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Digital Roots: Consumer's Perspective on Youth-Led Startups from Northeast India

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Abstract -- The rise of youth-led startups in Northeast India shows a huge dynamic shift in local entrepreneurs using technology to promote and commercialize the region's rich culture. This study explores the consumer's perspective on these ventures by examining the trust, digital engagement, cultural authenticity and social media visibility, and how these shape the consumer's purchase and attitude. This research has captured insights from consumers across different demographic groups. The key example includes platforms enabling local entrepreneurs to sell handloom products online. As digital literacy is growing and startups build strong online and social engagement, the consumers recognize the value of supporting youth led startups in Northeast India. The responses were collected from 100 consumers.

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of digital technologies has transformed landscapes from across the world offering the youth an opportunity to create. Northeast India consisting of Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Tripura, which is rich in cultural heritage but has limited marketing, poses a challenge for the youth, but digitalization has been a very useful catalyst for the youth-led startups. Youth entrepreneurs are leveraging digital platforms to build start-ups to bring the regional tradition, crafts and cuisine to a global audience. As consumers are becoming more aware of digitalization, understanding the emerging start-ups of the youth has become crucial. Consumer perspective influence acceptance, the brand growth and its sustainability especially for these early ventures that rely on engagement and trust. This study aims to explore consumer views, their digital interaction, attitudes, engagement with these start-ups within the digital ecosystem which then highlights the challenges and opportunities faced by the youth. Ultimately, it shows a deeper understanding by the consumer on these youth-led start-ups in Northeast India.

II. OBJECTIVES

1. To understand perceptions, expectations Sikkim, consumer attitudes, and toward youth-led startups in Northeast India that leverage digital platforms.
2. To evaluate consumer awareness of youth-led startups promoting Northeast Indian culture, products, and traditions digitalization. Through
3. To examine the factors influencing consumer trust and purchase intention toward these startups (e.g., authenticity, digital presence, product quality, cultural value).

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. *A Study on the Growth Progress of Start-Ups in the North East Indian States - Kanchan Hijam, Dr. Kh. Dhiren Meetei, Research Scholar, Professor, Department of Commerce, Manipur University, Imphal, India*

This paper provides an overview of start-up growth in Northeast India, focusing on initiatives like the Start-Up India Campaign, and highlights the significant role of government policies, and local entrepreneurial spirit. It analyses the development across various sectors, especially agriculture.

2. *Growth of startups in northeast region- Jitendra Sinha.*

Many youth-led startups in Northeast India have found success by tailoring products and services to local consumer preferences. For example, businesses that are online fashion houses, selling regional crafts and traditional jewellery catering to consumers seeking authentic, locally inspired products. 'Namhah' connects tea gardens directly to consumers, emphasizing freshness and authenticity, which appeals to those who value quality and origin.

3. Youth Entrepreneurship in the Digital Age: Empowering the Next Generation- Binbin Cui, Transformation Financial Digital Manager at Royal Canadian Mint, Canada.

This paper technologies entrepreneurs, explores how digital empower addressing young both opportunities (global reach, minimal capital investment) and hindrances (digital literacy gaps, limited resources) that shape the consumer and market trends.

4. From idea to impact: How young entrepreneurs are changing the game in 2018- Prof. Dr. MBONIGABA Celestin

Recent research on young entrepreneurship highlights the growing role of technology, social values, and innovation in shaping modern business ventures. Scholars note that millennials and Generation Z have redefined entrepreneurship by combining financial aspirations with a strong sense of socialpurpose (Smith & Jones, 2018; Anderson & Lee, 2018). This shift has given rise to mission-driven enterprises that emphasize sustainability, inclusivity, and ethical practices, positioning entrepreneurship as both a profit-oriented and socially responsible endeavour

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Data Collection

The study adopts a descriptive and quantitative research design to examine consumer perceptions of youth-led startups in Northeast India that utilize digital platforms. Primary data was collected through a structured, Likert-scale-based questionnaire distributed online using convenience sampling, targeting consumers who engage with digital content related to these startups. Secondary data from journals, reports, and published studies supported the theoretical foundation.

Data Analysis Method

The sample responses were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, independent sample t-tests, and chi-square tests to understand relationships among factors such as cultural authenticity, digital trust, product quality, innovation, price perception, and purchase intention, as well as to explore gender-based differences. This methodology enables a systematic evaluation of consumer attitudes and the digital factors influencing their support for youth-led entrepreneurial ventures in the region.

V. DATA ANALYSIS

Pearson Correlation Test

Correlations											
		Q1Numeric	Q2Numeric	Q3Numeric	Q4Numeric	Q5Numeric	Q6Numeric	Q10Numeric	Q11Numeric	Q12Numeric	Q14Numeric
Q1Numeric	Pearson Correlation	1	.867**	.434**	.448**	.417**	.252**	.385**	.370**	.478**	.377**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	.006	<.001	<.001	<.001	.002
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
Q2Numeric	Pearson Correlation	.867**	1	.543**	.480**	.593**	.196*	.390**	.429**	.605**	.446**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001	.035	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
Q3Numeric	Pearson Correlation	.434**	.543**	1	.503**	.578**	.251**	.295**	.392**	.393**	.341**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001	.007	.001	<.001	<.001	.004
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
Q4Numeric	Pearson Correlation	.448**	.480**	.503**	1	.548**	.068	.272**	.456**	.470**	.443**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	.466	.003	<.001	<.001	.006
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
Q5Numeric	Pearson Correlation	.417**	.593**	.578**	.548**	1	.228*	.270**	.450**	.529**	.485**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		.013	.003	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
Q6Numeric	Pearson Correlation	.252**	.196*	.251**	.068	.228*	1	.344**	.197*	.210*	.165
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.035	.007	.466	.013		<.001	.034	.024	.097
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
Q10Numeric	Pearson Correlation	.385**	.390**	.295**	.272**	.270**	.344**	1	.538**	.481**	.336**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	.001	.003	.003	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
Q11Numeric	Pearson Correlation	.370**	.429**	.392**	.456**	.450**	.197*	.538**	1	.503**	.436**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	.034	<.001		<.001	<.001
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among respondents' perceptions of youth-led startups from Northeast India, their attitudes toward cultural authenticity, online presence, product quality, pricing considerations, and purchase intentions. The results reveal consistent, significant, and positive correlations across most variables, indicating that these constructs are strongly interrelated within the consumer decision-making process.

