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**Aesthetic economy as a driver of commercial space choice among
generation Z**

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***Abstract.** The relevance of the study is driven by profound changes in Generation Z consumer behaviour under the conditions of creative-economy expansion, digital communication and the growing economic importance of intangible value creation. In this context, aesthetic characteristics of commercial spaces move beyond a purely decorative function and become economically significant factors shaping visitation decisions, interaction duration and consumer loyalty. Conventional approaches to analysing commercial space choice increasingly fail to capture the behavioural logic of Generation Z, necessitating a reconsideration of the aesthetic economy as an independent driver of demand.*

The purpose of the article is to identify and theoretically substantiate the impact of aesthetic economy on Generation Z's choice of commercial spaces, as well as to determine applied guidelines for using aesthetic factors as an economic resource to enhance the attractiveness and competitiveness of such spaces.

The study applies system-structural and logical-analytical methods, comparative analysis, and theoretical generalisation to contemporary research on consumer behaviour and the creative economy. Conceptual analysis is employed to



examine behavioural and economic outcomes arising from the implementation of aesthetic solutions in commercial environments.

The study establishes that aesthetic economy influences Generation Z's pre-purchase decisions through emotional perception, symbolic identification and value alignment with commercial spaces. It is demonstrated that aesthetic solutions are translated into measurable economic effects through increased consumer loyalty, extended interaction duration, and the accumulation of intangible added value. Key implementation constraints are identified, including individualised aesthetic perception, limited measurability of aesthetic effects, time lags between design interventions and economic returns, and the risks associated with the commercialisation of authenticity.

The findings substantiate that aesthetic economy functions as a strategic management instrument for commercial spaces oriented towards Generation Z and should be treated as a long-term intangible economic asset rather than a supplementary design component. The integration of aesthetic solutions into demand management and competitiveness strategies for commercial spaces is economically justified. Prospects for further research include the development of quantitative models to assess the intangible added value of aesthetic solutions, the analysis of their interaction with digital platforms, and the investigation of the long-term economic sustainability of aesthetically oriented commercial spaces.

Keywords: *consumer behaviour, experience economy, intangible assets, spatial perception, consumer loyalty, value-based identification, commercial environment, business competitiveness.*



Естетична економіка як драйвер вибору комерційних просторів представниками покоління Z

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***Анотація.** Актуальність дослідження зумовлено трансформацією споживчої поведінки покоління Z в умовах розвитку креативної економіки, цифрової комунікації та зростання ролі нематеріальних чинників конкурентоспроможності комерційних просторів. За цих умов естетичні характеристики простору перестають виконувати суто допоміжну функцію й набувають економічного значення, впливаючи на рішення щодо відвідування, тривалості взаємодії та формування лояльності. Традиційні підходи до аналізу вибору комерційних локацій не повною мірою пояснюють поведінкові моделі покоління Z, що актуалізує потребу в осмисленні естетичної економіки як самостійного драйвера попиту.*

Мета статті полягає у виявленні та науковому обґрунтуванні впливу естетичної економіки на вибір комерційних просторів представниками покоління Z, а також у визначенні прикладних орієнтирів використання естетичних чинників як економічного ресурсу підвищення привабливості та конкурентоспроможності таких просторів.

Методи дослідження включають системно-структурний аналіз, логіко-аналітичні та компаративні методи, узагальнення теоретичних положень сучасних досліджень у сфері споживчої поведінки та креативної економіки, а також концептуальний аналіз поведінкових і економічних наслідків використання естетичних рішень у комерційних середовищах.

У ході дослідження встановлено, що естетична економіка формує докупівельні рішення покоління Z шляхом впливу на емоційне сприйняття,



символічну ідентифікацію та ціннісну релевантність комерційних просторів. Доведено, що естетичні рішення трансформуються у вимірювані економічні ефекти через зростання лояльності, подовження тривалості взаємодії та акумуляцію нематеріальної доданої вартості. Виявлено ключові обмеження практичної реалізації принципів естетичної економіки, пов'язані з індивідуалізацією сприйняття, обмеженою вимірюваністю естетичних ефектів, часовими лагами їх економічної віддачі та ризиками комерціалізації автентичності.

