

Understanding Generation Z: Information Needs and Behaviour in the Digital Age

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Abstract

Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012), has been represents the first truly digital-native generation. Their information needs and seeking behaviour have been profoundly shaped by rapid technological advancements, social media, and instant access to digital content. This research paper has been finding out the characteristics, information needs, and behavioural patterns of 150 Gen Z students in the digital era. It highlights their preference for personalized, fast, and multimedia-rich information, as well as their reliance on mobile devices and artificial intelligence tools. The study also explained the challenges e.g. information overload, misinformation, and reduced attention spans. The paper concludes by emphasizing the need for libraries and information institutions to redesign services to align with Gen Z expectations.

Keywords: Generation Z, Information needs, Seeking behaviour, Artificial intelligence, Misinformation

Introduction:

The use of digital technologies has grown at an unprecedented rate in the twenty-first century, radically altering the creation, access, and consumption of information. Known as "digital natives," Generation Z was raised in a world where social media, cell phones, and the internet ruled. Gen Z does not differentiate between online and offline contexts, in contrast to other generations. They have a significant preference for speed, convenience, and interactivity in their information behaviour. Libraries, educators, and information professionals that want to effectively serve this group must comprehend these trends.

Literature Review:

Das and Das (2023) The research study have examines how secondary and higher secondary students in a rural block of West Bengal use school and other libraries, what languages and sources they prefer, and how satisfied they are with existing library services. It focuses on 380

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students from 19 schools in the Patrasayer block. This study also shows a strong reliance on Bengali, moderate but not intensive use of school libraries, limited use of public libraries, and growing dependence on the Internet when school collections fall short. Students generally see school collections and services as adequate to satisfactory, but there is clear room to expand access, staffing, technology, and integration of libraries into everyday school life.

Hazra (2025) in his research article have explore the information needs, seeking patterns, and challenges faced by women users of the library. The research uses a survey method with questionnaires and phone interviews, covering 120 women respondents. In this paper, the findings reveal that most users belong to the 18–29 age group, with a majority being graduates and a significant proportion unemployed. Women primarily visit the library for health information, reading newspapers, self-learning, and career-related purposes. The study also highlights key barriers to library use, such as lack of adequate collection, uncomfortable environment, insufficient reading facilities, and limited staff support. The concluded in his paper that the study emphasizes the importance of improving library resources, infrastructure, and user engagement to better meet the diverse information needs of women users.

Bishop, Yarbrough & Harris (2022) have explains why younger generations are not choosing manufacturing careers and how industries can attract them. The study highlights a major workforce challenge caused by the retirement of Baby Boomers, leading to a significant skills gap in manufacturing. Despite increasing job opportunities, many positions remain unfilled due to misconceptions about the industry, lack of interest, and ineffective traditional recruitment methods. The paper emphasizes that Gen Z is a “digital-native” generation that values meaningful work, rapid feedback, career growth, work-life balance, and personalized communication. The research study also concludes that changing perceptions, addressing misconceptions, and redesigning recruitment strategies to align with Gen Z preferences are essential for sustaining the manufacturing workforce in the future.

Oyighan, Oladokun & Okwu (2025) have investigates how Generation Z students’ access and use information in academic settings. It adopts a cross-sectional survey method, collecting data from 219 students across five Nigerian universities. The findings show that Gen Z students primarily seek information related to digital skills, career opportunities, scholarships, and current affairs. Social media platforms, AI-powered tools, online encyclopedias, and video platforms are the most commonly used sources, while traditional library resources are less preferred. In this study, they also reveals that students exhibit independent and digital-first information-seeking behavior, relying less on lecturers and peers. The research study concludes that universities must modernize library services, improve access to digital resources, and strengthen digital literacy programs to align with the evolving preferences and needs of Gen Z students.

Objectives:

- To find out the characteristics of Generation Z.
- To identify their information needs in the digital age.
- To analyze their information-seeking behaviour.

- To explore challenges faced by Gen Z in information consumption.

