

INTERGENERATIONAL CONSUMER BEHAVIOR: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW FROM 2001 UNTIL 2024

Ignatius Hari Santoso^{1*}, I Made Sukresna²

¹Doctoral Student, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Diponegoro, Indonesia

²Lecturer, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Diponegoro, Indonesia

ignatiusharisantoso@students.undip.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This systematic literature review explores the evolving landscape of intergenerational consumer behavior by analyzing 35 peer-reviewed articles, which were published between 2001 and 2024. Using the PRISMA framework, this review identifies the key pattern, mechanism, and cultural context that shape the consumers' preference across generational cohort. The findings reveal a significant shift from the traditional unidirectional influence toward a bidirectional dynamic influence, where the younger generation increasingly influences the household consumption, specifically in digital and lifestyle related product category. This review uncovers six thematic clusters: Brand Identity and Emotional Meaning, Direction of Influence, Cultural Orientation, Lifestyle and Product Category, Advertising and Media Exposure, and Peer and Family Interaction.

Keywords: Intergenerational Influence, Consumer Behavior, Brand Loyalty, Consumer Identity, PRISMA, Systematic Literature Review

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the era marked by the rapid technological innovation, demographic shift, and cultural globalization, understanding the intergenerational consumer behavior has never been more urgent. Consumers today are not only influenced by traditional family norms, but are increasingly shaped by the digital ecosystem, influencer and the global media narratives. These contemporary forces have significantly transformed how the customer preferences are developed, negotiated and transmitted across generations.

Recent development, such as the rise of digital native cohort like Z and Alpha generation have

* Corresponding author: Ignatius Hari Santoso. Email: *ignatiusharisantoso@students.undip.ac.id*

introduced new dynamic in consumption behavior, especially in digital goods, fast fashion, and sustainability conscious product. Younger consumers are not merely passive inheritors of brand preference but active agents who influence their parents and grandparents' choice, specifically in technology and lifestyle categories. This bidirectional influence challenges the traditional way of consumer socialization, which long emphasized unidirectional learning from parents to children.

Intergenerational consumer behavior is still one of the growing research fields that places a major emphasis on exploring people's consumption patterns, how preferences formed by a consumer group, and decision-making processes vary among different generational groups. With rapid technological advances and rapid economic change, the ability to understand intergenerational consumer behavior is crucial for businesspeople and academics. Each generation is shaped by unique experiences and cultural influences. Thus, each generation can also show different consumption patterns that reflect their values, attitudes, and lifestyle choices (Parment, 2013).

Research on intergenerational consumer behavior is still very relevant in today's dynamic market conditions, where differences between generations can significantly influence purchasing decisions and levels of loyalty to a brand (Schewe & Noble, 2000). For example, the Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z generations show differences in digital literacy and ethics, which in turn can have different effects on their interactions with products and services (Smith & Clurman, 2007). Thus, academics and practitioners need to understand the importance of developing effective marketing strategies based on different consumption patterns due to generational differences (Twenge, 2017).

Despite the growing academic attention, several critical knowledge gaps have remained. First, most studies still concentrate on Millennials and overlook the emerging behavior of Gen Z and Gen Alpha, whose digital fluency and global exposure may foster radically different intergenerational dynamics. Second, few studies have systematically examined emotional conflicts, negotiation mechanisms, or brand forgiveness within families, especially in the aftermath of brand transgression. Third, methodological approach remains limited, often relying on cross-sectional surveys or qualitative interview, with little use of cross-cultural issues, which could capture the evolving nature of family consumption behavior.

Systematic Literature Review on intergenerational consumer behavior provides a comprehensive analysis of existing research, starting from the stage of identifying key themes, mapping the methodology used in each published article, and revealing gaps in the literature articles studied (Snyder, 2019). Given these emerging trends and gaps, this review systematically examines intergenerational consumer behavior research from 2001 to 2024, aiming to synthesize key themes, and propose a forward-looking research agenda.