Обґрунтовано, що естетична економіка є важливим інструментом стратегічного управління комерційними просторами, орієнтованими на покоління Z, та має розглядатися як нематеріальний економічний актив довгострокової дії. Показано доцільність інтеграції естетичних рішень у системи управління попитом і конкурентоспроможністю комерційних просторів. Перспективи подальших досліджень пов'язані з розробленням методів кількісного оцінювання нематеріальної доданої вартості естетичних рішень, аналізом їх взаємодії з цифровими платформами та вивченням довгострокової економічної стійкості естетично орієнтованих комерційних просторів.

Ключові слова: *споживча поведінка, економіка досвіду, нематеріальні активи, просторове сприйняття, лояльність споживачів, ціннісна ідентифікація, комерційне середовище, конкурентоспроможність бізнесу.*

Problem statement. In the current context of consumer behavior transformation and the development of creative industries, the aesthetic economy is becoming increasingly important in shaping demand for commercial spaces. For Generation Z, the choice of retail, service, and creative locations is increasingly less determined by functional or price parameters. It is increasingly driven by visual appeal, the symbolic content of space, compliance with value orientations, and the



potential for social communication and self-presentation in the digital environment. It leads to structural shifts in the economy of commercial spaces, where design, atmosphere, and emotional experience become measurable factors in business competitiveness.

From a scientific point of view, the problem lies in the insufficient conceptualization of the relationship between aesthetic economy, generational models of space perception and consumer decision-making processes. Traditional economic and marketing approaches do not fully explain the motivations of Generation Z, which integrates consumption with cultural identity, social responsibility and digital practices. It highlights the need for interdisciplinary models that combine economics, sociology, perceptual psychology and spatial theory to analyze commercial locations as economic and cultural systems.

The practical significance of the study is related to the need to develop new approaches to the design, renovation and management of commercial spaces, taking into account the aesthetic expectations and behavioral patterns of Generation Z. For business, this means finding tools to increase loyalty and economic efficiency through intangible assets, for developers and city management structures – the formation of sustainable and attractive urban environments, and for public policy – the integration of aesthetic factors into the development strategies of the creative economy and urban spaces. Thus, the study of aesthetic economics as a driver of commercial space choice is directly related to the key scientific task of updating theories of consumer behavior and to the practical challenge of increasing the competitiveness of commercial and urban environments.

Analysis of recent research and publications. A review of scientific research by topic reveals four interrelated scientific directions. The first scientific direction concerns the understanding of aesthetics as a tool for visual identity and symbolic communication, shaping basic consumer expectations in the media and cultural environment. In the study of V. Nazarenko, the evolution of makeup is



considered as a means of visual identification in mass culture, which forms recognizable images and indirectly affects the perception of commercial visual spaces [1]. M. Divel analyses creative hairdressing as a form of applied art with a pronounced emotional and therapeutic effect, which enhances the subjective value of the environment for the client [2]. I. Obukhovska considers photography as a means of preserving and popularizing intangible cultural heritage, emphasizing its role in shaping cultural authenticity and aesthetic appeal of space [3]. In summary, this direction confirms that aesthetics for Generation Z acts as a carrier of meanings and social identity; further research should focus on measuring the impact of visual codes on consumer trust and loyalty.

The second direction covers the economic and digital marketing aspects of the aesthetic economy, within which visual appeal is transformed into intangible added value. T. Zaruba demonstrates that using online platforms for selling and booking beauty services provides economic benefits through aesthetically designed service visualizations and convenient digital interaction [4]. K. Kupriienko and co-authors analyze the development of social networks as a leading channel of brand communication, emphasizing that the aesthetics of visual content determine the level of involvement among Generation Z [5]. I. Iasinska establishes a connection between aesthetically structured care programs, the level of their implementation, and the growth of user confidence, which enhances the economic effect of repeated service selection [6]. In general, this direction confirms the economic feasibility of investments in the aesthetic component of digital services; further research should focus on developing models to quantify the economic return on such investments.

