a significant positive influence on social media adoption and engagement among Generation Z.

H6: Privacy and security concerns have a significant negative influence on social media adoption and engagement among Generation Z.

III. Research Methodology

A. Introduction

This section describes how the conceptual model developed in the literature review was operationalized and empirically tested. Because social media engagement reflects internal perceptions, emotions, and beliefs that are not directly observable, a structured, quantitative approach was required to translate the study's six behavioural and technological determinants into measurable indicators and to test their relationship with social media adoption and engagement among Generation Z in India.

B. Operational Definitions of Research Variables

Social Media Adoption and Engagement (SME): the extent to which Generation Z users accept social media platforms as part of their everyday routine and actively participate in platform-based interactions, operationalized through self-reported frequency of usage, time spent, and level of active interaction (e.g., participating in discussions, integrating social media into daily activities).

Perceived Usefulness (PU): the degree to which users believe social media helps them communicate effectively, access timely information, and build social or professional networks.

Social Influence (SI): the extent to which peers, friends, family, and online communities shape a user's decision to use and engage with social media.

Perceived Enjoyment (PE): the intrinsic pleasure, fun, and emotional satisfaction users experience while using social media.

Attitude Toward Social Media (AT): a user's overall positive or negative evaluation of social media usage.

Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU): the extent to which social media platforms are perceived as simple, intuitive, and requiring minimal effort to operate.

Privacy and Security Concerns (PSC): the degree of worry users have regarding the misuse, unauthorized access, or lack of transparency surrounding their personal data.

All constructs were measured using a structured questionnaire with items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

C. Research Framework and Hypotheses

The research framework models perceived usefulness, social influence, perceived enjoyment, attitude toward social media, perceived ease of use, and privacy and security concerns as independent variables exerting a direct effect on social media adoption and engagement, the dependent variable, consistent with hypotheses H1 through H6 presented in Section II-I.

D. Sources of Research Data

The study relies primarily on primary data, collected through a structured questionnaire administered to Generation Z social media users in India, since existing secondary sources may not fully reflect the current motivations, concerns, and expectations of this rapidly evolving user group. Secondary sources — academic journals and industry reports — supported theory development, scale design, and interpretation of results. Respondents indicated their level of agreement with each construct statement on a five-point Likert scale, supporting the application of reliability testing, correlation, and regression analysis.

E. Sampling Design

A purposive (non-probability) sampling technique was used, selecting respondents based on their membership in the Generation Z age group (approximately 18 to 28 years) and their active use of at least one major social media platform such as Instagram, Facebook,

Snapchat, YouTube, or X, while residing in India and voluntarily agreeing to participate. Purposive sampling was considered appropriate because the constructs under study — such as perceived enjoyment and privacy concern — can only be meaningfully evaluated by individuals with direct, active experience of social media, and because this approach is well-established in technology-adoption and digital-behaviour research where researchers must ensure participants have direct exposure to the environment under examination. The minimum sample size required for the regression model was estimated at 98 respondents using G*Power (medium effect size $f^2 = 0.15$, $\alpha = 0.05$, power = 0.80); the study targeted a larger pool of 200 to 300 respondents to improve robustness, and after data screening a final sample of 150 valid responses was retained for analysis.

F. Research Instrument and Data Collection

The questionnaire comprised a demographic section and a measurement section covering perceived usefulness, social influence, perceived enjoyment, attitude toward social media, perceived ease of use, privacy and security concerns, and social media adoption and engagement, each measured with multiple five-point Likert-scale items adapted from validated prior studies. The instrument was administered online via Google Forms and digital communication channels within university networks and social media communities, with confidentiality and anonymity assured to minimize response bias. Data collection took place over several weeks to reach the targeted sample size.

G. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed in IBM SPSS Statistics through univariate, bivariate, and multivariate stages. Frequency analysis and descriptive statistics profiled respondents and study variables. Cronbach's alpha assessed internal-consistency reliability. Skewness, kurtosis, tolerance, and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

diagnostics confirmed that the assumptions of normality and the absence of severe multicollinearity were satisfied prior to inferential testing. Multiple linear regression then tested the hypothesized relationships between the six independent variables and social media adoption and engagement, with R^2 and adjusted R^2 indicating the proportion of variance explained by the model.

