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## Decoding Generation Z: A Perceptions Content Analysis

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**Decoding Generation Z: A Perceptions Content Analysis**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the multifaceted nature of Generation Z through a content analysis, aiming to identify the range of characteristics and preferences within this cohort. By delving beyond prevalent stereotypes, this study addresses the gap in understanding regarding Generation Z's learning styles, communication preferences, work ethics, and personal values. Through examination, this research provides insights crucial for marketers and educators seeking to engage and educate Generation Z effectively.

## **Introduction**

### **Background and Need**

Generations are defined as an identifiable group that share birth years, age location, and significant life events at critical developmental stages (Kupperschmidt, 2000). Characteristically, there are six differentiated generations to date. The Greatest Generation or the Veteran Generation (1925-1946), Baby Boomers (1946-1960), Generation X (1960-1980), Generation Y (1980-1995), Generation Z (1995-2010), and the Alpha Generation (2010 - present) (Zemke, 2000). Each generation has specific characteristics commonly grouped together, but what happens if you do not fit in with the characteristics, or stereotypes, of your generation? For example, younger generations such as Generation Y and Z are often deemed multitaskers, masters of new technology, and individuals who easily accept cultural differences (Krishnan et al., 2012). If a member of Generation Z does not fit in with these characteristics, where do they fit, and do they need to fit somewhere? It is important for more research to be conducted on Generation Z, so marketers and educators have a clearer picture of the psychographics of this generation. Without a clear picture, efforts to formulate messages and choose effective media channels to persuade and educate this generation are unlikely to succeed.

Researchers have sought to identify general characteristics of Generation Z. Generation Z members are most commonly characterized as the net generation, Facebook generation, digital natives, or I generation because of the fact this generation was born into a highly developed digital era (Tari, 2011). They are characterized as brave, technologically savvy, impatient, lovers of change, and impulsive. Being born into a world of technology has allowed them to form relationships online unlike any other generation before them. Generation Z has been deemed leaders in our world yet is also viewed as lazy and quick to anger (Sidorcuka, 2017).

## **Problem Statement**

Research on Generation Z is limited and research has failed to produce an overarching list of member characteristics. Educators need to be aware of Generation Z characteristics such as learning preferences and styles, communication preferences, preferred learning environments, technology preferences, motivations, and professional conduct. Determining these Generation Z characteristics will equip educators with the tools to adjust curriculum to enable students to successfully enter the workforce. While there is research comparing generational differences between three generations currently in the workforce, Generation X, Generation Y, and the Baby Boomers, Generation Z is not yet included.

## **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to conduct a content analysis to identify characteristics of Generation Z. Determining the range of characteristics of Generation Z will help guide future classroom instruction and curriculum development, specifically in the agricultural field for Generation Z students.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What does Generation Z prioritize in their personal life?
2. What are the technological and communication preferences of Generation Z?
3. How does Generation Z view work ethic and job preferences?

## **Literature Review**

Currently, six generations are identified: the Greatest Generation or the Veteran Generation (1925-1946), the Baby Boomers (1946-1960), Generation X (1960-1980), Generation Y (1980-1995), Generation Z (1995-2010), and the Alpha Generation (2010-Present). These six generations are often compared and contrasted in social science research, especially in research that seeks ways to best educate and communicate with members of these generations. Each generation is known for specific characteristics, whether it is Generation Z's tech-savviness and occasional laziness or Generation X's fierce independence and pragmatism. This literature review helps to explain common characteristics of Generation Z based on current research.

## **Influences on Generation Z**

Each generation has its unique characteristics influenced by contemporary global events. For example, most of Generation Z was born around the time of 9/11. Reisenwitz (2022) compared the standout characteristics of Generation Y and Generation Z by implementing an identical survey for both generation cohorts. Main characteristics such as demographics, internet usage, satisfaction, social media usage, brand loyalty, and risk aversion were evaluated for both generations. Data were then used to help marketing professionals develop strategies targeting each individual generation. This research used the generational cohort theory, a conceptual framework, to compare and contrast Generation Y and Generation Z. According to Reisenwitz (2022), the purpose of this study was to assess the differences specifically between Generation Y and Generation Z to contribute to generational cohort theory and also allow marketers to better address the needs and wants of Generations Y and Z.

Often, generational parameters are set around both birth years and major events that have shaped the lives of each generation (Van Rossem, 2019). For example, being born in an era of

technology has caused Generation Z to be our world's most technologically developed group at such a young age. Generation Z, having been raised in an era of connection, are often referred to as digital natives. Although one might assume Generation Z prefers digital communication, it has been found that 84% of Generation Z say they prefer to talk to their boss face-to-face instead of over online platforms (Stillman & Stillman, 2017). Generation Z, having been brought up on the cusp of technology, desires a world where both physical and technological connection are present.

