Social Media Usage: A Comparative Study on Generation Y and Generation Z In India

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Abstract Social media platforms have become integral to modern life, transforming communication, information exchange, and entertainment. This study investigates the social media usage patterns of Generation Y (born 1981-1996) and Generation Z (born 1997-2012) in India. The research explores variations in platform preferences, usage frequency, content consumption, and psychological impacts through a detailed comparison. By employing surveys and qualitative interviews, this paper highlights generational nuances and their broader societal implications. The findings indicate distinct behavioural patterns across the generations, influenced by technological exposure, cultural norms, and life stages. Recommendations for policymakers, businesses, and educators aim to optimize social media's potential while mitigating its challenges. The study concludes with recommendations to promote healthy social media habits and reduce negative effects, particularly among youth.

Keywords: Social media, Generation Y, Generation Z, Behavioural Patterns

1. Introduction

Social media has rapidly encroached on people's daily lives in the twenty-first century and emerged as one of the most important technological platforms for communication. Social media has developed over time into an engaging platform for sharing knowledge and skills, collaborating with others, and having conversations. Social media's popularity has grown dramatically in the modern era. Social media is used by billions of people globally. The three social media platforms (SMP) that are most often utilized worldwide are Facebook (FB), YouTube (YT), and WhatsApp (WA). The advent of social media has created a paradigm shift in communication and interaction. With India being one of the largest social media platforms markets, understanding generational differences in usage patterns is crucial. Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1980), Millennials (1981-1996), and Generation Z (1997-2012) represent unique perspectives shaped by varying degrees of technological assimilation and socio-economic conditions. This comparative study delves into their behavior, preferences, and the implications of their social media usage within the Indian landscape. India is the second-largest digital marketplace in the world, with more than 560 million active internet users (Keelery, 2021). According to usage reach, Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp are some of the most widely used social media platforms in India (Diwanji, 2020). The money raised by the start-up appears to benefit from frequent Twitter use and other Twitter users' comments (Singhal & Kapur, 2022). This demonstrates the significance of this research from the perspective of marketers.

In 2020, almost 50% of people in India have access to social media. It is projected that by 2025, 67 percent of people will have access to social networks (Tanushree, 2022). The millennial generation, sometimes referred to as Generation Y (GenY), comprises over 1.8 billion people, or roughly 23% of the global population. Thirty-four percent of India's total population, or 440 million individuals, are millennials. According to Priyam (2021), India has become the world's largest millennial market in recent years, drawing interest from millennials worldwide. In 2021, Deloitte also released a study that detailed the increasing impact of Generation Z (Gen Z) on the consumer landscape following the pandemic. Academics and marketers must therefore understand how Gen Z and Gen Y use social media, web-based technology, and

information access. This study fulfilled the aforementioned goal and demonstrated the generational disparities in social media usage between Gen Z and Gen Y in India.

Different generations use SMP in different ways. Numerous research made an effort to comprehend how SMPs are used by each generation. The majority of these investigations were carried out in wealthy nations. Furthermore, rather than comparing SMP usage across generations, this research focused on each generation separately. This work is therefore an effort to close this gap. In developing nations like India, social media research is still in its infancy, especially when it comes to younger people. Additionally, Gen Z and Gen Y, commonly known as Millennials, are a growing demographic cohort with a greater online presence and internet access; as such, marketers should be aware of how they use social media. When using social media, it's critical to comprehend the fundamental variations and distinctions between generations. Marketers must provide products and promotions that are tailored to the target demographics. Businesses can also utilize this research to better understand the social media habits of their clients and what kinds of material would appeal to their target audience on different platforms.

Although social media usage has advanced significantly in recent years, little is known about how Gen Z and Gen Y evaluate and use various social media features. Understanding how Gen Z and Gen Y utilize social media, communicate online, and consume information is crucial for academics and marketers. Businesses could use this information to better understand their clients, create or modify their products and marketing materials, and provide prospects with greater value. Understanding how Gen Z and Gen Y use social media and examining how they use its features—such as sociability, information, entertainment, education, and shopping—are the goals of this study. There are six sections in the paper's structure. The study and its goals are introduced in the first section, and a review of the literature and the formulation of hypotheses are presented in the second. Information regarding social media is covered in subsection 2.1, while information about generations—including a discussion of Gen Y and Gen Z—is included in subsection 2.2. The developed hypotheses are justified in subsection 2.3. In contrast, methodology, results and discussion, conclusion, and originality/value are covered in sections 3, 4, 5, and 6, respectively.

