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How Do Communication Modalities Influence Intergenerational Communication?

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Abstract

This cross-sectional study analyzes the rapidly developing landscape of online communications. In particular, it studies the modalities used by three generations, which include baby boomers, Gen X, and Gen Y/millennials. In addition to analyzing their preferred methods, researchers also studied the conflicting views on other generations. This was done through data collected from an online survey administered via email and social media posts. It was hypothesized that the gaps in communication styles between different generations would be significantly different than the other generations mentioned. Researchers found that while generational differences are still present among the three demographics studied, a significant number of similarities between the groups were present as well. One example being that the majority of individuals from each generation reported using Facebook as their primary social media service (SMS) as well as over 90% stating that they felt confident in their ability to effectively utilize new forms of technology and social media.

INTRODUCTION

Intergenerational differences have been a recurring topic of research and conversation in everyday life. This study focuses on communication modalities and how they might influence the context of what information is being shared during instances of intergenerational communication. A common perception held by younger generations about baby boomers is that in general they seem out of touch with current computer-mediated communication (CMC) options, creating a rift between them (Walther, 1992). In comparison, the older generations has the perception that younger generations lack in areas such as in-person social skills because of their long-term exposure to technology.

Modalities that were focused on include face-to-face, email, text, social media platforms such as Facebook/Facebook messenger, Twitter, and more. Researchers focused on exploring what the intergenerational gap is by setting clear definitions of the three generations. This was done by analyzing the research gathered in other related studies to begin making connections between the different generations. Specifically, researchers focused on their preferred communication modalities and the reasoning behind why and when they chose to use them.

This was done by asking questions that were designed to learn more about their online habits and what motivates them towards those tendencies. What are the preferred communication modalities for each generation? Do ones generation communication modalities change when interacting with another due to the generational gap? Are there any benefits of conflicts because of how communication modalities differ between generations? These are all relevant questions that have yet to be thoroughly expanded on in the field of communications research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

People often hear terms like “millennial”, “baby boomer”, and “generation gap” being tossed around without ever really understanding what those concepts of time and age mean. Why does it matter what different age groups are defined as? As Venter (2017) found, there are many different ways to apply the concept of generational differences in research. For the purpose of this study, researchers decided to apply it through a sociological approach. Specifically, researchers used a sociological approach to study the three generations of participants. Baby boomers and Gen X in particular was noted to share many similar values and personality traits due to being close in age and having lived through similar cultural experiences.

This literature review will be taking a closer look at the differences involved in generational gaps, communication modalities, and how the different generations use social media. These themes are essential to understanding how these generations communicate and why conflict can arise when our communication styles and methods don’t quite match up with each other during our interactions.

The Generational Gap

Generational gaps are one of the biggest causes of intergenerational conflict. Researchers attempted to identify the differences in opinion between participants from these different generations. Specifically, the three groups focused on included baby boomers, Gen X, and Gen Y, also known as millennials, which is a term that was originally coined by Strauss and Howe (1997) to help explain the in their book, *The Fourth Turning: An American Prophecy*. Baby boomers are most commonly classified as being born between 1946-1964, Gen X is classified as

being born between 1965-1979, and Gen Y between 1980-2000 (Opiates, Krambia-Kapardis, & Varnavas, 2012).

A large amount of their conflict is rooted in the different communication styles experienced while growing up, as well as the large gap in cultural values between the older and younger generations. Venter (2017) found that baby boomers prefer to communicate through email, face-to-face, or on the phone. Millennials were found to also enjoy face-to face communication, although not to the same degree as Gen X or baby boomers. Gen X-ers are known to be in the "middle-child" of these generations, and as a result are more comfortable mixing together several different ways of communication. (Abrams, 2013).

Baby boomers grew up during an era when becoming successful in the workforce and supporting their family was the number one priority. They are often categorized as loyal, committed, and reliable workers that expect the same levels of dedication from others. Millennials on the other hand have grown up living with advanced technology and have used it throughout almost the entirety of their lives (Venter, 2017). They are considered experts with communicating technologically. This is done mainly through social media services (SMS) and text messaging and other popular digital mediums (Leung, 2013).

