

AI-ASSISTED VISUAL DECISION MAKING: THE ROLE OF IMAGE UPLOADS IN SKINCARE AND OUTFIT SELECTION AMONG GEN Z

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Article Received: 20 July 2026, Article Revised: 10 August 2026, Published on: 30 August 2026

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Doi: <https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijarp.8432>

ABSTRACT

The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) in consumer applications has significantly transformed how Generation Z (Gen Z) engages with decision-making processes, particularly in the domains of skincare and fashion. This study investigates the role of AI-assisted visual decision-making tools, such as ChatGPT and similar platforms, that utilize uploaded images to generate personalized recommendations. Focusing on Gen Z, a digitally native cohort, the research explores their perceptions, trust levels, and behavioral responses to AI-generated suggestions. Using a descriptive research design and primary data collection, the findings reveal that AI-driven visual tools enhance personalization, improve confidence in decision-making, and influence purchase intentions. However, concerns regarding data privacy and algorithmic bias remain significant. The study offers insights for marketers, developers, and policymakers to better cater to Gen Z consumers in the digital era.

KEYWORDS: Artificial Intelligence, Gen Z, Visual Decision Making, Skincare, Fashion, Personalization, Consumer Behavior.

Full Paper

1. INTRODUCTION

Generation Z (born approximately between 1997 and 2012) represents a highly digital-savvy consumer segment that actively engages with emerging technologies. Their preferences are shaped by social media, digital platforms, and personalized experiences. In this context, artificial intelligence (AI) tools that allow users to upload images for skincare and outfit recommendations are gaining popularity.

AI-assisted platforms analyze facial features, skin conditions, and body aesthetics to provide customized suggestions. For Gen Z, who value individuality, convenience, and instant feedback, such tools offer an innovative way to make informed decisions. However, the increasing dependence on AI also raises questions about authenticity, privacy, and trust.

This study aims to understand how Gen Z interacts with AI-driven visual decision-making systems and how these technologies influence their consumption behavior.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 AI in Consumer Behavior

- AI enhances consumer decision-making by analyzing large datasets and offering predictive recommendations, thereby reducing cognitive effort and uncertainty (Huang & Rust, 2021).
- Wedel and Kannan (2016) highlight that AI-driven analytics enable firms to understand consumer preferences in real time, improving marketing effectiveness.
- Davenport et al. (2020) argue that AI systems act as “decision aids,” guiding consumers toward optimal choices through algorithmic suggestions.
- Shankar (2018) emphasizes that AI personal assistants influence purchase decisions by providing instant, context-aware recommendations.
- Kaplan and Haenlein (2019) note that AI transforms the consumer journey by automating search, evaluation, and selection processes.

2.2 Characteristics of Gen Z Consumers

- Gen Z is highly digital-native, having grown up with smartphones and social media, which shapes their consumption patterns (Priporas et al., 2020).
- Francis and Hoefel (2018) describe Gen Z as value-driven consumers who seek authenticity, personalization, and interactive experiences.
- Djafarova and Bowes (2021) found that Gen Z heavily relies on visual platforms like Instagram and TikTok for fashion and beauty inspiration.

- Turner (2015) states that Gen Z prefers instant access to information and quick decision-making tools, making them ideal adopters of AI technologies.
- Dabija et al. (2019) highlight that Gen Z consumers are more experimental and open to technological innovations compared to previous generations.

2.3 Visual Decision-Making and Image-Based AI

- Image-based AI systems use deep learning algorithms to interpret visual data, improving recommendation accuracy in fashion and skincare (Liu et al., 2020).
- Sun et al. (2019) suggest that visual search technologies enhance user engagement by allowing consumers to search using images instead of text.
- Kang et al. (2020) found that visual AI increases perceived usefulness and ease of use in online shopping environments.
- Park et al. (2018) argue that visual-based recommendations reduce product evaluation time and improve decision satisfaction.
- De Vries et al. (2019) emphasize that visual cues significantly influence consumer perception, especially in appearance-related products.