The third direction concerns the study of the value and behavioral characteristics of Generation Z, which determine their attitude toward commercial spaces as sources of experience. M. Kryvtsova and O. Soroka characterize Generation Z as a specific socio-economic segment sensitive to the emotional and visual quality of the environment [7]. I. Burachek and co-authors emphasize that for



this generation, a comfortable, aesthetically rich environment is an essential factor in choice and loyalty [8]. C. Giachino and co-authors show that for Generation Z, the aesthetic uniqueness and «experience» of space are key motivators of choice, in particular in the areas of leisure and tourism [9]. The generalization of this direction indicates the dominance of the behavioral logic of experience over purely functional motivations. Further research should be directed at analysing the relationship between value orientations and real spatial behavior of Generation Z.

The fourth direction combines architectural and design research that directly analyses the influence of aesthetic characteristics of commercial spaces on their perception by Generation Z. C. M. Tam and co-authors develop and validate indicators of environmental factors of commercial districts, proving the decisive role of atmosphere and visual integrity [10]. Y. Cheng analyses the spatial design of commercial complexes, taking into account the needs of Generation Z and emphasizing the importance of emotional saturation and the spatial scenario [11]. R. Çetin and S. Anıktar establish a direct relationship between design decisions of shopping centers and behavioral intentions of young consumers [12]. S. Wang and Y. Song reveal the dominance of minimalist aesthetic trends in the perception of coffee shop facades by Generation YZ [13], which is consistent with the results of M. C. Wibowo and co-authors, who quantitatively prove the positive impact of minimalist design on the visual preferences of Generation Z [14]. In general, this direction confirms the key role of aesthetic and architectural solutions as an economic driver in the choice of commercial spaces, and further research should focus on integrating design, psychological, and economic parameters into complex models to assess the effectiveness of environments for Generation Z.

Identification of previously unresolved parts of the general problem.

Despite the active study of the aestheticization of consumption and creative aspects of commercial spaces, significant gaps remain in scientific research. The economically significant characteristics of the aesthetic economy from the



perspective of consumer choice among Generation Z are not sufficiently systematized; the behavioral and value characteristics of this generation are often analysed fragmentarily and out of touch with spatial decisions. The long-term economic consequences of aesthetic decisions, in particular their impact on loyalty, interaction duration, and the creation of intangible value, remain understudied. The scientific and practical problems of implementing the principles of aesthetic economics, related to the individualization of perception, the complexity of quantitative measurement of aesthetic effects and the risks of commercialization of authenticity, are also insufficiently revealed.

The proposed study fills these gaps through a comprehensive economic and behavioral analysis of the aesthetic economy as a factor in the choice of commercial spaces by Generation Z. The work systematizes the key characteristics of the aesthetic economy, substantiates their connection to consumer behavioral responses, and demonstrates the economic consequences of their use. It allows us to expand our theoretical understanding of the problem and to develop applied guidelines for managing commercial spaces that take into account the specifics of Generation Z.

Formulation of the article objectives (statement of the task). The article aims to identify and substantiate the influence of the aesthetic economy on the choice of commercial spaces by Generation Z representatives and to determine guidelines for applying aesthetic factors as an economic resource to increase their attractiveness and competitiveness.

Objectives of the article:

1. To establish the key characteristics of the aesthetic economy that determine the choice of commercial spaces by representatives of Generation Z.
2. To investigate the behavioral and economic effects of aesthetic decisions in commercial spaces, in particular their impact on loyalty, duration of interaction, and intangible added value.



3. To substantiate the scientific and practical problems and directions of implementing aesthetic economy tools in the design and management of commercial spaces focused on Generation Z.

Presentation of the primary research material. Within the framework of the analysis of consumer behavior among Generation Z, aesthetic economy acts not as an auxiliary but as a system-forming factor in the choice of commercial spaces. It is a shift from the rational-functional logic of consumption to a model in which the economic value of space is formed through emotional perception, visual and symbolic saturation, and the ability of space to serve as an environment for self-expression and social visibility. For Generation Z, commercial space is part of a personal and digital narrative; therefore, its aesthetic characteristics directly affect decisions about visits, duration of stay, and repeat visits. In this context, aesthetics is transformed from a decorative element into an economic resource that determines behavioral patterns and commercial performance (table 1).