Some researchers have theorized that one of the driving motivations for the millennial generation's use of social media is to achieve higher levels of validation and affection. Hartman and McCambridge (2011) concluded that while millennials are highly proficient with technology, they have significant struggles with oral, written and interpersonal skills. Venter (2017) also suggested that "helicopter parents", which is common term used to describe highly involved parents, watch over their children too closely. This level of scrutiny has resulted in many Gen Y children beginning to look for more support and recognition in their lives from

those around them. These co-dependent traits are what can sometimes cause millennials to be viewed as narcissistic to baby boomers and Gen X-ers that have a more traditional set of values.

Baby boomers did not experience the same levels of focus on their lives from parents and peers that millennials do now on social media. Instead, they were encouraged to focus on finding steady, well-paying work that could provide for themselves and their families. According to Venter (2017), this mindset is what can sometimes lead baby boomers to stereotype millennials as being too self-involved. Leung (2013) studied the generational differences in motivations and narcissistic personalities when using Facebook, blogging sites, and online forums.

Researcher observed the activity and motives of baby boomers, Gen X-ers, and millennials to better understand their reasoning for using the aforementioned SMS. Similar to the work done by Venter (2017), the study conducted by Leung (2013) also found that frequent social media usage was best for narcissistic people to self-regulate and gain control over their surroundings. However, this study ultimately concluded that there were no significant generational differences between using Facebook or blogging sites as a mean to satisfy affection or social needs. It also found that millennials were exhibited no higher tendencies towards narcissistic compared to baby boomers or Gen X-ers.

The gap between baby boomers and millennials is significant, but individuals who are apart of Gen X can find themselves caught in the middle of opposing values. Their exposure to a variety of different experiences can overlap in both directions, making them a mediating generation, also known as a “bridge”, between the two extremes (Venter, 2017). Members of Gen X often find it easier to relate to baby boomers than Gen Y because many of them also were forced to learn how to use technology and SMS as they arose. They also have the ability to connect with relative ease to the millennial generation. This is, at least in part, due to their age,

but also because many Gen X-ers have millennial children whose lives are saturated in the ever-changing world of technology and online communication (Venter, 2017).

Urlick (2017) stated that those in Gen X must be up to the task of pairing the millennial generation with strong mentors from past generations. There should also be more attention focused on the differences in communication styles between these generations so that the general public can more easily understand them and begin to address these issues. Creating mentorships between millennials and baby boomers helps to begin closing this gap and prepares millennials to work with the newest generation, Gen Z, also known as “digital natives.” Gen Z is early in their development of traits other than a notably higher proficiency with technology and SMS.

Communication Modalities & Interpersonal Communication

Over the last two decades technology has expanded at a rapid pace, which has subsequently shifted aspects of everyday life. There are more ways to communicate now than ever before, and interpersonal communication has begun to evolve as well (Swiggard, Muchnick, Mark, Parker, Micah, & Salmons, 2011). In many cases, the generations that didn’t grow up with social technology like the Internet may see a depletion of traditional or “old” communication styles (Haserot, 2009). Face-to-face, letter, and phone were the only ways to communicate for the prime year of most baby boomers through Generation X. Baby boomers may feel threatened by what they see as a radical shift in communication styles and may not be open to embracing new technologies (Madison, 2016).

Face-to-face communication is defined as interactions that allow people to communicate verbally or nonverbally through body language and spoken communication (Venter, 2017).

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is the term used for all forms of communication that exist via computers. This includes email, text messaging, and SMS such as Facebook.

Millennials often prefer to connect through texting and the Internet as it allows them to have more control over their social interactions. This is difficult to do when the social interactions they're participating in take place over the phone or face-to-face (Daley-Hinkens, 2014).