2. Literature Review

Through social media, users can create personal public profiles, interact with friends in real life, and connect with new people who share their interests (Griffiths et al., 2014). Another expert stated that in social media, a member-based online platform, users typically post basic information about themselves and interact with other members in various ways and on a range of themes (Mahajan, 2009; Pempek et al., 2009). Even though writers refer to this idea as "Social Media (SM)," the phrase "social networking sites (SNS)" is frequently employed in everyday speech, and the two terms are sometimes used interchangeably. According to Strauss and Howe's generational theory, cohort members share formative experiences, which influence their values and behaviour. In India, socio-economic factors further diversify these patterns. Studies by Statista and other organizations indicate that Millennials and Gen Z dominate social media platforms, with Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp leading in popularity. Older generations, such as Baby Boomers, prefer platforms like Facebook and LinkedIn for connectivity and professional networking. Facebook is widely used for socializing, especially with friends that users have previously built ties with offline (Pempek et al., 2009). Additionally, Facebook is utilized for sociability and to keep track of social activities across social networks. People usually feel pressured to keep up with friends and/or stay informed about topics of interest when utilizing social media platforms (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). Additionally, the public has been informed through social media (Roengtam et al., 2017). The most widely used social networking sites were determined to be Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (Jambulingam et al., 2014). Customers are thought to be actively involved in the production and promotion of content on social media sites such as Wikipedia, YouTube, MySpace, and Facebook (Heinonen, 2011). Significant disparities in Twitter and Facebook usage and social media pleasure were discovered by Lim et al. (2014). Additionally, Bowman (2019) determined the most effective methods for creating social media websites and expanding their user base. Social media is more likely to be used by Gen Y to create their own identities, which has a big influence on their behaviours, expectations for service, engagement with brands and businesses, and participation in value creation (Bolton et al., 2013).

Research shows a positive correlation between digital literacy and platform diversity. While Gen Z displays a nuanced understanding of algorithms, Baby Boomers rely more on intuitive interfaces. Social media reflects Indian cultural norms, including family-centric content, community engagement, and festivals. Generational differences manifest in the

type of content shared and consumed. Literature highlights the dual impact of social media as a tool for empowerment and as a source of mental health concerns, with each generation facing distinct challenges.

3. Generation

The literature offers a wide variety of generation group classifications. Lyons et al. (2015) proposed one of the other categories.
a) Millennials, or Generation Y, were born between 1981 and 1994.

b) Generation Z was born between 1995 and later.

The authors have used the aforementioned classification for their investigation. This study examines how Gen Y and Gen Z use social media in India because there is a lack of research on these two generations in that country.

3.1. Generation Y (Millennials)

Generation Y, sometimes known as millennials, grew up with the majority of technical advancements, such as the Internet and personal computers. To stay in touch with their friends and family, this generation employs various apps, social media, and mobile devices (Lazarevic, 2012). Customers from Generation Y are avid users of mobile technologies and social media (Zhang et al., 2017). Furthermore, Gen Y frequently expresses their thoughts and communicates with other consumers via social media (Bolton et al., 2013). According to Balakrishnan et al. (2014), social media marketing has emerged as a crucial marketing tactic for connecting with Gen Y customers. Muskat et al. (2013) discovered that while making decisions, members of Generation Y typically take other people's advice into account. They're willing to pay more for fair-trade goods (Aksoy & Özsönmez, 2019).

3.2. Generation Z

Young adults born in 1995 or later are referred to as Generation Z (Bassiouni & Hackley, 2014). The definition of Gen Z is controversial among scholars. There are numerous claims that Gen Z started in the middle of the 1990s (Turner, 2015). A 2019 Bloomberg analysis found that Gen Z made up 32% of the global population, with 472 million Gen Zers living in India (Verma, 2020). The first generation to have grown up during the internet revolution is Gen Z. Gen Z is more active on social media than Gen Y, spending 2 hours and 55 minutes a day on it, having been immersed in the internet environment since birth (Who Uses social media the Most? 2019).

Gen Z blends the aspirational goals and technological prowess of the younger generation with the work ethic and practicalities of earlier generations (Wilson, 2019). With their fervent activism, support for sustainable products, and greater interest in curating their social media accounts, Gen Z is significantly positioned to be an example to others (Ryerson & Olito, 2020).