IV. Data Analysis and Results

This section presents the analysis of data obtained from 150 valid respondents after data screening for missing values, outliers, and invalid response patterns, beginning with the demographic profile, followed by descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, assumption testing, and multiple regression analysis used to test the six hypotheses.

A. Profile of the Respondents

Table I presents the demographic distribution of the 150 respondents. Female respondents formed a slightly higher share of the sample (54.7%) than male respondents (45.3%). The sample is concentrated in the younger segment of Generation Z, with 40.0% aged 18–20 and 46.7% aged 21–23 (86.7% combined), and the remainder aged 24–26. Most respondents were undergraduate students (63.3%), with the balance holding postgraduate qualifications (36.7%). Daily usage intensity was high: 43.3% spend 1–3 hours per day on social media, 33.3% spend 3–5 hours, and 13.3% spend more than five hours, with only 10.0% spending under an hour. Instagram was the most frequently used platform (48.0%), followed by YouTube (26.7%), Snapchat (16.7%), and Facebook (8.6%), reflecting a generational shift toward visually engaging, entertainment-driven applications. These characteristics confirm that the sample represents an active, digitally engaged cohort of Indian Generation Z users well suited to examining the study's determinants.

TABLE I DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS (N = 150)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	68	45.3
	Female	82	54.7

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age Group	18–20 years	60	40.0
	21–23 years	70	46.7
	24–26 years	20	13.3
Education Level	Undergraduate	95	63.3
	Postgraduate	55	36.7
Time Spent per Day	Less than 1 hour	15	10.0
	1–3 hours	65	43.3
	3–5 hours	50	33.3
	More than 5 hours	20	13.3
Most Used Platform	Instagram	72	48.0
	YouTube	40	26.7
	Snapchat	25	16.7
	Facebook	13	8.6

B. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Table II summarizes the mean and standard deviation of the seven composite study variables. Perceived enjoyment recorded the highest mean score ($M = 4.25$), indicating that entertainment and intrinsic pleasure are the strongest motivations for social media usage among respondents. Perceived ease of use ($M = 4.18$) and

perceived usefulness ($M = 4.12$) were also rated highly, followed by social media adoption and engagement ($M = 4.10$), attitude toward social media ($M = 4.05$), and social influence ($M = 3.98$). Privacy and security concerns recorded a comparatively moderate mean ($M = 3.45$), suggesting that while respondents remain highly engaged, they are increasingly aware of data-related risks.

TABLE II DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF STUDY VARIABLES (N = 150)

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	4.12	0.61	High agreement
Social Influence (SI)	3.98	0.67	Strong peer influence
Perceived Enjoyment (PE)	4.25	0.58	Very high entertainment value
Attitude Toward Social Media (AT)	4.05	0.63	Positive overall attitude
Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)	4.18	0.59	Easy and convenient
Privacy & Security Concerns (PSC)	3.45	0.72	Moderate concern
Adoption & Engagement (SME)	4.10	0.60	High active engagement

C. Reliability Analysis

Cronbach’s alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of each construct’s measurement items. As shown in Table III, all seven constructs exceeded the

recommended 0.70 threshold, ranging from 0.81 (privacy and security concerns, acceptable) to 0.89 (social media adoption and engagement, good), confirming that the measurement scales are reliable and suitable for inferential analysis.

TABLE III RELIABILITY ANALYSIS OF STUDY CONSTRUCTS (CRONBACH'S ALPHA)

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach's α	Reliability
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	5	0.86	Good
Social Influence (SI)	5	0.84	Good
Perceived Enjoyment (PE)	5	0.88	Good
Attitude Toward Social Media (AT)	5	0.85	Good
Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)	5	0.87	Good
Privacy & Security Concerns (PSC)	5	0.81	Acceptable
Adoption & Engagement (SME)	6	0.89	Good

D. Normality and Multicollinearity Assessment

Prior to regression analysis, normality was assessed using skewness and kurtosis statistics (Table IV). All constructs fell within the accepted -2 to $+2$ range, with skewness generally negative, indicating a mild tendency toward agreement typical of engaged Generation Z respondents, while kurtosis values indicated distributions that were neither excessively

peaked nor flat. Multicollinearity was assessed using tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values (Table V); all tolerance values exceeded the 0.20 threshold (0.58–0.70) and all VIF values remained well below 5.0 (1.43–1.72), confirming that the six independent variables represent sufficiently distinct constructs and that regression coefficients would remain stable and interpretable.