Haserot (2009) theorized that the millennial generation feels baby boomers over explain and oftentimes overuse face-to-face meetings. Millennials that value multitasking and feel confident in their ability to do so often believe that the time used for face-to-face meetings should be used to accomplish other tasks. Baby boomers on the other hand believe millennials overuse technology resources when it would be more efficient to call or meet in-person. Overall, each generation believes in the importance of using face-to-face communication in an effort to achieve social balance, although this can be a struggle for younger generations (Haserot, 2009).

Baby boomers were born in a time where they had to wait for what they wanted, unlike the millennial generation where access to the Internet has made getting what they need almost instantaneously. Gen X is referred to as the "sandwich generation," because they are often characterized as being between the two other generations. As the "middle child", they look for a balance of values, explanations, and behaviors between with baby boomers and millennials (Urick, 2017). Looking at the differences in interpersonal communication styles, researchers were able to see the preferred methods of interpersonal communication from each generation. However, this does not apply to all individuals within a generation, as some will prefer a communication approach that lies outside of the norm.

Social Media & Technology Usage

Social media and how it is being used is still a relatively new and exciting field to study. In particular, we've decided to look deeper into how exactly different generations differ in the way that they utilize their social media accounts. Those in the millennial generation are more

likely to use social media in their day-to-day lives because they are more familiar with it. Leung (2013) suggests that this is likely due to the fact that baby boomers are being exposed to this new world of technology at a more mature age.

This is usually done through reading posts and news articles that have been shared with them by friends and family. Baby boomers, on the other hand, often prefer to use more traditional mediums such as television, magazines, and newspapers to obtain this information (Towner & Lego, 2016). A theory that correlates well with modern society and the social media age of communications is social information processing theory (SIP). This concept in communication was coined back in 1992 by the researcher Joseph Walther. He chose to focus much of his theory onto the topic of computer-mediated communication (CMC).

SIP focuses primarily on the relationships formed between people while using CMC methods (Walther, 1992). Due to the time period of its original development, the initial research of this theory focused exclusively on text-based online communication. One study went into detail about how privacy on social media is another topic that millennials and baby boomers react differently towards (Chung, Park, Wang, Fulk, & McLaughlin, 2010). Younger adults do not expect to maintain their online privacy in the same way that other generations might. They've been raised with the Internet their whole lives and see the act of sharing personal information online as less serious than older generations.

Uses and gratifications theory is another interesting concept that focuses on trying to better understand why and in what ways individuals seek out different forms of media to satisfy their specific needs (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). A strong association between the uses and gratifications of social media and privacy was shown in study done by Quinn (2016). The uses of social media vary as well with the generations. A recent study done by Towner and Lego

(2016) concluded that millennials are more likely to get updates about political campaigns and news through their social media accounts rather than television.

Boyd (2017) suggests that some of the reasons teens spend more time online to socialize with people they know, customizing their profiles, and leaving responses on other posts. Gen-X and baby boomers often prefer to focus more on the networking capabilities of social media and technology. They often prefer to using it to reconnect with old friends, manage their business contacts, or online dating. Another Boyd (2002) study touched on the subject of self-image and how the Internet can be used to project what the individual wants displayed.

The research done for this study was primarily based off of message boards and other text-focused websites, the findings discovered still apply well to the online conditions we see now. Specifically, their research touched on topics such as identity management and how people can use SMS to project a constructed “face” that they feel is most appropriate in that context. The “faces” that people use while online can vary greatly depending on which group they are attempting to integrate themselves into and how much they want to share while visiting with that group (Boyd, 2002).

Research has shown that baby boomers are more likely to use the Internet and social media to find health information, make purchases, and obtain religious information. Unlike young adults, they are less likely to use it for entertainment such as watching videos, downloading music, playing games, or reading blogs articles (Chung et al, 2010). The article also goes on to explain that baby boomers are at times more skeptical of newer technology. This is due to often believing that they are too old to learn how to use it properly.

