



# Navigating the Shifting Outdoor Equipment Market: Oztent's Challenges and Opportunities in Engaging Generation Z Consumers During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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**Abstract.** This study explores the challenges and opportunities for Oztent, an Australian outdoor equipment brand, in the changing outdoor equipment market during COVID-19. It aims to understand Generation Z consumer preferences and perceptions of Oztent's camping products. The findings reveal that Gen Z respondents have limited awareness of the brand, highlighting the need for Oztent to prioritize product quality, engage with younger demographics on social media, and align product attributes with consumer values. The study underscores the significance of targeted brand recognition strategies and effective marketing communication through digital platforms to enhance brand awareness and loyalty among Generation Z consumers.

**Keywords:** Outdoor equipment market; COVID-19; Generation Z; Consumer preferences; Brand awareness; Social media Marketing communication.

## 1 Introduction

Oztent, a reputable Australian outdoor equipment brand with a 30-year history, is recognized for its innovative outdoor gear, particularly its high-quality and durable tents. These tents are renowned for their ease of setup and comfort, catering to the needs of outdoor enthusiasts seeking reliable and convenient camping solutions. Prioritizing quality, Oztent has established itself as a trusted brand in the outdoor industry, offering not only tents but also camping furniture, sleeping bags, and accessories aimed at enhancing the outdoor experience. With a focus on quality, Oztent has become a trusted brand in the industry. Their award-winning tent can be built in just 30 seconds and has received positive feedback for its convenience, comfort, and reliability in extreme weather conditions. This core value sets Oztent apart from other brands and demonstrates their ability to meet the needs of modern campers who prioritize fast, convenient, and high-quality camping experiences.

Nevertheless, in recent years, Oztent has encountered challenges stemming from external factors. Specifically, the Australian outdoor equipment market has performed poorly compared to Oztent's global operations. In contrast, China's outdoor equipment

market is thriving and expected to reach \$4.464 billion by 2024, while Australia's market size is estimated to be less than \$100 million[22]. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped consumer behavior, leading to an increase in outdoor activity for health and well-being[1].

These challenges also present opportunities for Oztent. The pandemic has accelerated digital transformation and online shopping trends even after its effects subside[10]. Understanding evolving consumer preferences among emerging demographics is crucial during this time. Gen Z, with significant purchasing power and a preference for outdoor experiences, should be targeted by Oztent to stimulate market growth and competitiveness[12; 24; 3].

Oztent needs to seize the opportunity presented by the underperformance of the Australian outdoor equipment market and global market competition. The company should aim to meet emerging consumer demands, particularly from individuals seeking a healthy lifestyle and nature experiences, through the introduction of innovative products and services. Given their significant purchasing power and influential role in shaping consumer trends, Gen Z should be a key consideration in Oztent's product development and marketing strategies. By strategically catering to the preferences of this influential consumer group, Oztent can enhance its market position, augment its brand appeal, and remain competitive in an ever-evolving marketplace.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Brand Awareness**

Brand awareness plays a crucial role in ensuring the long-term success of a brand. A brand that enjoys high recognition is more likely to be identified by consumers and distinguish itself in a competitive market [6]. By allocating time, effort, and resources towards bolstering brand awareness, brands underscore their commitment to continual growth and sustained relevance in the marketplace [13]. Moreover, brand awareness serves as a potent indicator of service quality and commitment, signaling the brand's long-term presence, broad product or service distribution, and consumer trust [14].

A brand endowed with robust brand awareness can facilitate the cultivation of brand assets by molding consumers' perceptions of brand value. Furthermore, strong brand awareness can engender positive brand recognition, foster heightened consumer loyalty, and augment sales revenue [16]. Businesses can enhance brand awareness through various strategies, including well-crafted marketing campaigns, initiatives aimed at increasing brand exposure, and reinforcement of brand recognition elements [4]. An effective plan should delineate specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound goals to guide marketing activities and facilitate progress monitoring [17].

Social media marketing plays a pivotal role in augmenting brand awareness through its facilitation of virtual interaction, provision of incentives, and enhancement of information dissemination systems. Companies utilize social media platforms to promote their offerings, provide prompt customer support, and foster online communities for the dissemination of brand-related information among consumers [11]. Content marketing is also a key strategy for amplifying brand visibility. Through the dis-

semination of compelling, high-quality content across social networks, brands can effectively capture consumer attention and deepen their understanding of the brand and its products [5]. Furthermore, collaborating with relevant influencers enables brands to extend their reach to a broader audience, fostering authentic conversations and engagement that seamlessly integrate the brand into the lives of target consumers [3].

