



THE PARALLEL LIFE - A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA AMONG GENERATION Z.

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Abstract:

Social media is a crucial double-edged sword in the hands of youth, especially the Generation Z. Along with its inherent advantages it has many disadvantages which cannot be ignored at any cost. Social media like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and WhatsApp has created a segment of its own encompassing large group of this generation as their vital consumer base. Social media has revolutionized the way people live their lives. The engagement is so strong that it has penetrated cultural and social aspects of individuals. The paper examines and tries to put forward the various perception about social media among Generation Z. It emphasizes both positive and negative outlook of the said media and how it has become an inevitable to life and lifestyle of its users. It provides a sneak peek into the mindset of a generation which is technologically native and highly aware but still chooses to be part of media which have negative impact to many aspects of their lifestyle thus leading to a self-aware parallel life. The paper examines the various perceptions that the Generation Z have about the social media and how it has impacted the way of life in this technological and digital Himalayan tsunami that world has witnessed.

Keywords: *Social Media, Generation Z, Social Media Perception.*

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Introduction:

Social media has been one of the most prominent developments in recent times. The world has become a much smaller place where people from different parts of the world can connect on a single platform. It has given a media for strong voices to raise their concerns and opinions and allowed them to be heard at the highest level, be it organization,

consumer forums or even the government. Social media has given an impetus and a new meaning to mass communication. Not only has it developed a sense of confidence among people but also has revolutionized the way people live their life. Hence it has become integral part of cultural change that the world has witnessed.

Parallely, it has also caused an immense pressure



on the teenagers to present themselves as per the norms, culture, and perception of current social media world. The worry is that it would take away more than it gives to such a younger demographic of audience.

Social Media Overview:

In January 2022, there were 1.40 billion people living in India. Data indicate that from 2021 and 2022, India's population rose by 13 million (+1.0%). In India, women make up 48.0% of the population, while men make up 52.0%. 35.9% of Indians resided in urban regions in the beginning of 2022, while 64.1% did so in rural ones. In January 2022, there were 658.0 million internet users in India. In India, 47.0 percent of the population had access to the internet as of the beginning of 2022.

The number of internet users in India rose by 34 million (+5.4%) between 2021 and 2022. To put things in perspective, these user statistics show that 742.0 million individuals in India did not access the internet at the beginning of 2022, which translates to 53.0 percent of the population being offline at that time. Actual internet user estimates may, however, be greater than these suggested numbers indicate because COVID-19-related concerns continue to have an impact on studies into internet use. At the beginning of 2022, India had 1.14 billion mobile connections, according to data from GSMA Intelligence.

However, many individuals use more than one mobile connection, such as having one connection for personal use and another for business, so it's common for mobile connection numbers to greatly outnumber population numbers. According to data from GSMA Intelligence, 81.3 percent of the country's population has mobile connections in

India in January 2022. In India, there were 34 million more mobile connections (+3.1%) between 2021 and 2022.

In India, there were 467.0 million active users of social media in January 2022. At the beginning of 2022, there were 33.4% of people in India using social media, however it's vital to keep in mind that these users may not all be distinct people. According to a Kepios investigation, between 2021 and 2022, the number of social media users in India rose by 19 million (+4.2%).

The 5 most popular social media platforms (including messaging apps) in India (2022) are WhatsApp (534.30 million active users), followed by Instagram (503.37 million users), Facebook (491.53 million users), Telegram (374.40 million users), Facebook Messenger (324.39 million users).

Generation Z Overview:

Generation Z are the population who are born between 1997 and 2010. This generation is digitally native and have experienced the best of innovation in every field. They have aptitude towards technology usage and usage of various digital and social media options. They are bold and expressive and have more of a liberal and open mindedness in most of the issues. They are very different from their predecessors in terms of being expressive, more scientific approach and culturally more separate. They are high in personality and self-consciousness. With high uneven waves on moodiness, they are complex to predict.

Objective of Study:

- 1) To know how generation 'z' perceives social media.
- 2) To understand the advantage and disadvantage of social media through prism of generation Z



- 3) To know the usage pattern of social media.
- 4) To understand the penetration of social media in the daily life of Generation Z

Methodology:

50 individuals belonging to Generation Z were interviewed through open and face to face

conversation with the help of pre-determined questions. The average age of the group is 24 years with equal Male: Female ratio. All from Mumbai suburban area. The responses of the respondents were generalised in different categories.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Social media platforms (as per respondents)

Advantages	Disadvantages
Keeps one update to date	Addiction and increased screen time
Cheap and on the move source of entertainment	Health issues (eye problem, back issue, stress etc)
Provides earning opportunity	Promotes materialistic life
Helps to connect with many and develops lobby	Acts as a distraction
Motivates and develops personality	Tends to promote more spendings
Helps in self-evaluation	Leads to comparison and self-doubts
Can help in career growth	Restricts physical socialisation

Usage of various Social Media Platforms by Respondents.

PLATFORM	PERCENTAGE Using the Platform
Instagram	100
Facebook	50
Twitter	45
LinkedIn	20
WhatsApp	100
Snapchat	56
Telegram	84
YouTube	100

Major insights of perception about social media among the Generation 'Z':

1. Social media or social pressure

Social media has become all pervasive in today's time and age. Social pressures are either arising directly because of social media or can be linked to it with certainty. It creates competition between people, a race in which they are pressurized to do better than others. Individuals often risks a lot of things which affects their mental health too.

Often teenagers hop from one brand to another.

They are very easily influenced by what they see online. The pressure that they feel can be both positive and negative. If it is taken positively it can encourage to do work harder and achieve those things that they do not have on the other hand it can create anxiety and undue pressure and lead them to make inappropriate choices.