Methodology:

This proposed research work has been conducted to address information and Gen Z needs. In this research study, we have collected data from 150 Gen Z students and most of the 16 to 25 aged. Among students, most use digital technology for learning.

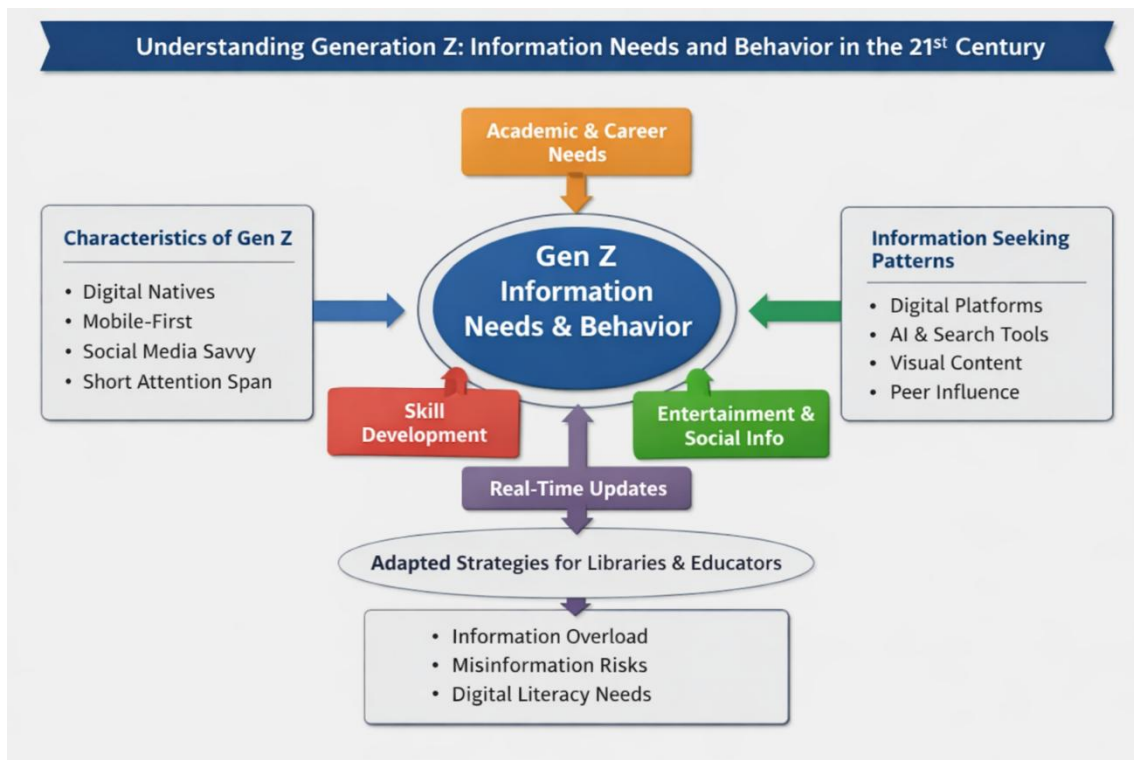


Figure-1: Conceptual Framework of Information Needs and Behavior of Gen Z Students

Data Collection

In this study, we have collected data from 150 Gen Z respondents through google form via e-mail and WhatsApp. The data analysed using by descriptive statistical tools and techniques such as frequency and percentage.

Table-1: Sample Distribution of Respondents

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Age 16–18	40	26.7%
Age 19–22	65	43.3%
Age 23–26	45	30.0%
Total	150	100%

Table 1 shows that the least number of respondents belong to the age group 16-18 years (26.7%), and the majority of respondents belong to the age group 19-22 years (43.3%). They are mostly college students. The third age group is 23-26 years, which is (30%). This indicates that the research study is largely dominated by college-going students, who are active users of digital technologies and web resources.