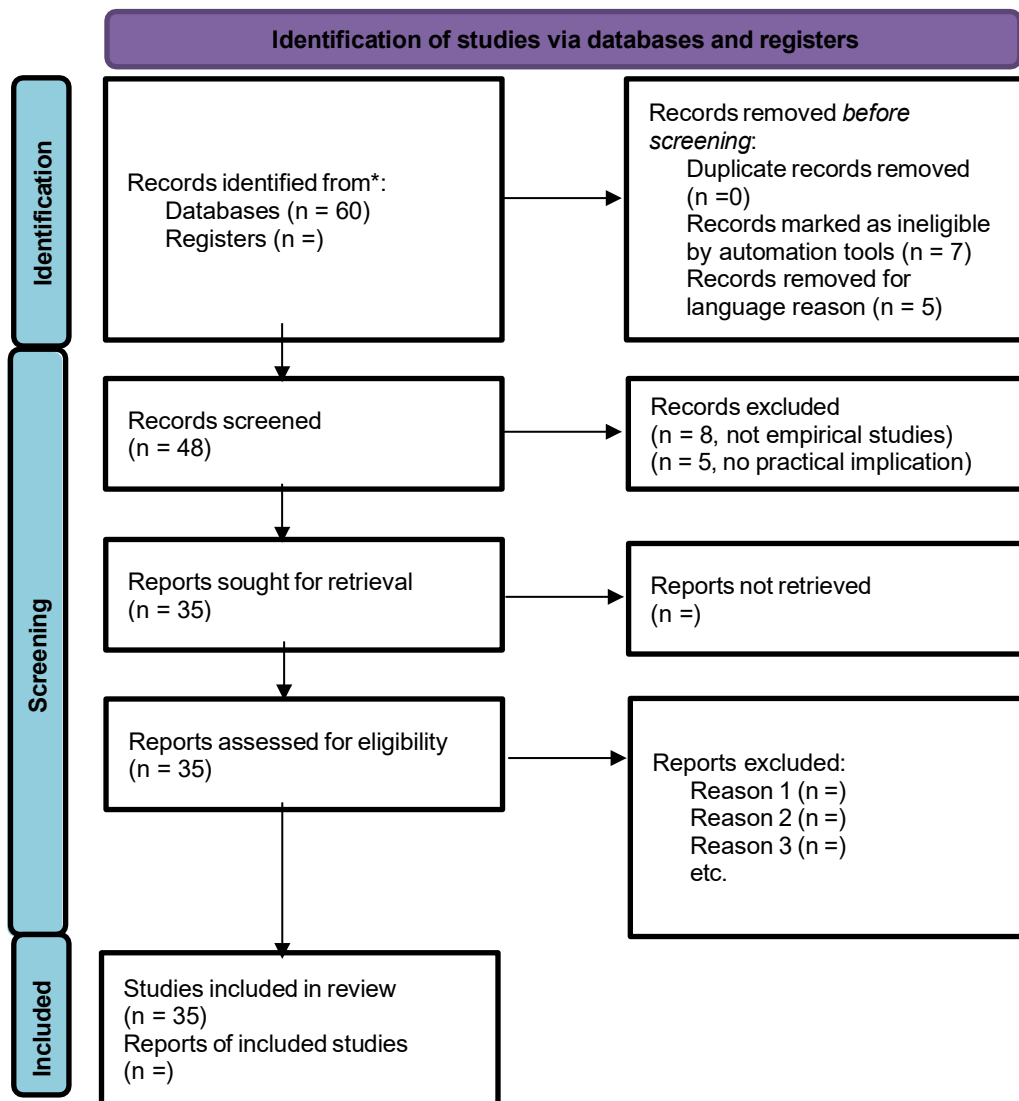


Figure 1. Prisma Flow Diagram

2. METHODOLOGY

Systematic review is chosen as method to answer the questions. Systematic review is an adequate method to synthesize all the available evidence to provide a robust evidence base to guide policy and practice (Victor, 2008). During the process, we follow the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) Guidelines (Moher et al., 2009) and the checklist (Page et al., 2021). The stages of this systematic literature review are depicted in the PRISMA flow diagram (Picture. 1), Picture created by tools that developed by Haddaway et al. (2022), starting with the number of references initially found and moving on to the papers that were excluded and, finally, the papers that were included.

