

Correlating Internet, Social Networks and Workplace – a Case of Generation Z Students

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Abstract

Generation Z is a common name for the most recent generation at the labor market. Members of generation Z, born after 1990, are characterized as highly connected, active use of communications and media technologies such as World Wide Web or YouTube. They are accustomed to collaborate, share and distribute images and information. Besides, they are often described as instant minded with faster life rhythm, and tending to be more individualistic and self-directed. With the advent of technological innovations, the generation Z is constantly connected with their friends, peers, family, relatives and acquaintances. They are born and brought up with idea of a connected world and want to connect and share their accomplishments with all. This being said, the generation Z do not shy off from work and have a set of predefined ideologies towards their workplace. The workplace includes all the aspects such as team, superiors, subordinates, freedom of speech, etc.

It isn't a possibility for organizations to adapt to environment anymore but an actual and pressing challenge, because the generation Z, which is entering

the labor market in these days, has significantly changed its needs compared to the earlier generations. This shift has resulted in a tangible need for empowerment. The purpose of the study is to investigate the perceptions of generation Z towards the workplace of their future. A survey questionnaire method is used to collect the responses from the generation Z students and the findings are noted.

Keywords: Generation Z, Workplace, Career aspirations, Social networks, Generational differences, Social media.

Introduction

Generational differences, especially the differences between generations defined variously as the Baby Boom Generation, Generation X, and the Millennial Generation, are widely discussed in the popular press as well as in a few scholarly publications (Reeves & Oh 2008). Business entrepreneurs as well as social pundits speculate that the various generations of students enrolled in today's higher education institutions as well as the different generations of employees in the corporate workplace require a different approach to education and training. Extensions of this speculation are that instructional designers should take generational differences into account when developing instruction and those generational differences represent a meaningful variable for research designed to examine the differential efficacy of various applications of educational technology.

Generation gaps are now highly noticed by business and industries across the globe. Business firms acknowledge that, generation gaps would lead conflicts, communication barriers and dissensions. Besides, generation gap will affect and interrupt the quality of the communication within organizations, generation gaps probably would delay the process for organizations to catch up the trends and lose the opportunities. Nowadays, searching for solutions in generation gap also a major objective within the organization.

The present study was undertaken to investigate the perceptions of generation z workforce towards their future workplace. The study incorporates an inquisitive approach wherein, subtle questions pertaining to their attachment towards internet and social presence is tested and further their perceptions towards future workplace.

Review of Literature

Definitions of Generations

No standardized nomenclatures are used to label various generations. Different consultants and researchers have come up with different names that label specific generations, while writing and exploring about generational differences (**Reeves & Oh** 2008). Moreover, which span of years should be encompassed within any one generation, is still a major disagreement among the authors. The chronological schemes used to assign people born in a given year to one of the generations defined by the sources listed in the first column and the comparison of different labels given to various generations are presented in Table 1. The table clearly depicts that some authorities state that Generation Y were born as late as 1982 (**Howe and Strauss**, 2000) while others have established a start date as early as 1978 (**Martin and Tulgan**, 2002). Interestingly, the end date for Generation Y is defined as 2000 by both of these sources (**Howe and Strauss**, 2000; **Martin and Tulgan**, 2002).

As the members of the three middle generations (**Boomer, X, and Millennial**) will be in higher education and workforce over the next 15 years, the focus of this review is on these generations. The generations will be labeled and delineated, for purposes of this review (as illustrated in Table 2), however, other synonymous terms for the three major generations are used in various sections of this review, especially when referring to specific literature resources that employ alternative terms.

As we take a closer look at Generation Z, it is important to point out that although some experts dispute the actual year Generation Z begins (with most agreeing they were born after 1990 (**Peterson**, 2014), all agree that students in Generation Z display shared characteristics, including being technologically savvy and consuming information through digital media (**Glum**, 2015; **Holmes**, 2011).