2.4 Personalization and Consumer Satisfaction

- Personalization improves customer satisfaction by delivering relevant and tailored experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 2019).
- Bleier and Eisenbeiss (2015) found that personalized product recommendations increase purchase intention and customer loyalty.
- Tam and Ho (2006) highlight that customized interfaces enhance user engagement and decision quality.
- Arora et al. (2008) suggest that personalization creates perceived value, leading to higher consumer retention.
- Lemon and Verhoef (2016) emphasize that personalized experiences across touchpoints significantly improve overall customer journey satisfaction.

2.5 Trust, Ethics, and Privacy Concerns

- Trust in AI systems is crucial for adoption, as users must believe in the accuracy and fairness of recommendations (Grewal et al., 2020).
- Zuboff (2019) warns that excessive data collection can lead to surveillance concerns and reduced consumer trust.
- Martin and Murphy (2017) highlight that privacy concerns negatively impact willingness to share personal data online.

- Binns et al. (2018) emphasize the importance of algorithmic transparency to ensure fairness and accountability.
- Lwin et al. (2020) found that younger consumers, including Gen Z, are aware of privacy risks but still engage with digital platforms due to perceived benefits.

3. Research Objectives

- To examine the adoption of AI-based image upload tools among Gen Z
- To analyze the impact of visual AI on skincare and outfit decision-making
- To evaluate the role of personalization in influencing satisfaction and purchase intention
- To identify concerns related to privacy and trust among Gen Z users

4. Research Methodology

- **Research Design:** Descriptive and analytical research design is adopted.
- **Target Population:** Gen Z consumers (aged 18–27).
- **Data Collection:** Primary data collected through structured questionnaires distributed online.
- **Sample Size:** 70 respondents.
- **Sampling Technique:** Convenience sampling.
- **Tools for Analysis:** Percentage analysis

5. Data Analysis

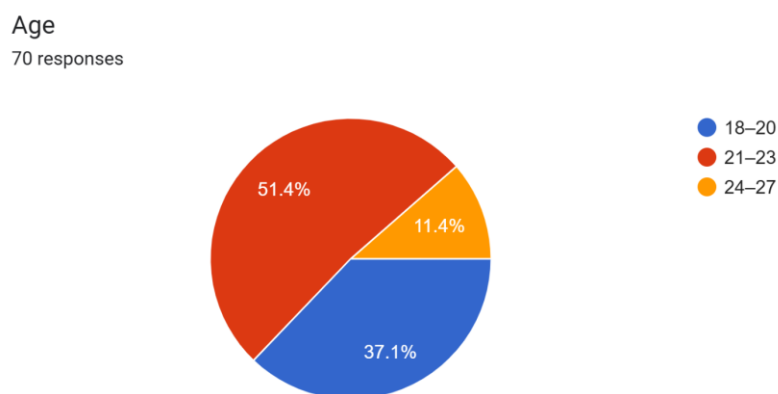


Figure 5.1: Age distribution.

Source: Primary Source

From the above figure , 51. 4 percent belong to the age group of 21-23, 37.1 percent belong to 18-20 and remaining 24-27.

Gender
70 responses

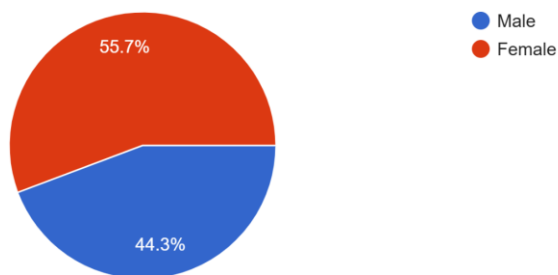


Figure 5.2: Gender Distribution of Respondents.

Source: Primary Source

From the above figure, 55.7 percent are female and 44.3 percent are male.

Education Level
70 responses

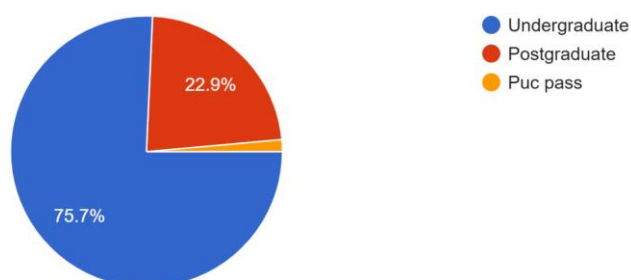


Figure 5.3: Educational Qualification of Respondents.