In regards to direct communication with others, baby boomers are often characterized as preferring to use more personalized methods of contacting others. For example, they might

prefer to send emails or call the person on the phone if they cannot walk or drive to them. Venter (2017) found that baby boomers rarely resort to using instant messaging for their interpersonal communication needs. This is because, unlike Gen X and Y, they grew up experiencing much more face-to-face communication rather than the CMC methods used frequently by the two younger generations.

Being raised in such a technological society, millennials commonly find multitasking online to be much easier than other generations (Krishen, Berezan, Agarwal, & Kachroo, 2016). Watching videos or going onto Facebook while simultaneously writing a school paper is usually less difficult for them to accomplish than older generations. Unfortunately, this difference in multitasking ability can lead to a gap in communication between millennials and baby boomers (Krishen et al, 2016)

Literature Review Summary

Communicating interpersonally has dramatically changed over time during the life of the generations. According to articles used in this research, face-to-face communication was the main preferred type of communication for the baby boomer generation. Soon, Gen X began to use letters and telephone calls as different means of communicating. Most recently though Gen Y has taken more to text messaging, social media, and other online services for communication. The way communication has changed due to the technology changes are inevitable and ever changing. We must understand how the different generations communicate in order to assure that we do not lose touch with one another. Researchers compared how different communication modalities, such as text messaging and social media use, have changed interpersonal communication and how this affects the different generations of our time.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Over the last 70 years there has been a drastic change in society, particularly in technology. The changes in technology have changed the way people communicate with each other. The most notable difference is between generations, due to the modalities that were available during influential life stages (Venter, 2017). Three research questions were proposed in an attempt to clearly define and examine the connections and disconnects between these generations and their online preferences and

RQ1: How do communication modalities influence intergenerational communication?

A study conducted by Hamel (2005) states that with normative of devices or modalities like cell phones, and others that can be used for professional and personal communication the boundaries has become blurred. In support of this theory, Venter (2017) suggests that modalities have changed the way generations communicate. Researchers hypothesized that each generations would experience some level of struggle while attempting to engage in intergenerational communication due to the influence of conflicting generational traits.

RQ2: What are the main communication modalities preferred by each generation?

The main communication modalities focused on include face-to-face, email, text, and social media websites such as Facebook. In a study conducted by Leung (2013) there were many people from each generation that used the modalities for multiple reasons. Researchers hypothesized that each generation, millennials and baby boomers in particular, would have their own distinct preferences in what modalities they use most frequently.

RQ3: How has each generation adapted to the new modalities when communicating with others from different generations?

During the data collection segment of this study researchers were looking to see if any individuals within each generation notices changes with modalities when communicating with someone outside of their normal communication preferences. Researchers hypothesized that due to generally having less experience with technology, baby boomers would struggle with intergenerational communication done online more than Gen X-ers or millennials would.

A number of recent studies conducted between baby boomers and millennials have found that groups with large age gaps between them often develop stigmas attached to other groups due to their differences in values and preferred modalities. The data provided by Daley-Hinkens (2014) suggests that older generations believe the new modalities being used by millennials are a double-edged sword due to how invasive they can be in regards to personal privacy.

METHODOLOGY

Participants & Procedure

This was a cross-sectional study that surveyed over 205 people from three targeted generations; baby boomers, Gen X, and Gen Y. The website Survey Monkey was used to reach as many people as possible who were within these generation limits. Ethnicity was not asked for on the survey, but gender was. The number of men that participated was 39 and women made up the significant majority with 148 female respondents. Surveys were distributed through mass email to the staff and students of a private university in the Midwest. In addition to mass emails, researchers also utilized their personal social media accounts by posting the survey on Facebook to reach a wider audience of potential participants.

Although data was collected anonymously, the use of friends and family as a collection means for this survey introduced the element of snowball sampling into this study. Snowball sampling can be called a referral or network used to reach a target population that would be

difficult or impossible without the assistance from others that were previously a part of that research (Voicu & Babonea, 2011). In this study, one of the researchers approached a family member in the baby boomer demographic and used the connections provided by that family member to reach a greater amount of responses in this demographic.

