

# The Generation Z and their Social Media Usage: A Review and a Research Outline

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## Abstract

The paper tries to explore the awareness of how the present Generation Z is using the social media as well as to review its repercussion on them as an individual's, organization and society as a system. The paper demarcates Generation Z from other branches of generation with a systematized differentiation in the behaviour, principles and choices which are constant over the time. It outlines their social media usage and intra-generational difference springing from environmental factors and personal factors. Personal factors are divided into steady and driving factors. The paper brings forward how the futuristic Generation Z's use of social media influences them as an individual's, organization and society. It also attempts to bring forward certain managerial repercussions and to them and a research outline.

Earlier researches on access of social media by Generation Y as well as Generation Z give rise to certain queries which are yet to be answered. They laid focus mainly on the US & UK, ignoring other regions and countries (including nation like India which comprises of 28% of youths) with huge and rapidly increasing share of Generation Y's & Z's populations; and where the determinants of social-media usability would vary considerably; the customer set under these studies are those whose behaviour are inclined to vary as they move on the different phases of their life cycle; they tried to understand Generation Z's social media use but misses to look at the controllers as well as aftermaths of social-media usage. The theoretical frame of reference brought forward in this paper harvests a thorough set of investigation questions and designs the pathway for considering the predecessors & outcomes of social networking used by Gen Z. It tries to identify certain ignored queries regarding Gen Z's and their social media usability, along with also sketches practical insights for various decision makers.

**Keywords:** Black View, Generation X, Generation Y, Generation Z & Social Media

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## 1. Introduction

The west has a neat tradition of sorting the generations into nomenclatures like Gen X, Gen Y and now Gen Z. Generation Z, or Gen Next plug in a peculiar fascination on marketing decision makers and academicians across the globe. It has become a common trending jargon, Gen Z are the demographic cohort after Generation Y's & X's. The very active type and with high intensity usage of social media platforms by Gen Z would be depicting the technical know-how behaviour of upcoming generation. Some published write-ups regarding Gen Z have laid emphasis upon the social media usage pattern by youngsters these days. It can be observed that this Gen Z are from good socio-economical background and are residing in fully urbanized and developing economies where the access regulation to information and communication technology (ICT) is less restricted and easily available. However, it is quite self explanatory that due to cultural and technological foundations the social media usage by Gen Z's

in India is quite different from other countries. The aim of this paper is to explore the awareness of the present Gen Z's use of social media and also to review its repercussion on them as an individual's, organizations and society as a system.

The use of social media by Gen Z is building high interest in researchers, decision makers & marketing/service organizations as they believe it is influencing people's behaviour in different spheres: as favorable & unfavorable consequences for individuals, organization's young employees and society as a bigger system

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Who are Generation Z or Zer's?

The Brodahl and Carpenter's (2011)<sup>4</sup> classification of generations using the birth year category for each cohort: Generation X (1961-1980), Generation Y (1981-1990) and Generation Z

(1991 and after) is followed. Gen Z is the first to have Internet technology so readily available and they have been exposed to an unprecedented amount of technology in their upbringing, courtesy the web revolution that occurred throughout the 1990s. People of Gen Z are naturally thought of as being so comfortable with technology, that interacting on social media websites is a significant portion of their socializing behaviours. Gen Z are having a strong ‘virtual bonding’, and it helps youngsters to break out from emotional and psychological struggles they face offline. The early, regular and influential exposure to technology by Gen Z have their plus and minuses in terms of rational, sentimental, and social consequences.

