

# AN EXAMINATION OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION TOWARD ONLINE FOOD SHOPPING DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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**Wahyuningsih**

Department of Management, Tadulako University, Indonesia

**Hanny Nasution**

Center for Empowerment Research, Australia

**Ratna Roostika**

Department of Management, Universitas Islam Indonesia, Indonesia

**Yulia Hendri Yeni**

Economic Faculty, Universitas Andalas, Indonesia

**Abstract:** Customer satisfaction has been considered a key strategic indicator to enhance marketing performance. This study was conducted to compare the satisfaction level of consumers toward online food shopping based on generational differences. The data were collected from consumers who purchase food from the restaurant using the online application across Indonesia. The cross-sectional data were collected utilizing an online questionnaire using Google online application. A total of 445 responses were found to be valid. Descriptive statistics analysis and independent sample T-test were employed to describe behavior in purchasing food online and the difference in customer satisfaction perceived by two generational cohorts. The results show that Gen Y and Gen Z have a significantly different levels of satisfaction. Gen Y feels a higher level of satisfaction than Gen Z. The managerial implications for restaurant managers and service providers are offered. Future research might investigate customer satisfaction for other generational cohorts, for instance, Baby Boomers, generation X, and others. In addition, future research might be conducted for different cultural backgrounds by adding other variables (eWOM, loyalty, marketing performance) resulting from customer satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Customer Satisfaction, Generational Cohort, Online Food Shopping

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*Corresponding Author:*  
Wahyuningsih, Department of  
Management, Tadulako Uni-  
versity, Indonesia, E-mail:  
wahyuningsih.wahyuningsih@  
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There has been extensive research on customer satisfaction over the last few years. However, most of these studies have investigated levels of customer satisfaction at an aggregate

level or for the entire market (segment Lim et al., 2020; Evelina et al., 2020). Although there have been several studies examining satisfaction for the different market segments, for example, Nhu (2020) and Hayat et al. (2020), based on age differences, the division of the market segmentation is still lacking. Traditionally, birth age can be employed as a

useful way to create market segments (Chen, 2010). Nevertheless, Schewe and Meredith (2004) argue that birth age may describe segments, but it does not help understand segment motivations. They suggest using generational cohort theory, a highly accurate and more effective method to define the market. Based on this argument, there is a need to fill the gap by investigating levels of satisfaction based on generational cohorts, specifically younger generations.

Several previous studies have utilized generational cohorts as one of the bases for market segmentation (Gursoy et al., 2008; Lo et al., 2020). That studies have determined the range of periods of each generation, and it is still debatable. For instance, Carpenter et al. (2012) argue that Silent Generation refers to a cohort of people born between 1925 and 1942, Baby Boomers born between 1943 and 1960, Gen-X born between 1961 and 1981, and Gen-Y, known as Millennials, born between 1982 and 2000. Meanwhile, Johnston (2013) stated that Gen-X was born between 1961-1981, Gen-Y was born between 1982-1991, and Gen-Z was born between 1992-2000. Hence, it can be noticed that at least there are five generations consisting of Baby Boomers, Gen-X, Gen-Y, Gen-Z, and Gen Alpha. Among these five generations, this study focuses on segmenting two younger generations, i.e., Gen Y and Gen Z.

Along with the development of information and technology, there has been an impact on people's shopping behavior, including food. Moreover, since the Covid-19 pandemic, consumers have purchased online food to avoid virus transmission from other people. Online food shopping is growing in popularity among consumers and restaurants because it benefits both parties (Kimes, 2011). Consumers embrace food online shopping because of its ease, speed, and precision (Dixon et al., 2009; Tomacruz and Flor, 2018), while restaurants see the potential for increased revenue and fewer errors. Restaurants have an opportunity to provide online ordering through their website or other applications such as Go-food, Grab-food, etc. (Suhartanto et al., 2019). Kimes (2011) stated that online ordering has increased revenue, capacity management, productivity, transactional marketing, and customer relation-

ship management. Hence, research on consumer behavior in purchasing online food is critical.