Table 1

Key characteristics of the aesthetic economy that influence the choice of commercial spaces by Generation Z

Characteristic	Contentual essence	Economic effect
Visual integrity of the space	Consistency of design, color solutions and spatial composition	Formation of the first impression and increasing the likelihood of entry
Symbolic authenticity	Presence of unique meanings, local or value markers	Increase in consumer loyalty and identification with the brand
Emotional atmosphere	Creating a positive emotional state through light, sound, and textures	Extending the time of stay and intensity of interaction
Instagramability	Potential of the space for visual representation in social networks	Free brand distribution and attracting a new audience
Flexibility and scriptability	The possibility of transforming the space into different formats of experience	Adaptation to changing preferences and increasing repeat visits

Source: formed by the author based on [1, p. 169; 3, p. 191–192; 10; 11; 12; 14, p. 239–240]



In practical terms, the above characteristics of the aesthetic economy are realized through a set of managerial and spatial decisions that directly shape the behavior of Generation Z consumers in commercial settings. The visual integrity of the space is formed as an integrated spatial and graphic identity, within which architectural solutions, interior design, navigation, and digital media are subordinated to a single visual code. This approach is demonstrated by flagship formats such as Starbucks Reserve Roastery, where the space is designed as a «theatrical, immersive environment», in which the design, coffee roasting process, and gastronomic zones form a single experience for the visitor [15]. In this case, aesthetic parameters are directly converted into time spent, interaction intensity, and consumers' willingness to return to the space. Symbolic authenticity is realized through the inclusion of local meanings and historical or value markers that resonate with Generation Z's worldview, focused on sustainability, ethics, and emotionally rich impressions. Commercial spaces that consciously articulate their identity (through references to the urban context, ecological materials, cultural narratives) are perceived not only as places of consumption but also as environments of belonging, which strengthen loyalty and willingness to pay for the experience, not just for the product. The emotional atmosphere is formed based on the principles of sensory design: the management of lighting scenarios, color palettes, acoustic backgrounds and tactile materials is aimed at reducing cognitive load and creating a comfortable emotional background. It translates consumption from the level of a utilitarian transaction to the level of a memorable experience, which has its own intangible value for representatives of Generation Z. Of particular importance for this age group is the visual representational appeal in digital networks, when the space is purposefully designed as a source of visual content for social platforms. In this case, the commercial location serves as a «content-generating environment»: visitors independently produce photo and video content, increasing brand reach without additional advertising costs. The Museum of Ice Cream case is illustrative,



where the space is organized as a sequence of bright, sensory-rich installations that encourage interaction and photography; it is this visual and communication logic that has made the project one of the most famous examples of experimental retail and experience-oriented marketing [16]. The flexibility and scriptability of the space complement this mechanism: modular furniture, temporary installations, and the ability to change functional areas quickly make it possible to combine everyday consumption with event formats, creative collaborations, and media content. Thus, aesthetic economics serves as a holistic, practical model in which visual integrity, symbolic authenticity, emotional atmosphere, visual representational appeal in digital networks, and scenario flexibility of space jointly ensure the economic performance of commercial locations focused on Generation Z.

In the behavioral dimension, Generation Z demonstrates a specific type of interaction with the commercial environment, based not on a step-by-step rational analysis but on a rapid perceptual-emotional assessment. This generation perceives visual-spatial and emotional parameters of the environment as signals that are immediately interpreted in terms of personal relevance, psychological comfort, and compliance with their own value orientations. Unlike older generations, for whom space is a context of consumption, for Generation Z it serves as an active «mediator» between the individual's internal state and economic behavior, shaping decisions at the pre-purchase stage (table 2).