Source: Primary Source

From the above figure 75.7 percent are Undergraduate, 22.9 percent are Postgraduate and 1.4 percent are PUC pass.

Table 5.1: Occupational Status of Respondents.

Occupation	Respondents	Percentage
Student	53	75.7
Employed	11	15.7
Self-employed	5	7.2
Unemployed	1	1.4

Source: Primary Source

From the above table, 75.7 percent are Students 15.7 percent are Employed 7.2 percent are self Employed and 1.4 percent are Unemployed.

Have you ever uploaded your photo to get AI-based recommendations?
70 responses

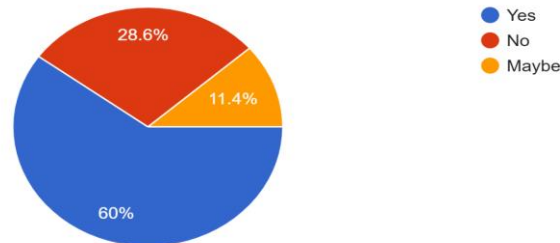


Figure 5.4: Adoption of AI-Based Image Upload for Recommendations.

Source: Primary Source

From the above figure, it is evident that a significant majority of the 70 respondents, specifically 60%, have uploaded their photos to receive AI-based recommendations. In contrast, 28.6% stated they have not done so, while a smaller segment of 11.4% remains unsure, selecting "Maybe."

Table 5.2: Preferred Platforms for AI-Based Recommendations.

	Respondents	Percentage
AI Agent (ChatGPT, Gensmo, Manifest AI)	60	85.7
Beauty Apps (NXTFACE, Cetaphil AI Skin Analysis, TroveSkin)	6	8.6
Fashion Apps (Style.ai, Myntra (MyStylist), Acloset)	11	15.7
Social Media (Instagram's "Visual Search" & AR Filters, Pinterest "Lens" , Snapchat AR Lenses)	10	14.3
None	1	1.4

Source: Primary Source

From the above table, AI agents are the most dominant tools with about 85.7 percent adoption, while fashion apps 15.7 percent and social media AI tools 14.3 percent , and beauty apps have the lowest usage at 8.6%, with only 1.4% of respondents not using any AI platforms at all.

Table 5.3 Sources of Awareness about AI Tools.

	Respondents	Percentage
Social Media	<i>41</i>	<i>58.6</i>
Friends/Peers	<i>16</i>	<i>22.8</i>
Ads	<i>2</i>	<i>2.9</i>
Online Search	<i>11</i>	<i>15.7</i>

Source: Primary Source

From the above table, Social media is the primary source of awareness at 58.6 percent , followed by friends/peers at 22.8 percent, online search at 15.7 percent , and advertisements contributing the least at just 2.9 percent.

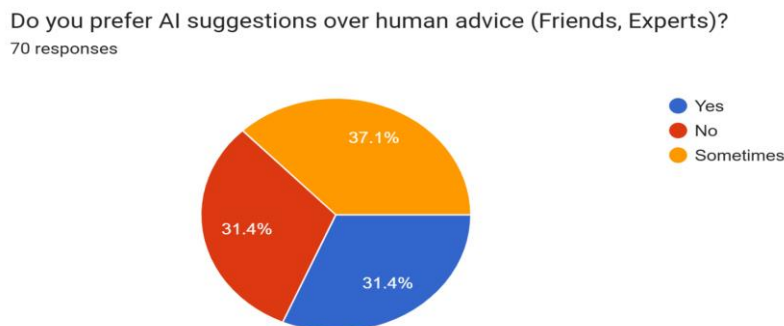


Figure 5.5: Preference for AI Suggestions vs Human Advice.

Source: Primary Source

For the above figure, preferences are mixed, with 37.1% of respondents sometimes relying on both AI and human advice, while an equal 31.4% each prefer either AI or human suggestions exclusively.