A variety of food types and services provided and served by restaurants will affect the level of satisfaction perceived by the consumer. All companies attempt to increase their customer satisfaction in many ways. That is due to customer satisfaction has been considered a key strategic indicator and a profit generator (Basari and Shamsudin, 2020). Higher customer satisfaction insulates customers from competitors and enhances a company's reputation in the marketplace (Anderson and Sullivan, 1993; Fornell, 1992). For consumers to perceive high levels of satisfaction, companies must be able to identify and serve the consumers based on market segmentation. One variable for undertaking market segmentation is based on generational cohorts. As pointed out by (Parment, 2013; Rudolph and Zacher, 2020), consumers with different generational cohort backgrounds tend to perform different attitudes and behaviors; therefore, they tend to have different satisfaction levels (Taylor and DiPietro, 2017). Based on this argument, the objective of this study is to examine customer satisfaction with online food shopping for Gen Z and Gen Y.

Based on the argument, this study contributes to the body of knowledge in the marketing field, specifically about customer satisfaction. Besides, the study offers more insight into segmentation based on the generational cohort. Restaurant managers might benefit from this research to increase customer satisfaction by providing healthy and safe food from a health perspective. Hence, the objective of this study is to examine customer satisfaction for Generation Z and Generation Y in their decision to purchase food from a restaurant using an application online.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Generational Cohort Theory**

The generational cohort theory divides the population based on the year they were born (Kamenidou et al., 2020; Lissitsa and Kol, 2016). A generational cohort is presumed to have different characteristics exclusively assigned to that group (Zwanka and Buff, 2020). In line with this definition, Schewe and

Meredith (2004, p.51) defined a cohort as a group of individuals born during the same period and traveled through life together. The generational cohort has been applied in various research fields, such as social sciences, psychology, human resource management, mass communication, and marketing (Chen, 2010; Egri and Ralston, 2004; Schewe and Meredith, 2004; Zwanka and Buff, 2020). People born in the same period share similar key historical or social life experiences (Kupperschmidt, 2000). The effects of those key life experiences will be relatively stable throughout their lives (Smola and Sutton, 2002) and will affect different behaviors and beliefs of each generation.

Previous studies have examined at least five generations (Carpenter et al., 2012; Twenge, 2015), namely Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X (Gen X), Generation Y (Gen Y), and Generation Z (Gen Z). Silent Generation defines as a group of people born between 1925 and 1942 and Baby Boomer born between 1943 and 1960. Further, Gen X is a cohort of people born between 1965-1979, Gen Y was born between 1980-1994, and Gen Z was born between 1995-2000. These previous studies indicate that people born in the same period tend to show the same attitudes and behavior.

### **Customer Satisfaction**

The study of customer satisfaction has attracted the attention of academics and practitioners (Aksu et al., 2021). It is due to companies that can provide optimum customer satisfaction that will improve their performance (McQuitty et al., 2000). In line with this argument, Shankar et al. (2003) suggest that customer satisfaction is a key success factor in increasing a company's profit. Satisfied consumers will tend to make repeat purchases to become loyal customers (Lin et al., 2020). Moreover, loyal customers are less likely to switch purchase products from other companies (Suryawardani and Wulandari, 2020). This argument is supported by the study of Anderson and Sullivan (1993). They suggest that higher customer satisfaction insulates customers from competitors, enhances a firm's reputation in the marketplace, and lowers the costs of attracting and transacting with new customers. Based on these

studies, it can be emphasized that customer satisfaction is a key strategic factor in profitability.

Along with the increase of study on customer satisfaction, there is diversity in its measurement. Oliver (1980) stated that, there are two main scales to measure customer satisfaction: perceived performance and perceived disconfirmation. Meanwhile, Parasuraman et al. (1998) and Ueltschy et al. (2004) suggest that quality is a scale to measure customer satisfaction. Further, other measures of customer satisfaction are expectation (Bendall-Lyon and Powers, 2004) and overall satisfaction (Hultman et al., 2019). Based on these studies, determinants of customer satisfaction consist mainly of four constructs: performance, quality, expectation, and disconfirmation (Wahyuningsih, 2011).

### **METHOD**

An online survey and a descriptive research design were conducted to collect potential respondents' data. Data were collected using Google online survey from March until June 2020 during the pandemic Covid-19. The target sample was consumers who purchased food from the restaurant using the online application. The responses represented all provinces in Indonesia. A comparison of early and late respondents was not significant for all the variables tested. It indicates that non-response error is not a major problem.