### 2.2 Generational GAP

The different life cycle stages have often acted as common glasses in bringing together and interpreting actions and experiences of different generational segments within populations, compared to the traditional groupings of segment on the basis of socio-economic class, culture and geographic locations. All generations enduringly share a similar outlook and as they mature they build up certain distinctiveness that differentiates them from the older generations: behavioural qualities, work ethics, attitudes, learning capability and motivational skills. Certain enduring traits like increased mark down of effort towards work as nucleus to one’s life and fragile work morals when comparing Gen Y’s & Gen Z’s to previous generations

### 2.3 Social Media

In the narrowest sense the phrase social media is define as any electronic service through which Internet users be able to create and share a variety of contents over the Internet. They include user developed services like online journals, social networking websites, online game zones, audio-video sharing sites, online rating/ review forums, online groups, where users generate, design, bring-out, or check over and verify the contents and information. The user’s activities on social media are broadly classified as either contribution, or consumption tasks and usually maximum users are consumption oriented than contributors to the social media. The user behaviour with respect to social media is chang-

ing at a rapid rate therefore; the theoretical frame of reference describes the predecessor as well as the outcomes of social media usage by Gen Z’s with a general and frequently used set of usage classification: content contribution, information sharing, information usage, searching for facts and data, online participation and entertainment usability.

### 2.4 Gen Z’s and Social Media

These social networking generations who ideally belong to the segment of school to college students or comparatively fresh entrant as manpower in organizations are frequently labeled as technically innate and very style conscious of all previous generations. The need to be involved and informed to/with other people is the main rationale behind the use of online socializing by Gen Z. These Zers who are 14-25 years old have more tendencies to prefer online social sites for communicate and interact with people they know than other generations and are happy and feel vital to provide active feedbacks and comments about the brands/services/issues they use or one way or other involved apart from this they value opinion given by other’s too (eMarketer, 2011). Studies are there on Gen Z’s increasing usage of social media but more has to be done on their social media activities and its behavioural impact. This generation is a vigorous contributor, high consumer of online content, creative and mash-up experts; they have strong gravitational bond for online communication that they prefer to participate and remain connected via technology available at finger tips.

### 2.5 The Frame of Reference: Design and Analysis

- Predecessors of Gen Z’s social media usage  
Irrespective of similarities within generations that continue over years, there are certain aspects that affect an individual’s acceptance process and his usage of social media. This section depicts influence of environmental and personal factors on Gen Z’s social media usage.
  - *Environmental factors*- Social media is affected by external environmental factors like Political, Economical, Technological, Cultural and Legal variables(PETCL

<i>Millennial</i>	<i>Vs</i>	<i>Gen Z</i>
▪ Tech savvy		* Tech Innate
▪ Communicate with Text		* Communicate with images
▪ Curators & Shares		* Creators & Collaborators
▪ Now Focused		* Future Focused
▪ Optimistic		* Realistic
▪ Want to be discovered		* Want to work for success
▪ Dependent / Self Centered		* Self Reliant / Aware
▪ Entitled		* Persistent

Model 1. Milleniel Vs. Gen Z.

analysis), which differs across the countries respectively and act as a direct or indirect influencing agent on Gen Z's social media usage; via putting effect on personal-level factors (socio-economic, educational, occupation etc). Somewhere differences within these aspects across the countries paves the way to conditions that encourages or restrains social media usability, as depicted in further.

- *Personal factors*- Personal factors like social & economic class, morals/choices, lifecycle stage, age-maturity, and culture/subculture do play a key role in molding Gen Z's online accessibility pattern. Gen Z's socio-economic standing is clearly mirrored by education, family income, materialistic possessions in any geographical area, will be crucially influenced by the environmental factors and prevailing governmental policies. The personal steady factors have a lasting impact on Gen Z's social networking use, individual's personal objectives, feelings and norms/personality/individuality can easily influence and be influenced by their displayed online behaviour in time.

These wide ranging set of personal factors are out of our scope of study and it is crucial to lay stress that these personal factors are considered to be "dynamic" in nature. Distinguishing the exceptional character-set for Gen Z is a tough call as the role that social networking sites are playing in individual's life by its very nature progresses across the age & life-cycle stages. Though for this generation their life-cycle stages can be a key element for the types and intensity of social networking usage but at the same time age may not act as an accurate indicator of life-cycle stage. Gen Z from their very birth stage witnessed the rapid changing face of technology, easily approachable education system, disposable income, extremely supportive families which infused them to be flexible towards change, technical innate, excelling performers, diverse, more persistent as task oriented.

