iJRASET
International Journal For Research in Applied Science and Engineering Technology

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH

IN APPLIED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

Volume: 12 **Issue:** VIII **Month of publication:** August 2024

DOI: https://doi.org/10.22214/ijraset.2024.64087

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International Journal for Research in Applied Science & Engineering Technology (IJRASET)
ISSN: 2321-9653; IC Value: 45.98; SJ Impact Factor: 7.538
Volume 12 Issue VIII Aug 2024- Available at www.ijraset.com

Analysing the Relationship between Generation Z's Attitude towards Gluten-free Products and their Demographics

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Abstract: ***Gluten is a type of protein naturally present in wheat, barley, and rye. It plays a crucial role in providing elasticity and structure to dough, making it indispensable in baking processes. However, some individuals face health challenges related to gluten consumption, such as gluten intolerance, wheat allergies, and the widely recognized celiac disease. Consequently, medical professionals often advise these individuals to adopt a gluten-free diet, which excludes gluten-containing foods. Interestingly, gluten-free diets aren't solely for those with gluten-related disorders; they're also embraced by individuals seeking a nutritious diet and improved digestion. The study aims to analyse the relationship between Generation Z's demographics and their attitudes towards Gluten-free products with the objective of formulating more effective marketing strategies. The data for the study was collected with the help of 58 respondents within the Generation Z age group with the help of a structured questionnaire, focusing on demographic variables such as age, income, preferences and lifestyle. The collected data was analysed with the help of a chi-square test to analyse the preferences and behaviour of Generation Z regarding gluten-free products. The findings provide valuable insights into the interplay between Generation Z demographics and their attitudes towards gluten-free products, which can help marketers to understand and promote these products.***

Keywords: Generation Z, Demographics, attitudes, gluten-free products, relationship, preferences, marketing strategies.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a notable transformation in the market landscape, spurred by a growing emphasis on health and well-being, especially among the younger generation. With an ever-expanding dedication to self-care and a comprehensive approach to personal wellness, individuals are actively pursuing dietary options that meet their nutritional requirements and resonate with their lifestyle choices. This shift in consumer behaviour has resulted in a remarkable change in the demand for gluten-free products, both within India and on a global scale. This shift in dietary preferences has captured the attention of researchers, marketers, and producers, prompting a deeper investigation into the underlying factors influencing Generation Z's attitudes and purchasing behaviour regarding gluten-free offerings.

The term "gluten" refers to a protein found in wheat, barley, and rye. It has gained considerable attention due to its potential adverse effects on certain individuals, such as those with gluten-related disorders like celiac disease, wheat allergy, and non–Celiac gluten sensitivity. Celiac disease, in particular, is an autoimmune disorder triggered by the ingestion of gluten, causing damage to the small intestine and resulting in various gastrointestinal symptoms, nutrient malabsorption, and other systemic complications. Non–Celiac gluten sensitivity, on the other hand, is a condition characterized by symptoms similar to those of celiac disease but without the presence of autoimmune markers.

Consequently, gluten-free foods have emerged as a practical dietary alternative, relieving digestive discomfort and other adverse symptoms associated with gluten consumption, thus contributing to optimal health. The increasing prevalence of gluten-free diets can also be attributed to the influence of celebrities, health influencers, and social media platforms, which have played a pivotal role in advocating for the benefits of gluten-free living. The endorsement of gluten-free diets by celebrities has not only sparked consumer interest but has also inspired Generation Z to adopt this dietary lifestyle.

Moreover, in today's era, gluten-free food products have become increasingly popular among Generation Z and are perceived as a fashion statement for maintaining a healthy lifestyle. However, not everyone can afford gluten-free options. In earlier times, people consumed naturally gluten-free foods like bajra and macca, and this practice still prevails, especially in rural areas.

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However, gluten-free items such as cakes and biscuits are hard to come by and are often expensive in cities, making them inaccessible to many. Generation Z, being trend-followers, tends to emulate their idols, including adopting gluten-free or sugar-free diets if their favourite celebrities endorse them, thereby driving trends in the market.