### **Generation Z Common Characteristics**

Generation Z has been identified by both negative and positive stereotypes. Based on research by Seemiller and Grace (2016), many positive stereotypes such as loyalty, compassion, responsibility, and determination were discovered. Ganguli (2022) documented the different characteristics and preferences of Generation Z in the workforce. The research identified the need for Generation Z employees to be treated differently in the workforce. For example, employers must work harder to retain Generation Z member in the workforce as this generation is mobile and does not feel loyalty to an employer. Employee retention is critical for organizational success over long periods of time. Therefore, employee retention should be of concern since Generation Z will make up the bulk of the workforce in the coming years.

Ganguli (2022) identified many common themes that help characterize Generation Z's stereotypical work habits, identifying five dimensions that signify what an organization should focus on while recruiting and managing Generation Z. Schroth (2019) also depicted a vision of Generation Z entering the workplace and labor market. While Gen Z shares many traits with Millennials, such as lasting motivation and the need for relationships, they also bring in new patterns of behavior managers not only have to understand but have to learn how to manage



(Schroth, 2019). It was an adjustment when Millennials entered the workforce, and it has been an adjustment for Millennials now that Generation Z is entering the workforce. Millennial bosses will have to learn how to balance the “on my own time” attitude of Generation Z employees beginning their first jobs. Every generation has its doubts about the younger generations, but there are many negative stereotypes that Generation Z has to overcome. Generation Z, unlike previous generations, are highly motivated by the prospect of tangible rewards (Seemiller and Grace, 2016). Generation Z has also been characterized negatively as lazy and quick to anger (Sidorcuka, 2017).

In their research, Schroth (2019) focused heavily on the idea that Generation Z has little to no work experience when they begin to enter the workforce. In 1979, 60% of teens held a job, while in 2015, 34% of teens held a job. This number is expected to drop further by 2024 (Schroth, 2019). The lack of work experience adds another level of concern for hiring Generation Z employees.

Leskauskas (2022) discussed the idea that Generation Z lives everyday with an auxiliary ego. We know that there are significant differences between each generation, and new informational technologies, smartphones, and internet, have taken the role of a present auxiliary ego for the generations that were born in the 21st century (Leskauskas, 2022). Leskauskas’ research focused heavily on how these new technologies invade cultures and have the potential to invade the younger generations. This research specifically focused how a better understanding of Generation Z’s technology preferences would shed light on issues in analytic work and relationships with adolescent patients in the healthcare field.

## **Generation Z is Tech Savvy**

Generation Z is known as the tech-savvy generation. Born straight into an era of technological growth and advancement, most members of Generation Z are expected to have full working knowledge of the technological world. Persada's (2022) research focused on revealing the behavioral intentions of the tech-savvy Generation Z. Tech-savvy Generation Z will dominate the global population, and in order to stay competitive it is essential for a business that targets this demographic to understand the overarching characteristics of this generation (Persada, 2021). This research highlighted online versus in-store transactions of Generation Z and the behavioral nature of Gen Z in using the electronic wallet. According to Persada, the measurement in this research was done by using the Theory of Planned Behavior and a multivariate analysis with the Structural Equation Model that proposed six different hypotheses detailing this idea that in today's digital era the development of financial technologies will only continue to grow. Persada's (2021) research provided as description of the online spending habits of Generation Z, predicting the development of digital financial technologies will continue to grow.

Generation Z is classified as a technologically savvy generation. However, being a Generation Z member with little to no technological knowledge can hinder opportunities in the workforce. This information ties into learning styles, because most members of Generation Z have had to learn to take notes via computer and may even prefer taking classes through an online platform. In a collegiate setting, students are most likely to opt-out of classes that do not align with their learning preferences (Jaggars, 2014). In a study conducted with college students in the United States and Brazil, it was found both student groups prefer to engage in intrapersonal learning over interpersonal learning (Seemiller, 2019).

In the workplace, multiple generations work together. Research conducted by Bencsik, Juhász, & Horváth-Csikós (2016) looked at the Generations Y and Z in the workplace. This research identified significant differences between the two generations, despite the similarities, and demonstrated these differences appear rather emphasized in the corporate environment (Bencsik et al., 2016). Each generation tends to have unique viewpoints and expectations, workplace cultural norms, and patterns of learning and knowledge sharing (DeJuliis, & Saylor, 2021). Impactful historical events, parenting styles, and trends in pop-culture all influence a person's identity, attitudes, and belief system (DeJuliis, & Saylor, 2021). These factors differ for members of Generation Y and Generation Z, which is why there tends to be a generational gap. This quantitative research described what managing these two generations would mean for the managers as well as what difficulties would occur when these two generations are forced to manage each other (Bencsik et al., 2016). According to Bencsik, activities in the workplace will be forced to adapt to the new requirements for Generation Y and Generation Z.

Mignano's (2022) work on coaching athletes who were born in Generation Z examines the idea that the characteristics of Generation Z athletes influence coaching practices. This study went in depth to examine coaches' perceptions of Generation Z athlete characteristics, challenges, and effective coaching strategies (Mignano, 2022). Mignano examined 12 highly experienced coaches and sport science providers. They were interviewed and it was revealed that coaches characterized Generation Z athletes as having excellent technology skills, high expectations for success, short attention spans, poor communication skills, and an inability to deal with adversity (Mignano, 2022). Challenges included coaches having issues connecting with their athletes and supporting them. It was found that strategies such as connecting process with performance, teaching communication skills, being direct, and setting clear expectations worked

well with Generation Z athletes. By defining Generation Z characteristics, coaches were able to better connect with the athletes.