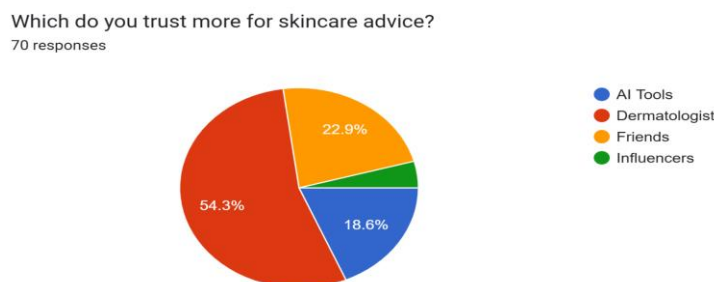


Figure 5.6: Trust in Sources for Skincare Advice.

Source: Primary Source

For the above figure, dermatologists are the most trusted for skincare advice 54.3 percent , followed by friends 22.9 percent and AI tools 18.6 percent, while influencers are the least trusted 4.2 percent.

Which do you trust more for outfit selection?
70 responses

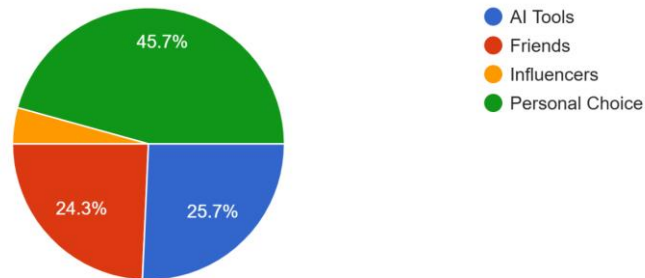


Figure 5.7: Trust in Sources for Outfit Selection.

Source: Primary Source

For the above figure, 45.7 percent rely on personal choice for outfit selection , with AI tools 25.7 percent and friends 24.3 percent having similar levels of trust, and influencers again being the least trusted 4.3 percent.

How often do you follow AI recommendations?
70 responses

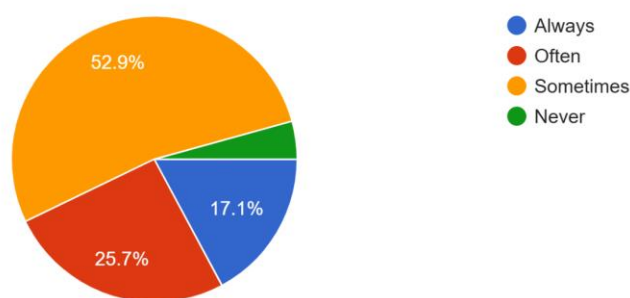


Figure 5.8: Frequency of Following AI Recommendations.

Source: Primary Source

For the above figure, most respondents follow AI recommendations occasionally 52.9 percent , while 25.7 percent follow them often, 17.1 percent percent always follow them, and only about 4.3 percent never do.

Have you purchased a product based on AI recommendation?
70 responses

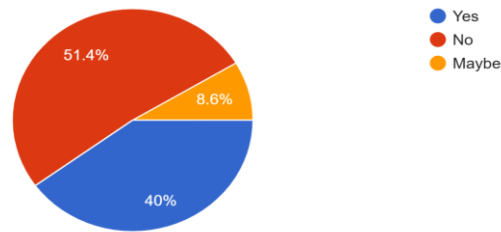


Figure 5.9: Purchase Decisions Influenced by AI Recommendations.

Source: Primary Source

For the above figure, over half of the respondents 51.4 percent have not made purchases based solely on AI recommendations, while 40 percent have done so and 8.6 percent remain unsure.

Do AI suggestions reduce your confusion while choosing products?
70 responses

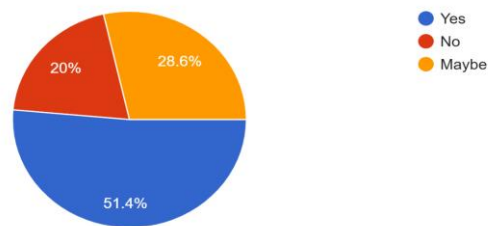


Figure 5.10: Impact of AI in Reducing Decision-Making Confusion.

Source: Primary Source

For the above figure, a majority of respondents 51.4 percent feel that AI helps reduce confusion in decision-making, while 28.6 percent are uncertain and 20 percent do not find it helpful.