Survey Data Collection

Researchers chose to format this as a cross-sectional study due to the time restrictions in place. Before participants began the survey they were shown a brief summary of study details and an estimated time frame for how long it will take to complete. Participants involved were both male and female within the birth year range of 1946-2000, which is the generally accepted cut off in age for Gen Y. The survey featured a variety of questions on the topic of social media preferences and generational differences which were formatted in a semi-closed and open way.

The semi-closed portions of the survey were used to identify basic demographic information such as gender and ages to help correctly sort responses. Open-ended questions were then used so that participants could specify the conflicts or frustrations they'd experienced while using online communication or interacting with individuals from other generations. After the survey collection period was completed, a two tailed-chi square test was used to begin analyzing the data collected.

RESULTS

While some of the questions asked were chosen from Survey Monkey's pre-written selection, the researchers wrote the majority of them. Participants were asked 14 questions designed to determine their demographic information and preferred methods. Researchers also explored the different ways participants view and communicate with other generations while interacting online. First, by seeing what communication modalities are being used most

commonly by each generation. Second, by discovering which, out of the modalities mentioned, are used most commonly by each generation. Lastly, researchers wanted to study what the main reasons were that motivated participants to use social media.

Between three mass emails and several social media post made on Facebook, there were a total of 205 responses collected. Although 14 of those participants did not fully complete the survey, the remaining 191 did complete it in its entirety. To test the first hypothesis, researchers asked each participant to describe how they preferred to communicate with others. They were given four options, which included text messaging/social media, email, over the phone, or in-person. A chi-square contingency table, or a chi-square test with association, indicated that there was not a significant relationship here ($P = .002815$).

See the Table below or Table 1.1 for more detailed in results.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Text messaging/Social media	43.75%	84
E-mail	14.58%	28
Over the phone	9.38%	18
In person	32.29%	62
TOTAL		192

In addition to asking what modalities they preferred, researchers asked participants to rank those preferences on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the highest. Table 2.1 shows that the majority of Gen X and Gen Y preferring to text as their number one preference to communicate with others. Alternatively, the majority of baby boomer participants stated that email or in-person were their number one ways to communicating with others.

To test the second hypothesis, researchers asked participants what they prefer to use their technology/social media accounts for most often. There were four options giving, connecting

with friends and family, consuming online media (books, video, etc.) and other (specify). A chi-square contingency table or a chi-square test with association indicates that there was a significant relationship ($P = .03365$).

See the Table below or Table 3.1 for more detailed results.

	CONNECTING WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY.	MANAGING BUSINESS AND CONTACTS.	CONSUMING ONLINE MEDIA (VIDEOS, BOOKS, ETC)	OTHER	TOTAL
Baby Boomers	61.11% 33	22.22% 12	9.26% 5	7.41% 4	29.19% 54
Gen X	80.00% 36	6.67% 3	4.44% 2	8.89% 4	24.32% 45
Gen Y	69.77% 60	9.30% 8	17.44% 15	3.49% 3	46.49% 86
Total Respondents	129	23	22	11	185

To further test this hypothesis researchers asked what social media platform is used most often. Out of 191 participants 136 (70.83%) choose Facebook as the social media site they use most often. See Table 4.1, located in the appendix below, for more detailed results. In addition to asking participants which social media platform they used most often, they were also asked to explain why they preferred it. Their response selections included; I enjoy the community on that platform more, I never used other mentioned, I don't like the services provided by other platforms, and other (specify). The results showed that 131 (68.23%) participants said they enjoy the community that platform.

DISCUSSION

Social Information Processing Theory Applications

When asked to rank their favorite methods on a scale of 1-5, all three groups of participants listed text messaging as their number one most preferred method of communication. This commitment to text-based preference towards online communication parallels the initial findings found in SIP. Walther (1992) suggested that relationships are built and maintained

through online communication. His research focused on text-based online communication in particular, but even today his research is still applicable to online relationships.

