

Artur S. Laskowski

ORCID: 0000-0001-5364-2048
Uniwersytet w Białymstoku

**AN INSTANT CULTURE (CUP): IMMEDIATE GRATIFICATION
EXHIBITED BY GENERATION Z TRAITS THAT CATER TO THEIR NEEDS**

**KULTURA TU I TERAZ: NATYCHMIASTOWA (INSTANT) GRATYFIKACJA,
JAKO CECHA CHARAKTERYSTYCZNA I ODPOWIEDŹ
NA POTRZEBY GENERACJI Z**

| Abstract

Social perspectives on future vision of culture-at-large, invite us to view how we understand today's culture as constituted from western world perspectives, within the 21st century global context. Still, since many culture-enablers do not take into consideration the Generation Z needs, this power of culture-enable rests in the hands of generational gap and interpretation. To fully understand the cultural needs of Generation Z we must therefore understand the experience and stand of Generation Z, not just current generations, as culture-enablers.

- Słowa kluczowe: Generation Z, digitally innate, 8-second filter prone, culture.

| Abstrakt

Socjologiczne i społeczne perspektywy wizji przyszłej, szeroko pojętej kultury, zmuszają do refleksyjnego spojrzenia na to, jak rozumiemy dzisiejszą kulturę jako uformowaną z perspektywy świata kultury zachodniej, w kontekście globalnym XXI wieku. Ponieważ, wielu animatorów kultury nie bierze pod uwagę potrzeb

Pokolenia Z, mandat do tworzenia kultury spoczywa w rękach pokoleń reprezentujących lukę pokoleniową i pokoleniowej interpretacji szeroko pojętej kultury. Aby w pełni zrozumieć kulturowe potrzeby Pokolenia Z, musimy zatem uwzględnić doświadczenia i oczekiwania Pokolenia Z, a nie tylko obecnych pokoleń, jako czynniki sprzyjające tworzeniu kultury.

- Keywords: Pokolenie Z, cyfrowo urodzeni, podatni na 8-sekundowy filtr, kultura.

| Introduction

Reviewed literature, shows that there is no finite consensus on the Generation Z definition of birth year, and demographers view, as well, differs on the beginning and the end of this generational' cohort timeframe (Renfo 2012; White 2015). Pew Research Center (Dimock 2019) qualifies Generation Z as those born between 1997-2012, while Jelenianuskiene and Juceviciene (2015: 42-50) and Schroer (2016), set the birth year timetable between 1995-2012.

For the purpose of this paper, I am defining Generation Z, as a group of people/cohort born between mid-1990's-mid 2010's. Many sources do identify and refer to Generation Z as: Centennials, Generation Next, Homeland Generation, Plurals, Post-Millennials, Digital Natives, Me Generation, Generation N (Feiertag and Berge 2008: 457-464), iGen, Generation Zombie, Generation Zen, Generation Zers, -or simply- Gen Z.

Members of Generation Z are the next generation that is already beginning to dominate the worlds' work market, education and culture environments. They were born into challenging era: ranging from worldwide terrorism issues, world political instability, environment issues, global economic crash and rise of nationalism(s). They are the first generation ever that is widely and directly exposed to the digital environment afforded by new and ever-changing technology, connected by social networking platforms that are bombarded sheet/mobile/ by information on the Internet. In 2018, based on the data published by the Pew Research Center (*Mobile fact sheet* 2019), 90 percent of respondents in American households (USA) with a median

income of less than \$30,000 per year, had cell phones, of which 67 percent were internet-enabled smart phones.

Generation Z behavioral characteristic development, as in previous generations, is significantly shaped, influenced and formed by the diverse environment and surrounding elements. Generation Z is not unique: what defines culture for Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, does not cut the Generation Z vision and needs. Members of Generation Z are not purely culture consumers – they are, not like Renaissance period Medici curators’ of the culture, they are the culture creators.

It must be noted that global and instant connectivity made possible by the newest and ever-changing technology, wide awareness of brands that support worthy causes (important to Gen Z members), social inequalities are seen as a culture builders by Generation Z members. Therefore, the importance to define and follow the definition of culture (what is) is shifting into the direction of definition of the function of culture (what does), perhaps arguably, the complexity of the Gen Z culture (what is its meaning) is exhibited by their traits.

| What makes a generation the generation

Glass (2007: 98-103) defines generation in terms of the year that the individuals live (as a combined situation or surroundings of whereby an individual is prone to own lifestyle) or a cohort (consisting of members born) of a specific year.