TABLE IV NORMALITY TEST RESULTS (SKEWNESS AND KURTOSIS)

Variable	Skewness	Kurtosis	Interpretation
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	-0.85	1.10	Normal
Social Influence (SI)	-0.72	0.95	Normal
Perceived Enjoyment (PE)	-0.90	1.25	Normal
Attitude Toward Social Media (AT)	-0.78	1.05	Normal
Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)	-0.88	1.15	Normal
Privacy & Security Concerns (PSC)	-0.45	0.60	Normal
Adoption & Engagement (SME)	-0.80	1.00	Normal

TABLE V MULTICOLLINEARITY DIAGNOSTICS (TOLERANCE AND VIF)

Independent Variable	Tolerance	VIF	Interpretation
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	0.62	1.61	No issue
Social Influence (SI)	0.58	1.72	No issue
Perceived Enjoyment (PE)	0.65	1.54	No issue
Attitude Toward Social Media (AT)	0.60	1.67	No issue
Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)	0.63	1.59	No issue
Privacy & Security Concerns (PSC)	0.70	1.43	No issue

E. Multiple Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Multiple regression analysis was performed with social media adoption and engagement as the dependent variable. The model achieved $R^2 = 0.68$ (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.66$), indicating that the six behavioural and

technological determinants jointly explain approximately 68% of the variance in adoption and engagement — a strong effect size for social-science research. The overall model was statistically significant ($F = 48.25$, $p < .001$). Table VI presents the standardized regression coefficients for each predictor.

TABLE VI MULTIPLE REGRESSION RESULTS FOR HYPOTHESIS TESTING (N = 150)

Hyp.	Predictor	β	t	p	Result
H1	Perceived Usefulness (PU)	0.28	3.92	<.001	Supported
H2	Social Influence (SI)	0.22	3.15	.002	Supported
H3	Perceived Enjoyment (PE)	0.35	4.80	<.001	Supported
H4	Attitude Toward Social Media (AT)	0.19	2.75	.007	Supported
H5	Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)	0.25	3.60	.001	Supported
H6	Privacy & Security Concerns (PSC)	-0.16	-2.40	.018	Supported (negative)

Model Fit: $R^2 = 0.68$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.66$; $F(6,143) = 48.25$, $p < .001$. Dependent Variable: Social Media Adoption and Engagement (SME).

All six hypotheses were supported. Perceived enjoyment recorded the strongest standardized effect ($\beta = 0.35$), confirming that entertainment and emotional gratification are the dominant drivers of Generation Z engagement, followed by perceived usefulness ($\beta = 0.28$) and perceived ease of use ($\beta = 0.25$). Social influence ($\beta = 0.22$) and attitude toward social media ($\beta = 0.19$) also exerted significant positive effects, confirming the relevance of peer validation and psychological evaluation to sustained engagement. Privacy and security concerns showed a significant negative effect ($\beta = -0.16$), indicating that respondents who are more worried about data misuse and surveillance engage less openly and less intensively, even though such concerns do not appear to prevent adoption outright.

V. Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

A. Findings of the Study

The descriptive results indicate a strongly positive perception of enjoyment, usefulness, ease of use, attitude, and social influence among respondents, alongside moderate privacy and security concern. Multiple regression analysis confirmed that all six

hypothesized determinants remain statistically significant predictors of social media adoption and engagement, jointly explaining 68% of its variance. Perceived enjoyment emerged as the strongest predictor, confirming that Generation Z’s engagement is driven more by experiential and emotional reward than by pure functional value, while perceived usefulness and ease of use confirm that functional value and usability remain relevant even for a digitally proficient generation. Social influence and attitude toward social media further confirm that engagement is socially and psychologically reinforced, while the significant negative effect of privacy and security concerns confirms that trust and perceived risk act as a real, if moderate, restraint on engagement intensity.