Table No. 1: Generational Labels and Dates Reported in Different Sources

<i>Source</i>	<i>Labels</i>				
Howe and Strauss (2000)	Silent Generation (1925 –1943)	Boom Generation (1943–1960)	13 th Generation (1961–1981)	Millennial Generation (1982–2000)	--
Lancaster and Stillman (2002)	Traditionalists (1900–1945)	Baby Boomers (1946–1964)	Generation Xers (1965 –1980)	Millennial Generation; Echo Boomer; Generation Y; Baby Busters; Generation Next (1981–1999)	--
Martin and Tulgan (2002)	Silent Generation (1925–1942)	Baby Boomers (1946–1960)	Generation X (1965–1977)	Millennials (1978–2000)	--
Oblinger and Oblinger (2005)	Matures (<1946)	Baby Boomers (1947–1964)	Gen-Xers (1965–1980) Gen-Y; NetGen;	Millennials (1981–1995)	Post-Millennials
Tapscott (1998)	--	Baby Boom Generation (1946–1964)	Generation (1965–1975)	Digital Generation (1976–2000)	--
Zemke et al. (2000)	Veterans (1922–1943)	Baby Boomers (1943–1960)	Gen-Xers (1960–1980)	Nexters (1980 –1999)	--

Table No. 2: Generational Labels and Dates

Label:	Mature Generation	Boom Generation	Generation X	Millennial Generation	Generation Z
Date:	1925–1945	1946–1964	1965–1980	1981–1989	1990–present

Do Generational Differences really exist?

There is relatively little consensus of opinion and scholarship about whether generational differences exist that are worth taking into consideration in the workplace, colleges, and universities, and other contexts (**Reeves & Oh** 2008). For starters, as noted above, notable differences can be found in the labels used for the generations by different researchers and experts as well as across the spans of years used to delineate the different generations. In addition, **Lancaster and Stillman** (2002), among others, have made a distinction between people born on the edges of various generational spans and those caught between two generations by labeling them *cuspers*. **Lancaster and Stillman** (2002) maintained that the Traditionalist/Baby Boom cuspers were born between 1940 and 1945, Baby Boom/Generation X cuspers were born between 1960 and 1965, and the Generation X/Millennial cuspers were born between 1975 and 1980. Generalization of generational traits to individuals based on their categorization with regard to generation cannot be done due to the existence of cuspers.

Most authorities agree that a great deal of variance exists among the distinguishing characteristics within any given generation, despite the lack of consistency in nomenclature and chronology; thus, it is inadvisable to assume that someone born in 1960 (and thus a late Boomer) would be not as technologically sophisticated as a person born into Gen X or the Millennial Generation or if a person was born in 1985 then that person would have most of the characteristics of a Gen Y person or that (**Reeves & Oh** 2008). In other words, it is definitely unjustified to make assumptions based on that person's membership in a chronological generational cohort, about any one individual.

Characteristics of the Generation Z

Generation Z is demographically distinct from every previous generation. They were born to older mothers, live in smaller families and have fewest siblings of any era. They are born in an era where the total number of births per woman fell below 2. They started school younger than ever, is the most formally educated generation in history, and projected to stay in education for longer than ever (**McCrindle**, 2010).

They are the first global, most technologically literate and socially empowered generation ever. They are shaped by technology almost from birth. They are extraordinarily dependent on technology and their first language is a technological one, (**Reeves & Oh** 2008). This can be mirrored in their communication. They place more value on speed than accuracy as they have grown up in a fast moving, ever-changing society. They multi-task and absorb information from multiple sources and also think in hyperlinks, (**McCrindle**, 2006; **Grail Research**, 2010). Compared to earlier generations, they are more virtually present, well networked, driven by greater exposure to digital media, are more tolerant of diversity, and spend significant time on online social networks (**Grail Research**, 2010). The digital native generation is constantly connected (**Palfrey & Gasser**, 2008).