Furthermore, the new generation is highly conscious of their health, knowing what foods to consume and avoid, which is why more and more youth are opting for gluten-free diets due to their perceived nutritional benefits and the promise of improved health. The popularity of gluten-free food products is such that even restaurants are now offering gluten-free options. In this research study, we have collected data from 58 respondents to understand the relationship between Generation Z's attitudes towards gluten-free products and their demographics. The study aims to explore how demographic variables such as age, gender, income level, and geographical location affect Generation Z's attitudes towards gluten-free products, their affordability, market competition, pricing, and preferences in gluten-free food products.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review carefully examines 24 papers, grouped into four main sections. These sections explore different aspects of gluten-free products, providing valuable insights. Initially, the focus is on understanding how consumers view and decide on gluten-free options. Then, the review dives deeper into the nutritional, economic, and health aspects of gluten-free diets. Next, it explores market trends, innovations, and accessibility challenges in the gluten-free product market. Finally, the review looks at how different demographic groups engage with gluten-free products. Overall, these sections offer a comprehensive understanding of Generation Z's attitudes toward gluten-free products, considering factors like demographics, market trends, health concerns, and consumer behaviours.

A. Attitudes and Behaviour Towards Gluten-Free Products

The literature review provides comprehensive insights into the nuanced attitudes of Generation Z towards gluten-free products. Williams and Page (2011) elucidate the critical importance for marketers to understand the unique characteristics of each generation, emphasizing the need for tailored marketing strategies to foster relationships and trust. Sethi's (2024) exploration of consumer behaviour underscores the pivotal role of technology, particularly among Millennials and Generation Z, who exhibit remarkable loyalty and expansive connectivity. Moreover, Jung, Kim, and Yoon's (2017) investigation uncovers the intricate relationship between consumption values, such as health consciousness, and consumer attitudes and purchase intentions towards gluten-free products. Their rigorous analysis, employing methodologies such as factor analysis and multiple regression, reveals compelling findings regarding the significant influence of exploratory, functional, and emotional values on consumer behaviour. Furthermore, Pawar and Naranje's (2016) study on automobile customers in Pune City contributes valuable insights into the factors shaping buying behaviour, aiding marketers in crafting targeted strategies. Jolly Masih's (2016) exploration of gluten-free product trends highlights the burgeoning market potential, propelled by increasing consumer awareness and endorsements by celebrities like Gwyneth Paltrow and Ryan Gosling. Through meticulous examination of these studies, marketers and researchers gain a nuanced understanding of the dynamic landscape of the gluten-free product market, enabling them to devise effective strategies and capitalize on emerging trends.

B. Health and Nutritional Aspects of Gluten–Free Products

The review encompasses six studies that delve into various facets of gluten-free products. Singh and Whelan (2011) underscore the significant hurdles posed by the limited availability and higher costs of gluten-free foods, advocating for policy interventions and market strategies to enhance accessibility and affordability for consumers. Panagiotou and Kontogianni (2017) undertake a meticulous cost estimation analysis specific to Greece, shedding light on the substantial economic burden associated with gluten-free diets and suggesting the implementation of financial support mechanisms to alleviate financial strain on consumers. Liu et al. (2023) delve into the intricacies of consumer trust in gluten-free brands in the wake of product recalls, emphasizing the critical role of stringent quality control measures and transparent communication to maintain consumer confidence and brand reputation. Xhakollari et al. (2019) offer valuable insights derived from a systematic review, identifying a spectrum of factors influencing consumers' adherence to gluten-free diets, underscoring the necessity for personalized interventions tailored to individual needs to foster sustained dietary compliance. Zerbini et al. (2024) delve into the perceptions of non-celiac consumers regarding the healthiness of gluten-free products, shedding light on concerns surrounding nutritional adequacy and advocating for consumer education initiatives to promote informed dietary choices.

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Finally, Laine (2016) provides a nuanced examination of consumer buying behaviour in Finland, stressing the importance of market segmentation and targeted marketing strategies tailored to diverse consumer preferences within the gluten-free market segment. Together, these studies offer rich insights into the multifaceted landscape of gluten-free products, serving as a valuable resource for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and researchers seeking to address the challenges, harness the opportunities, and enhance the overall consumer experience in the gluten-free market.