B. Theoretical and Managerial Implications

Theoretically, the study reinforces the continued relevance of the Technology Acceptance Model and the Theory of Planned Behaviour in explaining social media adoption and engagement, while extending these frameworks by demonstrating that intrinsic, hedonic motivation (enjoyment) and risk perception (privacy and security concern) play roles at least as important as functional usefulness and ease of use for a digitally native, entertainment-oriented generation. Managerially, the findings suggest that platform developers and marketers should prioritize experiential value — interactive features, creative tools, and

personalization — while continuing to support functional value through informational and networking features, and should invest in influencer- and community-based engagement strategies grounded in authenticity. Because usability and privacy protection remain significant even for a technologically proficient audience, continuous investment in intuitive interface design and transparent, user-controllable privacy settings is essential to sustaining long-term engagement.

C. Policy Implications

The significant negative effect of privacy and security concerns highlights the need for robust data-protection frameworks and clear communication to users about how their data is collected, stored, and used. Given the high engagement levels associated with enjoyment and social reinforcement, policymakers and educational institutions may also consider digital-literacy and well-being initiatives that help Generation Z users balance active participation with mindful, informed use of social media platforms.

D. Study Recommendations

- 1) Prioritize entertainment-driven, interactive features and personalization to sustain the strongest identified driver of engagement, perceived enjoyment.
- 2) Maintain and communicate functional value — information access, networking, and communication support — alongside entertainment content.
- 3) Invest in intuitive, low-friction interface design, recognizing that ease of use remains significant even among digitally proficient users.
- 4) Strengthen influencer- and peer-based engagement strategies while safeguarding authenticity, given the significant role of social influence.
- 5) Adopt transparent data practices and accessible privacy controls to mitigate the negative effect of privacy and security concerns on engagement.

E. Limitations of the Study

The study relied on non-probability (purposive) sampling from a self-selected group of digitally active respondents in India, which may limit the representativeness of the findings across the broader,

more socio-economically and geographically diverse Generation Z population. The cross-sectional design captures perceptions at a single point in time and cannot establish how adoption and engagement evolve as platforms and user preferences change, nor can it fully establish causal direction between the variables. Reliance on self-reported Likert-scale data introduces the possibility of social-desirability or recall bias, and the platform-agnostic design does not differentiate between the distinct engagement dynamics of individual platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, or Snapchat. Findings are also specific to the Indian cultural and regulatory context and should not be generalized internationally without further validation.

F. Scope for Future Research

Future research could adopt probability-based sampling and longitudinal or experimental designs to strengthen external validity and establish causal relationships, and could incorporate additional constructs such as trust, fear of missing out, social comparison, and digital fatigue. Platform-specific and cross-cultural comparative studies, along with mixed-method designs that combine quantitative testing with qualitative insight into users' lived experiences, would further enrich understanding of how Generation Z's social media engagement evolves as emerging technologies such as AI-driven personalization and immersive media become more deeply integrated into these platforms.

G. Conclusion

This study examined the behavioural and technological determinants of social media adoption and engagement among Generation Z users in India. The empirical results confirm that perceived usefulness, social influence, perceived enjoyment, attitude toward social media, and perceived ease of use are each positively and significantly associated with adoption and engagement, jointly explaining 68% of its variance, while privacy and security concerns exert a significant negative effect. Perceived enjoyment emerged as the strongest driver, confirming that entertainment and emotional gratification are central to how this generation experiences social media, while functional value, usability, social validation, and positive attitude

reinforce sustained participation. The findings confirm that fostering meaningful, lasting engagement requires more than technological capability — it depends on entertainment value, functional relevance, social connectivity, and user trust operating together. Organizations seeking to strengthen engagement with Generation Z should pursue an integrated strategy that combines experiential design, functional value, community-based marketing, and transparent data governance.

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