Climate Change, Memes, & the Workplace: A Comparison of Generational Correlates on Online Platforms

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Introduction

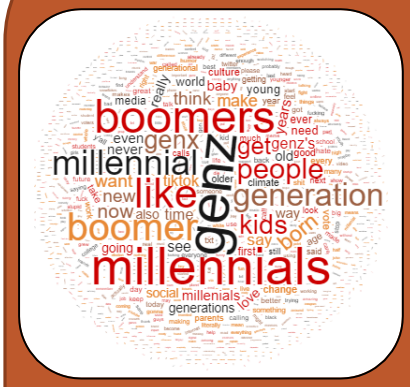
The viral phrase 'Ok boomer' piqued my interest– I wanted to see if the internet had any other collocations for generations.

- **Hypotheses:**
  - 'Ok boomer' = high incidence rate
  - Boomers correlated with centrist/conservative views
  - Millennials = laziness
  - Gen Z = possibly climate change

Data

- **Built new corpus**
- Used **Octoparse** to scrape data
- Search terms: **"gen z," "millennial," "boomer"**
- Websites: **Twitter, Google, Google Scholar**
- 7 categories: boomer / Gen Z / millennial tweets, boomer / Gen Z / millennial Google searches, all three terms on Google Scholar
- Original data set (DS) before cleaning:
  - Twitter – **~8,000 tweets**
  - Google – **~640 Google Searches**
  - Google Scholar - **~750 articles**

How do people talk about Gen Z, boomers, & millennials online?



Word cloud generated from tweets containing "gen z"

	feature	G2	p	n_target	n_reference
1	boomer	1648.85687	0.000000e+00	1339	1111
2	ok	539.98580	0.000000e+00	524	515
3	okay	147.78018	0.000000e+00	76	27
4	say	98.77046	0.000000e+00	98	97
5	just	49.75457	1.742273e-12	131	257
6	sooner	48.81743	2.809308e-12	18	1
7	neutrality	42.45642	7.227474e-11	16	1
8	said	41.62853	1.103708e-10	49	57
9	like	39.51821	3.250143e-10	129	278
10	shit	35.88060	2.097876e-09	37	38
11	christmas	33.80135	6.103641e-09	21	11
12	net	33.34510	7.717211e-09	18	6
13	got	32.60088	1.131632e-08	39	46
14	bitch	31.25173	2.266449e-08	18	7
15	family	30.88340	2.740049e-08	29	27
16	im	29.88962	4.573556e-08	28	26
17	fucking	28.07963	1.164249e-07	31	34
18	telling	27.30800	1.734923e-07	19	12
19	man	26.01653	3.385064e-07	23	20
20	biden	24.13216	8.994574e-07	13	4

Top 20 keywords from tweets containing "boomer"

Method

- Removed duplicates, manually cleaned data in Excel (removed instances of "boomer" as name or football team, removed one outlier Twitter account)
- Condensed DS to **tweet content** (Twitter) & **article title & description** (Google & Google Scholar)
- Loaded data into **R Studio**
- Stripped dates, URLs, & all punctuation except ', removed spaces from certain phrases ("gen z" → "genz") to see collocations of phrase better & treat as one unit
- Created **bigrams** & **trigrams**
- Calculated **mutual information** & **T score** for bigrams, sorted by score & controlled for occurrence rates
- Created **corpus** of all data, then calculated **keywords** for each DS

Results

DSs varied not only by **generation**, but also by **platform**.

- Google is used by older folks whereas Twitter used by predominantly young people.
- Google searches focused on reaction of older people to 'ok boomer' (*phrase, meme, viral, internet, weapon*) & employing/marketing to Gen Z (*digital, marketing, brands, work[force|place], employers).*
- Twitter *boomer* set was negative *(fucking, shit, bitch*); Twitter *Gen Z* set focused on topics & issues that interest Gen Z, reflected Gen Z language *(climate change, Tik Tok, vote, planet; bc, y'all, txt, like).*
- Google Scholar focused on the health concerns of boomers (*boomer women, boomer retirement, cohort, health, nurses, aging*).
- Findings surrounding *millennial* were not as conclusive.

Discussion

- Found backing for hypotheses
  - *Ok boomer* = high prevalence rate across almost every DS
  - *Biden, family, Christmas* were keywords of Twitter *boomer* DS
  - *Procrastination* was a keyword of Google *millennial* DS
  - *Climate change* featured prominently in Twitter *gen z* DS
- Negative tone of Twitter *boomer* DS = attitudes of young people towards boomers?

Conclusion

- Generation terms & platform under study both have an influence on the important words of each DS as determined by mutual information, T scores, & keyness analyses.
  - Future studies analyzing online data must take these factors into account.
- Gen Z uses Twitter to criticize boomers & discuss climate change & other interests.
- Generations older than Gen Z are interested in marketing to & employing them, also feel attacked by *ok boomer*.
- Future research: examine other online platforms, do diachronic analysis instead of synchronic, retry data collection & analysis of *millennial*.