Relevace of Library Among Generation Z in Digital Era

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1. INTRODUCTION

Generation Z, the generation of people born between the late 1990s and early 2010s, also known as Zoomers, iGeneration, or digital natives is a pivotal group for researchers as they are likely to shape future trends and course of action. The group is often characterized by a short attention span, lack of patience and confused mind. They have been exposed to the internet, a plethora of choices and multiple means to gratify their desires, right from their birth. These factors have influenced their thought process and personality considerably. The concept of library which is traditionally associated with tranquility, in-depth knowledge and slow pace, does not match with their fast-paced way of life. There is a need to explore and understand the positioning of libraries in the minds of generation Z and their expectations of it

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The history of libraries is as old as the history of documentation. Library may also be defined as a collection or a repository of information and documents. Therefore , ever since humans began depicting their thoughts in a form that could be expressed and passed on to others, libraries came into being by default. The Magadha and Mauryan era inscriptions made in Tamil, Brahmi, Kharosthi and Armaic scripts, a number of inscriptions recovered from 2nd century B. C. in Brahmi script and the grant of Lalitha Vistara by Buddhist monk stating the position of traders, artisans and Buddhist monks are evidences of prevalence of art of writing in India since the 1st and the 2nd century B.C. itself (Rao, 1994).

The emergence of well-organized libraries can be traced to Gupta period (Bhatt and Kandhasamy, 2020). The establishment of the universities like Nalanda University in the 4th century A.D, Vikramshila University in the 8th century A.D., Jaggadal Vihara in Varendrabhumi in the 10th to 11th century A.D., Sompuri University under King Guhasena in 11th century, Navadwipa in West Bengal which flourished during 10th – 11th century enriched the culture of libraries in India.

Libraries continued to prosper in the medieval period. The libraries were getting more systematic as evidence indicate that libraries of medieval period in India belonged to one of the four categories, religious, public, private and academic libraries. The Mughal rulers were quiet fond of art and literature and they all had libraries attached to their palaces. During Mughal Period , 1562 – 1748 A.D. many magnanimous libraries were built (Sharma, 1985).

The British Rule brought the mordern library to India. Importance of public libraries enhanced manifolds. At that time, the country was divided into 3 presidencies, namely Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. Public libraries were set up in these three regions. The Asiatic Society of Bengal was the first modern library setup in India in the year 1784 followed by Asiatic Society of Bombay in1804. Madras library Society was formed in 1818.

During the post-independence era a lot of impetus was given to education. The public libraries were given tremendous importance and respect. The schools and colleges were recognized based on their libraries. The educational institutions had libraries attached to them to support the teaching and learning process. The public libraries supported the non-formal education where aspirants of various examinations would study. The public library also emerged as hub of cultural activities and public engagement. The elite took pride in getting membership of various libraries (Jogesh,1993).

However, of late, due to advent of internet, penetration of smartphones and changing lifestyle, the concept of library has undergone a sea change.

Tata Consultancy Services conducted a survey wherein digital habits of Indian students in the age group of 12-8 years were

explored. About 12,000 students across 15 cities were questioned. According to it, they consider the Internet most useful for doing their school assignments. This trend has impacted the number of young people visiting libraries. They prefer accessing information on the internet from the comfort of their rooms rather than making the effort to visit a library (Latha and Padma, 2019).

To remain relevant, libraries would have to reinvent themselves. They would have to adopt the changing habits of their most important target audience, the youngsters. Many libraries are taking measures to not only remain relevant but enhance engagement as well. Libraries need to undertake innovative techniques and introduce features in sync with user needs . Libraries should involve youngsters and work in collaboration to explore emerging trends and think out-of-the-box. Furthermore, the pandemic has worked as a catalyst enhancing the need to move services online. As with many other sectors, it led to a debate on the relevance of physical format vis-a vis digital format. As with other products and services, libraries too must utilize social media to enhance its reach and engagement with the youngsters.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To understand the changing perception of young generation towards library and its relevance among them, related articles and research papers were studied semi-structured interviews were conducted. The semi-structured questionnaire followed PACT (People, Activities, Context, and Technologies) framework. The exploration began by framing core questions using the PACT framework, which delves into People, Activities, Context, and Technologies (Benyon, 2013). A pilot study was conducted on 5 respondents to check the language and the similarity in what researcher intend to ask and what the respondent understand. From the observations of the pilot study few questions in the questionnaire were rephrased. The questionnaire was again discussed with five respondents to remove any other discrepancy. The respondents were also encouraged to provide their feedback. The feedback by and large agreed that the questions were precise, understandable, and relevant. However, the respondents suggested that the questionnaire was too broad in perspective and should narrow down on certain aspects. Based on these observations and suggestions, the questionnaire was further structured and divided into four distinct heads: General Usage of Libraries, Digital Resources and Technology, Community and Social Value, Library Awareness and Marketing.