C. Gluten-Free Product Trends and Market Analysis

In the domain of gluten-free product trends and market analysis, several notable studies contribute valuable insights. Hopkins and Soon (2019) focus on England, examining the nutritional quality, cost, and availability of gluten-free foods, highlighting potential disparities and opportunities for improvement in the market. Orach, Oksana, and Rezvykh (2024) explore innovative technologies for producing the next generation of gluten-free food products, offering promising avenues for enhancing product quality and diversity. Gorgitano and Sodano (2019) delve into the evolving perception of gluten-free products, from being a dietary necessity to potentially serving as a premium price extraction tool, reflecting shifts in consumer preferences and market dynamics. Guennouni et al. (2022) undertake a systematic review and meta-analysis to investigate gluten contamination in labelled gluten-free and naturally gluten-free meals across diverse socioeconomic contexts, emphasizing the importance of stringent food safety regulations and quality control measures. Hanci and Jeanes (2019) scrutinize the accessibility of gluten-free food staples for patients with coeliac disease, shedding light on challenges related to affordability and availability, particularly for vulnerable populations. Finally, Capacci, Leucci, and Mazzocchi (2018) address the economic implications of gluten-free diets, highlighting higher food prices and the financial burden faced by individuals with coeliac disease, underscoring the need for policy interventions to ensure equitable access to gluten-free products. Collectively, these investigations provide a holistic insight into the dynamic realm of gluten-free merchandise, covering advancements in technology, consumer viewpoints, food safety considerations, accessibility challenges, and economic implications. Consequently, they serve as valuable resources for guiding the decisions of stakeholders and policymakers, facilitating the development of future strategies and interventions tailored to the gluten-free market.

D. Demographics and Consumer Segmentation

The literature surveyed explores diverse aspects of consumer behaviour and dietary preferences, offering valuable insights into the determinants that shape food choices, especially among younger age groups. Warwick et al. (1997) delve into the dynamics of food choices among the younger demographic, shedding light on the determinants shaping their dietary preferences. Xhakollari et al. (2021) contribute by exploring the motivations behind the adoption of gluten-free diets, employing health behaviour models to elucidate the underlying factors driving this dietary trend. Costell et al. (2010) focus on food acceptance, highlighting the pivotal role of consumer perception and attitudes in shaping preferences for different food products. Lee et al. (2011) further delve into consumer perceptions and purchase intentions, particularly within the realm of health food consumption, offering valuable insights into consumer behaviour in this niche market segment. Kelly et al. (2008) provide a detailed examination of new product development within the gluten-free food industry, offering implications for market trends and innovations in response to changing consumer demands. Finally, Schmeling (2014) offers a forward-looking perspective on food trends, with a specific focus on women belonging to Generation Y in Germany, providing valuable insights into emerging consumer preferences and behaviours in the food industry. Collectively, these studies provide a holistic comprehension of consumer behaviour concerning food choices, thereby informing future research directions and guiding strategies for market interventions and product development initiatives.

a) Objectives of the study

- To gain insight into gluten-free products through available literature.
- To find out the relationship between Generation Z's attitude towards Gluten-free products based on their demographic variables.

b) Research Hypothesis

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between Generation Z's attitude towards Gluten-free products based on their demographic variables.

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III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted with one focused group of Generation Z to analyse the relationship between Generation Z's Attitude towards Gluten-free products and their Demographics like age, gender, income, geographical location etc.

A. Sample and Data Collection.

With the help of judgemental sampling, 58 participants were selected. A properly framed structured online questionnaire was distributed among the Generation Z age group within Jaipur, Rajasthan. The questionnaire comprises two sections: one to gather demographic details like age, gender, family income, and education level, and the other one to present the Likert scale queries for opinions on gluten-free items. Participants rated statements on a scale of 1 to 5 from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree". Subsequent data analysis was conducted employing the chi-square test to discern potential associations or relationships between variables.