Therefore, enhancing brand awareness is not only crucial for long-term success but also the foundation for connecting with contemporary consumers, especially the digitally engaged Gen Z group. By effectively utilizing strategies such as social media marketing, content marketing, and influencer collaborations, brands can establish a robust brand presence within a competitive marketplace.

## 2.2 The Consumption Habits of Gen Z

Generation Z, typically defined as individuals aged between 18 and 35, exhibit a distinctive set of traits including independence, emotionality, expressiveness, innovation, and curiosity. They demonstrate openness to diverse forms of communication and display a heightened propensity for consumption compared to preceding generations. However, they often struggle with short-term planning and critical thinking [23]. Within the realm of consumer behavior, digital channels hold the importance for Generation Z, with an emphasis on four specific platforms [9]. Notably, Generation Z regards social media influencers as credible sources of information, akin to well-educated acquaintances [21]. This trust stems from their desire for authenticity, leading Generation Z consumers to favor brands that genuinely convey emotions and values [15].

Compared to preceding generations, Generation Z demonstrates distinctive preferences in digital engagement, particularly emphasizing brand authenticity and sustainability. When making purchasing decisions, they prioritize factors such as product price, design, production location, and materials used for sustainability [7]. This inclination of Generation Z not only underscores their commitment to sustainable development but also signifies their willingness to endorse brands that align with their sustainability standards and even boycott companies that fall short of these standards [20]. Moreover, research indicates that Generation Z seeks not only the product itself but also a sense of resonance and identification with peers throughout the consumption journey. Their self-concept is heavily influenced by belonging to a community, underscoring the significance for marketers to effectively leverage peer interaction and influence.

However, we cannot overlook the significant influence of the Covid-19 pandemic on the consumption behavior of Generation Z. Throughout the outbreak, Gen Z's shopping habits have evolved to become more practical and cautious. They exhibit a propensity for making informed purchasing decisions by analyzing diverse digital content pertaining to products or brands, and they demonstrate heightened thriftiness by actively seeking methods to reduce costs [2].

In summary, Generation Z is known for the proficiency in digital technology and the unique approach to brand interaction. Having matured in an era where technology

permeates daily life, they possess advanced skills in navigating the digital landscape. This demographic remains intricately connected to the broader world through various social media platforms, significantly influencing their preferences and behaviors in brand engagement. Authenticity and transparency rank among the paramount values for Generation Z, as they seek genuine connections over conventional advertising tactics. They exhibit a preference for brands that align with their values and offer personalized experiences. Therefore, businesses need to adapt their marketing strategies to effectively engage this tech-savvy generation and establish resonance with them.

### **3 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The research adopts a survey-based approach as the primary method of data collection, focusing on Generation Z individuals aged 18 to 30, in the Australian Market. This methodology aims to examine the perceptions of this target demographic towards outdoor camping products and to identify the key factors shaping their purchasing decisions. A sample size of 75 respondents is anticipated to be obtained, serving as the foundational dataset for the research. Quantitative analysis techniques will be employed to enhance objectivity and augment the research's reference value. Conducting a survey helps to capture standardized responses from a diverse cohort, increasing our sample size and ensuring a variety of perspectives for robust analysis[18]. These insights will help assess Oztent's efficacy as a marketing tool for this demographic.

Specifically, the survey investigates income levels, previous camping experiences, the frequency of camping, purchasing habits for related accessories, and engagement in outdoor activities—all pertinent to understanding the consumer behavior of our target group. Data collection was conducted through convenience sampling within the author's network for expedient and cost-effective recruitment, while acknowledging that this non-random selection method could introduce bias, potentially impacting the study's generalizability [19].

Furthermore, the survey delves into the economic diversity of respondents and their camping habits, preferences for accommodations, and motivations for camping, yielding insights for targeted marketing strategies. Additionally, the analysis of tent purchasing locations and brand preferences provides a deeper understanding of the current market trends relevant to Generation Z consumers.