The questionnaire also elicited opinions and experiences of the respondents. Open ended questions were incorporated to get unique insight of the respondents which the structured questions might have not captured.

135 questionnaires were filled through google forms, using simple random sampling. The respondents belonged to the age group of 18 to 25 years.

Correlation, ANOVA, Cross Tabulation and Chi-Square test were used for analysis.

Hypotheses Tested:

Ho: Purpose of visiting library has an impact on library usage.

Ho: Gender has an impact on the pattern of library usage in today's digital era.

Ho: Social media has an impact on the customer engagement of library

Library relevance Frequencies

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
$library relevance^a$	Research	56	41.5%	74.7%
	leisure reading	33	24.4%	44.0%
	Free Internet	10	7.4%	13.3%
	Group Study	33	24.4%	44.0%
	Attending Events	3	2.2%	4.0%
Total		135	100.0%	180.0%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Out of 135 responses received, 56 (41.5%) use library for research and academic purposes, 33 (24.4%) use it for leisure reading, 33 (24.4%) use it for group study , 10(7.4%) use it primarily for availing free internet facility and only 3 (2.2%) view library as a place for attending events like seminars, discussions, book launch etc

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Correlation Matrix

		Constant	Research(1)	leisure reading(1)	Free Internet(1)	Group Study(1)	Attending Events(1)
Step 1	Constant	1.000	-.746	-.432	-.127	-.279	.041
	Research(1)	-.746	1.000	.123	.037	-.090	.008
	leisure reading(1)	-.432	.123	1.000	-.102	-.011	-.106
	Free Internet(1)	-.127	.037	-.102	1.000	-.042	-.063
	Group Study(1)	-.279	-.090	-.011	-.042	1.000	-.221
	Attending Events(1)	.041	.008	-.106	-.063	-.221	1.000

The above correlation matrix indicates the following interpretations:

Research and Leisure Reading: There is a strong negative correlation (-.746), suggesting that as time spent on research increases, leisure reading tends to decrease. This may indicate a trade-off between engaging in research and spending time on leisurely reading.

Research and Free Internet: A moderate negative correlation (-.432) suggests that the more time spent on research, the less time is spent using free internet for activities other than research. This may imply that those who engage in research activities uses free internet mainly for research and academic purposes and may have less use for free internet in other contexts.

Research and Group Study: The correlation (-.279) is weak and negative, suggesting a slight tendency that more research is associated with slightly less participation in group study.

Leisure Reading and Group Study: The correlation (-.011) is very close to 0, indicating almost no relationship between leisure reading and group study.

Attending Events and Other Activities: Attending events has weak or no correlation with all the other variables. This suggests that participation in events does not strongly influence, nor it is influenced by, the other behaviours in this dataset. However, the only positive correlation that attending events has been with research (.008) which indicate that people availing the services of library may be interested in attending academic events through library.

Ho: There is no significant difference between the gender in terms of whether they follow libraries on social media.

Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Do you follow any libraries on social media?	Male	37	1.81	.397	.065
	Female	39	1.72	.456	.073

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
									Lower	Upper	
Do you follow any libraries on social media?	Equal variances assumed	3.668	.059	.945	74	.348	.093	.098	-.103	.289	
	Equal variances not assumed			.948	73.477	.346	.093	.098	-.102	.288	

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The results suggest that there is no significant difference between the gender in terms of whether they follow libraries on social media. Both the t-test for equal variances and the Welch's t-test (for unequal variances) yield p-values greater than 0.05, meaning we fail to reject the null hypothesis. Hence There is no significant difference between the gender in terms of whether they follow libraries on social media.

Ho: Gender has an influence on the type of library usage.

Descriptives

Gender

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Physical	37	1.54	.505	.083	1.37	1.71	1	2
Digital	2	1.50	.707	.500	-4.85	7.85	1	2
Both	37	1.49	.507	.083	1.32	1.66	1	2
Total	76	1.51	.503	.058	1.40	1.63	1	2

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Gender

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.089	2	73	.915

ANOVA

Gender

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.054	2	.027	.105	.901
Within Groups	18.932	73	.259		
Total	18.987	75			

The value of F-statistics suggests that the means of the groups are not significantly different.