Walther (1992) also suggested that relationships built online could be equally as strong as relationships built through face-to-face communication, albeit at a slower pace due to the lack of nonverbal cues and reduced response time. In recent years, the Internet has begun making the speed at which personal connections can be made between people online much faster. Walther (1992) later amended his research to acknowledge that there are a wider variety of online modalities to speed up the process of relationship building. Some examples include YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram and other audio/visual SMS. These services allow individuals the ability to connect with others at a more instantaneous speed rather than waiting for text-only responses.

One other significant thing to note is that in question 11, “Do you enjoy using technology to relax?” there were similar responses between all three generations. For the option, “Yes, I use technology to relax with often” it was shown that 38.71% baby boomers, 29.03% of Gen X, and 30.65% of Gen Y agreed that technology was their preferred method of relaxation. This finding seems to suggest a slight rise in the general process integrating new technology into the lives of all of previously mentioned generations.

An interesting outlier here was on the response, “Sometimes, but I enjoy having other options as well.” where 49 (53.26%) of our Gen X participants chose that answer. One potential reasoning for this is due to Gen X being “sandwiched” between baby boomers and Gen Y (Urick, 2017). Their exposure to both of these groups seems to make many Gen X-ers strive to find balance between the habits they’ve picked up from both baby boomers and Gen Y.

Uses & Gratifications Theory Applications

Uses and gratifications theory and how it relates to CMC is helpful when attempting to understand and clarify what attracts users to a specific modalities and mediums. This approach also expands knowledge on why one medium attracts more or certain users over others according to Leung (2013). In this study, researchers applied uses and gratification concepts to better understand what specific mediums are used and why those mediums are chosen over the others.

According to Grellhesl (2012), text messaging can be composed in a very short period of time and can be done effectively anywhere and is and can be done in a convenient manner. This adds gratification to users, and even more so the younger generations and people that are on the move. To identify what mediums are being used researchers wanted to see what kind of communication modalities each generation favored. Researchers did this by asking how participants preferred to communicate with others.

As shown in Table 1.1, researcher found that overall the majority of the participants from each generation answered many of the questions the same way. The options included text messaging/social media, email, over the phone, or face to face. Over 84 participants (43.75%) stated that they prefer to communicate instead of text messaging. The second most preferred method was face-to-face communication, which received 62 responses (32.29%).

To further examine the results, researchers split and separately analyzed the data collected from each generation. First, starting with the baby boomers, there were a total of 54 participants that completed the survey. As shown in Table 1.1, in-person communication received the highest ranking with 18 responses (33.18%) with text messaging/social media coming in second with 16 (29.63%). The results from this survey are comparable with the findings made by Venter (2017).

It was found that baby boomers are more likely to prefer communicate face-to-face because they more often rely on verbal and nonverbal cues that occur naturally during a conversation. Gen X had a total of 45 participants that completed the survey, as shown in Table 1.1. Text messaging/social media was the highest ranked with 25 participants (55.56%) stating that they preferred communication with this method. The second most popular response was in-person communication with 8 (17.78%) responses. Gen Y had the highest number of participants, with a total of 88 completed surveys. The number one preferred communication method was texting/social media with 42 (47.73%). In-person communication came in second with a total of 33 (37.50%).

In a study conducted by Sejrup (2009), Facebook was examined and it was found that there are four main motives, also known as gratifications, for individuals that prefer Facebook to other SMS. The informational motives include; information searching, information sharing, and surveillance. Diversion: passing time and a break from something or convenience. Personal motives: self-presentation tools and impression management. Lastly, the social motives include: integration, validation, and connection. Researchers asked two questions which were meant to highlight why the participants choose to use those particular mediums. The first of these questions was, “What do you prefer to use technology/social media for?”.