Search Strategy

To find credible literature, this study uses literature that is listed on Emerald Database. The keywords that used in search string are combination of words “Intergenerational” and “consumer behavior” with several combinations that limited to studies published between 2001 and 2024. We searched for the terms in titles, abstract, and keywords, and finally yielded 60 articles

Study Selection

Study selection was based on 4 criteria (Table 1.). 60 articles were screened through reading the titles and abstracts, the articles that are not mentioned about intergenerational or consumer behavior, are excluded. Based on this exclusion, 7 research papers do not meet these criteria. Several studies excluded because after retrieve the full text, the articles are written on other languages than English about 5 articles, are not empirical studies about 8 articles, and do not provide practical implication about 5 articles.

Table 1. Exclusion Criteria

	Criteria	Description
1	Not on Topic	The article addresses another topic
2	Other Language	Article written other than English
3	Not Empirical Studies	Studies not showing any empirical studies methodology, theory construct
4	Not give Impact for topic	The papers are not provided with the practical implication.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 2. Journal List

No	Journal Name	Number of Article
1	Journal of Consumer Marketing	3
2	Journal of Contemporary Marketing Science	4
3	Marketing Intelligence & Planning	2
4	Journal of Product & Brand Management	2
5	European Journal of Marketing	4
6	Industrial Management & Data System	4
7	International Journal of Wine Business Research	3
8	EuroMed Journal of Business	5
9	Employee Relation: The International Journal	2
10	Qualitative Market Research: an International Journal	2
11	British Food Journal	1
12	International Marketing Review	2
13	Art and the Market	1
14	Young Consumers	2
15	Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management	1
16	Benchmarking: An International Journal	3
17	International Journal of Social Economics	1
18	International Journal of Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Marketing	1
19	International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship	2
20	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	1
21	Baltic Journal of Management	1
22	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	2
23	International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management	3
24	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	2
25	Journal of Strategic Marketing	5
26	Journal of Business Research	4
27	Journal of Consumer Behavior	6
28	Journal of Interactive Marketing	1

How do intergenerational relationships influence consumer preferences, behaviors, and brand loyalty across different product categories?

Based on the 35 papers which are eligible, here is an answer to what can affect the different generations who consume certain products. The answer is shown on Table 3 below.

Table 3 Result Mapping

Answer	Number of Studies	Reference
Modeling Brand Usage and Emotional Meaning of Brand	5	Moore et al. (2001); Mandrik et al. (2005); Perez et al. (2011); Mooji (2015); Mandrik et al. (2017);
Bi-Directional Influence (Parent to Child, and Child to Parent)	4	Cotte & Wood (2004); Bravo et al. (2007); Gram et al. (2015); Liu et al. (2024)
Collectivism Culture	8	Ng et al. (2002); Rose et al. (2002); Parameswaran (2002); Silverstein (2006); Masuda, et al. (2008); Lin & Ke (2010); Karanika & Hogg (2015); Hans & Gupta (2023)
Advertising Matter	3	Dou et al. (2006); Moore & Carpenter (2008); Fowler et al. (2014)
Lifestyle	7	Chan (2001); Chan et al. (2006); Podoshen & Junfeng (2011); Moore (2012); Jiang & Shan (2018) Gaitan et al. (2022); Carrigan et al. (2023)
Based on Product Category	2	Dubois et al. (2005); Bubphapant & Brandao (2025)
Individual Culture / Self-brand Connection	6	Moore et al. (2002); Mangleburg et al. (2004); Egri & Ralston (2004); Chaudhary et al. (2020); Duffy (2013); Karanika & Hogg (2015)

To synthesize insights from the 35 selected research paper, we organize the findings into six major thematic clusters that emerged consistently across the literature, that is Brand Identity and Emotional Meaning, Direction of Influence, Cultural Influence (Collectivism vs Individualism), Lifestyle and Product Category, Advertising and Media Exposure and Peer-Family Interaction and Social Learning. Each cluster offers a distinct but interconnected lens through which to understand intergenerational consumer behavior.

Brand Identity and Emotional Meaning

A recurring theme is the role of brand attachment in identity construction, with brands acting as the symbolic link between generations. Studies such as Moore et al. (2002) and Chaudhary et al. (2020) illustrate how brand preference is transmitted not merely for functional reasons but as a means of preserving familial legacy and shared values. This inherited brand association shape consumers' identity, particularly in categories that are tied to lifestyle and self-expression, such as clothing, luxury

goods, and personal technology. This cluster reveals that brand transmission is often emotional and values-laden, underscoring the importance of symbolic consumption in sustaining brand loyalty across generations.