B. Statistical population and sample size

Statistical analysis was done by preparing a table The following table represents the demographic characteristics of the 58 participants in the study. These variables including, age, qualification, employment status and occupation show the demographics of selected samples.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Demographic Variables	Count
a) Gender	
Male	30
Female	28
Total	58
b) Age	
16-18	2
19-22	9
23-26	16
27-29	31
Total	58
c) Qualification	
High School	4
Bachelor's degree	28
Master's degree	23
Others	3
Total	58
d) Employment Status	
Yes	32
No	26
Total	58
e) Occupation	
Business	5
Service	25
Students	22
Homemaker	2
Unemployed	4
Total	58

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Table 1 shows the demographic composition of the selected participants. The majority of participants (n=31) fell within the age range of 27 – 29 years, while 30 participants were male and 28 were female. Participants with bachelor's degrees (n=28), and a significant number of people were employed (n=32) in other occupations, the most common occupation among the participants is 'service' i.e. (n=25). These demographic details help to provide insights into the diversity of collected samples, this will help to get a clear and generalized result and also help to understand the different variables of the study.

IV. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study explored how Generation Z's perceptions of gluten-free products are influenced by demographic factors. It was found that seeking information about such products did not directly impact Generation Z's preferences. However, the study revealed a growing likelihood among the Generation Z age group to purchase gluten-free products near future. The accompanying table presents the statistical analysis, including Pearson Chi-Square Values, Degree of Freedom (Df), and p-values. The hypothesis testing of the study was conducted with the help of the chi-square test, where if the significant value is greater than 0.05, then the null hypothesis will be rejected and if the value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis will be accepted.

Table 2. Variable taken - Locating gluten-free products

I find it easy to locate GFP at my local grocery store	Pearson Chi-Square Value	Df	Asymp Sig, (2 Sided)	Status of Alternate Hypothesis
Gender	1.612	4	0.807	Accepted
Age	10.597	12	.564	Accepted
Qualification	13.651	12	.324	Accepted
Employment Status	1.217	4	.875	Accepted
Occupation	18.889	16	.274	Accepted

In Table 2, This table reveals that for all variables, the p-value exceeded the significance level of 0.05, ranging from 0.274 to 0.875. it also shows that there is a statistically significant association between gender, age, qualification, employment status, or occupation and the ease of attitude towards locating gluten-free products at the stores.

Table 3. Variables taken - Benefits of GFPs.

I frequently seek out information on the benefits of GFP	Pearson Chi-Square Value	Df	Asymp Sig, (2 Sided)	Status of Alternate Hypothesis
Gender	1.529	4	.822	Accepted
Age	11.133	12	.518	Accepted
Qualification	8.195	12	.770	Accepted
Employment Status	2.390	4	.664	Accepted
Occupation	12.648	16	.698	Accepted

Table3. The table shows the benefits of consuming gluten-free products. The table shows that all chi-square tests yielding p-values above 0.05, ranging from 0.518 to 0.822, leading to acceptance of the alternate hypothesis for each variable. Consequently, the data suggest that there is a statistically significant association between the demographic variables (gender, age, qualification, employment status, and occupation).

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Table 4. Search for gluten-free options during food shopping.

I actively look for GF options when shopping for food product	Pearson Chi-Square Value	Df	Asymp Sig, (2 Sided)	Status of Alternate Hypothesis
Gender	3.661	4	.454	Accepted
Age	5.651	12	.933	Accepted
Qualification	9.649	12	.647	Accepted
Employment Status	2.201	4	.699	Accepted
Occupation	13.117	16	.641	Accepted

Table 4. This table shows whether people actively look for gluten-free products when they shop based on factors like gender, age, education, and occupation. The results indicate that all p- p-values exceed the significance level of 0.05, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis for each variable. This suggests that there is a statistically significant association between the demographic factors and the behaviour of actively seeking gluten-free foods. In simple terms, people's shopping behaviour for gluten free products does not appear to be significantly influenced by these demographic factors.

Table 5. Variable taken – on the basis of the taste of gluten free products

The different taste of GFP influences my purchase intention	Pearson Chi-Square Value	Df	Asymp Sig, (2 Sided)	Status of Alternate Hypothesis
Gender	2.773	4	.597	Accepted
Age	13.857	12	.310	Accepted
Qualification	8.883	12	.713	Accepted
Employment Status	4.447	4	.349	Accepted
Occupation	14.538	16	.559	Accepted

Table 5, Indicates that the taste of gluten-free products does significantly impact purchase intention. The Asymp Sig values for all factors exceed the threshold of 0.05, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis for each variable. This suggests that there is a statistically significant influence of demographic factors on attitudes towards the taste of gluten-free products.