Since the p-value (0.901) is greater than 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that there is no statistically significant difference between the groups (in terms of gender) for type of library usage.

Ho: Gender has no impact on the frequency of visit to library.

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent

Gender * How often do you visit a library (physical or digital)?	76	100.0%	0	0.0%	76	100.0%

Gender * How often do you visit a library (physical or digital)? Crosstabulation

Count

		How often do you visit a library (physical or digital)?					Total
		Daily	Few times a year	Monthly	Never	Weekly	
Gender	Male	1	8	6	1	21	37
	Female	1	5	7	2	24	39
Total		2	13	13	3	45	76

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.251[a]	4	.870	.870
Likelihood Ratio	1.263	4	.868	.870
Fisher's Exact Test	1.599			.870
N of Valid Cases	76			

a. 4 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .97.

Since 40% cells have expected count less than 5 thus p value of Fisher's Exact Test

is taken which is > 0.05 at alpha level of significance hence we accept the null hypothesis that

There is no significant association between Gender and frequency of library visit.

Ho: Social media has an influence on the awareness of the library.

Do you follow any libraries on social media?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	65	85.5	85.5	85.5
	Yes	11	14.5	14.5	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

The above frequency distribution table shows:

The frequency distribution table indicates that 85.5% of respondents do not follow libraries on social media. However, 14.5% of respondents do follow libraries on social media, which also gives a chance to study that how the customer engagement can be increased on social media.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION
- **Generation Z and Millennials use library primarily for academic related purposes.**

In India library is associated with academics and academics related activities. Most of the people visiting libraries seek to

fulfil some academic need and requirement. Library is not only used for study related needs but for the broad level development of individual wherein it is essentially used for skill development, education, improving General Knowledge, preparing for competitive exams. (Qualitative and Quantitative Survey of Public Libraries in India, 2019). Therefore, most of the visitors of public library are college/university students. Of late a trend is being observed wherein small libraries or mini libraries are mushrooming in smaller towns and rural areas. Such libraries are fostering a culture of reading among youngsters belonging to towns and villages. While on one hand fall in attendance of public libraries is being witnessed, on the other hand the concept of private study centre and reading room is gaining traction. Such centres are very popular among students preparing for competitive exams. According to the Nielsen's study on the impact of COVID-19 on the Indian Book, there is an increase in reading hours of youngsters from 9 to 16 per week. Additionally, genres such as Self-help, Spirituality, History, and Enterprise have gained popularity among readers (Anderson,2020).

People are result oriented in India. Parents allow only those activities to be taken up by their children which would help them in securing better marks. Leisure reading, as such do not find many takers among young students in India. In the era of cutthroat competition, young people give utmost importance to career and employment. In such a scenario, leisure reading does not seem to find space in youngsters' minds.

Most of them view public library as a support system complimenting their academic-career goals. The key items that they look for in library are reading materials for competitive exams, information brochures on various academic programs and avenues for employment. Thus, public libraries should make such literature and material like government and private publications on employment, information about various academic courses, etc available to young people. Libraries must facilitate the democratic and hassle-free flow of information. Facilities like employment kiosks with access to internet to search/apply for jobs online and online study groups should be encouraged. Public library should incorporate social networking sites to connect and form meaningful relationship with the youngsters.

- **Generation Z and Millennials prefer to study alone**

Studies indicate that millennials are collaborative and prefer to work in teams. Inclusion, cohesiveness in working environment and striving together to achieve common goal are the motivating factors for them. Gen Z, on the other hand, are individualistic and prefers to work alone. They prefer individual assignments and being judged for their own efforts. As such, they prefer to study alone and concentrate on their work. Their workplace preferences also reflect the same as they like to have separate workstation rather than open, collaborative workspace. They want to work in seclusion without any disturbance from any external source. (Patel, 2021). Libraries should therefore devote more space to individual cabins. If enough space is not available, barrier should be created to separate one reader from the other. In big cities reading rooms with such arrangements are taking over traditional libraries. Young aspirants who hope to clear competitive examinations prefer such reading rooms. Even when most of the information and reference material is available online, studious young aspirants for competitive exams, students of medical science, chartered accountancy and other professional courses seek a quiet place to concentrate and focus on their studies. Such places are rare in metro cities and if available, they are quite expensive. Traditional libraries may find new market segment if repositioned as a calm and affordable place for students to study.