## **Conclusion**

The literature on Generation Z reveals a cohort defined by distinct characteristics. Primarily, they are known for their tech-savviness, having grown up in a digital age. This influences their learning styles, communication preferences, and even job expectations. Unlike previous generations, Generation Z exhibits a willingness to switch jobs. However, despite their digital prowess, they prioritize authentic relationships and face-to-face communication in the workplace such as communication with a boss. When entering the workforce, they often lack traditional work experience. Understanding these traits is crucial for educators to cultivate engagement. In learning how Generation Z is viewed and how Generation Z members view themselves, communicators and educators can determine how their audiences tend to learn best. Specifically related to students in the Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food, and Life Sciences, college administrators, student support staff, and faculty have much to gain from studying the characteristics of the students they are currently working to serve.

## **Methodology**

The research employed a quantitative content analysis. Specifically, the research conducted a content analysis of various peer reviewed journals to determine patterns and themes. Specifically, it entailed a comprehensive content analysis of recent, within the last five years, peer-reviewed journal articles focusing on Generation Z. This examination aimed to uncover prevalent themes and concepts associated with Generation Z by examining generational characteristic such as communication, technology, values, education, workplace dynamics, preferences, barriers, and priorities.

In general, the steps of content analysis are to formulate a research question, define the designated population, select the sample, define a unit of analysis, construct categories of content, establish a quantification system, code content, analyze, and draw conclusions (Guest et al., 2012).

## **Research Design**

Content analysis has been defined as a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding (Stemler, 2000). The researcher met with a research librarian with the University of Arkansas Libraries to determine the best database to search for articles. EBSCO, an esteemed database utilized by the University of Arkansas Libraries, serves as resource for accessing peer reviewed, scholarly literature. With its comprehensive collection of peer-reviewed journals spanning various disciplines, EBSCO offers researchers a robust platform to explore multifaceted aspects of Generation Z, including their behaviors, attitudes, and societal impacts. By leveraging EBSCO's advanced search functionalities and tailored filters, information can efficiently be sifted through.

To refine the search, specific parameters were established to focus solely on peer-reviewed articles published within the past five years. Additionally, each selected article required full-text availability in PDF format to ensure thorough examination. Initially, the search yielded a total of 3,992 articles. Subsequently, by narrowing the publication date range to include only articles from 2018 to the present, the results were further refined, revealing 3,623 articles meeting the specified criteria. The search terms employed to categorize articles encompassed a broad spectrum, including Generation Z characteristics, communication styles, technology usage, values, education level, workplace dynamics, preferences, barriers, and priorities. Further refinement of the search led to the selection of 70 articles that most closely aligned with the research criteria from the initial pool of 3,623 articles. Among these, 16 articles were unavailable in PDF format. Ultimately, the research culminated in the inclusion of 54 peer-reviewed articles, all published within the last five years, addressing the defined facets of Generation Z traits and behaviors.

In preparation for analysis, a comprehensive coding instrument and corresponding instructions were meticulously created (see appendix A). This instrument was designed to facilitate systematic examination of each selected article, identifying key themes and commonalities across the group of literature. The coding instrument comprised several distinct sections, each tailored to capture specific dimensions relevant to the study of Generation Z. These sections included article number, Generation Z characteristics, communication patterns, technology usage, values, education trends, workplace dynamics, job preferences, barriers encountered, priorities identified, Generation Z age delineation, and unique nicknames associated with this demographic cohort. This structured approach ensured a rigorous and

consistent methodological framework for data analysis, enabling the extraction of valuable insights into the nature of Generation Z attributes and behaviors from the assembled literature.

Triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Patton, 1999). The researcher used training sessions to achieve triangulation

### **Rigor**

Maintaining the internal consistency of the study was extremely important to ensuring validity. Throughout the content analysis examining Generation Z preferences, an audit trail served as a crucial methodological tool. It documented each step of the research process, from data collection to analysis, ensuring transparency and reproducibility. By recording decisions made during coding, such as category definitions and criteria, the audit trail maintains the study's reliability and validity. The audit trail provides a roadmap for researchers to trace the origins of findings and detect any potential biases or errors. In the context of studying Generation Z preferences, an exhaustive audit trail helps maintain rigor and credibility.

Member checking in content analysis involves seeking feedback from participants or stakeholders to validate the accuracy and interpretation of findings. This process enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the study by allowing those involved to confirm that their perspectives have been accurately represented. Member checking fosters a collaborative research approach, strengthening the validity and relevance of the findings within the context of the target population.