#### **3.2 Data Collection**

We administered a concise 24-question survey to gather data on brand awareness and customer engagement with Oztent among Generation Z. The survey had four sections: Demographic Information, Awareness of Oztent, Quality Perception, and Engagement Activities. It aimed to collect demographic details, assess brand familiarity, understand the importance of product quality for consumers, and explore their engagement

preferences on social media and outdoor activities. This structure will help us analyze how brand awareness influences the purchasing decisions of Gen Z consumers interested in camping and outdoor activities. In our forthcoming analysis, we will use regression to explore the relationship between brand awareness and various dimensions of customer engagement.

## 4 Result

The research findings reveal that a substantial majority of Gen Z respondents, accounting for 80%, lack familiarity with Oztent, underscoring a deficiency in brand awareness (see Table 1). This underscores a crucial area for improvement in marketing communications, necessitating strategic customization to align with the distinct characteristics and behaviors of this demographic, thereby fostering trust and loyalty. Conversely, a noteworthy proportion of respondents, totaling 77.3%, possess prior camping experience, indicating an opportune avenue for Oztent to engage with this cohort more effectively (see Table 1).

The research underscores the significance of quality and durability as pivotal factors influencing purchasing decisions, with an overwhelming majority of respondents (78.7%) prioritizing these attributes(see Table 1). This underscores the necessity for marketing campaigns to center around showcasing Oztent's product excellence in these domains. Moreover, the study underlines the importance of social media in reaching younger demographics, particularly Generation Z, with Instagram identified as the most popular platform, followed by WeChat, as well as others such as Facebook, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, and Reddit (see Table 1). This underscores the importance of social media as a key channel in Oztent's marketing strategy to enhance brand awareness and engagement within this critical consumer segment.

**Table 1.**Results on Generation Z’s Brand Awareness of Oztent and Factors Influencing Purchase Decision

Category	Results
Age Range	8-30 years old (100%)
Annual Income	Less than \$18,200 (34.7%), \$18,200 to \$120,000 (25.3%), \$45,001 to \$120,000 (24%)
Previous Camping Experience	have been camping before (77.3%)
Most Important Tent Attribute	Quality/Durability(78.7%), Price(8%)
Least Important Tent Attribute	Set-up Time(42.7%),Portability(29.3%),Price(16%), Waterproofing(9.3%)
Most Used Social Media Platform	Instagram (45.3%) Wechat (30.7%) Facebook (10.7%)

## 5 Discussion

This study investigates the relationship between brand awareness and Generation Z consumer engagement, unveiling that Gen Z places greater emphasis on product quality and durability over price, portability, and ease of installation. Therefore, Oztent should prioritize these attributes in its marketing communications to captivate the attention and interest of Gen Z consumers. Research indicates a notable gap in brand awareness of Oztent among potential consumers aged 18-30, with many individuals being unfamiliar with the brand. This underscores a unique opportunity for Oztent to bridge this gap through targeted marketing strategies. These strategies should not only underscore product quality but also leverage the most active digital platforms for Gen Z, particularly Instagram and TikTok. These platforms wield considerable influence in shaping brand image and purchase decisions, serving as primary channels for acquiring brand information and conducting comparisons. Encouraging Gen Z to share their experiences with Oztent products fosters a sense of value and significance, as they contribute to the brand narrative[8]. Such participatory initiatives not only heighten brand visibility but also reinforce community engagement and brand loyalty through user-generated content.

Based on these findings, Oztent can strategically position itself in the market by accentuating the quality and durability of its products, directly catering to the core needs of Generation Z consumers. By bolstering its presence on social platforms like Instagram, Oztent can augment brand awareness and effectively engage with potential customers, exerting greater influence.

In summary, this study underscores the significance of targeted brand recognition strategies in increasing engagement among Generation Z consumers. It emphasizes the necessity of aligning product attributes with consumer values and utilizing digital platforms for marketing communication. Future research could further explore how specific marketing strategies directly impact Gen Z consumer behavior and purchasing decisions to provide deeper insights for brands.

## 6 Conclusion

In conclusion, Oztent can strategically position itself by emphasizing product quality and durability, meeting the core needs of Generation Z consumers. By increasing brand awareness through platforms like Instagram, Oztent can effectively engage potential customers and have a greater influence. This research highlights the significance of understanding Generation Z consumer behavior and using digital platforms for effective marketing to drive brand awareness and loyalty. Ultimately, by adapting to the evolving preferences of Generation Z and engaging them through tailored marketing strategies, Oztent can enhance its market position and remain competitive in the outdoor equipment industry.

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