Table 2

Behavioral and value responses of Generation Z to visual-emotional stimuli in a commercial environment

Stimulus type	Cognitive processing method	Dominant behavioral response	Economic consequence
Visual image of space	Intuitive assessment of «fit/unfit»	Instant decision about interaction	Entry or refusal without comparing alternatives
Spatial density	Emotional feeling of tension or freedom	Avoidance or selective use	Shortening or lengthening stay
Sensory load	Filtering of excess stimuli	Exhaustion or comfort	Changing the depth of interaction



Stimulus type	Cognitive processing method	Dominant behavioral response	Economic consequence
Symbolic signals	Correlation with own values	Identification or distancing	Formation or blocking of loyalty
Possibility of digital reproduction	Assessment of the representativeness of the experience	Intention to record and distribute	Indirect communication value

Source: formed by the author based on [7; 8; 10, p. 11; 12, p. 278; 13]

In practice, this means that Generation Z's behavior is determined not by the sum of the characteristics of the space, but by how they are subjectively processed. The visual image of the environment works as a trigger for intuitive choice even before the commercial offer is realized. The space is either accepted as emotionally understandable or filtered out without further analysis, which reduces the effectiveness of traditional information and price incentives [7]. The reaction to spatial density and sensory load is clearly behavioral. Generation Z tends to avoid environments that require constant attention or generate a feeling of oversaturation, even if they objectively offer favourable conditions.

In contrast, spaces that allow for «emotional relaxation» are used longer and more often, which, statistically, increases the likelihood of economic interaction as a secondary effect of the stay. The symbolic interpretation of the environment is critical. Generation Z quickly reads signs of insincerity or declarativeness, so discrepancies between visual messages and actual practice are perceived as a breach of trust and lead to behavioral rejection. At the same time, environments that do not impose value narratives but instead allow personal interpretation gain an advantage in building loyalty. The digital continuation of the experience completes the behavioral cycle: the decision to record the stay in the space and share it online indicates the positive integration of the spatial experience into the personal narrative. Under such conditions, Generation Z moves from the role of a passive consumer to an active interpreter and relayer of experience, which adds additional economic value to the commercial environment, though mediated.



Within the economic analysis of commercial spaces, aesthetic decisions should be considered not as elements of design or marketing communication, but as factors in the generation of measurable economic effects. Their impact is manifested indirectly – through changes in consumer behavioral parameters that are not directly related to price or assortment, but determine the overall performance of the space. In this sense, aesthetic solutions serve as a tool for managing intangible assets, particularly loyalty, interaction intensity, and reputation capitalization, which are increasingly considered key sources of long-term added value (table 3).

Table 3

Economic consequences of using aesthetic solutions in commercial spaces

Economic parameter	Manifestation in consumer behavior	Effect formation mechanism	Economic result
Consumer loyalty	Repeat visits without additional incentives	Emotional consolidation of experience	Reduction in customer acquisition costs
Duration of interaction	Extended stay time	Comfort and positive experience	Increased probability of transactions
Frequency of indirect contacts	Voluntary recommendation and mention	Social value of experience	Organic expansion of the audience
Intangible added value	Formation of image attractiveness	Accumulation of symbolic capital	Premiumization of space
Resistance of demand	Reduced sensitivity to price changes	The advantage of experience over price	Increased financial stability

Source: formed by the author based on [2, p. 1907; 4; 5; 6, c. 1175–1176; 10, p. 18; 13]

These economic consequences appear gradually, but are cumulative. Loyalty is formed not from a single interaction, but from multiple positive experiences the consumer associates with a specific space. Under such conditions, repeat visits occur without the use of direct marketing incentives, thereby reducing the average cost of audience retention and increasing the economic efficiency of the space in the long term. Extending the duration of stay is one of the most critical operational effects of aesthetic solutions. In practice, this manifests as an increase in spontaneous, unplanned transactions. At the same time, the economic value of time consists not



only in a direct increase in sales but also in an increase in the probability of repeat interaction, since an extended stay contributes to the emotional consolidation of the space's image in the consumer's mind. Intangible added value is formed through the accumulation of symbolic and reputational capital, which lacks a direct monetary expression but affects the space's ability to retain and monetize attention [2, p. 1907]. Practice shows that commercial spaces with a distinct aesthetic identity over time gain the opportunity for premiumization – both in the form of a higher average check value and through additional revenue formats associated with event activity, collaborations or brand partnerships [10, p. 18]. The stability of demand, driven by the aesthetic component, is reflected in a decrease in consumer price sensitivity. Under conditions in which space is perceived as a valuable, experiential resource, price fluctuations play a secondary role to the risk of losing the desired emotional or social experience. As a result, aesthetic solutions serve as an economic shock absorber, mitigating the impact of competitive pressure and external shocks. Thus, the use of aesthetic solutions in commercial spaces has a clearly expressed economic dimension, in which intangible effects are gradually transformed into sustainable financial benefits.