Peer debriefing and examination were also used to maintain rigor. The researcher provided each peer reviewer with the codebook. Each peer reviewer was tasked with randomly selecting articles and following the coding instructions. Findings were discussed with experts and

provided feedback to help identify errors, biases, and oversights. In conducting the analysis, the researcher acknowledged assumptions, values, and biases that could influence the interpretation of the data. As a Generation Z individual collaborating closely with a committee primarily composed of Gen X and millennial members, the researcher recognized the potential for biases about Generation Z. Interactions and discussions with faculty committee members have provided valuable insights, yet the researcher remain vigilant in ensuring that the analysis remains objective and free from bias, seeking to balance personal viewpoints with those of diverse perspectives represented within the committee.

### **Data Analysis**

After data collection, data was recorded in a coding sheet and analyzed for frequency. Following the completion of content analysis, common themes were identified and examined to be reported in the findings.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, a comprehensive content analysis of recent peer-reviewed journal articles relating to Generation Z was conducted. By thoroughly examining various dimensions such as characteristics, communication, technology, values, education, workplace dynamics, preferences, barriers, and priorities, the study aimed to provide valuable insights into Generation Z. The research design involved the formulation of research questions, sample selection, and the development of a coding instrument. Leveraging EBSCO as the primary database for literature retrieval ensured access to a wide variety of high-quality scholarly articles. The inclusion criteria and refinement process resulted in the selection of 54 relevant articles for analysis. To ensure rigor, measures such as triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, and maintaining an audit trail were implemented to enhance the validity and reliability of the study. Data analysis



involved using frequencies to determine thematic identification to uncover common themes across the chosen literature. Overall, this research contributes to a nuanced understanding of Generation Z and offers implications for various fields, including education, workplace management, and societal engagement.

## Results

Once coding was completed, the collected data was examined to find patterns and draw conclusions on the most common Generation Z characteristics, communication patterns, technology usage, values, education trends, workplace dynamics, job preferences, barriers encountered, priorities, Generation Z age delineation, and unique nicknames. This content analysis revolved around frequencies.

Each selected article had a variety of known or assumed Generation Z characteristics listed. The characteristics have been broken down according to the frequency of mentions in the 54 approved articles. Environmentally aware or environment conscious was found 10 times, conservative spending and avid travelers were recorded twice, and seeking change in daily life was recorded 7 separate times. Criticizing the status quo was found twice along with challenging generational assumptions. Generation Z is socially and economically active as it was stated 7 separate times.

**Table 1**

*Generation Z Characteristics*

| Characteristics       | Frequency | Characteristics | Frequency |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|
| Environment Conscious | 10        | Self-Informed   | 2         |
| Creative              | 9         | Thoughtful      | 2         |
| Innovative            | 8         | Responsible     | 2         |
| Change Seekers        | 7         | Demanding       | 2         |
| Socially Active       | 7         | Cautious        | 2         |
| Multitaskers          | 6         | Compassionate   | 1         |

|                       |   |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|---|
| Impatient             | 6 | Leaders               | 1 |
| Adaptable             | 6 | Relaxed               | 1 |
| Pragmatic             | 5 | Flexible              | 1 |
| Entrepreneurial       | 5 | Impulsive             | 1 |
| Open                  | 4 | Relationship-Oriented | 1 |
| Tech-Savvy            | 4 | Spoiled               | 1 |
| Confident             | 4 | Materialistic         | 1 |
| Diverse               | 4 | Entitled              | 1 |
| Unique                | 4 | Low Attention Span    | 1 |
| Critical              | 3 | Trendsetters          | 1 |
| Opinionated           | 3 | Forward Thinkers      | 1 |
| Global                | 3 | Loyal                 | 1 |
| Influencers           | 3 | Active                | 1 |
| Easily Bored          | 3 | Skill Focused         | 1 |
| Less Brand Loyal      | 3 | Self-Taught           | 1 |
| Ambitious             | 3 | Curious               | 1 |
| Independent           | 3 | Innovative            | 1 |
| Accepting             | 3 | Genuine               | 1 |
| Hyperconnected        | 3 | Distracted            | 1 |
| Conservative Spending | 2 | Messy                 | 1 |
| Avid Travelers        | 2 | Courageous            | 1 |
| Criticize Status Quo  | 2 | Diligent              | 1 |
| Challenge Assumptions | 2 | Self-Centered         | 1 |

|               |   |       |   |
|---------------|---|-------|---|
| Open-Minded   | 2 | Brave | 1 |
| Determined    | 2 |       |   |
| Goal Oriented | 2 |       |   |

---

According to research, Generation Z has several communication preferences. Social media is Generation Z's primary mode of communication with 13 articles citing social media usage. Face-to-face communication ranks second with 10 articles viewing it as Generation Z's favorite way to communicate with other Gen Z'ers and those outside of their generation. In general, Generation Z prefers clear, practical, and fast communication tactics. In the educational setting, Generation Z needs open communication, feedback, and digitalized instructional methods.