**Effect on individual** - This paper brings forward the effects of Gen Z's and their social media usage and how it impacts them as an individual, an organization and the society. We start with probable favorable/ unfavorable effects of Gen Z's and their excessive social media use on an individual:

*Favorable effects* -

- Gen Z desires to explore and experience the virtual social society and for the same uses social networking platform to socialize. Social media networks like Face-book, Watsapp, Tumblr, Instagram, Twitter can lead to identification, image formation, maintenance and boosting up young member's social assets as their character are formed through what all

they post regarding themselves online and in return what others post and assess about them.

- Social media uses also extends certain psychosomatic and emotional comforts, now a days it is helping in strengthening the family and friendship bonds and taking care of rest of the ancillary socializing needs which augments Gen Z's self-prestige. These social platforms are providing the medium to spread the positive physical and mental well being by effectively and competently informing about health & nutrition, spirituality, societal concerns to the younger population of the world especially the developing nations at their finger touch.
- Certain behavioural implications are also there as outcomes of their social media usage like adventurous nature, information disclosures online, security, confidentiality, WOM communiqué, online code/morals and so forth.

#### **"Black view" or unfavorable effects**

- Excessive use of social platforms is suspiciously influencing all basic aspects of individual level outcomes like psychosomatic, sentimental and physical well-being and societal progress.
- Increasing reliance on social media technology for entertainment, communication and even emotional gratification and guidelines, poses some deliberate botherations regarding the enduring effects of excessive- use on Gen Z's psychological health
- Gen Z's believes in investments as the social asset or contacts it maintains online, but this high online reliance have serious negative repercussion. Too much sharing of personal information over the virtual world in quest of social affiliation could invite undesired complications.
- The young generations "desire for popularity" on social networking results in spending more of their time online and tend to unveil more information, which can misrepresent close relationships.
- Even though being conscious about the possible risks associated with social platform involvement like cyber stalking, identity thefts, harassment, cyber bullying etc there are very less control over the access to one's basic information on social networking sites(securityaffairs.co)
- Occasionally, individuals' loss of confidentiality is pinned up to organizational-level ramifications like: companies accessing information from social networking sites in manpower hiring process.
- "Addiction of Internet" is another concern and has its set of negative effects. It is observed that adolescents spontaneously keep on checking their social media profiles and updates. Online plugged in activities definitely put a harm-

ful impact on young mind's educational activities and rest pattern, and tends to reduce their contribution in important real world activities resultant leading to dejection, solitude and social apprehensions (Espinoza and Juvonen, 2011).

- Though social media can provide a short term cushioning effect for active socialization but can deteriorate pre-existing issues of socially-psychoneurotic harmful individuals who do not realize the long-run costs that could be incurred.

### 2.6 Effects on Organizations

Companies such as Apple, Versace, Hidesign etc. give take on social networking platforms as a prospective source of market intellect and observe different social platform activities like fan pages, online journals to gather important information related to promoting their products. Now a day's social media offers liberty to build up better customer relationship management by promising customers to enlist with their products, by connecting with other users and by encouraging online association with brand groups and pages; thereby strengthening the brand equity and increase customer equity.