Direction of Influence: from Unidirectional to Bidirectional

Traditionally, influence was conceptualized as flowing from the parents to children, and this is in line with classic consumer socialization theory. However, recent evidence notably by Liu et al. (2024) and Gram et al. (2015) reveal a growing bidirectional influence, where children also shape parental decision, particularly in digital and fashion related domain. This especially happened in families with high digital disparity, where the younger serve as tech experts for the family. This shift challenges the conventional hierarchical model and suggests that influence within family is increasingly reciprocal.

Cultural Orientation (Collectivism and Individualism)

The largest thematic cluster highlights how cultural values, specifically collectivism and individualism, mediate the intergenerational influence. In collectivist culture such as China and India, brand choice often reflects the family duty, harmony and respect for the elders (Ng et al., 2002; Silverstein, 2006). Contrary, in more individualistic setting, the younger generation exhibit greater autonomy in brand selection (Egri & Ralston, 2004). Studies in this group emphasize that cultural context plays a pivotal role in moderating how brand preferences are passed on and whether they are preserved, adapted or rejected.

Lifestyle and Product Category

Another cluster focuses on how consumption patterns differ by product category and generational lifestyle alignment. For instance, health conscious or environmentally friendly products tend to resonate more with younger consumers, while the traditional luxury products may maintain appeal across the older generations. Studies such as Podoshen & Junfeng (2011) and Bubphapant & Brandao (2025) show that generational attitudes toward consumption are also strongly shaped by values such as materialism, sustainability and convenience. This research highlights the notion that intergenerational transfer is not for all products, and the marketers should segment the customer strategically.

Advertising, Media Exposure and Symbolic Consumption

This smaller cluster explores the role of media exposure and advertising cues in shaping intergenerational consumption habits. Moore & Carpenter (2008), and Dou et al. (2006), have found that older generation rely more on traditional advertising format, where the younger cohort respond to digitally mediated cues and peer-driven content. These findings reinforce the idea that marketing

stimuli are processed differently depending on generational context and media habits, influencing the likelihood of adoption across the family line.

Peer Influence and Family Interaction

A final cluster involves the interaction between peer and family influence, especially among adolescent and young adults. Mangleburg et al. (2004), and Gram et al. (2015) illustrate that while family remains an important source of brand norm, peer influence can reinforce, challenge, or even override familial transmission, specifically for status-oriented products. These insights suggest a complex negotiation between peer and family socialization agents during the identity-forming years.

Discussion

The thematic clusters which are presented in Table 3 offer a rich synthesis of how intergenerational consumer behavior has been studied from multiple angles, such as emotional brand meaning, directionality of influence, cultural context, lifestyle relevance, advertising exposure, and social learning through peers. However, these findings also illuminate several important areas where existing scholarship remains incomplete, fragmented or theoretically underdeveloped. These gaps are summarized in Table 4 represent strategic entry point for future research and are strongly tied to the themes revealed in the current literature.

First, the influence of cultural orientation, especially collectivism and individualism has been widely studied, yet most research remains anchored in single country context, especially China, India, and other Asian country. This presents a major limitation in generalizing finding across diverse cultural settings. Despite the dominance of collectivist context in the literature (Karanika & Hogg, 2015), few studies have conducted systematic cross-cultural or longitudinal comparisons to determine how intergenerational brand transmission evolves in different sociocultural and economic landscapes. Future research should focus on multi country studies that compare how generational brand loyalty is preserved or transformed under varying cultural norms, including hybrid or diasporic identities.

Besides, while classical consumer socialization theory assumes a unidirectional influence from parents to children, more recent studies such as Gram et al. (2015) and Liu et al. (2024) reveal that influence is increasingly bidirectional, especially in families with large technology gaps. The younger generation, often more digitally literate, now guide the older members in product decisions involving digital goods, smart devices, and lifestyle trends. However, despite this shift, there have remained limited on theoretical development around the model of child-to-parents influence. Literatures lack comprehensive framework that captures the conditions, boundaries, and cultural moderators of this reciprocal influence. Thus, future research is encouraged to develop integrated influence models that move beyond traditional hierarchy and reflect dynamic decision-making structure within family.