Parry and Urwin (2011: 79-96), defines generation as “a set of historical events and related phenomena that creates a distinct generational gap”, that must include “some form of social ‘proximity’ to shared events or cultural phenomenon”. Further, the elements of general individual characteristics and ways of own interpretation of the world must be included and based on individual’ understanding: each individual has its own, unique personality and behavior that is defined by every physical action and observable emotion which defines particular individual, and cannot be imitated by another individual (Oullette and Wood 1998: 54-74).

To date, there are six living cohorts of the different generations.

Table 1. Generation dominant characteristics

Generation	Birth year range	Dominant behavioral characteristics
Traditionalists	1900-1945	Loyal and discipline;
Baby Boomers	1946-1964	Responsible with strong work ethics;
Generation X	1965-1980	Efficient, Independent thinkers;
Generation Y	1981-1994	Confident, more social but less independent;
Generation Z	1995-2012	Poor communication skills, extensively reliant on digital technology (social);
Generation Alpha	2013-	Inspiring, in-situ (real-time);

Source: author's findings.

In 2019, as Reported by Bloomberg (Miller 2018), Generation Z comprises 32 percent of the global population of approximately 7.7 billion, already surpassing the 31.5 percentile share held by Millennials⁷.

In Poland, Generation Z members stand at approximately 5.2 million (of 38,645,240), which is 13.5 percent of the entire population: as reported by *CountryMeters* (2019) and *Statista* (2019).

Traits of the Generation Z that makes gen Z culture and who they are

They are the Offspring's of Gen Y

Members of Gen Z, are mostly the offspring's of Gen Xers (commonly referred to as Millennials), "latchkey" generation: their parents often came from school to the empty home, were subjected to social dislocation – of their parents, who often were divorced and women held paid jobs, usually, outside safety and familiarity of their home stand. Like Gen X parents, Gen Z members, as mentioned before, are maturing in a time of economic hardship, global turmoil and conflicts. It ap-

pears, that the modern version of Gen X – style pragmatism becomes a prevalent Gen Z trait (as opposite to optimism, displayed by the Gen Y – the Millennials).

Such a trait has, has been studied and explored, mainly by the for-profit marketing field. Lucie Green of J. Walter Thomson, calls Gen Z members “Millennials (Gen Y) on steroids”, while labelling them as: “conscientious, hardworking, somewhat anxious, and mindful of the future” (Williams 2015).

They are Digitally Innate and the 8-Second Filter Prone

“Digitally innate” term coined by Claire Povah and Simon Vaukins (Povah 2017), is as an attempt to describe Gen Z’s ability of seamless way of virtual interaction: knowledge of new technological innovations and willingness of its utilization, expectancy of new, constant updates to their platforms and easiness navigating such changes.

Gen Z members, as digitally innate – operate with filters working non-stop – Do I need to know this? Does it affect me? Why should I care? Fast Company, another marketing research giant, describes it as “not an attention problem, (*but*) it’s an 8-second filter” (Finch 2015). An 8-second filter, might be a breaker for currently used format of sharing information, but most likely, will allow the new generation, speedier ways to synthesize and process information at hand in more rapid and flawless ways.

They Exhibit a Need for Customization Without Effort

As reported by WPP (Pang 2016: 24-27), New Zealand’s government rapport on Gen Z, perhaps, we already see an 8-second filter practical application, because the new technology users are bringing own preferences to the content creation: Gen Z inhabits Instagram and Snapchat, as Millennials did, use Facebook, just to stay connected with teachers, coaches and family members. An email, deemed for older people, is used only when Gen Z absolutely must have to use it. As a preferred platform to stay connected with friends, anonymous Secret and Whisper, along with *Finstas* – fake Instagram accounts, guarded with restricted contact list/membership for controversial contests, are being created.

This all, conveys a message, often expressed by emoji (Bennett 2014) and gifts, in lieu of words. It means that Gen Z's see more with less, a phenomena called a "five words and a picture", as cited by Williams (Williams 2015).