However, with the extensive acceptance and use of social media by Gen Z, organization that kindle commitment, focus on relationship building and devise mutual value creation for their customers stand apart to garner the significant profits. In developing nation like India with ample entrepreneurial skill set use of social platform can help in innovating newer and better business prototypes. There are certain connotations for consumer-employee relation and how organizations appoint, administer and motivate its employees as their repercussions are vital in service sector. Successfully managing gen next employees

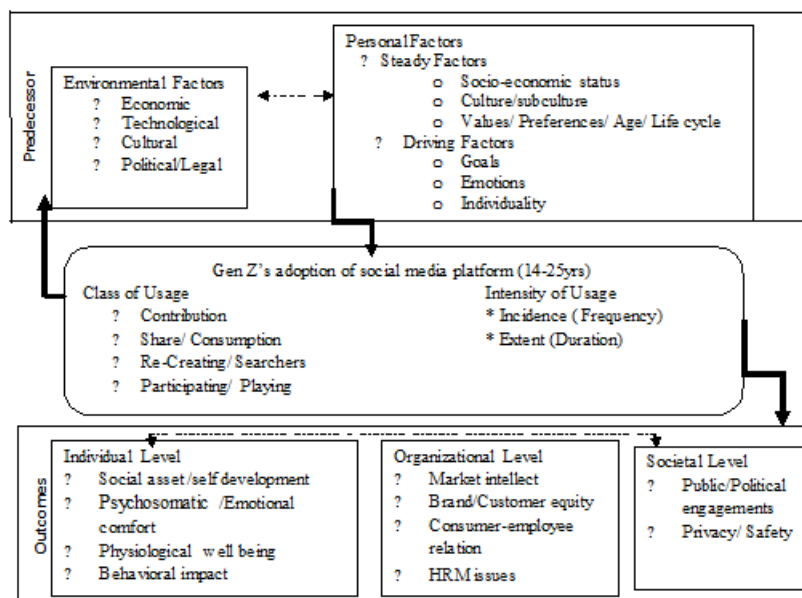
and their synergy with other generational group of co-workers and customers poses great challenge ahead, specifically when it is known that both the generations have difference in attitudes and techniques towards career objectives.

Now a day's many organizations refer social networking platforms for prospecting candidates sometimes to terminate employees who indulge in objectionable information online – though use of such confidential information of employees may be regarded as breach of his online privacy and could awfully impact their output, well being and moralistic behaviour.

### 2.7 Effects on Society

Similar to positive and negative consequences at individual and organizational levels; social media's effect is also prevalent at societal level too. The positive sides such as many social networking platforms like YouTube, Face-book, Whatsapp and Twitter are now a days following the trend to efficiently broadcast awareness on vital issues: health and hygiene, girl education, consumer awareness, and other critical social issues, creating consciousness to societies at large specifically teenagers and youths. On the contrary, human beings tend to encounter negative set of emotions and feelings like animosity, rage, grudges and resultant they react online and offline respectively. Thus the mistreatment of social platforms at an individual level could germ the seed for pertinent legal protections to make sure public safety.

Hence, this generation's usage of social networking activities shall be heading to changes in societal measures and behaviour at the social level in areas such as public and political commitment, privateness and communal safety. In the public or civic-obligation, participation in certain social groups and communities (the



Model 2. The Reference Framework: Predecessors and Outcomes of Social Media Usage by Gen Zer's.

better India etc.) builds-in a form of social citizenship. There are media evidences advocating a positive effect of Gen next's social platform use on governmental/ constitutional issues as well. During the recent BSF jawan's video(2017) on Face-book about diet problem and reflected deeper malaise, the vast social network united and formed class of young & old that provoked immense country level anger and debate regarding the physical and mental well being of national soldiers.

This generation expects externalities to respect their wish to keep their personal life free and not to judge them on the basis of their social media identities. However, for modern organizations auditing employees' online social personality and utilizing the content present there is becoming a common practice unless strict regulations restrict them. Unfortunately, legislation is yet to keep up with the swift paced online expansion.

#### *Suggestions*

- Very less literature is present with regards to the Gen Z and their social networking activities and that too bring in certain questioning. The few released researches on this realm focuses mainly on the US and UK , leaving behind other countries with huge and vast-expanding Z'ers community, where elements and activities of social-media usage can differ considerably.
- These earlier researches likely to study students (high school & colleges) whose behaviours displays a tendency to vary as they go through the different phases of lifecycle.
- Some where a proper investigation on social media's usage background and consequences are missing.