Another gap emerges in the technological mediation of intergenerational consumption. While the thematic findings confirm that technology plays a critical role in shaping brand knowledge and product

choice across generations, few studies explicitly examine how digital savvy affect the brand trust, decision authority, or emotional influence within family. The growing role of children as technology experts within households as highlighted by Khan et al. (2020) implies a profound reordering of influence roles. This phenomenon warrants deeper investigation into how digital competence reshapes the power dynamic and consumption rituals within multigenerational households.

Another critical gap involves the emotional and identity-related dimensions of brand inheritance. As seen in studies like Moore et al. (2002) and Chaudhary et al. (2020) brands are not only utilitarian objects but also vessels of familial identity and emotional continuity. However, most research on intergenerational transmission remains focused on behavioral or economic outcomes, with less emphasis on symbolic meaning and emotional value. There is an opportunity to integrate identity theory, symbolic consumption, and affective brand loyalty into future work, particularly to understand how younger generations relate emotionally to brands passed down by family members.

On the other hand, while many studies document the flow of brand preference, almost no address what happened when emotional conflict, disappointment, and even rejection of these preferences occur. For instance, younger consumers may reject parents' favorite brand due to ethical concern or personal value, leading to tension or negotiation within the family. The emotional and psychological negotiation mechanism involved in such brand-related conflicts are still largely unexamined in the literature. Understanding how families navigate that situation whether through forgiveness, compromising, or even disengagement can provide valuable insight for brand managers, which face the generational backlash or repositioning challenges.

The proposed future research agenda is synthesized from an integrative reading of recent and foundational works on intergenerational consumer behavior, revealing critical themes and significant research gaps. Across diverse cultural, demographic, and methodological lenses, the literature underscores the dynamic interplay between generations in shaping consumer preferences, brand relationships, and identity construction.

Traditionally, much of the literature has emphasized unidirectional influence, that is, from parents to children (John, 1999; Moore & Wilkie, 2005). This aligns with classical consumer socialization theory where children are perceived as passive recipients of values and brand loyalties passed down by their parents. However, more recent studies challenge this model. For instance, Mandrik et al. (2018) provide evidence of strong daughter-to-mother influence in China, especially in modern product categories such as fashion, health, and technology. This shift reflects a growing reciprocity in influence, particularly in cultures undergoing rapid modernization. These findings suggest critical cultural mediation in how influence flows within families. In collectivist cultures like China, while parental authority remains respected, younger generations are increasingly seen as sources of knowledge—particularly in areas of media, tech, and lifestyle trends. This phenomenon is under-explored and ripe for deeper investigation through longitudinal and cross-generational studies.

The relationship between intergenerational brand transmission and consumer identity is another central theme. Chaudhary et al. (2020) illustrate how children develop emotional attachments and self-brand connections not only from personal experiences but also from inherited family brand traditions. Brands, in this context, become symbolic vessels of familial continuity and trust. Likewise, Khan et al. (2022) extend this perspective to the realm of counterfeit luxury consumption, demonstrating that millennials often engage with counterfeit brands not purely for economic reasons, but as a form of generational identity signaling. This reflects a broader need to integrate identity theory and symbolic consumption into studies of family influence. It raises intriguing questions about how brands serve as conduits of generational meaning and whether such meanings differ across cultural or product contexts.

Furthermore, the widening digital divide between generations has introduced new dynamics in consumption behavior. As noted by Khan et al. (2022), technology-related products are not only consumed but also mediated by younger generations who often act as technology stewards for their families. This role reversal marks a significant departure from traditional hierarchies of knowledge within families and suggests that younger generations now shape family decision-making in ways that are both practical and symbolic. Yet, few studies have formally examined the implications of digital competence on intergenerational consumption patterns. Future studies could explore how this reversal affects brand trust, choice, and loyalty within the household, especially as digital transformation reshapes the way consumers interact with brands.