Do you feel AI recommendations match your personality/style?
70 responses

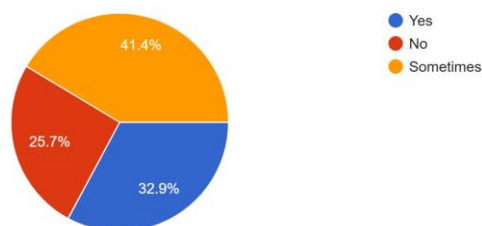


Figure 5.11: Perceived Alignment of AI Recommendations with Personal Style

Source: Primary Source

For the above figure, 41.4 percent of respondents feel that AI recommendations match their personality and style sometimes, 32.9 percent believe they do match, while 25.7 percent feel they do not.

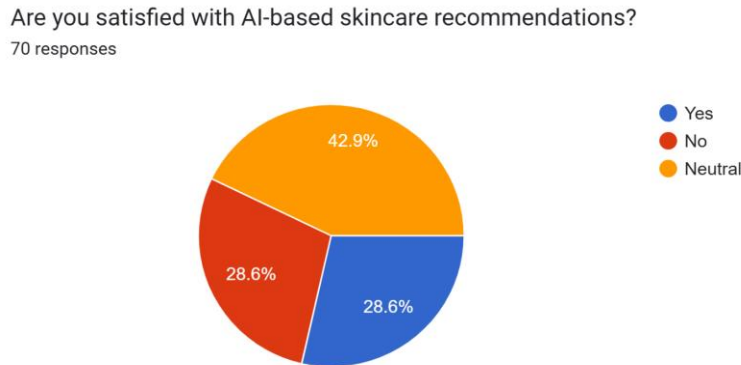


Figure 5.12: Satisfaction with AI-Based Skincare Recommendations.

Source: Primary Source

For the above figure, in AI skincare recommendations, the largest group of respondents 42.9 percent feel neutral, while equal proportions 28.6 percent each either agree or disagree with the effectiveness of AI suggestions.

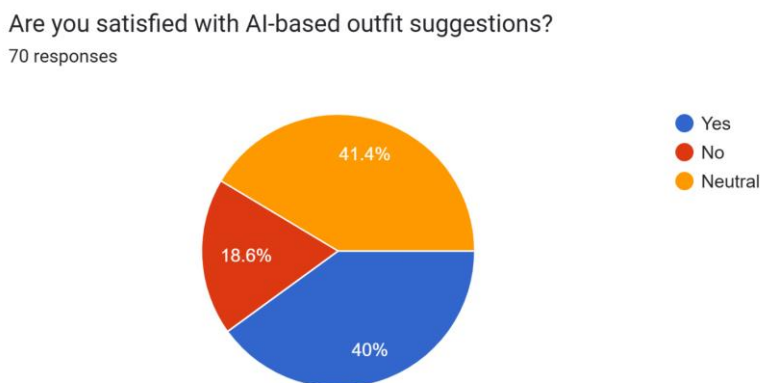


Figure 5.13: Satisfaction with AI-Based Outfit Suggestions.

Source: Primary Source

For the above figure, in AI outfit suggestions, a plurality of respondents are satisfied, with 40 percent answering “Yes,” closely followed by 41.4 percent who feel neutral, and only 18.6 percent expressing dissatisfaction.

Would you recommend these AI tools to others?
70 responses

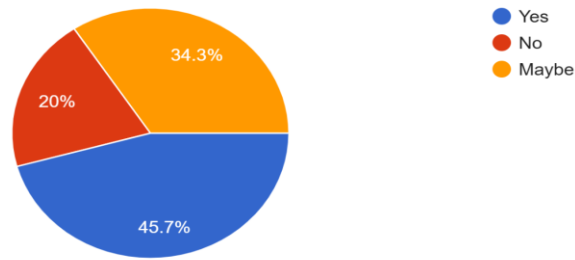


Figure 5.14: Willingness to Recommend AI Tools to Others

Source: Primary Source

For the above figure, a majority of respondents 45.7 percent would recommend AI tools, while 34.3 percent might recommend them and 20 percent would not.