As shown in Table 3.1, 133 (69.47%) said that they use social media primarily for connecting with family and friends. To break this up by generation, the majority of baby boomers surveyed, including 33 participants (62.11%), said connecting with family and friends is their number one reason for using technology and social media. Gen X with 36 (80.00%) stated that they use this medium for connecting with family and friends. The majority of Gen Y, with 60 (67.77%) responses, also stated that connecting with family and friends was a priority.

The second question highlighted concerns why they prefer to use that platform the other options available to them. As shown in Table 4.1, which is located in the appendix below, participants said that they enjoy the community on their preferred platform with 131 (68.23%). The majority of baby boomers stated that they enjoy the community on that platform with 29 (53.70%). Gen X's majority also said they enjoy the community on the preferred platform with 28 (62.22%). Following the recurrent theme, the majority of Gen Y said they enjoy the community on the preferred platform with 72 (81.82%).

Over half of the participants stated that they use social media for reasons such as seeking and sharing information as well as connecting with friends and family. Also, by social motives for using a medium for the integration and connection received from a social media platform community. To draw a conclusion, when uses and gratification theory is applied to this study one can often see how, in the majority of generations, there are many similarities in reasoning for how and why certain modalities are being chosen over other potential options.

LIMITATIONS

One limitation that this study faced was the potentially negative influences that come with the snowball sampling method. Social media was also used to spread more awareness of the survey via posts made on the researcher's personal Facebook profiles. This was somewhat limiting though because some of the participants surveyed were familiar with the researchers involved in the study. This personal connection, and the fact that it was posted on Facebook specifically, could have potentially resulted in personal biases influencing some responses.

The random selection process used to select participants limited the amount of respondents as well as the varying amounts of data collected from the targeted demographics.

The notably lower number of responses from baby boomers and Gen X limited researchers ability to attribute their findings to a larger demographic. Ideally, it would have been completed over the span of several months. In this case, the study needed to be completed within a 16-week time period, which included the data collection and interpretation stages. These time constraints led to some potential findings that researchers weren't able to fully expanded on in further depth.

CONCLUSIONS & FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While researchers had hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in the preferred modalities between generations, our findings showed otherwise. All three generations ranked similarly on their preferred communication platforms, with SMS like Facebook being the most popular, and Snapchat being the most popular write-in response. In addition to their similar SMS preferences, many of the participants shared similar communication styles. These preferences featured online modalities more commonly than on the phone or face-to-face.

The researchers would suggest future studies attempt to gather their data from a more diverse population of participants. Spreading that data collection period over a several months, or even years if possible, would allow for time to collect more detailed findings on the subject. For example, more studies that focus on analyzing the specific traits and motivations behind the new Gen Z demographic would be beneficial in continuing to develop the field of generational study.

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Appendix

Charts and Tables

1.1

Rank the communication channels listed below on a scale of 1-5 (1 being the most frequent) for how often you use them.