**Table 2***Generation Z Communication Styles*

| Communication Style  | Frequency | Communication Style | Frequency |
|----------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|
| Social media         | 13        | Open Communication  | 1         |
| Face-to-Face         | 10        | Need Feedback       | 1         |
| Influencers          | 5         | Practical           | 1         |
| Interpersonal        | 4         | Mobile              | 1         |
| Sharing              | 3         | Fast                | 1         |
| Clear                | 2         | Transparent         | 1         |
| Word-of-mouth        | 2         | Digitalized         | 1         |
| Strong Communicators | 2         | Video Only          | 1         |
| Email                | 2         | Brief               | 1         |
| Instagram            | 2         | Online              | 1         |
| Story Telling        | 1         |                     |           |

Known as the most tech-savvy, digitally-centric generation, it is no surprise that Generation Z has very specific technological preferences. Generation Z's most used technological platform is social media with 9 references throughout the articles. 24/7 access is extremely important as Generation Z is highly dependent on technology. Because of exposure at a young age, Generation Z is the most adaptable, innovative, and interactive generation thus far.

**Table 3***Generation Z Technology Usage*

| Technology             | Frequency | Technology        | Frequency |
|------------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|
| Social media           | 13        | Enthusiasts       | 2         |
| Tech-Savvy             | 8         | Need 24/7 Access  | 1         |
| Digital Centric        | 8         | Trends            | 1         |
| Dependent              | 6         | Exposure          | 1         |
| Constant               | 4         | Innovative        | 1         |
| Exclusively Online     | 3         | Computer Literacy | 1         |
| Interactive Technology | 3         | Comfortable Users | 1         |
| Reliant                | 2         | Adaptable         | 1         |

Sustainability and social responsibility emerge as the most prominent values, each receiving a frequency of 7. This suggests that environmental consciousness and a desire for ethical behavior are significant concerns for this generation. Inclusivity, taking action, and innovation also hold considerable weight, with frequencies of 2. These values reflect a generation that values diversity, proactive engagement, and creativity in addressing societal challenges. Furthermore, autonomy, independence, and accountability are valued, each receiving a frequency of 2, highlighting a desire for individual agency and responsibility. Additionally, respect, safety, creativity, honesty, and credibility are also valued, with frequencies of 2, indicating a strong emphasis on integrity and personal well-being. Overall, Generation Z places a premium on sustainability, social responsibility, inclusivity, and individual autonomy, reflecting a complex interplay of ethical, environmental, and personal considerations in their value system.

**Table 4***Generation Z Values*

| Value                 | Frequency | Value          | Frequency |
|-----------------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
| Sustainability        | 7         | Honesty        | 2         |
| Social Responsibility | 7         | Justice        | 1         |
| Inclusivity           | 2         | Trust          | 1         |
| Taking Action         | 2         | Technology     | 1         |
| Innovation            | 2         | Accountability | 1         |
| Diversity             | 2         | Privacy        | 1         |
| Climate               | 2         | Relatability   | 1         |
| Autonomy              | 2         | Experiences    | 1         |
| Independence          | 2         | Teamwork       | 1         |
| Respect               | 2         | Humanity       | 1         |
| Safety                | 2         | Self-worth     | 1         |
| Creativity            | 2         | Credibility    | 1         |

Generation Z's educational preferences shed light on their attitudes toward learning methodologies and environments. Generation Z has emerged as highly educated and sophisticated regarding education with frequencies of 8 and 2, respectively. This suggests that Generation Z values educational programs that challenge them intellectually and provide a high level of academic rigor. Furthermore, multimodal, and interactive learning methods are favored, each receiving a frequency of 2, indicating a preference for dynamic and engaging educational experiences. Educational autonomy and experiential learning are also valued, with frequencies of

3 and 1, revealing a desire for self-directed learning and hands-on engagement. Additionally, independence and adaptability are recognized as important attributes, each receiving a frequency of 2, suggesting a preference for educational structures that allow for flexibility and personalized learning pathways. Generation Z exhibits a preference for intellectually stimulating, interactive, and flexible educational approaches that empower them to take ownership of their learning journey while fostering collaboration and commitment to academic excellence.

**Table 5**

*Generation Z Educational Preferences*

| Education             | Frequency | Education            | Frequency |
|-----------------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|
| Highly Educated       | 8         | Adaptable            | 1         |
| Experiential Learners | 3         | Modern Methods       | 1         |
| Sophisticated         | 2         | Difficult to teach   | 1         |
| Multimodal Learners   | 2         | Motivated Students   | 1         |
| Interactive           | 2         | Online Only          | 1         |
| Independent           | 2         | Researchers          | 1         |
| Hybrid Teaching       | 1         | Collaboration        | 1         |
| Informal Environment  | 1         | Committed            | 1         |
| E-learning            | 1         | Flexible             | 1         |
| Require Feedback      | 1         | Caring Teachers      | 1         |
| Educational Autonomy  | 1         | Prefer Customization | 1         |

Generation Z is beginning to enter the workforce and is showing preferences unlike any prior generation. Notably, personal development emerges as a prominent priority, with a



frequency of 4, indicating a strong desire for opportunities to grow and advance within their careers. Additionally, relationships and flexibility are valued, each receiving a frequency of 2, suggesting an emphasis on supportive work environments and the ability to balance work with personal commitments. Distance working and feedback are also recognized as important aspects, with frequencies of 2, reflecting a preference for remote work options and regular communication and guidance from supervisors. Generation Z seeks workplaces that prioritize personal growth, supportive relationships, flexibility, and clear communication, while also valuing realistic expectations and opportunities for remote work.