Several interrelated scientific and practical problems constrain the implementation of the principles of aesthetic economics in commercial spaces. The key one is the high individualization of aesthetic perception, in which the exact spatial and visual solutions are interpreted differently by consumers depending on cultural experience, social identity, and personal expectations, significantly reducing the predictability of behavioral effects and complicating the standardization of design solutions [12, p. 279]. No less significant is the limited measurability of aesthetic results, since their impact is manifested mainly indirectly – through emotional experience, symbolic value and long-term loyalty, which are difficult to formalize within the framework of traditional economic performance indicators [10, p. 9]. The time lag between implementing aesthetic solutions and receiving



economic benefits remains a problem that contradicts the short-term logic of commercial planning. At the same time, an additional threat is the risk of the commercialization of authenticity, when the scaling of successful aesthetic concepts leads to their standardization, loss of uniqueness, and devaluation of meanings, ultimately resulting in a loss of trust and behavioral rejection by Generation Z.

The development of practical recommendations for the use of aesthetic economy tools in commercial spaces focused on Generation Z should be based on integrating aesthetics into the strategic management system, rather than on their fragmentary application as a design technique. In the design of such spaces, aesthetic solutions should be based on the logic of the consumer's behavioral scenario, providing control over the first impression, support for psychological comfort, and the possibility of flexible interaction without forced commercial pressure. Management of visual-spatial parameters should focus on minimizing sensory overload and ensuring aesthetic coherence, thereby increasing the duration of voluntary stay and laying the groundwork for loyalty. In the managerial dimension, it is advisable to consider aesthetics as an intangible asset, the effectiveness of which is assessed through repeat visits, audience stability, and reduced-price sensitivity, rather than solely through direct sales. To prevent the devaluation of authenticity, it is recommended to abandon template copying of successful visual concepts and instead develop a spatial identity grounded in local context, real sustainability practices, and a transparent value position. It is also essential to introduce adaptive management mechanisms that regularly adjust aesthetic decisions based on behavioral data, rather than relying on one-time design decisions.

Given the digital behavior of Generation Z, the management of commercial spaces should address the relationship between the physical environment and its digital reflection, without artificially stimulating visual showiness. It is recommended to create spatial conditions for the voluntary representation of experience, in which the digital activity of consumers is a consequence of the



positive integration of space into a personal narrative, rather than an end in itself. Taken together, such approaches allow using the tools of aesthetic economics to manage demand and enhance the competitiveness of commercial spaces aligned with the values and behavioral characteristics of Generation Z.

Conclusions. The study found that aesthetic economics is an independent economic factor in Generation Z's choice of commercial spaces, influencing consumer behavior earlier and more strongly than traditional price and functional parameters. For representatives of this generation, the aesthetic characteristics of space act as signals of value, emotional and social relevance, shaping decisions about interaction, duration of stay, and repeated choice. It is proven that aesthetic decisions translate into measurable economic effects through loyalty, the intensity of interaction, and the accumulation of intangible added value. It was found that the main scientific and practical problems of implementing the principles of aesthetic economics are the individualization of aesthetic perception, the limitations of tools for quantitative measurement of intangible effects, time lags between the implementation of aesthetic decisions and economic results, as well as the risks of standardization and commercialization of authenticity, which undermine the trust of Generation Z. An additional problem is the sensitivity of the young audience to discrepancies between the declared values of space and the real practice of its functioning. The formulated recommendations indicate the feasibility of integrating aesthetic solutions into the strategic management of commercial spaces as an intangible asset, the effectiveness of which is assessed through behavioral and reputational indicators rather than solely through short-term financial results. Prospects for further research include developing models to quantify the economic impact of aesthetics, analysing its interactions with digital platforms, and studying the long-term sustainability of aesthetically oriented commercial spaces across different socio-cultural environments.



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