Figure-1: Bar Chart of Age Distribution of Gen Z Respondents

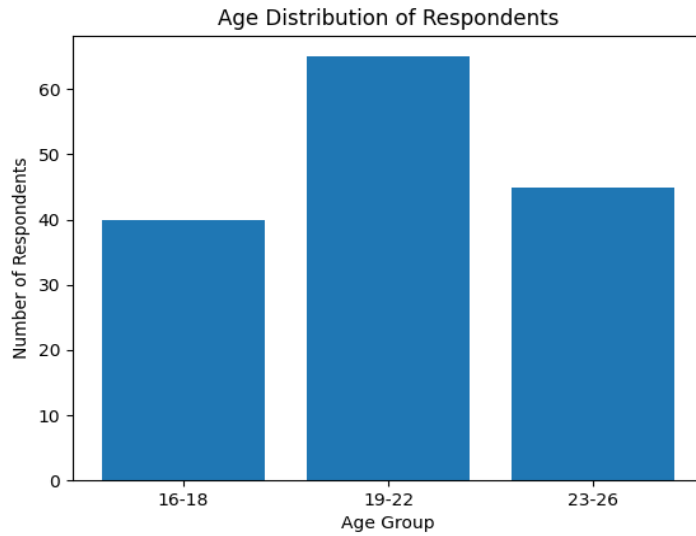


Table-2: Most Preferred Sites for Sources of Information

Source	Respondents	Percentage
Search Engines	120	80%
Social Media	110	73%
YouTube/Video Platforms	95	63%
Library Resources	55	37%
AI Tools (Chatbots, GenAI)	100	67%

From table 2, 80% of Gen Z respondents said search engines were their top choice for information. AI tools ranked third among Gen Z respondents (67%), and social media ranked second (73%), indicating a strong preference for quick, algorithm-driven information systems. It's interesting to note that, among Generation Z respondents, library resources (37%) are the least preferred websites, suggesting a decline in conventional information-seeking techniques.

Figure-2: Comparison of Preferred Sources of Information

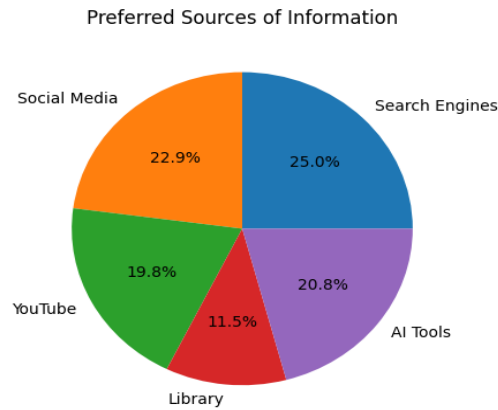


Table-3: Purpose of Information Seeking of Gen Z

Purpose	Respondents	Percentage
Academic Study	130	87%
Skill Development	105	70%
Entertainment	115	77%
Career Guidance	90	60%

Table 3 shows that 80% of the 130 respondents (out of 150) were used in an academic study, which is the primary source of information for Gen Z respondents. However, 77% of the 115 respondents and 70% of the 105 respondents were used in an entertainment and skill development to seek information among Gen Z students. Career guidance also plays a crucial role in the digital era, with 60% of the 150 Gen Z students surveyed using it.

Figure-3: Highest usage of Information Seeking of Respondents

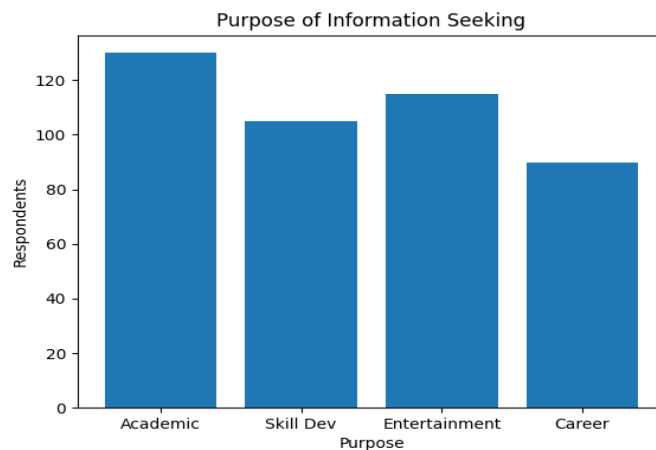


Table-4: Preferred Format of Information

Format	Respondents	Percentage
Video Content	115	77%
Text (Articles/Books)	70	47%
Infographics	85	57%
Audio (Podcasts)	60	40%