A pilot study with 30 respondents was conducted during the last week of April 2020. Revisions based on the pre-test feedback were incorporated into the final questionnaire to improve clarity and validity. A total of 445 responses were found to be valid. Measurements of this research have employed exciting literature. This study utilized expectation, feeling, performance, and overall satisfaction to measure customer satisfaction. These measurements were adapted from previous studies (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2012; Oliver, 1980; Wirtz and Bateson, 1999). This study adopts Shams et al. (2020) To determine the cohort of Gen Y and Gen Z. Gen Y is defined as a cohort who was born between 1980-1994 (aged between 26-40 years old in 2020) and Gen Z between 1995-2000 (aged between 20-25 years old in 2020). This study employed nominal and ordinal

scales for questions related to the characteristics of respondents. The questions related to customer satisfaction were measured using a 1-7 Likert scale ranging from very dissatisfied to very satisfied.

Various analytical techniques were used after collecting quantitative data from online surveys. Descriptive statistic was used to provide an overview of the respondents' characteristics. Multivariate methods were used to assess the reliability and validity of the constructs. Specifically, the independent sample T-test was employed to test the difference in customer satisfaction perceived by Gen Z and Gen Y.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Characteristics of Respondents

The results show that of 445 respondents, there are 289 respondents (64.9%) categorized as Gen Z and 156 respondents (35.1%) as Gen Y. Further, it

shows that 58.7% of the respondents were females. A dominant number of females in this study indicates that women are usually responsible for providing food at home. The profile of respondents concerning their educational background was as follows: below senior high school (2.5%), senior high school (33.3%), diploma (1.3%), bachelor's degree (45.6%), master's degree (15.1%), and doctoral degree (2.2%).

Job or occupations of respondents consist of students (53.9%), private employees (15.3%), entrepreneurs (7.2%), work for the government (15.3%), housewives (2.5%), and others (5.8%). The questionnaire was mostly distributed in student groups on social media, so the results are dominated by undergraduate and postgraduate students. Most of these students have been using food online because they do not live with their parents but rather live in a boarding house or dormitory. Therefore,

Table 1. Summary of Respondents' Characteristics

Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	%
Generation type	Gen Z	289	64.9
	Gen Y	156	35.1
Gender	Female	261	58.7
	Male	184	41.3
Education	<Senior high school	11	2.5
	Senior high school	148	33.3
	Diploma (D1/D2/D3/D4)	6	1.3
	Bachelor's degree (S1)	203	45.6
	Master's degree (S2)	67	15.1
	Doctoral degree (S3)	10	2.2
Job/occupation	Students	240	53.9
	Private employees	68	15.3
	Entrepreneurs	32	7.2
	Work for the government (civil servant)	68	15.3
	Housewife	11	2.5
	Others	26	5.8
Expenses	≤IDR.1000,000	133	29.9
	IDR.1000,000-2,500,000	133	29.9
	IDR. 2,500,001-5,000,000	108	24.3
	IDR. 5,000,000-7,500,000	42	9.4
	>IDR 7,500,000	29	6.5

they purchase food online for convenience reasons. The average expense of respondents per month was below IDR 1,000,000 (29.9%), IDR 1,000,000-2,500,000 (29.9%), IDR 2,500,001-5,000,000 (24.3%), IDR 5,000,000-7,500,000 (9.4%), and more than IDR 7,500,000 (6.5%). Most respondents have an average monthly expense of below IDR 1,000,000-2,500,000 because they are students. A summary of respondents' characteristics in more detail can be seen in Table 1.

### Online Food Shopping Behavior of Gen Y and Gen Z

Research on the behavior of Gen Y and Gen Z in shopping for food online will be explained in Table 2. The frequency of online food shopping was dominated by respondents who purchased 1-5 times within the past three months (62.9%). Restaurant managers should also consider that 20% of respondents purchased more than ten times. This result indicates a potential market for food sellers to take advantage of this opportunity. Consumer behavior related to the type of restaurant selected by con-

sumers is dominated by fast-casual or food courts (43.8%). That agrees with the food type consumers most choose: fast food (40%). These results suggest that young generations (Gen Y and Gen Z) prefer to purchase fast food. These findings are parallel with the argument of Schwieger and Ladwig (2018) and Weinswig (2016), who point out that Gen Y and Gen Z are pragmatic persons and fast-changing consumer technologies; therefore, they will seek home-delivered food (Suhartanto et al., 2019).