Table 6. Variable taken – purchase intention on the basis of Nutritional values of GFP's

The nutritional value of GFP influences my purchase intention	Pearson Chi-Square Value	Df	Asymp Sig, (2 Sided)	Status of Alternate Hypothesis
Gender no effect	9.319	4	0.054	Rejected
Age	9.478	12	.662	Accepted
Qualification	5.940	12	.919	Accepted
Employment Status	4.894	4	.298	Accepted
Occupation	13.251	16	.654	Accepted

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Table 6 investigates the influence of the nutritional value of gluten-free products on purchase intention, considering various factors. Here, age, qualification, employment status and occupation do significantly impact purchase intentions, as their p-values are above 0.05 but, gender doesn't affect purchase intentions (p = 0.054), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis for this variable.

Table 7. Variable taken - Future purchase intention of GFPs

I am likely to purchase GFP in the near future	Pearson Chi-Square Value	Df	Asymp Sig, (2 Sided)	Status of Alternate Hypothesis
Gender	2.1	3	.50	Rejected
Age	18.391	9	.031	Rejected
Qualification	7.099	9	.627	Accepted
Employment Status	4.241	3	.237	Rejected
Occupation	6.167	12	.907	Accepted

Table 7 shows future purchase intentions of gluten-free products. Gender, age and employment status do not significantly impact future purchase intentions but, Qualification and occupation shows significant effects on future purchase intentions, with the null hypothesis being rejected for these factors.

V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The study underscores a significant correlation between Generation Z's attitudes towards Gluten-Free Products (GFP) and their demographic profiles. Within the spectrum of attitudes explored, spanning from preferences regarding the placement of gluten-free products within retail spaces to perceptions of the health benefits conferred by such items, as well as the methodologies employed in seeking out these products and evaluating their taste, demographic characteristics emerge as influential factors. For instance, attitudes towards the accessibility and placement of gluten-free products may vary based on geographical location, urbanization, and proximity to specialized health food stores. Similarly, perceptions of the health benefits associated with gluten-free items might be shaped by factors such as age, income level, and educational background, reflecting varying degrees of emphasis on dietary trends versus medical necessity. Moreover, the search habits for gluten-free products can be influenced by technological adeptness, socio-economic status, and lifestyle preferences, with younger individuals potentially gravitating towards online platforms and social media for product discovery, while older demographics may lean towards traditional marketing channels. However, while these aspects exhibit a strong alignment with demographic variables, nuances emerge when examining purchase intentions over time and the impact of nutritional considerations. It's notable that slight discrepancies have been observed in purchase intentions among different demographic groups, particularly concerning future outlooks and evolving perceptions of the nutritional value of gluten-free products. These variations underscore the complex interplay between demographic characteristics and consumer attitudes towards GFP, offering valuable insights for marketers and policymakers aiming to effectively target and cater to the preferences of Generation Z

A. Suggestion

Future research should broaden its scope by including a more diverse range of participants and increasing the sample size. This approach will help capture a wider range of viewpoints, offering a deeper understanding of how different groups perceive gluten-free products. Furthermore, exploring the psychological aspects that influence people's decisions when purchasing gluten-free items is important. Understanding the thoughts, beliefs, and feelings that drive these choices can provide valuable insights for businesses and marketers. Additionally, investigating the financial implications of gluten-free diets is essential, as cost considerations play a significant role in consumer decision-making. Lastly, studying the cultural and peer influences on gluten-free product consumption can reveal important social factors that shape dietary habits. By addressing these key areas in future research, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of why people choose gluten-free products and how various factors influence these choices.

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VI. IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

The implications of this study extend far beyond its immediate scope, offering valuable insights for various stakeholders in the food industry. Marketers stand to gain a significant advantage by leveraging the findings to enhance their understanding of consumer preferences and tailor their promotional efforts accordingly.