**Table 6**

*Generation Z Workplace Characteristics*

| Workplace            | Frequency | Workplace              | Frequency |
|----------------------|-----------|------------------------|-----------|
| Personal Development | 4         | Less Engaged           | 1         |
| High Turnover        | 2         | Fair Compensation      | 1         |
| Distance Working     | 2         | Realistic Expectations | 1         |
| Relationships        | 2         | Need Job Security      | 1         |
| Flexibility          | 2         | Balance                | 1         |
| Feedback             | 2         | Motivated              | 1         |
| Advancement          | 1         | Independent            | 1         |
| Low Commitment       | 1         | Structure              | 1         |

Similar to the table above, Generation Z has strong aspirations and priorities within the professional realm. Entrepreneurship emerges as a leading preference, with a frequency of 4, indicating a strong desire for autonomy and innovation in their careers. High salary and balance

are valued, each receiving a frequency of 3, showing the importance of financial stability and a healthy work-life balance. Growth and job security are also recognized as significant factors, with frequencies of 2, suggesting a desire for continuous development and stability in their careers. Generation Z seeks job opportunities that offer autonomy, financial stability, growth opportunities, and a supportive work culture, while also valuing innovation and a healthy work-life balance.

**Table 7**

*Generation Z Job Preferences*

| Preference         | Frequency | Preference          | Frequency |
|--------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|
| Entrepreneurship   | 4         | Empowerment         | 1         |
| High Salary        | 3         | CEO Opportunity     | 1         |
| Work Life Balance  | 3         | Job Prestige        | 1         |
| Growth Opportunity | 2         | Mentoring           | 1         |
| Social Environment | 2         | Rewards             | 1         |
| Job Security       | 2         | Encouragement       | 1         |
| Personalization    | 1         | Improved Technology | 1         |

The chart below delineates potential barriers faced by Generation Z, shedding light on challenges that may impede their personal and professional development. Notably, depression emerges as a significant barrier, with a frequency of 2, highlighting the mental health challenges this generation may encounter. Short attention span and risk aversion are recognized as prevalent barriers, each receiving a frequency of 2, suggesting potential difficulties in maintaining focus and taking calculated risks. Moreover, external comparison and decreased resilience are

acknowledged as obstacles, with frequencies of 1, underscoring the impact of societal pressures and a lack of coping mechanisms on Generation Z's well-being. Generation Z faces a diverse array of barriers, encompassing mental health challenges, societal pressures, and personal skill development, highlighting the need for support and resources to help them overcome these obstacles and thrive in various aspects of their lives.

**Table 8**

*Generation Z Potential Barriers*

| Barrier                | Frequency | Barrier              | Frequency |
|------------------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|
| Short Attention Span   | 2         | Not Loyal            | 1         |
| Depression             | 2         | Outside Pressure     | 1         |
| Financial Restrictions | 1         | Difficult            | 1         |
| Risk Aversion          | 1         | Not Leaders          | 1         |
| Lack Problem Solving   | 1         | Sensitive            | 1         |
| High Expectations      | 1         | Unprepared           | 1         |
| External Comparison    | 1         | Decreased Resilience | 1         |

Research has shown a comprehensive overview of the priorities held by Generation Z, showing the multifaceted values and concerns that shape their worldview. Environment emerges as a predominant priority, with a frequency of 5. Interaction and experiences, particularly features on social media, also hold considerable weight, with frequencies of 4 and 3, respectively, indicating a strong desire for meaningful social connections and memorable encounters. Safety and mental health are recognized as important priorities, each receiving a frequency of 2, reflecting Generation Z's commitment to personal well-being and emotional

resilience. Additionally, diversity, justice, and being taken seriously are valued, with frequencies of 2. Generation Z's priorities encompass a broad spectrum of environmental, social, and personal values, reflecting their nuanced approach to navigating contemporary challenges and striving for a more equitable and sustainable future.

**Table 9***Generation Z Priorities*

| Priority                | Frequency | Priority              | Frequency |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------|
| Environment             | 5         | Trendiness            | 1         |
| Interaction with Others | 4         | Impact                | 1         |
| Authenticity            | 3         | Simplicity            | 1         |
| Clear Communication     | 3         | Popularity            | 1         |
| Experiences             | 3         | Personalization       | 1         |
| Physical Health         | 2         | Culture               | 1         |
| Quality                 | 2         | Technology            | 1         |
| Mental Health           | 2         | Being Unique          | 1         |
| Treatment of animals    | 2         | Volunteerism          | 1         |
| Collective Good         | 2         | Justice               | 1         |
| Personal Safety         | 2         | Relationships         | 1         |
| Entertainment           | 2         | Connection            | 1         |
| Instant Gratification   | 1         | Being Heard           | 1         |
| Cost Performance        | 1         | Being taken Seriously | 1         |
| Personal Satisfaction   | 1         | Social Media Image    | 1         |
| Saving Money            | 1         | Diversity             | 1         |