The generation Z can be characterized with superficial and divided attention because they use more kind of media simultaneously. They are smart, remarkable and practical. Being born in a visual era, they think not in trends but in scenes (**Reeves & Oh** 2008). The free entrance in cultural contents and the colourness in these, quickly form their taste. Values of environmental protection and information are important for them (**Tari**, 2010).

Eight special characteristics or norms are possessed by this generation, according to **Tabscott** (2009: 6). These are collaboration, freedom, scrutiny, customization, fun, integrity, speed and innovation. They prize freedom and freedom of choice. They want to customize things, make them their own. They enjoy a conversation, not a lecture and are natural collaborators. They insist and scrutinize on integrity. They want to have fun be it school and even at work. Speed and innovation are part of their life and are normal for them.

Generation Z on social media and Internet usage

So what technology does Generation Z have access to and how do they receive information? Generation Z is accustomed to having information at their fingertips and being in constant communication through digital media, as they are been raised in a time in which the Internet has always existed (**Berland**, 2010; **Holmes**, 2011; **Roberts, Yaya, & Manolis**, 2014). As indicated by the 94 percent of teenagers who have a Facebook account (as of

2012), Generation Z is highly active on social media (**Lenhart**, 2013). By sharing their experiences online through videos and links, Generation Z gathers and spreads information (**Relander**, 2014). Generation Z switching back and forth between up to five screens throughout their day due to the use of digital media on smart phones, tablets, and laptops (**Relander**, 2014). Social media and digital advertising are important marketing strategies, given Generation Z's daily use of technology and Internet, (**Glum**, 2015).

Generation Z and the Workplace

Generation Z is named after the name: zappers, characterized by quick shifts. They will be ready for sudden change if they don't like something such as 'workplace', they live in a faster rhythm than the earlier generations. It is natural for them to change workplaces. They don't want to be stuck at one place: they make off without compromises; (**Mutte**, 2004).

This may strengthen trends nowadays. According to **Martin and Schmidt** (2010) within a year, one in three high-potential employees admits to not putting all his/her effort into his/her job, one in four employees intends to leave his/her workplace, four out of 10 have little confidence in their coworkers and even less confidence in the senior team, one in five employees believes his/her personal aspirations are quite different from what the organization has planned for him/her. **Wrzesniewski & Berg & Dutton**, 2010 cite that only 45% of the employees say they are satisfied with their jobs—down from about 60% in 1987.

Methodology

Based on the literature cited above, the present study includes generation Z cuspers which contain the individuals born from 1991 till date. A structures questionnaire containing questions related to their perceptions and attitude towards, internet, social media and their beliefs for workplace was investigated.

Data Analysis

A scale was developed to measure the responses of students born after 1990 towards internet technology and their perceptions towards work. Four internal consistency estimates of reliability were conducted to determine how consistent scores were across administration. If the scores have a high degree of consistency, then our questionnaire is said to be reliable. The first internal consistency estimate was a split-half coefficient on the entire file, expressed as the Spearman-Brown corrected correlation. The second was the coefficient alpha on the entire file. For the split-half coefficient, the scale was split into two halves, using alternate sequencing. There were 141 participants in the study, of which 83 (58.86%) self-identified as male and 58 (41.13%) self-identified as female. Of the total number of respondents 81 (57.4%) were enrolled for an undergraduate program of study whereas, 60 (42.6%) for a postgraduate program. In case of year of birth which is important for the research as Generation Z is considered for birth year of 1990, a total of 57 (40.4%) were born in between 1990 – 1992, 82 (58.2%) between 1993 – 1995 and 2 (1.4%) from 1996 – 2000. The variables considered for the study were internet usage, life on social networks, relations to work with respect to self-confidence, ideal work and teamwork, relation to workplace with respect to ideal workplace, work from home and changing/switching workplace. Each of the variables was formed using sub variables and thus the total scale consisted of 34 items.