4. Usage of Social Media

4.1. Socialization

Socialization entails interacting with peers, family, and friends (C. S. Park, 2015). Motivations for socialization include developing a sense of belonging, creating a foundation for conversation, interacting with friends, family, and coworkers, and learning about the situations of others (D. Boyd, 2008). The number of people using smartphones to connect and get information via social media is increasing (Havíř, 2017; Heinrichs et al., 2011; Kapoor et al., 2018; Singhi & Bajaj, 2017). Keeping in contact with or communicating with friends, as well as searching for people and social events, are the main reasons people use social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or WhatsApp (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). People utilize social media to integrate and socialize, according to numerous studies (Kim et al., 2010). Social media use also contributes to positive psychological outcomes like psychosocial wellness and self-efficacy (Abosag et al., 2020; Keenan-Devlin, 2010; Yang, 2016). Additionally, social engagement, archiving, self-expression, escapism, and peeking are the five main social and psychological reasons why people use Instagram (E. Lee et al., 2015). According to Wei et al. (2020), a free platform fulfils users' natural needs for autonomy, leading to SNS fulfilment. According to Whiting and Williams (2013), young generations have made substantial use of social media to engage with a variety of people, including friends, family, partners, coworkers, old friends, old connections, and new acquaintances. Facebook serves as an additional platform for Gen Z and Y users to connect with others and fulfil their social interaction needs (Bodroža & Jovanović, 2016). Thus, it was hypothesized that:

H1: There is a difference between Gen 'Z' and Gen 'Y' in the usage of social media for socialization (SOC)

4.2. Information

Numerous academics have studied how people use social media to find information, and some have discovered intriguing reasons why people keep using it. Social media is typically investigated for information exchange, with users frequently sharing messages and images. The role of user-generated material and experiences on social media was examined by Munar and Jacobsen (2014). Social media is used passively for things like viewing content, reading other people's posts, and searching for information, events, or people, even though it is also used actively to create content and convey messages (Verduyn et al., 2015). Social media can also be used to look for information on events, festivals, and celebrations, as well as sales, discounts, or products. Additionally, it is employed to search for company news (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

A real-life friend is considered an opinion leader when they post a news article on social media (Turcotte et al., 2015). Social media gave them access to a wider variety of news and information, which allowed them to stay up to date on developments. These social media technologies are expanding users' capacity to create and receive personalized news streams (Hermida et al., 2012).

News stories can now be found in new ways thanks to social media platforms. Because people may now participate more fully in the production and distribution of news, reading and sharing it on social media has grown in popularity. According to C. S. Lee and Ma (2012), people were more likely to share content on social media platforms if they were driven by knowledge, interacting with others, or reaching a particular status. Therefore, it was hypothesized as:

H2: There is a difference between Gen 'Z' and Gen 'Y' in the usage of social media for seeking information (INF).

4.3. Entertainment

Spending time on social media is enjoyable. Among the entertainment possibilities are watching videos, playing games, and listening to music (Whiting & Williams, 2013). Social media is entertaining, according to several research (de Vries et al., 2012; N. Park et al., 2009). The degree to which social media users find an online platform entertaining and engaging is known as its entertainment value (Khan, 2017). To meet their needs for "escapism, diversion, aesthetic gratification, or emotional release," users commonly engage in social chats (Ducoffe, 1995). Another hobby on social media is scrolling through timelines. When a social media ad includes both entertaining and educational content, its impact increases. Khanna and Saxena (2013). Enjoyment is the most crucial factor in people's consistent usage of social media. t (Lin & Lu, 2011). Therefore, it was hypothesized as:

H3: There is a difference between Gen 'Z' and Gen 'Y' in the usage of social media for entertainment (ENT)

4.4. Education

Social media is being used in education by both Gen Z and Gen Y to connect with learning groups, access more useful content, and access other learning systems that facilitate learning. According to Ross et al. (2009), there are positive effects of increased social media communication on classroom discussions, student participation, and peer cohesiveness. Additionally, research has demonstrated that social media use positively affects the habits and views of Gen Y college students. Facebook is used by students for academic purposes, particularly to interact with peers and get assignment material (Vettor & Kosinski, 2000). Furthermore, when social media was used in schools in addition to conventional teaching techniques, Hung and Yuen (2010) discovered beneficial learning experiences. According to Junco et al. (2011), Twitter is also used in the classroom to encourage staff members to be more active and collaborative as well as students to become more involved. There are many benefits to incorporating social media into classroom activities over traditional methods, including increased creativity, partnership relationships, real-time contact outside of the classroom, and interaction with experts (Cheston et al., 2013; George & Dellasega, 2011).

Therefore, it was hypothesized as:

H4: There is a difference between Gen 'Z' and Gen 'Y' in the usage of social media for education (EDU).