Are you comfortable uploading your photos to AI platforms?
70 responses

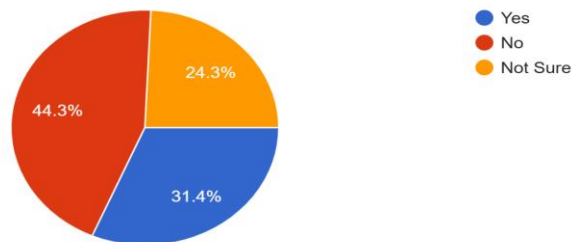


Figure 5.15: Comfort Level in Uploading Photos to AI Platforms.

Source: Primary Source

For the above figure, only 31.4 percent of users are comfortable uploading their photos to AI platforms, whereas 44.3 percent are not comfortable and 24.3 percent remain unsure.

Do you think your data is safe when using AI tools?
70 responses

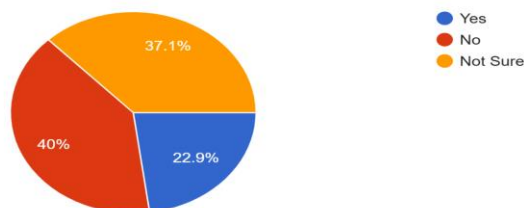


Figure 5.16: Perception of Data Safety in AI Tools

Source: Primary Source

For the above figure, only 22.9 percent of respondents believe their data is safe when using AI tools, while 40 percent do not and 37.1 percent are unsure, indicating that a majority 77.1 percent lack confidence or are uncertain about data security.

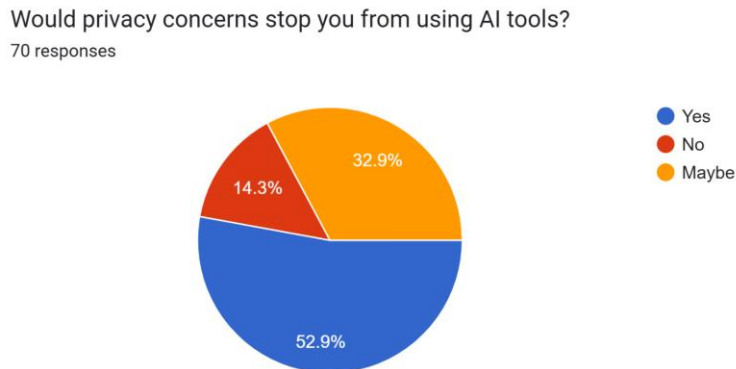


Figure 5.17: Impact of Privacy Concerns on AI Usage

Source: Primary Source

For the above figure, 52.9 percent of respondents say privacy concerns would stop them from using AI tools, 32.9 percent might be affected, and only 14.3 percent would continue using them without concern.

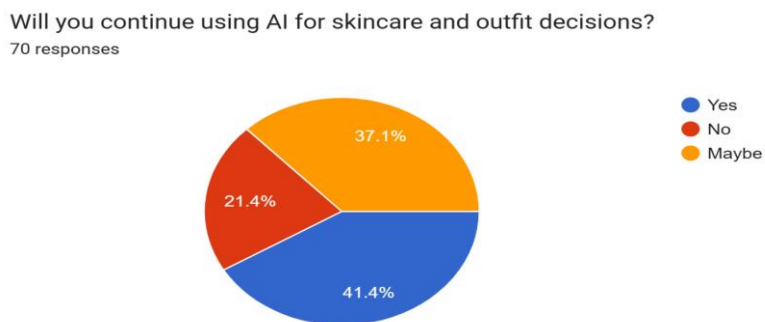


Figure 5.18: Intention to Continue Using AI for Skincare and Outfit Decisions.

Source: Primary Source

For the above figure, 41.4 percent of respondents plan to continue using AI for skincare and outfit decisions, while 37.1% remain undecided. And 21.4 percent of respondents will stop using ai for skincare and outfit decisions.