Throughout research, it was obvious that the age delineation of this generation was often confused. Most articles cited different years as the years encompassing Generation Z. Table 10 provides a breakdown of how Generation Z is defined by age range, offering insight into the

diverse age ranges in this demographic cohort. The data highlights variations in defining Generation Z, with different ranges and criteria being utilized. The most common age range identified is from the mid-1990s to the early 2010s, with a frequency of 5. Similarly, the years after 1995 and between 1997 and 2012 also receive a frequency of 5 each, suggesting a consensus around these periods as defining the birth years of Generation Z. The years spanning from 1995 to 2010 emerge as a prevalent range, with a frequency of 8, indicating a significant portion of the population falling within this timeframe. The data underscores the complexity of defining Generation Z, with various age ranges and criteria being considered, highlighting the need for a set range of years to be determined.

**Table 10**

*Generation Z Age Defined*

| Age Range            | Frequency | Age Range          | Frequency |
|----------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|
| After 1995           | 9         | 1996-2015          | 1         |
| 1995-2010            | 8         | After 1990         | 1         |
| 1995-2012            | 5         | After 1996         | 1         |
| 1997-2012            | 5         | After Y Generation | 1         |
| 1996-2010            | 4         | 2000-2016          | 1         |
| Mid 90s to Early 10s | 4         | Ages 14-25         | 1         |
| Ages 18-25           | 1         |                    |           |

Many nicknames for Generation Z were also discovered during research. Table 11 presents a comprehensive compilation of the various nicknames attributed to Generation Z, reflecting the diverse ways in which this demographic cohort is referred to in everyday

conversation. The most prevalent nickname is "Digital Natives," with a substantial frequency of 11, describing the generation's relationship with technology and the internet. Other frequently used terms include "Gen Z," "Post Millennial," and "iGeneration," each with a frequency of 4, indicating common descriptors used to name this cohort. Variations such as "Zoomers" and "GenZers" are also present, reflecting the informal and evolving nature of generational terminology. Furthermore, the chart encompasses a wide array of nicknames, ranging from technology-centric labels like "Net Gen" and "Generation I" to more playful names like "Screenagers" and "Gen Wii." Notably, there are also mentions of specific platforms or characteristics associated with Generation Z, such as the "Facebook Generation" and "Switchers," highlighting the influence of digital culture and adaptability within this generation.

**Table 11***Generation Z Nicknames*

| Nickname              | Frequency | Nickname          | Frequency |
|-----------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|
| Digital Natives       | 11        | The We Generation | 1         |
| Gen Z                 | 8         | Centennials       | 1         |
| GenZ                  | 4         | Dotcom Children   | 1         |
| Zers                  | 4         | Internet Children | 1         |
| Post Millenial        | 4         | GenZers           | 1         |
| Zoomers               | 3         | Net Gen           | 1         |
| Gen Tech              | 3         | Generation I      | 1         |
| Zeners                | 2         | GZ                | 1         |
| Z Generation          | 2         | Switchers         | 1         |
| Online Generation     | 2         | Z                 | 1         |
| Facebook Generation   | 2         | Screenagers       | 1         |
| Youngsters            | 1         | Gen Tech          | 1         |
| After Y Generation    | 1         | iGeneration       | 1         |
| Generation Me         | 1         | N Generation      | 1         |
| Technology Generation | 1         | Gen Wii           | 1         |
| Gen Next              | 1         | Post Gen          | 1         |



## Conclusions

The majority of articles had varying views on the many diverse Generation Z characteristics, communication patterns, technology usage, values, education trends, workplace dynamics, job preferences, barriers encountered, priorities, Generation Z age delineation, and unique nicknames. This content analysis revealed commonalities and differences in the perception of Generation Z. Based on these findings, there is now a compelling list of Generation Z outsider perceptions that compiles information from 54 different peer-reviewed scholarly articles. Generation Z, as characterized by various sources, exhibits a variety of traits and preferences that shape their behaviors and priorities across different domains. Seemiller and Grace (2016) discovered many positive stereotypes such as loyalty, compassion, responsibility, and determination that are also reflected in the findings from this content analysis. From environmental consciousness to technological preferences, this generation showcases a distinct set of values and aspirations separate from the generations prior.

In terms of environmental awareness, Generation Z demonstrates a significant concern for sustainability and social responsibility. This is evident from the frequency of mentions of values such as environmental consciousness and ethical behavior in the selected articles. Inclusivity, innovation, and taking action are also highlighted as important values, reflecting a generation that values diversity and proactive engagement in addressing societal challenges.

Regarding technology, Generation Z is highly knowledgeable and reliant on digital platforms, particularly social media. Their preference for clear and fast communication tactics aligns with their use of social media as the primary mode of communication within their generation. Generation Z's emphasis on 24/7 access to technology depicts the fact that they grew up in the age of booming technological advancement.