4.5 Shopping

Social networking has altered the communication between customers and sellers (Papasolomou & Melanthiou, 2012). Businesses are utilizing social media at an exponential rate to advertise their goods and services and to boost their exposure on social networks by maintaining public social media profiles (Hanna et al., 2011; Parveen et al., 2015). Social media has a huge impact on a business's existence, sales, and reputation (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

Parveen et al. (2015) looked into how social media affected organizational performance in terms of enhancing customer service and relations, increasing information accessibility, and decreasing the value of customer interactions and promotion. Customers have a positive opinion of brands that closely reflect their self-concept. According to Abosag et al. (2020), friend likes and brand similarity boosts social media satisfaction. Facebook advertising has a good impact on Gen Y awareness and knowledge in South Africa (Duffett, 2015). Mishra (2019) has looked at how consumers' social media engagement with brand-related content is influenced by a brand's social media marketing efforts and propensity for online social interactions.

For entrepreneurs, social media offers countless opportunities for celebrity-endorsed marketing strategies (Fink et al., 2020). Fashion brands typically use creative Instagram ads to engage their followers and customers (Casaló et al., 2021). Professional-oriented products can be promoted by retailers and advertisers on social media platforms such as LinkedIn (Vithayathil et al., 2020). According to J.-S. Park and Ha (2021), consumer community participation is a useful indicator of a brand's social media performance. Consumers are contacting retailers via social media more frequently with comments, issues, and goals (Kapoor et al., 2018). According to Kudeshia et al. (2016), liking fan sites on social media turns into WOM (Word of Mouth), which leads to a buy proposal. According to Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016), user-generated content on social media has a positive impact on brand equity and brand attitude toward products, ultimately influencing consumers' intentions to buy from businesses. Therefore, it was hypothesized as:

H5: There is a difference between Gen 'Z' and Gen 'Y' in the usage of social media for shopping (SHOP).

Marketing professionals should be aware of how Gen Z and Gen Y use social media differently. Gen Y grew up during the time that social media was first introduced to developed economies and when technology started to enter homes (Dimock, 1019). As a result, Gen Y in India has adopted social media and technology more quickly than other generations. Gen Z, on the other hand, was raised in a social media culture, thus it stands to reason that they would behave differently on social media than Gen Y. Compared to Gen Y, Gen Z uses social media more frequently (Curtis et al., 2019).

5. Research Methodology

5.1.Measurement

The authors modified a list of things from earlier research (Gupta & Bashir, 2018). A group of experts (two sociologists, two academicians, two Gen Z students, and two Gen Y people) heard these statements. Items for SOC, INF, ENT, EDU, and SHOP were finalized based on the panel's opinion. Table 6 in the appendix lists the scale items utilized in this investigation. The validity and reliability of all scales were assessed (Table 1).

Table 1.

AVE	EDU	ENT	SHOP	SOC	INFO	DV	CR	R	No of Items
EDU	0.61					0.78	0.88	.885	5
ENT	0.495	0.50				0.71	0.83	.781	4
SHOP	0.485	0.452	0.50			0.65	0.75	.824	5
SOC	0.540	0.571	0.277	0.43		0.70	0.79	.729	4
INFO	0.392	0.464	0.148	0.482	0.57	0.75	0.80	.781	3

Note: Diagonal values are AVE.

Ra = Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient, AVE= Average Variance Extracted, DV= Discriminant value, CR= Composite Reliability,

5.2.Method

This study was empirical. One of India's most well-known metropolises, Lucknow, was home to the contestants. Purposively, respondents from Gen Y and Gen Z were chosen. The survey was distributed online to around a thousand respondents. Following a review of the responses received, 293 forms in total were determined to be fully completed in every way and were used for analysis. SPSS software was used to examine the data. Dichotomous categorical variables were used to generate the grouping variables. Additionally, the researchers included gender, another dichotomous categorical variable, as a control variable on the recommendation of one of the knowledgeable reviewers. Two-way ANOVA was utilized to test the hypotheses because two independent categorical variables need to be examined.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

6.1. Scale Reliability and Validity

For a scale to be considered reliable, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient values should be at least 0.7 (Hundleby & Nunnally, 1968). All of the scales are reliable, as shown by the alpha values (Table 1) for education, entertainment, shopping, socialization, and information being higher than 0.7.