Preliminary Analysis

The sampling distribution is normally distributed as $n > 30$ and there are 5 levels in ordinal scale. The assumption for normality was tested via examination of the unstandardized residuals. Review of Shapiro-Wilk (S-W) test for normality ($SW = .907$, $df = 141$, $p = .416$) and skewness (.169) and kurtosis (-.458) statistics suggested that normality was a reasonable assumption. The boxplot suggested relatively normal distribution shape (with no outliers) of the residuals. Under the given circumstances bivariate correlation was employed to study the results deriving out of the data. Before performing any internal consistency tests of reliability, all items were examined to ensure that the same scale was used and that all necessary reverse-

scaling were complete. A major assumption of the reliability analysis is that the split-half coefficients are equal. Results Cronbach’s alpha for the first half were .729, while Chronbach’s alpha for the second half were .751 (see Table 4). Therefore the assumption was violated. Despite the violation of assumptions the reliability analysis was performed for class instructional purposes.

The Cronbach Alpha for these thirty four items was 0.819 (See Table 3). An inspection of the data analysis indicated that scale reliability cannot be improved by elimination any of the variables and thus we accept the Chronbach Alpha value of 0.819. A split-half reliability test was also computed, which yielded an equal length Spearman-Brown coefficient of .652 (see Table 4).

Table No. 3: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.819	.824	34

Table No. 4: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Part 1	Value	.729
		N of Items	17 ^a
	Part 2	Value	.751
		N of Items	17 ^b
Total N of Items			34
Correlation Between Forms			.483
Spearman-Brown Coefficient	Equal Length		.652
	Unequal Length		.652
Guttman Split-Half Coefficient			.652

- The items are: I1, I2, I3, I4, I5, I6, I7, I8, I9, L1, L2, L3, L4, L5, SC1, SC2, IW1.
- The items are: IW2, IW3, TW1, TW2, TW3, IW1, IW2, IW3, IWP4, IWP5, W1, W2, W3, W4, C1, C2, C3.

A series of Spearman rank-order correlations were conducted in order to determine if there were any relationships between the birth year of respondents, their internet usage, life on social networks, relations to work with respect to self-confidence, ideal work and teamwork, relation to workplace with respect to ideal workplace, work from home and changing/switching workplace.

A two-tailed test of significance indicated the there was a negligible relationship between birth year and the internet usage of the respondents $r_s(141) = .072, p > .05$. However, a similar two tailed test of significance indicated that the respondents life on social networking sites and their internet usage showed low moderate positive relationship $r_s(141) = 0.275, p < .05$, and birth year of respondents and their life on social networking sites showed close to zero relationship $r_s(141) = .015, p > .05$ (see Table 5).

Table No. 5: Correlations

			Birth Year	Internet Usage	Life on SNS
Spearman's rho	Birth Year	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.072	.015
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.399	.861
		N	141	141	141
	Internet Usage	Correlation Coefficient	.072	1.000	.275**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.399	.	.001
		N	141	141	141
	Life on SNS	Correlation Coefficient	.015	.275**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.861	.001	.
		N	141	141	141
**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

Further the birth year of respondents was correlated using series of Spearman rank-order correlations with their relations to work with respect to self-confidence, ideal work and teamwork, relation to workplace with respect to ideal workplace, work from home and changing/switching workplace. Birth year showed a complete negative relationship with all the variables as seen in Table 6. The results suggest that, the birth year of respondents belonging to

generation Z has no effect on their overall perception of work and workplace, whereas, very low positive relationship was seen with switching of jobs, $r_s(141) = .052, p > .05$.

While considering self-confidence of respondents at their work, low moderate positive relationship was seen with ideal work ($r_s(141) = .283, p < .05$), team work ($r_s(141) = .177, p < .05$), ideal workplace ($r_s(141) = .238, p < .05$). On the contrary negligible relationship was seen with work from home ($r_s(141) = .081, p > .05$) and switching workplace ($r_s(141) = .094, p > .05$).

Respondents relation with ideal when considered with team work ($r_s(141) = .170, p < .05$), work from home ($r_s(141) = .246, p < .05$) and switching workplace ($r_s(141) = .331, p < .05$), was found to be significant but bearing low to moderate positive relationship. In contrast, ideal work in relation with ideal workplace borne a strong positive significant relationship, $r_s(141) = .763, p < .05$ (see Table 6).