Table 4 shows that a total of 115 respondents used video content format for information, which is 77%, and the second highest preferred format of information is infographics, with a total of 85 respondents using it, and its 57%. The third most preferred format for information is text format; were 47% respondents use it. The audio, such as podcasts, is at least the preferred format for information, were 40% respondents using it, but it's very relevant for Gen Z students. In this context, we have suggested that Gen Z students prefer visual and interactive content over traditional text-based materials.

Figure-4: Pie Chart of Percentage for Preferred format of Information

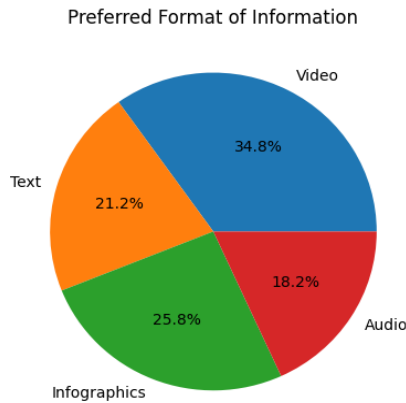
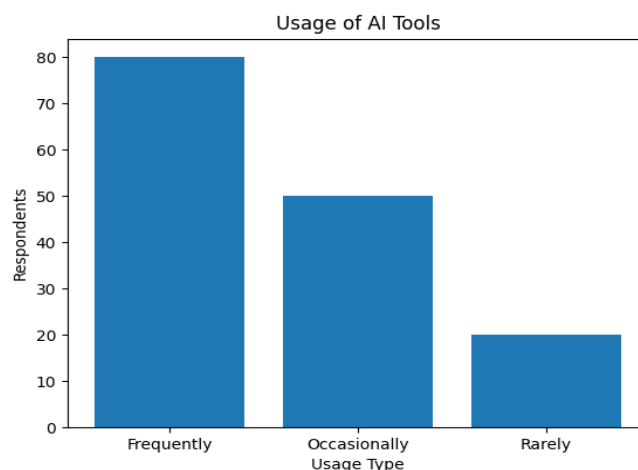


Table-5: Gen Z Uses of AI Tools

Usage Type	Respondents	Percentage
Frequently	80	53%
Occasionally	50	33%
Rarely	20	14%

Table 5 highlighted that a total number of 80 respondents frequently use AI tools, which is 53%, while 33% are occasionally use AI tools and techniques. Only 14% Gen Z students rarely use AI tools and techniques, which demonstrates the growing importance of artificial intelligence in information access and learning.

Figure-5: Most Preferred Usage AI tools by Gen Z



Findings and Conclusion:

The findings also reveal challenges, including declining use of library resources, potential exposure to misinformation, and overreliance on algorithm-driven platforms. Therefore, libraries and information professionals must adapt by integrating AI-based services into libraries. The libraries are providing digital literacy and critical evaluation skills, as well as multimedia and user-centred services for Generation Z students.

In this Context, the present research study an evolving information needs and seeking behaviour of Gen Z students in the digital age. As digital natives, Gen Z demonstrates a strong preference for instant, accessible, and multimedia-rich information sources, particularly search engines, social media platforms, and AI-powered tools. In addition to amusement, skill development, and career exploration, academic needs are the main focus of their extremely dynamic and purpose-driven information-seeking behavior. A move away from traditional text-based resources is reflected in the growing reliance on interactive formats and video content. In conclusion, rethinking contemporary library services and guaranteeing their future relevance in the quickly changing digital context require an awareness of Gen Z's information behavior.

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