In Table 1, diagonal values are AVE values. For convergent validity, the AVE value should be greater than 0.5. However, if the AVE value is less than 0.5 but the composite reliability (CR) value is more than 0.6 then convergent validity exists (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). AVE values for all scales are 0.5 and above except the scale SOC, however, CR values are greater than AVE values of all scales, which provide sufficient evidence that convergent validity exists.

If a scale's discriminant value (DV), or the square root of AVE, is higher than the correlation coefficients between that latent variable and other latent variables, it is said to have discriminant validity (Flury et al., 1988). All scales' DV values in Table 1 exceed the corresponding correlation coefficients between them as well as additional hidden factors. For instance, EDU's DV of.78 is higher than the correlation coefficients of ENT, SHOP, SOC, and INFO. This demonstrates discriminant validity. As a result, it was determined that each scale had construct validity.

6.2.Usage Patterns by Generation:

Table 1: Preferred Social Media Platforms by Generation

Generation	Top Platforms	Primary Usage
Baby Boomers	Facebook, WhatsApp	Connecting with family
Generation X	LinkedIn, Facebook	Professional networking
Millennials	Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp	Entertainment, e-commerce
Generation Z	Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok	Short-form visual content

6.3.Time Spent on Social Media (in Hours/Day):

Graph 1: Average Daily Social Media Usage by Generation
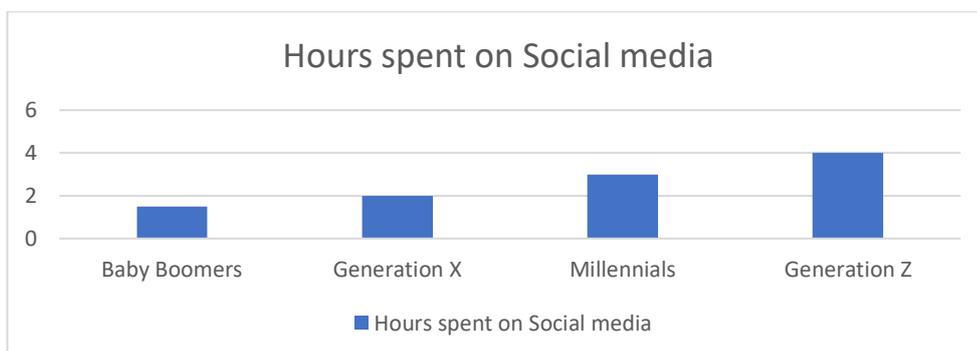
1. **Motivations for Usage**:

o **Baby Boomers** seek connection and information.

o **Generation X** values functionality and professional growth.

o **Millennials and Gen Z** are driven by entertainment, social validation, and brand engagement.

2. **Behavioral and Cultural Impacts**:

o Social media fosters inter-generational connectivity but also perpetuates cultural divides, especially regarding privacy concerns and content preferences.

7. Impacts

7.1.Positive Impacts:

Table 2: Positive Impacts Across Generations

VARIABLES	GEN Z (n=188)	GEN Y (n=105)
Gender		
Male	41%	61.90%
Female	59%	38.10%
Time spent on social media		
>4 hours/day	72.70%	27.30%
Social Media use		
WhatsApp	68%	32%
Facebook	72.60%	27.40%
Twitter	81%	19%
Instagram	68%	32%
Linkedin	67%	33%
Snapchat	72%	28%
Telegram	81%	19%
Pinterest	66%	34%
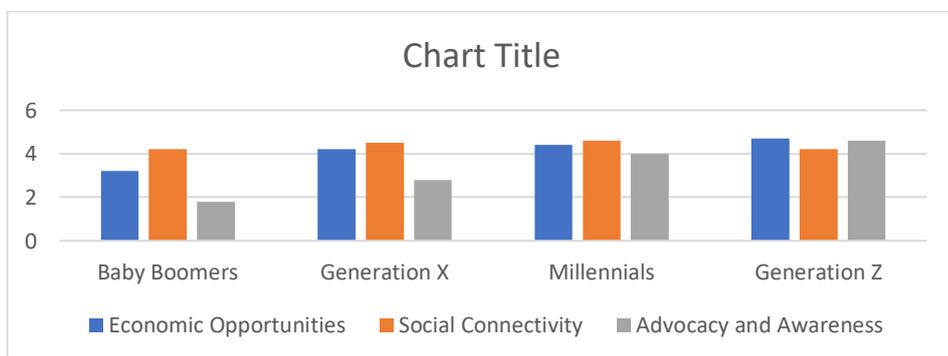
Aspect	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials	Generation Z
Economic Opportunities	Moderate	High	Very High	Very High
Social Connectivity	High	High	Very High	High
Advocacy and Awareness	Low	Moderate	High	Very High

7.2.Negative Impacts:

o **Mental Health**: Prolonged exposure leads to anxiety, particularly among Gen Z and Millennials, linked to cyberbullying and FOMO (fear of missing out).

o **Misinformation**: Baby Boomers and Gen X are more susceptible to misinformation due to lesser familiarity with fact-checking resources.