They are Seeking More Equitable and More Accepting World

Gen Z members appear to want to create more equitable and accepting world (with equal opportunities, tolerance attitudes towards same-sex relationships, virtual connection with people that are different in their virtues and believes). Fuse Marketing (Fuse Marketing 2015), identified in the USA, that the issue of prejudice and racism are on par with the education and economic crisis. However, the same research points out that when it comes to racial issues, Gen Z is able, as previous generations are, to write about such issues, but have difficulties verbalizing it.

They are Civically Engaged and Seeking Changes

Gen Z members observed and took an active participation in the rise to the stardom of then 17-year-old, 2014 Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai. Malala's call to civically powered engagement and participation, seeking change, still resonates around the globe: for example, most school shootings, terrorist attacks, do yell an immediate, usually, peaceful protests, organized through Twitter hashtag # sign (i.e., estimated 850,000 marchers gathered in response to #MarchForOurLives, in Washington DC, after the 2018 Parkland School shooting. Millions more, were watching this impromptu gathering via Internet, around the globe.). Same goes to 2019 Greta Thunberg's, around the globe and around the clock, ecological crusade – Gen Z called to action, in order to stop and revoke the climate changes.

They are Living at the Speed of a Light: Amazon-like Services a Must to Have

It seems that the Gen Z members are widely aware of advantages of the new technologies- speed, accessibility, and easiness of new technology use. They

appear to know and comprehend that everything, but time is on their side. Therefore, everything related to the new cohort of Gen Z members: schools, universities they attend, the world work force, must be geared to their high expectations for services, response and engagement. The ever-evolving on-line consumers' world taught Gen Z members how to be savvy, so it is only logical, that they expect no less than the same speedy services from every facet of life.

They Need Guiding Safety as They are Coming of Age

Research conducted in the USA (Twenge 2017: 37-63), shows that the concept of psychological safety plays a crucial role in the Gen Z world. Twenge points out, that American high school-age students are now physically safer than previous generations ever were: they are less likely to go out without their parents, less likely to have sex. Under-16 drinking has plummeted, and physical fight is seen as risky and pointless, sexual assaults are declining, too.

Nonetheless, the use of marijuana among American teenagers stays at the same level as in previous generations. American multigenerational society appears to share a common perception, that marijuana use is safe and, perhaps, even has health related benefits.

Cyberbullying, however, is one of the areas that isn't diminishing. Staggering facts emerge from critical review and meta-analysis research supervised by Robin Kowalski et al. in the USA (Kowalski 2014 et al.: 1073-1137): as many as 75 percent of American school-age children self-reported that they have experienced cyberbullying. The anonymity of this crime is two-fold; a bullied child is psychologically scarred, and he or she thinks that cyberbullying experience could be inflicted by anyone they know, causing lack of trust.

The anonymous media platforms that many Gen Z members synonymously associate with the 'world' they know, unfortunately become an arena most likely dominated by female-lead cyberbullying, while physical fight was a dominion of the male counterparts.

| Concluding thoughts on what must be done now

They Require Meeting and Satisfying the Demands of Their Generation

Based on the Gen Z traits discussed above, the older generations must work side by side in order to meet and exceed the needs and talents the Gen Z members bring to the table. Previously useful organizational approaches adapted by schools, universities and companies make no sense to the new generation. Gen Z's appear not to care, that each structural area is important. They want linked and coherent participation in all the areas, learn from them.

We, the elder generations, cannot be tempted by the hope that Gen Z will adapt to our expectations and needs. Our programs policies, set requirements, created syllabi, political visions and practices must be aligned with the demographical and behavioral predictions, so that if and when they prove to be right, the skills, interests, and demands of the new generation are utmost priorities. Rest, what we deem important and necessary, must and have to be realigned.

They Demand Using Technical Connectivity as a Communicative Medium

Discussed an 8-second filter, shows clearly, the window of no more than 8 seconds, needed to grab Gen Z's attention, during which the cohort will decide whether the content is worth their attention. Engagement of Gen Z students and workers, not so conventional culture creators, most likely depends on a need for enterprise apps to catch up with consumer apps that must enable more personalized experiences.

More than older generations, the technologically-focused Gen Z cohort is here to stay and to take the world to a next level. Where they will take us – human beings, directly depends on a wide collaboration between all living generations. Now, through Gen Z, we all are laying the foundation for the already growing in numbers and strengths Generation Alpha.