Answered: 187 Skipped: 0

Text							
	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	SCORE
Baby Boomers	42.86% 21	28.57% 14	12.24% 6	4.08% 2	12.24% 6	26.20% 49	3.86
Gen X	58.54% 24	14.63% 6	9.76% 4	4.88% 2	12.20% 5	21.93% 41	4.02
Gen Y	48.28% 42	25.29% 22	14.94% 13	6.90% 6	4.60% 4	46.52% 87	4.06
Social media							
	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	SCORE
Baby Boomers	11.54% 6	17.31% 9	15.38% 8	13.46% 7	42.31% 22 BC	27.81% 52	2.42
Gen X	11.36% 5	25.00% 11	20.45% 9	20.45% 9	22.73% 10 A	23.53% 44	2.82
Gen Y	15.12% 13	25.58% 22	12.79% 11	22.09% 19	24.42% 21 A	45.99% 86	2.85
Email							
	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	SCORE
Baby Boomers	25.49% 13 BC	15.69% 8	21.57% 11	27.45% 14	9.80% 5 C	27.27% 51	3.20
Gen X	6.82% 3 A	29.55% 13 C	27.27% 12	22.73% 10	13.64% 6 C	23.53% 44	2.93
Gen Y	4.71% 4 A	14.12% 12 B	21.18% 18	27.06% 23	32.94% 28 AB	45.45% 85	2.31
Over the phone							
	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	SCORE
Baby Boomers	2.00% 1	20.00% 10	32.00% 16	28.00% 14	18.00% 9	26.74% 50	2.60
Gen X	7.14% 3	19.05% 8	26.19% 11	26.19% 11	21.43% 9	22.46% 42	2.64
Gen Y	3.49% 3	16.28% 14	31.40% 27	19.77% 17	29.07% 25	45.99% 86	2.45
In person							
	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	SCORE
Baby Boomers	22.00% 11	18.00% 9	18.00% 9	26.00% 13	16.00% 8	26.74% 50	3.04
Gen X	20.45% 9	13.64% 6	20.45% 9	18.18% 8	27.27% 12 C	23.53% 44	2.82
Gen Y	27.91% 24	18.60% 16	19.77% 17	24.42% 21	9.30% 8 B	45.99% 86	3.31

2.1

How do you prefer to communicate with others?

Answered: 187 Skipped: 0

	TEXT MESSAGING/SOCIAL MEDIA	E-MAIL	OVER THE PHONE	IN PERSON	TOTAL
	29.63% 16 BC	24.07% 13 C	12.96% 7	33.33% 18	28.88% 54
	55.56% 25 A	13.33% 6	13.33% 6	17.78% 8 C	24.06% 45
	47.73% 42 A	9.09% 8 A	5.68% 5	37.50% 33 B	47.06% 88
Total Respondents	83	27	18	59	187

3.1

What social media platform do you use most often

Answered: 187 Skipped: 0

	FACEBOOK	TWITTER	INSTAGRAM	LINKEDIN	YOUTUBE	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	TOTAL
Baby Boomers	83.33% 45 C	1.85% 1	3.70% 2 C	0.00% 0	5.56% 3	5.56% 3 Responses	28.88% 54
Gen X	88.89% 40 C	2.22% 1	8.89% 4 C	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	24.06% 45
Text	54.55% 48 AB	6.82% 6	25.00% 22 AB	1.14% 1	4.55% 4	7.95% 7 Responses	47.06% 88
Total Respondents	133	8	28	1	7	10	187

4.1

What do you prefer to use technology/social media for most often?

Answered: 185 Skipped: 2

	CONNECTING WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY.	MANAGING BUSINESS AND CONTACTS.	CONSUMING ONLINE MEDIA (VIDEOS, BOOKS, ETC)	OTHER	TOTAL
Baby Bombers	61.11% 33 B	22.22% 12 BC	9.26% 5	7.41% 4 Responses	29.19% 54
Gen X	80.00% 36 A	6.67% 3 A	4.44% 2 C	8.89% 4 Responses	24.32% 45
Gen Y	69.77% 60	9.30% 8 A	17.44% 15 B	3.49% 3 Responses	46.49% 86
Total Respondents	129	23	22	11	185

5.1

Why do you prefer that platform over others available?

Answered: 187 Skipped: 0

	I ENJOY THE COMMUNITY ON THAT PLATFORM MORE.	I HAVE NEVER USED THE OTHER SERVICES MENTIONED.	I DO NOT LIKE THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE OTHER PLATFORMS.	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	TOTAL
Baby boomers	53.70% 29 C	25.93% 14 C	3.70% 2	16.67% 9 Responses	28.88% 54
Gen X	62.22% 28 C	11.11% 5 C	11.11% 5	15.56% 7 Responses	24.06% 45
Gen Y	81.82% 72 AB	2.27% 2 AB	4.55% 4	11.36% 10 Responses	47.06% 88
Total Respondents	129	21	11	26	187