Team work relationship with ideal workplace ($r_s(141) = .269, p < .05$), work from home ($r_s(141) = .224, p < .05$) and switching workplaces ($r_s(141) = .276, p < .05$) showed low to moderate positive relationship which was significant in nature. Further ideal workplace with work from home and switching workplaces showed low to moderate significant positive relationship, $r_s(141) = .233, p < .05$ and $r_s(141) = .246, p < .05$ respectively. Work from home also borne low to moderate positive relationship with switching workplace, $r_s(141) = .251, p < .05$ (see Table 6).

Table No. 6: Correlations

			Birth Year	Self Confidence	Ideal Work	Team Work	Ideal Workplace	Work From Home	Switching Workplace
	Birth Year	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.010	-.086	-.174 ⁺	-.053	-.187 ⁺	.052
		Sig. (2 - tailed)	.	.906	.309	.039	.532	.027	.537
		N	141	141	141	141	141	141	141
	Self Confidence	Correlation Coefficient	-.010	1.000	.283 ^{**}	.177 ⁺	.238 ^{**}	.081	.094
		Sig. (2 - tailed)	.906	.	.001	.035	.004	.338	.268
		N	141	141	141	141	141	141	141
	Ideal Work	Correlation Coefficient	-.086	.283 ^{**}	1.000	.170 ⁺	.763 ^{**}	.246 ^{**}	.331 ^{**}
		Sig. (2 - tailed)	.309	.001	.	.044	.000	.003	.000
		N	141	141	141	141	141	141	141

Spearman's rho	Team Work	Correlation Coefficient	-.174 [*]	.177 [*]	.170 [*]	1.000	.269 ^{**}	.224 ^{**}	.276 ^{**}
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.039	.035	.044	.	.001	.007	.001
		N	141	141	141	141	141	141	141
	Ideal Workplace	Correlation Coefficient	-.053	.238 ^{**}	.763 ^{**}	.269 ^{**}	1.000	.233 ^{**}	.246 ^{**}
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.532	.004	.000	.001	.	.005	.003
		N	141	141	141	141	141	141	141
	Work From Home	Correlation Coefficient	-.187 [*]	.081	.246 ^{**}	.224 ^{**}	.233 ^{**}	1.000	.251 ^{**}
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.027	.338	.003	.007	.005	.	.003
		N	141	141	141	141	141	141	141
	Switching Workplace	Correlation Coefficient	.052	.094	.331 ^{**}	.276 ^{**}	.246 ^{**}	.251 ^{**}	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.537	.268	.000	.001	.003	.003	.
		N	141	141	141	141	141	141	141

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussions

From the analysis it was seen that, low to negligible to negative correlation existed between the variables considered for the research. Birth year of respondents failed to predict their behaviour on social networking sites as well as their internet usage. Birth year even did not predict the perception of respondents towards their workplace or career.

While considering the different variable related to work and workplace, the correlation was positive in nature but borne very low to moderate relationship. The only exception was seen in case of ideal work considered by the respondents and their perceptions of an ideal workplace. This showed a strong positive relationship which even was significant.

Looking back at the reliability analysis the Chronbach alpha was very high thus proving the reliability of items and the overall scale. The poor correlation of the variables could have been due to the limited nature of respondents. As the research primarily considered only generation Z samples that were born post 1990, the results appear to be distorted. If generation Y or millenials were considered in the research the responses could have been different and a clear distinction between their responses would have been noticed.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research showed a different set of results for generation Z career aspirants. Their overall perception towards work and workplace cannot be generalized as distinctive in nature without considering the earlier generations. The generation Z though being technology savvy and proactive on various online platforms, has some stereotypical views towards their possible career aspirations.

An in depth study considering the earlier generations should be undertaken to get more valid responses which can then show clear distinction between the different generations.

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