Further, Gen Y and Gen Z indicate a different number of frequencies in purchasing online food (depicted in Figure 1). The results show that Gen Z made more food purchases, i.e., 1-5 times. Meanwhile, Gen Z was shopping for food more frequently, i.e., 6-10 times. That is reasonable since Gen Y is the older generation investigated in this study. Hence they have made more purchases. These two generations belong to the same generation. Both are consumptive, addicted to technology, and love to shop for food online. Due to Gen Y performing more purchases, they perceive a higher level of satisfaction than Gen Z.

Table 2. Online food shopping behavior

Behavior	Categories	Frequency	%
Online shopping frequency	1-5 times	280	62.9
	6-10 times	76	17.1
	More than 10 times	89	20.0
Restaurant types	Fast casual/ food court	195	43.8
	Café	26	5.8
	Restaurant	131	29.4
	Booth	75	16.9
	Others	18	4.0
Food types	Fast food	178	40.0
	Main dishes	139	31.2
	Snack/light meals	74	16.6
	Beverages	41	9.2
	Others	13	2.9
Online shopping applications	'GoFood'	227	51.0
	'GrabFood'	139	31.2
	Restaurant Website	2	0.4
	'WhatsApp'	70	15.7

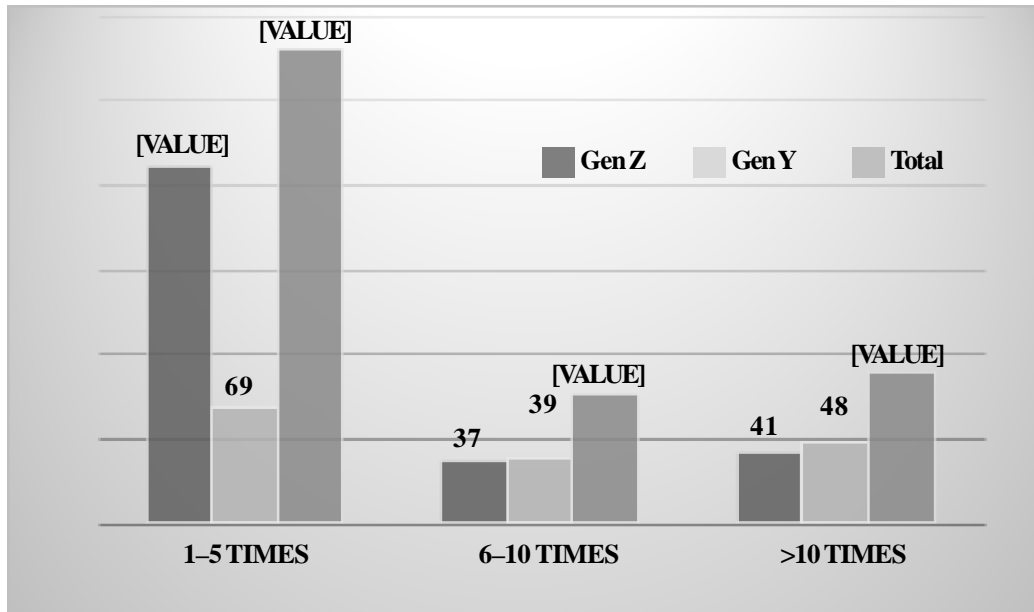


Figure 1. Shop frequency for Gen Z and Gen Y

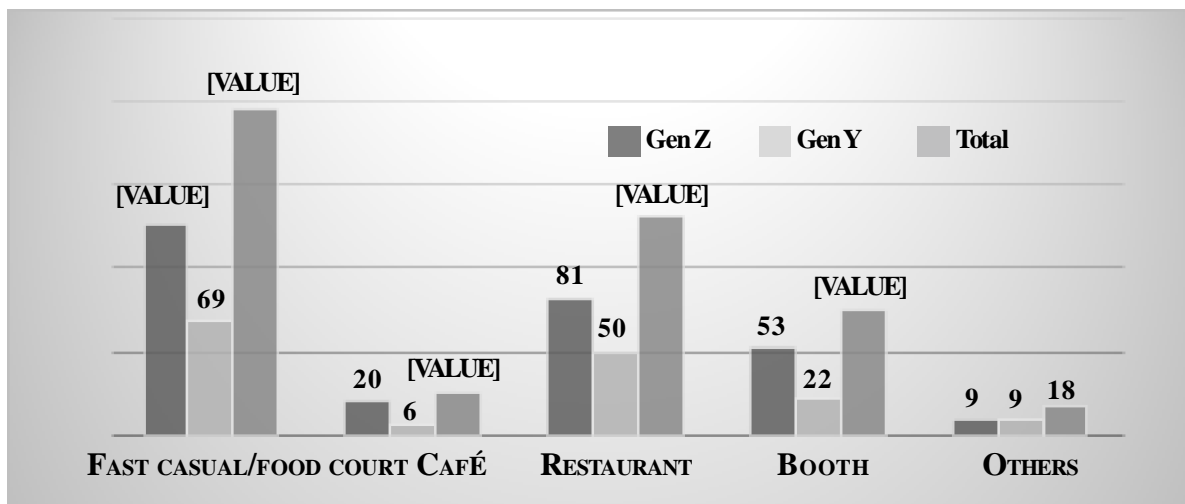


Figure 2. Restaurant types selected by Gen Z and Gen Y