Do you think AI will replace traditional decision-making methods?
70 responses

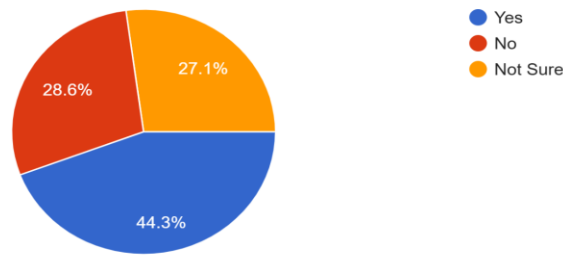


Figure 5.19: Perception of AI Replacing Traditional Decision-Making

Source: Primary Source

For the above figure, nearly half of the respondents 44.3 percent do believe that AI will replace traditional decision-making methods. 28.6 percent believe AI will not be replacing the traditional decision making methods and 27.1 percent are not sure about it.

Do you believe AI tools will improve in the future?
70 responses

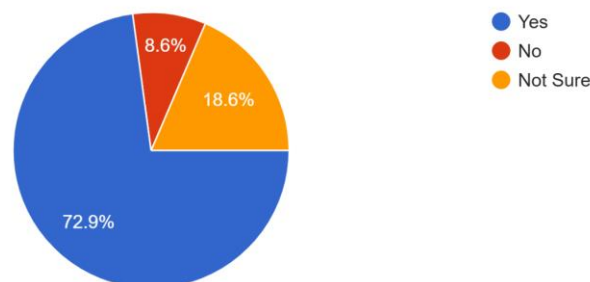


Figure 5.20: Belief in Future Improvement of AI Tools.

Source: Primary Source

For the above figure, a significant majority of respondents 72.9 percent believe that AI tools will improve in the future. 8.6 percent believe that AI tools will not improve and 18.6 percent are not sure.

6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 High Adoption with Platform-Mediated Engagement

60% of Gen Z respondents have used image-upload AI tools, with AI agents like ChatGPT dominating at 85.7% a novel repurposing of general-purpose AI for domain-specific personal decisions. Social media 58.6% drives discovery, not advertising.

6.2 A Conditional Trust Hierarchy:

Trust in AI is domain-dependent. In skincare, dermatologists dominate (54.3%), but AI still outranks influencers 18.6% vs. 4.2%. In fashion, AI 25.7% reaches near-parity with friends 24.3%.

6.3 Decision Confidence and Cognitive Relief:

51.4% say AI reduces confusion; compliance is high 95.7% follow AI recommendations at least occasionally. Yet only 32.9% feel AI consistently matches their personality, exposing a personalization gap.

6.4 Purchase Intent is Real but Not Yet Dominant:

40% have purchased based on an AI recommendation a commercially significant conversion rate. Outfit AI satisfaction exceeds skincare satisfaction, reflecting domain-specific risk perception.

6.5 Privacy as a Structural Barrier:

This is the study's most critical finding. Only 22.9% believe their data is safe; 77.1% lack confidence. Only 31.4% are comfortable uploading photos yet 60% have done so, confirming a biometric privacy paradox that demands urgent regulatory and design attention.

6.6 Optimism and Future Intent:

72.9% believe AI tools will improve; 41.4% plan to continue using them. This represents a conditional mandate for responsible, transparent AI development.

7. Implications of the Study

7.1 Managerial Implications

Businesses should adopt AI-driven personalisation tools to enhance customer engagement and improve decision-making experiences for Gen Z. Improving the accuracy and relevance of recommendations is essential to increase user satisfaction.

7.2 Marketing Implications

Since social media is the main source of awareness, brands should focus on digital and AI-integrated marketing strategies. Interactive campaigns using AI tools can effectively influence Gen Z purchase behaviour.

7.3 Technological Implications

Developers must improve AI accuracy, ensure fairness, and enhance transparency in algorithms. Continuous updates and user feedback integration are important for better personalisation.

7.4 Policy Implications

Strong data protection regulations are needed to address privacy concerns related to image uploads. Ensuring transparency and user consent is crucial for building trust.

7.5 Consumer Implications

Consumers benefit from convenience and personalisation but should remain cautious about privacy and data security while using AI tools.

8. CONCLUSION

AI-assisted visual decision-making tools are reshaping how Gen Z approaches skincare and fashion choices. The ability to upload images and receive personalized recommendations enhances user experience, satisfaction, and confidence. However, issues related to privacy and trust must be addressed to ensure long-term adoption. As Gen Z continues to dominate the consumer market, understanding their interaction with AI technologies becomes crucial for businesses and researchers alike.

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