The theoretical model illustrated above, summarizes the predecessors as well as outcomes of Gen Z's and its social media usage, and our open viewpoints on the stated model offers an outline for additional study.

## 2.8 Predecessors: Gen Z access to social media

- Environmental

There was always a requirement of a proper research for knowing cross-cultural and cross-country differences/similarities in different generations and how they use the social media. This theoretical model presented here hypothesizes a number of environmental aspects like PCETL whose effect can have a straight spark on the class and intensity of social platform usage. We need to think about certain mind tingling questions

- On what different aspects does social media usage fluctuate across the nations of the world? Can we understand the characteristics of these fluctuations?
- Are these aspects invariable and can they override international boundaries?
- Are there any resemblances across the countries with respect to Gen Z and social media? In spite the different environ-

mental factors existent what are the reasons for these resemblances?

A set of answers are required for these and many such queries for a cross nation' social media usage pattern understanding of Gen Z. These environmental factors have incidental impact on social media usage and also influence the personal factors; PETCL display a vital role in drafting the morals and choices related to virtual socializing world. Thus a cross- nation study analyzing the influence level of environmental factors on usability of social media and could reason out to what extent and how these factors involve personal level determinants of social media adoption.

- Personal-level

Certain studies have compared and contrasted different generations with each other, however, there is a possibility of considerable diversity within Gen Z and from others with regards to social media use due to certain personal aspects as depicted by model:

- Earlier studies have been focused on selected subgroups ( students, job seekers) of Gen Z who may differ in age group and stages of life span, resultant their preference for social media can also differ.
- The specific trait of Gen Z that marks it out from older generations is its deep involvement with technology in their very upbringing. Though very little information is available about the steady morals, values and choices regarding the social networking use. Studies are required to veil out Gen Z qualities and figure out their roles in social media use.
- Investigation are required regarding how this generation's more transitory evolving aspects like objectives, feelings, emotions and ethics impact and be impacted by their social media usage.

Working further on these issues will finally help decision makers and researchers to better figure out how Gen Z's emotional involvement with products, brand names or firms is related to their social media use.

- Social media usage: Gen Z's class & intensity of use

Recent researches with respect to Gen Z and social media is bringing out focus on another important sphere gaining curiosity than past is different class and intensity of use of social media.

It is obvious from previous studies and theoretical evidences that a max of social network users is just inactive viewers or consumers of data rather than aggressive contributors of data.

However, attention on certain issues is required:

- The theoretical model states class and intensity of social media usage by Gen Z, for which much of research is still required. Do researchers find any evident differences amid the subgroups & cultures mainly involved in each type of use?

- There is a need to find out inter generational exchange of Gen Z social platform usage with observing what the situations are and to which extent this generations shares the social media usage with other generations? Is there sharing of technology with parents and grandparents at home?
- A strong need is there to figure out precisely how strongly and what class of adoption this generation indulges into?
- The scope and magnitude of affiliation between the class and intensity of Gen Z's social media adoption requires to be investigated. Insight observation is required to find out the diversification in social networking activities that occur between different set of Gen Z segments and who are active users and others who engages in lesser class of activities.
- Finding the range of association between class and intensity of use of two or more social platforms like Twitter associated with Instagram.
- Can the elements of play be used by marketers to build relationships with Gen Z?
- Enumerate the adequate ways for organizations to kick off and aid the brand building social platform communities that can promote brand equity as well as add to customer equity.
- Do marketers glean up private information from social platforms to present more customized offerings?
- Finally exploring out the list of opportunities and threats (SWOT) for the marketers targeting their brands via social platforms to Gen Z.

Research answers to similar queries can provide an opening iota for functioning of the social-media-use to build and evolve parameters to measure it. These measures are vital for identical experimental tracking of various classes of social media usage and their outcomes on individuals, organizations and humanity.