Gen Z and Gen Y have similarities in selecting the type of restaurant, wherein these two generations prefer to purchase food from fast-casual/food courts (presented in Figure 2). Both of these generations seek instant service by relying on convenience in payment and comfort in delivery (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2012). These kinds of convenience also

purchase food online because of its convenience due to no need to cook and dress up (Tomacruz and Flor, 2018).

As depicted in Figure 3, the results of this study indicate that fast food is the type of food favored by Gen Z and Gen Y. They explained that the types of food they bought were a burger, french fries, fried

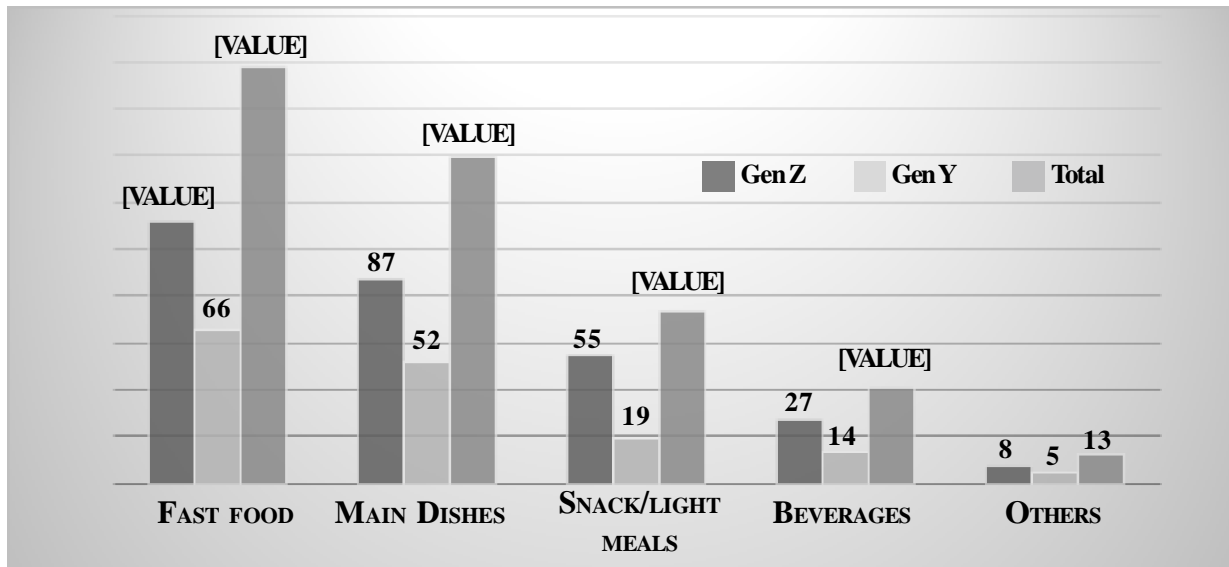


Figure 3. Food types selected by Gen Z and Gen Y

chicken, etc. They are less likely to shop for food from restaurants because the price is relatively higher, the food is not tasty, and it is more suitable for older generations. Although only 74 respondents (16.6%) out of 445, the most proportion who choose light meals or snacks is Gen Z., this result indicates that the younger generation buys more food that is not categorized as main dishes.

Gen Z and Gen Y use the GoFood application more than any other application (Figure 4). However, when analyzed in more detail, Gen Z utilizes more GrabFood applications (71.2%) than Gen Y (28.8%). These results indicate that GoFood is more familiar and utilized by Gen Y. In contrast, GrabFood is more familiar and utilized by Gen Z. Only a few respondents used restaurant web applications to purchase food online.