Belief that youth-led startups are innovative- Innovation has a strong correlation with support revealing that innovation is a primary driver of public support for youth entrepreneurship. Consumers seem to associate “culturally rooted” with “authentic” and “crafted with care,” which boosts credibility. Culture is a strategic branding tool for Northeast startups.

Authenticity and trust- Trust is multilayered and arises from three sources: Supportive perception of youth entrepreneurship, cultural authenticity and Quality of digital product representation. Authenticity must be performed and communicated, not assumed. Authenticity is now verified digitally, not just felt emotionally. Consumers expect professionalism online, clear product details, active social media, and consistent branding. Therefore, trust in a startup's online presence is strengthened when authenticity and high-quality product information are present.

Price and purchase intention - Product information is central to converting cultural interest into actual purchase behaviour. Good images and reviews help consumers justify prices and make informed decisions. Thus, product information acts as the bridge between cultural appeal and real purchase intention. Consumers admire cultural roots but still evaluate value for money. Authenticity attracts attention, but rational evaluation drives the final purchase. This suggests that value for money is not only about price it is about justified price through trust and clarity.

Independent sample T-Test using Gender as a group.

Independent Sample Test											
Customer Loyalty (Dependent Variable)						Gender (Independent Variable)					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Constant	1000.000	1	1000.000	100.000	.000	Gender	1000.000	1	1000.000	100.000	.000
Customer Loyalty	1000.000	1	1000.000	100.000	.000						
Total	2000.000	2									
Corrected Total	1000.000	1									

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Constant	1000.000	1	1000.000	100.000	.000	Gender	1000.000	1	1000.000	100.000	.000
Customer Loyalty	1000.000	1	1000.000	100.000	.000						
Total	2000.000	2									
Corrected Total	1000.000	1									

Innovation and support- There is no meaningful difference between males and females in how innovative they perceive youth-led Northeast startups to be. Females show slightly higher support, but the difference is not statistically significant. Females report significantly higher trust in the quality of products/services provided by youth entrepreneurs. There is no difference between male and female perceptions of cultural preservation.

Trust and authenticity- Males and females do not differ in how authenticity affects trust. Both genders show similar levels of trust influenced by a startup's online presence. Both genders show similar levels of trust influenced by a startup's online presence.

Product image and Purchase Intention -There is no gender difference in how product information affects purchase decisions. Men and women are equally likely to buy from startups that emphasize cultural roots. Price-value perception does not differ between genders. Overall, we see that only two variables showed significant gender differences: 1. Females have stronger expectations of culturally rooted products. 2. Females show higher trust in product quality. For all other constructs: innovation, support, authenticity, online trust, product information, cultural branding, and price sensitivity males and females do not differ significantly.

Chi Square Test

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.717 ^a	2	.156
Likelihood Ratio	4.401	2	.111
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.600	1	.206
N of Valid Cases	116		

A Chi-square test of independence was conducted to examine the relationship between gender and responses to awareness. The results indicated that the association was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 3.717$, $df = 2$, $p = .156$). This suggests that male and female respondents did not differ meaningfully in their responses to their awareness, and gender did not have an influence on how participants



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answered this item. Although 33.3% of cells had expected counts below 5, the minimum expected count (3.62) was acceptable, and the overall test result remains interpretable. Therefore, gender and awareness are statistically independent, indicating that both groups show similar views.

VI. FINDINGS

- Consumers who perceive youth-led startups as innovative are more likely to support them and trust their products.
- Cultural authenticity plays a critical role in shaping consumer trust and perceived product quality.
- A strong and professional online presence significantly enhances consumer confidence in youth-led startups.
- Product images, descriptions, and reviews strongly influence purchase decisions, acting as the bridge between cultural appeal and actual buying behaviour.
- Cultural authenticity increases purchase likelihood, but only when supported by clear product information and justified pricing.
- Value for money depends on trust in cultural authenticity and transparency in digital product representation.
- Only two gender-based differences were significant: a) Females expect more culturally rooted products. b) Females show higher trust in product quality.
- No significant gender differences were found for innovation perception, cultural impact, authenticity, online trust, product information influence, purchase likelihood, or price sensitivity

- Awareness levels of youth-led startups do not differ significantly between male and female respondents.

VII. CONCLUSION

The study reveals that consumer perceptions of youth-led startups in Northeast India are shaped by a combination of innovation, cultural authenticity, digital presence, and product clarity. The consumers value startups that blend tradition with modern creativity, and their trust increases when cultural narratives are backed by professional digital communication. While cultural roots attract consumer interest, actual purchasing decisions of the consumers depend heavily on clear product information, strong online visibility, and justified pricing. Gender-based differences are minimal, except for women showing stronger expectations of cultural authenticity and greater trust in product quality. Overall, the findings highlight that digital credibility, authentic storytelling, and transparent product representation are essential for the success and sustainability of youth-led startups in the Northeast. These insights can guide young entrepreneurs in designing culturally grounded yet digitally strong business strategies that resonate with contemporary consumers.

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