- **Among Generation Z and Millennials leisure reading is not associated with library**

In their pursuit of materialistic success, young generation have lost many old habits which were once considered essential for holistic development. Reading in one of them. Today, youngster read with specific goals rather than for sheer love of it. Reading for them is a means to enhance their knowledge that would make their job prospects better. Earlier reading books was one of the means of entertainment and spending free time, now the options are many. Youngsters spend time on smartphones, laptops, video games, etc. The youngsters today, in fact hardly have any spare time. The surmounting pressure of performing exceptionally well in academics and crack tough competitive exams like NEET, JEE, UPSC, CLAT, etc hardly leave any leisure time to them. Reading is perceived more as a necessity to enhance marks and success rate in competitive exams rather than as a hobby to draw pleasure and fulfilment. Having to put so much effort in academics there is hardly any time or charm left for leisure reading. Reading indiscriminately or for pleasure seems to be a thing of the past. With parents focussing only on marks, reading too is valued based on its utility. One is encouraged to read only those material which would yield high marks. Leisure reading is in fact discouraged and seen as wastage of time (Mahanta, 2023).

According to a study conducted by National Book Trust in association with National Council of Applied Economic Research fantasy, comics, thrillers and mythology are the most read books by youths in India but the percentage of the younger generation who indulge in leisure readings is very low (Economic Times, 2012). According to the National Literacy Trust's 2024 Annual Literacy Survey, just one in three children and young people say that they enjoyed reading in their free time, and only one in five children read daily in their free time,

- **Attending academic events, although presently attract less attention from Generation Z and Millennials but may gain traction in future.**

Generation Z and Millennials associate libraries only with academics and do not view it as a prospective venue for attending events. However, the programs piloted in several libraries indicate that organizing academic related events like talks on contemporary issues may engage the community better. One such initiative was taken by the Boston Public Library (BPL).

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BPL was established in 1848, and it is the first big free municipal library in the United States. The library conducts events such as summer reading for kids, talks by authors, concerts, exhibitions, community groups for senior citizens and many more. Such programs are very well taken by the community. A similar model can work in India as well. Being too much glued to their phones and being connected online, the young generation at times crave for physical socialization. Library can fill that void. The prominent libraries can conduct talks by eminent personalities from the community on subjects related to youth. In fact, such programs may assist the system in spreading awareness and sensitizing youth on matters concerning the world. Online connectivity of the libraries is essential for making such events successful. Programs such as meet the author programs/discussions on new books may re-kindle interest in books, and authors may also find a platform to promote their books. This would improve interest among new readers as well. Community literary clubs may be initiated in smaller cohorts. Such initiatives would involve community and would seve as value added service to the library.

- **Gender is not a discriminating factor for usage and interest in library.**

Several major studies of library users do not report gender differences (D'Elia and Rodger, 1994, Walzer, Scott, and Sutton, 2000, Metropolitan Cooperative Library System, 1999, Rosa et al, 2005).

- **Contrary to the general opinion, most of the generation Z and Millennials do not follow library on social media, however few of them do so and the numbers may go up in future.**

People use social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, or WhatsApp primarily connect and communicate with friends, family and folk (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). Research also indicate that finding new friends and socializing is also a factor driving youngsters towards social media (Kim et al., 2010, Whiting & Williams, 2013). Studies suggest that presence and engagement on social media sites have a positive effect on mental health of people (Abosag et al., 2020; Keenan-Devlin, 2010; Yang, 2016). Studies suggest that Instagram users utilise it basically for five purposes: social interaction, saving memories for future, self-expression, as a platform to escape the realities of life momentarily, and viewing what is happening in others' life (E. Lee et al., 2015). Social media is a platform used by people for self-discovery and give wings to their fantasies Wei et al. (2020). Thus, the studies indicate that people mostly use social media for social interaction and casual communication rather than for reading and academic pursuit. However, few studies also suggest that both generations (Gen Z & Gen Y) are using social media for availing access to more valuable content for their curriculum, exchanging ideas through interaction with learning communities, and access various educational systems that may equip them with more knowledge and enhanced skills. Knowledge from multiple sources would provide them with broader perspective. Studies indicate that social media communication enhances student involvement and cohesion with their peers and add positively to classroom conversations (Ross et al., 2009). Therefore, libraries should strive to involve young students to connect through social media platforms.

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