### Levels of Satisfaction Perceived by Gen Y and Gen Z

The independent sample T-test results show significantly different satisfaction levels between Gen Z and Gen Y. Gen Y perceived a higher level of satisfaction than Gen Z, with a mean value of 5.72 and 5.56, respectively. It can be seen in table 3 and figure 5. Further, the results show that from the two

components of customer satisfaction, i.e., expectation and performance, both of them were perceived differently by Gen Z and Gen Y. The results indicate that the performance of food purchased by Gen Y from the restaurant almost exceeded their expectation. Meanwhile, Gen Z felt that the version of food they bought from the restaurant just met their expectations. Hence, Gen Y perceived a higher level of satisfaction than Gen Z.

Significant differences were found between Gen Z and Gen Y related to their satisfaction with online food shopping. Wherein Gen Y perceived a higher level of satisfaction than Gen Z. The reasons underlying this finding may be explained as follows. Gen Y, as the older generation investigated in this study, they have more experience in purchasing products in their lives, including food. In other words, Gen Y, as the older generation than Gen Z, has collected more information about food and restaurants than Gen Z. Gen Y will evaluate alternatives to have the opportunity to select restaurants and food performance that meet their expectations. Sladek and Grabinger (2020) stated that Gen Y and Gen Z grew up with two vastly different parenting styles, affecting how they approach personal and work-related problems.

Table 3. Result of Independent Sample T-test

Components of Customer Satisfaction	MEANGenZ	MEANGenY	F Ratio	Sig.	Result
Expectation	5.51	5.71	4.639	0.032*	Gen Y > Gen Z
Performance	5.55	5.80	8.171	0.004**	Gen Y > Gen Z
Overall satisfaction	5.56	5.72	6.256	0.013*	Gen Y > Gen Z

\* = p<0.05, \*\* =p<0.01, \*\*\* =p<0.001

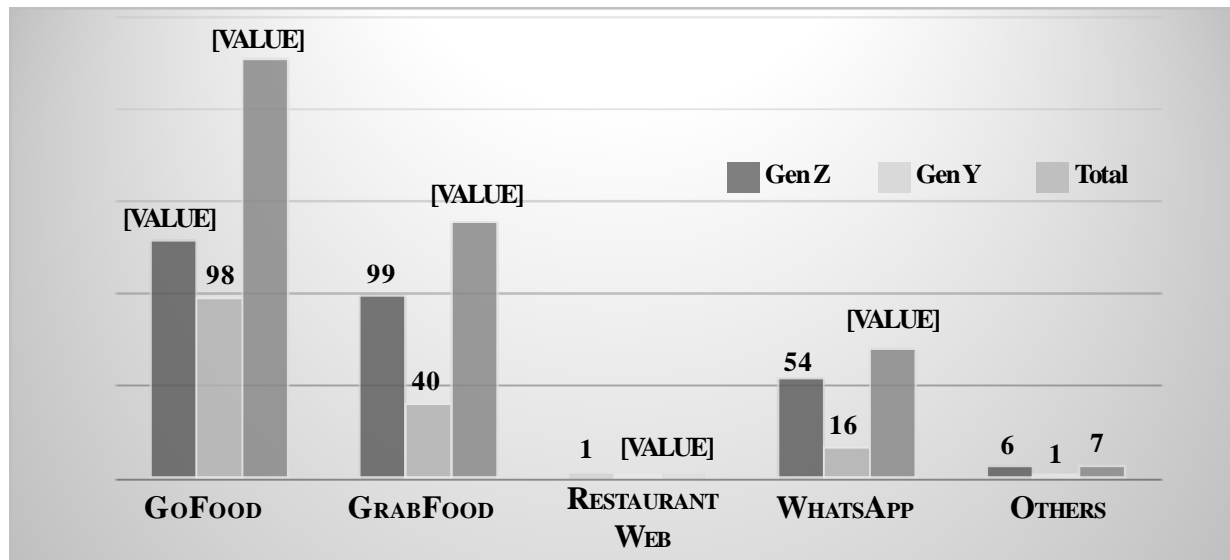


Figure 4. Online shopping application selected by Gen Z and Gen Y

Moreover, Chuah et al. (2017) argue that different generations tend to expose different attitudes and behavior when they respond to the market. Hence, Gen Y and Gen Z perform different behaviors, including their level of satisfaction in purchasing a product. It is supported by Shamsudin et al. (2020) study that Generation Z is the younger generation who increasingly difficult to satisfy when they buy food.