By highlighting the benefits and nutritional value of gluten-free products, marketers can effectively raise awareness among consumers, driving demand and consumption. Furthermore, the insights gleaned from this study can inform strategic decisions in product development, enabling manufacturers to innovate and create offerings that better resonate with the needs and preferences of their target audience. For retailers, this study provides a roadmap for optimizing retail approaches, from inventory management to pricing strategies, ensuring that gluten-free products are readily available and competitively priced to meet consumer demand. Overall, the study's implications underscore the importance of aligning business strategies with evolving consumer trends, ultimately fostering greater success and competitiveness within the dynamic landscape of the food industry.

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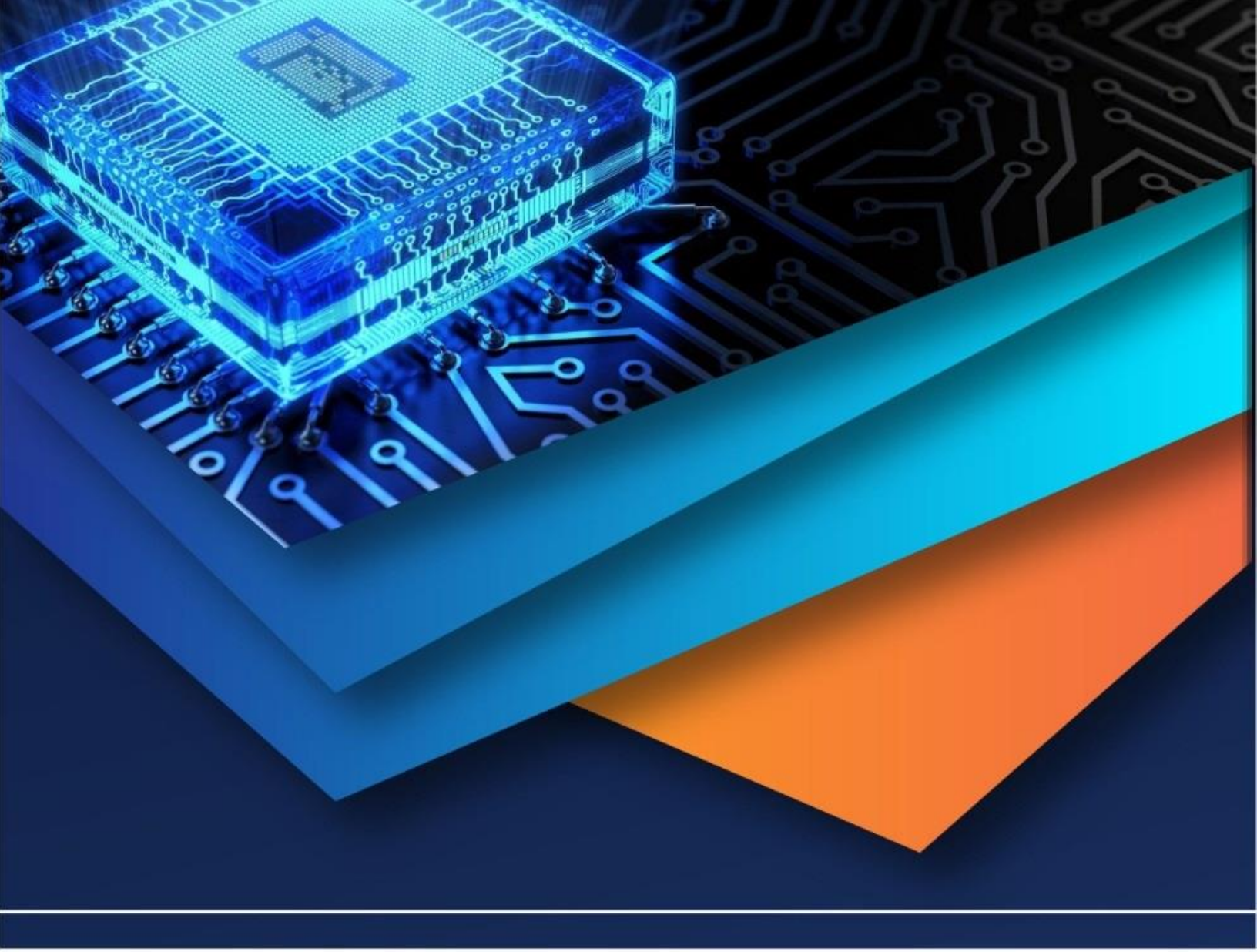

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