REFERENCES

1. Bennett J., (2014), *The emoji have won the battle of words*, "The New York Times", <http://nytimes.com/2014/07/27/fashion/emoji-have-won-the-battle-of-words.html>, [Accessed: December 18, 2019].
2. Bloomberg, (2018), *Generation Z is set to outnumber millennials within a year*, "Bloomberg", <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-08-20/genz-to-outnumber-millennials-within-a-year-demographic-trends> [Accessed: September 22, 2019].
3. Dimock M., (2019), *Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins*. Pew Research Center, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>, [Accessed: January 17, 2020].
4. Ekstrom K.M., (2007), *Parental Consumer Learning or Keeping up with the children*, "Journal of Consumer Behavior", 6.
5. Feiertag J., Berge Z.L., (2008), *Training Generation N: How educators should approach the Net Generation*, "Education Training", 50(6).
6. Finch J., (2015), *What is Generation Z, and what does it want [online]?*, <https://www.fastcompany.com/3045317/what-is-generation-z-and-what-does-itwant>, [Accessed: September 22, 2019].
7. Glass A., (2007), *Understanding generational differences for competitive success*, "Industrial and Commercial Training", 39(2).
8. Jaleniauskiene E., Juceviciene P., (2015), *Reconsidering University Educational Environment for the Learners of Generation Z*, "Social Sciences", 88(2).
9. Kowalski R.M. (eds.), (2014), *Bullying in the digital age: a critical review and metaanalysis of cyberbullying research among youth*, "PsycholBull", 140(4).
10. Lee J. Miller, Wei Lu, (2018), *Gen Z Is Set to Outnumber Millennials Within a Year*. Bloomberg, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-08-20/gen-z-to-outnumber-millennials-within-a-year-demographic-trends>, [Accessed: January 20, 2020].
11. MacKenzie J., McGuire R., (2016), *The First Generation of the Twenty First Century*, <http://magid.com/sites/default/files/pdf/MagidPluralistGeneration-Whitepaper.pdf>, [Accessed: September 11, 2019].
12. *Number of live births in Poland from 1995 to 2017* (in 1000 s)*, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/957086/poland-number-of-live-births/>, [Accessed: September 22, 2019].
13. Ouellette J.A., Wood W., (1998), *Habit and intention in everyday life: The multiple processes by which past behavior predicts future behavior*, "Psychological Bulletin", 124(1).

14. Parry E., Urwin P., (2011), *Generational differences in work values: A review of theory and evidence*, "International Journal of Management Reviews", 73(1).
15. Pew Research Center, (2019), *Mobile fact sheet*, <http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/mobile/>, [Accessed: September 19, 2019].
16. Poland population (2019) live-, (2019), "Countrymeters", <http://countrymeters.info/en/Poland/>, [Accessed: September 22, 2019].
17. Povah C., Vaukins S., (2017), *Generation Z is starting university – But is higher education ready?* "The Guardian", <https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2017/jul/10/generation-z-starting-university-higher-education-ready>, [Accessed: September 19, 2019].
18. Renfro A., (2012), *Meet generation Z*. *Gettingsmart.com*. "EdTech", <http://gettingsmart.com/2012/12/meet-generation-z/> [Accessed: January 20, 2020].
19. Schroer W.J., (2016), *Generations X, Y, Z and the Others*, <http://socialmarketing.org/archives/generations-xy-z-and-the-others/>, [Accessed: August 28, 2019].
20. Singh A., (2014), *Challenges and Issues of Generation Z*. "Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM)", 16(7).
21. Twenge J.M., (2017), *IGen: Why today's superconnected kids are growing up less rebellious, more tolerant, less happy, and completely unprepared for adulthood*, New York, Atria Books.
22. White S., (2015), *The Generation Z effect*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/20/fashion/move-over-millennials-here-comes-generation-z.html>, [Accessed: January 20, 2020].
23. Wiedmer T., (2015), *Generation Do Differ: Best Practices in Leading Traditionalists, Boomers and Generations X, Y and Z*, "The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin: International Journal for Professional Educators".
24. Williams A., (2015), *Move over, millennials, here comes Generation Z*, "The New York Times", <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/20/fashion/move-over-millennials-here-comes-generation-z.html>, [Accessed: September 19, 2019].
25. WPP. Pang William, (2016), *Generation Z and the 8 Second Window*, <https://www.govtpracticewpp.com/~media/wppgov/files/gen-z-deck-nz.pdf>, [Accessed: September 29, 2019].