The pressure that they feel can be both positive and negative. If it is taken positively it can encourage to do work harder and achieve those things that they do not have on the other hand it can create anxiety



and undue pressure and lead them to make wrong choices.

Social media help in numerous ways to change individuals' personality through entertainment or even through learning and development. Being present on social media itself can be a confident booster and a validation about being accepted by groups of friends or society at large.

It can also be a double edge sword as individual can only decide how it is to be used. Social media can play with human mind as it can be very addictive and would lead to a lot of wastage of time. It can also lead to substance abuse among youth which would be a greater concern. If used properly it can act as a mechanism to relieve stress, to get connected with others and to create a network among yourself to share emotions with each other.

2. Social media and Depression symptoms:

Many research has showcased that social media can impact mental health to a great extent. Social media has always acted as a linking tool among different and unknown people. It has given a platform for daily conversation with friends and close ones. But there are situation where certain feelings cannot be expressed easily and there is a fear of judgment. Introverts may feel very difficult to talk to people in public or face to face Whereas social media makes them feel more at ease to express themselves with others via posts, stories, reels etc. This is how social media can act as a helping tool to get out of depression rather than leading to depression. Social media has made expressing ourselves more easier .

On the other side when one watches someone buying a house car or even traveling to different locations it can lead to feeling of jealousy and self-

doubt. The negative comments on the posts can have a far greater impact on the persons mind and can create loss of confidence diversion of thoughts. Constructive criticism can be helpful but hatred will lead to depression if not dealt at the right time. In these recent times everyone on social media is either a silent viewer or a bold content creator the current generation is highly influenced by famous people on various social media platforms they get highly influence by them leading to disconnect from the real world or even one cell it has created standards with everyone wants to meet some go to the extent of posting and updating your daily life on various social media platform. They are so involved in posting the perfect picture or perfect story online that the fail to live in the present. To sum it up, positivity can make a person but negativity can break them too. Almost all the respondents agreed to the extreme level of impact social media on their mental health.

3. Less 'Social' More 'Media':

Social media itself is also undergoing changes in its design and usage. It was originally created as a tool to connect users with others. Social networking, they are now leaning more towards social entertainment. With diversified and growing user base social media has become a Mammoth platform for content creators. These contents are growing in its popularity and has provided an easy and affordable entertainment option. Generation Z are spending more hours using social media as an entertainment platform. Social media is providing both positive and negative entertainment which is highly unregulated. Short reels and stories have become a mode of entertainment. Scrolling mobile has become part of life. The addiction is so huge that



life without gadget and gadget without social media among this generation is least to imagine. While social networking sites may not yet be recognized as entertainment companies, they are leading the way in terms of adding value to the consumer experience of entertainment.

It has become a daily source of entertainment. Even news is viewed and well received through social media platforms.

4. Social media and Social Responsibility:

Social media markets about various campaigns and creates awareness on social issues like pollution, overuse of resources, exploitation, drug abuse and other cause marketing initiatives. The generation Z seems to not much connected to such marketing techniques. The majority felt that these campaigns just act as fillers rather than providing any vital developments in perception change or habit change among the users. Social Media to a very limited extent has been able to generate the citizenship aspects among the users as per the respondents. Some issues which users are already aligned to get massive boost if witnessed on such media while any new idea of social importance may take much more time and even acceptance among users.

5. Social Media and Money:

With change in technology and new and innovation advancements in the day to day life there also emerged new ways of earning revenue. Nowadays through content creations anyone can earn through social media. It has become a good source of earnings at that too with no age boundaries. Influencers earn more money through collaborations, paid promotions, branding etc, this has not only added to extra money but for many full-time employments as well. Creative youth have

become content creators using their talents to its optimum. Expertise in specific domain has also added to the new breed of content creators. Among the respondents at least 25 percent had their own income earning social media account. Even though amount earned was negligible but start is what is required.

6. Social Media and Social Evils:

Social media being fuelled by a larger crowd, the safety has been compromised to a greater extent. Cases of online stalking, sexting, adult content circulations are on wide rise. According to many studies the number of fake profile is also on rise. Such profiles are being used to do anti-social, immoral, and illegal activities. Among the group more than 80 percent agreed that they have a fake profile in one or the other social media platforms. The main use of such profiles was to majorly stalk someone whom they had some connect with. The other issue which was highlighted majorly was use of personal information including photographs by third parties without consent. The fear is that this information is being compromised by someone else. Also something that need a quick attention is the issue of inorganic followers created just to hype a social media account.

7. Social Media and Power of Youth:

Lately social media is used to generate narrative and artificially generate a perception either positive or negative about some issue or any matter concerning larger audience. It has also given a platform to the generation to raise their concerns and bring a change that suits their own personal or group interests. With democracy at its core and freedom of expression given, the youth especially the Generation Z have become quite vocal about their political affiliations



and ideology they hold dear. Social media have also become an important tool to pass on your grievances to the companies and various authorities. Among the respondents around 60 percent of them agreed having either posted or shared a grievances post of their friends so that to make me more effective and worthy of quick hearing and attention.

Conclusion:

Social media is here to stay and would become more bigger, better and heavily commercialised. Even with so many apprehensions, fears and distrust people are using it more than before. The addiction level is also something that is concerning. With developments in mobile connectivity and recent availability of 5G spreading gradually, it would lead to more impetus in growth of usage and penetration of social media in every day life. It is up to individuals to what extent they are ready to put their lives in forefront of an audience who are a major consumer group to various contents being served. Generation Z should be more preventive in their approach and determine a limit of its social media presence. For business its a very attractive segment to tap which they would prefer to with more personalised approach with the target audience. Social media's presence and duality in its approach is acceptable but an overall emergence of a highly compromised parallel life is concerning.

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