This study has investigated segmentation based on generation differences. It will be able to understand more about consumers' motivation than using only the age approach. Traditionally, birth age can be employed as a helpful way to create market segments. Nevertheless, Schewe and Meredith (2004) point out that birth age may describe segments, but it does not help understand segment motivations. Hence, using the generational cohort approach is a

highly accurate and more effective method to define market segments (Chen, 2010).

### CONCLUSIONS

Based on the objective of this study, which is to investigate customer satisfaction based on generational cohort, the finding of this study has shown that Gen Y and Gen Z perceive a different level of satisfaction toward online food shopping. More precisely, as the older generation, Gen Y perceived a higher level of satisfaction than Gen Z.

Creating customer satisfaction is one of the company's strategies to increase marketing performance. Therefore, the company needs to deliver a higher level of satisfaction to its customers. The company might not provide the same treatment to all customers since each segment has different pref-



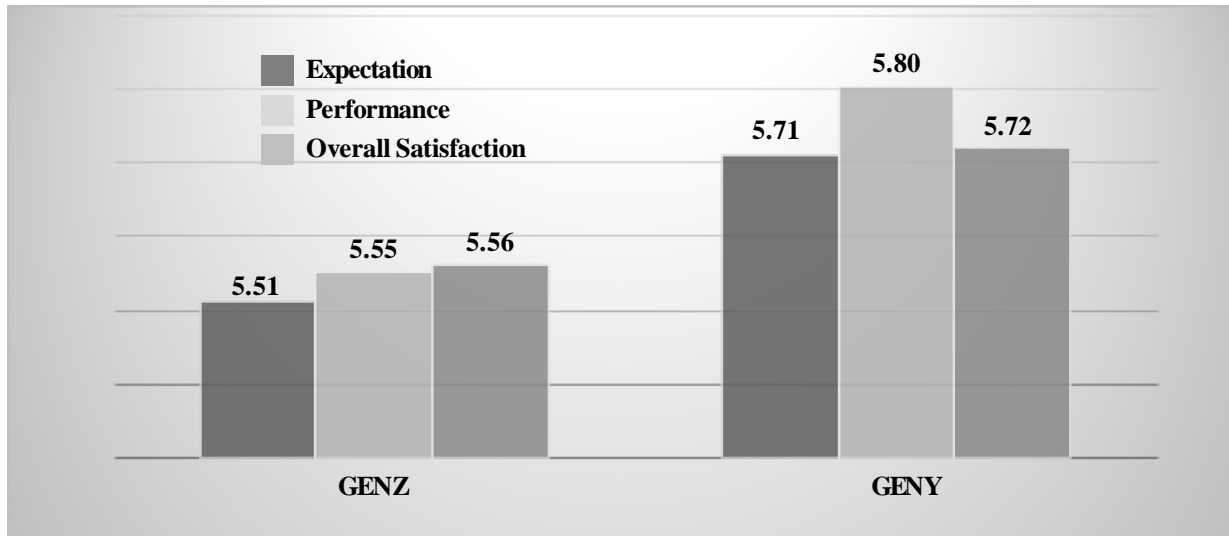


Figure 5. Level of Customer Satisfaction for Gen Z and Gen Y

erences and perform other behavior. One of the segmentation approaches utilized in this study is generational cohorts.

### IMPLICATIONS

Managerial implications of this study are offered. First, to increase levels of satisfaction perceived by consumers, managers and service providers need to improve convenience, including the convenience of putting the order, procedure of delivery, and payment. Second, this study suggests managers and service providers assure transaction security which consumers generally utilize online payment. Finally, managers and service providers are advised to enhance their performance, especially restaurant managers who need to improve food quality to increase customer satisfaction.

### LIMITATIONS

This study has investigated customer satisfaction limited to two generations, generation Y and generation Z. Future research might investigate customer satisfaction for other generational cohorts, for instance, Baby Boomers, generation X, and others. The focus of this study is limited to the level of satisfaction perceived by the customer. Therefore, future studies are suggested to examine the effect

of customer satisfaction on loyalty across different generations, from Baby Boomers to the Alpha generation. In addition, customer satisfaction research might be carried out for different ethnicities or cultures.

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