## 2.9 The Outcomes

Inadequate investigation attention has been devoted to the impact of social media usage of Gen Z on their segment members' social character, psychosomatic influence, overall well being, market-relevant purchase and consumption behaviour including off and on social platforms, WOM communication, brand and consumer relationship building. A proper research of the characteristics and degree of individual level influence will definitely add to current research literature. This research is also important for addressing the actual significance for organizations searching to understand and trying to take advantage of Gen Z' social media interactions. Some questions addressed at different sections of this paper pertaining different outcomes on organizations, individual and society as a whole.

- A need to explore out the extent of consistency in online and offline behaviour, individuality, tastes and characteristics of Gen Z.
- The segment Gen Z customers who on social platforms display acceptance or rejection for brands/ideas actually indulge in buying or supporting them or boycotting these brands/ ideas.
- What is the real time and long run influence of WOM spread on social platforms by this generation on its member segment or any other generation segment' purchase behaviour requires an understanding.
- Is the behaviour of Gen Z regarded as compliment or substitute in nature with respect to effect of social media on them?

Irrespective of Gen Z's role as customers, an additional important facet for organizations is their part as work-force. The first-level customer-handling positions in lot of organizations are mostly to be commanded by members of this new generation; therefore, administration requires a practical insight on how best to absorb understanding regarding Gen Z social platform usage into their man-powering game-plan and policies. Though there are equal chances of inter generational dissimilarities across a variety of work approaches, activities and values/ethics like for eg. The 2011 Census Report shows 50% of Indian population falls within the Gen Z population illustrating that in near future companies will need to battle for Gen Z's talents.

Various organizations have started to utilize social networking platforms internally to assist inter-communication, associations and surpass to evolve an involved and dedicated workforce. These Gen Z work-forces have been grown up in a digitization era, are most keen to use social networking platform to share thoughts, facts and involve them individually and proficiently online.

Hence, investigation is required to focus on questions posed here:

- How do organizations use social platforms to advocate collaborations among work-force and augment their synergy with customers?
- Finding out the impact of admitting or banning work-force' from using social media platform for their personal benefit during office time?
- Does the interaction between segment of Gen Z workers and customers or colleagues different from their interaction with other generation customers/ colleagues.
- What are the implications of above mentioned on human resource training, HR practices, as well as code regarding the access of social networking platforms at work?

There is a shortage of published literature regarding inter-generational synergy in the background of social media usage, focusing on these questions would demand a qualitative investigation to lay a foundation for quantitative epilogue research.

The individual-level effects of social media platform usage by Gen Z's, in return, influence organizational outcomes also. Similarly, collective individual-level outcomes give rise to huge, societal concerns with probable civic-code repercussions. Exactly, the "black view" of Gen Z and their social platform usage for societal cause demands to be investigated. Long-term studies are also required to explore:

- The end long impact of social platforms on the overall well-being of Gen Z.
- What tactics could assist in reducing exploitation of social networking platforms?
- How social norms can be changed regarding confidentiality, stated the "never overlooking" attribute of the internet?
- The repercussions of Gen Z labeled as "out warders" and possessing an individual identification that is mutually created by friends on social network?
- Which authorized, technical and official regulations are essential to reduce the negative influence of the "black view" on Gen Z?
- Lastly can any online crusade aid to educate the generation next for efficient, safe and responsible usage of social networking?

### 3. Conclusion

Authors anticipate this analysis will encourage decision makers and civic-policy framers to recognize and evolve product/service novelty that are favorable to individuals, organizations and society. Active usage of social media platform has already changed the virtual bazaar, the place of work and the society; this will gradually pave way to develop innovative commerce models, products and techniques. However, some questions are there concerning how Gen Z and their use of social media will shape individual, organizations and societal outcomes in different situations. Marketing analysts are invited to explore certain questions that authors have tried to identify through this paper and think the answers could help the customers, decision makers and civic policy framers.

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