As well as studies, it becomes clear that generational cohort theory (Schewe & Noble, 2000) provides a powerful segmentation tool. Each cohort (e.g., Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z) exhibits distinct consumption motivations, values, and brand perceptions. However, most existing work focuses on Millennials, with limited attention to the emerging Gen Z or Gen Alpha groups. Given their digital fluency and exposure to global cultures, these younger cohorts may demonstrate unique intergenerational relationships, possibly more peer- or influencer-driven than parent-driven. Understanding how these shifts affect long-term brand loyalty and market engagement is crucial for both scholars and practitioners.

Finally, methodologically, most reviewed studies employ qualitative interviews, self-reported surveys, or cross-sectional designs. While these approaches offer rich insights, they often lack generalizability or causal inference. Future research should diversify methods by incorporating experimental designs, big data analytics, and longitudinal family tracking, which can uncover temporal patterns and deeper causality in intergenerational influence mechanisms. Below are the research gap and suggestions for further research.

Table 4. Research Gap and Future Research

Focus Area	Identified Gap	Future Research Suggestion	Why Important?
Brand Identity and Emotional Meaning	Limited focus on emotional and symbolic dimensions of inherited brands	Explore how intergenerational brand attachment shape's identity, emotion and long-term loyalty	Helps explain how brands serve as emotional and cultural connectors across generations
Direction of Influence	Few theoretical models that explain child-to-parent influence in consumption	Develop dynamic models of reciprocal influence across generations and product categories	Reflect current reality where the children can guide their parents especially in digital and lifestyle decisions
Cultural Orientation (Collectivism and Individualism)	Dominance of single country studies, lack of multi-cultural comparison	Conduct comparative studies across individualistic and collectivist culture in different country	Enhance understanding of how cultural values shape intergenerational lifestyle alignment
Lifestyle and Product Category	Lack of clarity on which product category are most transferable across generations	Investigate intergenerational difference across product type (eco-friendly, digital goods and luxury goods)	Support better market segmentation and product targeting based on generational lifestyle alignment
Advertising and Media Exposure	Underexplored generational differences in media processing and advertising influence	Examine how traditional versus digital media impacts the intergenerational brand perception and recall	Help marketers to tailor the message across age groups, considering different media habits.
Peer Influence and Family Interaction	Insufficient research on the interaction between peer and family influence.	Analyze how the peer group and social media can moderate or even enhance family-based brand transmission.	Provide an updated view of consumer socialization in the context of youth culture and digital platform

4. CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review demonstrates that the intergenerational consumer behavior is shaped by a dynamic interplay of cultural values, generational identity, product categories and digital influence. While the earlier studies emphasized a unidirectional influence from parents to children, the recent research revealed a growing bidirectional and dynamic influence, particularly among digital native generation who increasingly influence of family consumption decisions.

The findings underscore the role of emotional brand attachment, symbolic meaning and generational experience in shaping the brand loyalty. For instance, the younger generation may embrace or reject the brand tradition not only because of the function or heritage but as reflection of personal and cultural identity. Noticeably, generational behavior such as Millennials' embrace of counterfeit luxury or Gen Z's alignment with sustainability-driven brand, reflect the evolving consumption motivation that goes beyond the economic utility.

For future research, this study can suggest several research gaps that can be settled, which is the comparison of cross-cultural, deeper research about reciprocal influence patterns, exploration of emotional conflict, and further research methods especially experimental methods. For the practical impact, this review can provide critical insights about how brand can navigate multigenerational markets. Firm must design an excellent marketing strategy that reflects the intergenerational complexity like acknowledging the traditional brand value while integrating modern digital narrative.

While this research offers valuable insights into the pattern and themes of intergenerational consumer behavior, several limitations should be recognized. First, this study is based solely on articles that are retrieved from Emerald database using a specific set of keywords. This choice while ensuring the database credibility but can exclude the relevant studies which published in different prominent databases such as Scopus and Web of Science. The second is although the review identifies key thematic cluster, the synthesis is narrative and descriptive, not a meta-analytic. Therefore, it does not quantitatively measure the strength of relationship of each construct. Finally, the temporal range between 2001 until 2024 may miss the emerging development in real time issues, especially regarding the Alpha generation and post-pandemic consumer behavior.

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