In the realm of education, Generation Z seeks intellectually stimulating and interactive learning experiences that allow for autonomy and flexibility in the classroom. Multimodal and experiential learning methods are favored by most, indicating a preference for dynamic educational approaches. It has been determined that Generation Z values educational programs that challenge them intellectually and provide opportunities for personal and intellectual growth. Generation Z also prefers educators with a high level of real-world experience.

As Generation Z begins to fully transition into the workforce, personal development emerges as a prominent priority, alongside the desire for supportive work environments and flexible, hybrid work arrangements. Each generation tends to have unique viewpoints and expectations, workplace cultural norms, and patterns of learning and knowledge sharing (DeJuliis, & Saylor, 2021). In knowing this, we were determined to find Generation Z's workplace preferences. Entrepreneurship also stands out as a leading career preference, highlighting this generation's inclination towards autonomy and innovation in their careers.

It has been determined that Generation Z faces several barriers, including mental health challenges, short attention spans, and external pressures. These obstacles have led to the importance of providing support and resources to help them navigate personal and professional challenges effectively. Generation Z is also much more likely to share their shortcomings than generations prior.

Defining the age range of Generation Z remains a point of contention, with variations observed in different sources. Despite this ambiguity, there is a consensus around defining the birth years of Generation Z, with the mid-1990s to the early 2010s emerging as the most common age range. In addition, the diverse array of nicknames attributed to Generation Z

reflects the evolving nature of generational terminology and highlights their unique relationship with technology and digital culture.

Generation Z fully embodies a complex interplay of values, preferences, and challenges that distinguish them from previous generations. Understanding these dynamics is essential for educators, employers, and policymakers to effectively engage with and support this generation as they navigate various aspects of their education, career, and life.

In light of the findings of this study, it would be wise for educators and employers to weave this information into curriculum and job structure. This content analysis better classifies the characteristics identified with Generation Z. This range of Generation Z characteristics will help guide future classroom instruction and curriculum development, specifically in the agricultural field for Generation Z students.

### **Recommendations**

Future research should refine the methodology to ensure a more comprehensive analysis of Generation Z's preferences. This could potentially involve incorporating multiple data sources, such as interviews or surveys, to provide richer insights into Generation Z behaviors, attitudes, and preferences. Incorporating a qualitative analysis could assist in understanding the underlying motivations and meanings behind the observed characteristics.

As for expanding upon the research and identifying next steps, a study exploring the subgroups inside of Generation Z could be conducted. Delving deeper into specific subgroups within Generation Z, such as differences based on socioeconomic status, cultural background, or geographic location, would provide insights into the diversity within this generation. It would also be valuable to do specific research on those on the cusp of Generation Z. Conducting trend forecasting to anticipate future shifts in Generation Z's characteristics based on emerging

societal, technological, and economic trends would be valuable for businesses, educators, and policymakers. This could help predict the future behaviors of Generation Z students, workers, and creatives. Assessing the impact of Generation Z's characteristics on various domains, such as education, employment, consumer behavior, and social attitudes, could guide strategies for engaging with and accommodating this generation. We already know that Generation Z has to be approached differently than the generations prior, but this impact assessment would help specify communication tactics.

Educators working with Generation Z should incorporate technology and interactive learning methods, such as online collaboration tools, to align with Generation Z's digital native tendencies in the classroom. Technology usage is key in keeping a member of Generation Z engaged. It would also be helpful to integrate real-world examples, case studies, and projects that resonate with Generation Z's interests and values. This would foster an environment of relevance and interest. It has been found that members of Generation Z prioritize personalization in their education. Providing opportunities for personalized learning experiences and allowing students to have a say in their education through project-based learning, self-directed study, and flexible learning pathways will be game-changing. Recognizing and addressing the mental health challenges faced by many members of Generation Z by providing resources and support systems within the educational environment is also essential in creating an open environment.

Regarding curriculum changes to accommodate Generation Z, it is important to emphasize critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and adaptability skills to prepare Generation Z for an increasingly complex and rapidly changing world. Integrating digital literacy skills, including information literacy, media literacy, cybersecurity awareness, and digital citizenship, into the curriculum will equip Generation Z with the skills needed to navigate the

digital landscape responsibly. Generation Z also values global immersion. Incorporating global perspectives, cultural competency, and awareness of social issues into the curriculum will foster empathy, diversity, and global citizenship among Generation Z students.

Understanding and engaging with Generation Z requires a multifaceted approach that acknowledges their diverse characteristics, digital fluency, and evolving societal context. Reflecting on the content analysis and considering potential refinements and expansions, it's evident that Generation Z presents both challenges and opportunities for educators, researchers, and society at large.

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## Appendix A

### Code Book:

#### Parameters

- Published within the last 5 years
- Peer-reviewed journal article
- Full PDF format available

#### Search Process including Key Words

- Generation Z
- Behaviors
- Communication
- Technology
- Values
- Education
- Workplace
- Job Preferences
- Barriers
- Priorities