8. Recommendations

1. **For Policymakers**:

   o Strengthen regulations on content moderation and data privacy.

   o Promote digital literacy campaigns targeting older generations.

2. **For Businesses**:

   o Customize marketing strategies to resonate with generational preferences.

   o Foster transparent communication to build trust.

3. **For Educators and Counselors**:

   o Integrate social media ethics into educational curriculums.

   o Address mental health challenges arising from excessive usage.

9. Conclusion

Given how social media is always growing and being adopted by different generations, this study was able to detail how two significant generations utilize social media and how it affects their life. Generation Z has a unique connection to social media and technology. According to Turner (2015), this generation is highly socially conscious and enjoys using social media in daily life. However, Gen Y's early exposure to technology had significant psychological, social, and cognitive effects in addition to influencing their behavior (Bolton et al., 2013). Social media is seen by younger people as an integral part of their everyday lives. Both generations are known for embracing new technologies and trying out novel communication channels.

This study underscores the diverse social media behaviors across generational cohorts in India, shaped by varying technological adaptability and cultural dynamics. While social media has democratized communication and created economic opportunities, its unchecked use poses significant challenges. A nuanced approach to balancing individual needs with collective well-being is essential to harness its full potential.

10. Research Implications

According to the study's findings, Gen Z uses social media more frequently than Gen Y. The results are in line with Seemiller and Grace's (2017) findings. Both generations are more connected now than they were in the past because of the proliferation of entertainment and networking technologies.

Prior studies were carried out in the US, Europe, and other East Asian countries; little research has been done in other countries, such as India, where the population of Gen Y and Gen Z is sizable and rapidly expanding. India is the nation with the largest number of Facebook users globally, with 300,000 customers as of 2020 (Tanushree, 2022). Globally, the number and use of social networking sites (SNSs) have increased for over ten years. In terms of social media use and internet exposure, both groups differ from one another. According to a study by Seemiller and Grace (2017), students in Generation Z differ from those in earlier generations in that they have different needs, expectations, perspectives, and goals. Gen Z are the ones who can steer the online community more sophisticatedly than Gen Y. The result of this study shows Gen Z is using social media more than Gen Y for education, entertainment, shopping, and socialization. Whereas social media usage of both generations for information seeking is equal.

11. Practical Implications

This research was carried out in India. The majority of the noteworthy research on social media usage that is now available is carried out in developed Western nations (Hysa et al., 2021; Lau, 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2017; Shao, 2009; Williams et al., 2012). This study is important for understanding how Asian consumers, particularly Indians, use social media. The study's conclusions help encourage Generation Z and Y to use social media in order to adjust to the rapidly evolving digital landscape. Social media use and engagement among young people is higher due to their psychographic characteristics. Retailers and marketers can more effectively identify, target, and place products for consumers, particularly across various demographic cohorts, according to the study's increased understanding of Indian consumers. More data is required, though, on certain age groups, shopping habits, and social media usage motivations. India, which has the greatest youth population, is the second most desirable emerging market after China. Businesses can use the study's findings to enhance targeted customer engagement. Organizations wishing to employ social media marketing and technologies in rising market economies like India would support and create plans for the younger generation. According to this report, businesses should think about using social media marketing to advertise their products and brands. Furthermore, this study demonstrates to marketers that social media marketing has emerged as a crucial instrument for influencing the changing consumer preferences of younger Asian generations, such as those in India.

12. Limitations and Further Research

According to the study's findings, Gen Z and Gen Y use social media in quite different ways. However, there are certain limitations to the study. Since the participants were from one of India's major cities, they were unable to accurately represent the population of the entire nation. As a result, care must be exercised when extrapolating the results to other populations. To validate the findings, a broader population should be included in future studies.

The scales created for this study were examined for validity and reliability. It was restricted to construct and content validity, though. The scales' ability to be standardized was limited because concurrent validity was not examined. To standardize the scale, further investigation is needed. Larger sample sizes in future research could help identify changes in outcomes among Baby Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z. Furthermore, longitudinal research should be used in future studies to better demonstrate causal relationships.

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