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TRANSMEDIA READING AND GENERATION Z'S SOCIAL ATTITUDES

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Abstract

The study of the reading habits, attitudes, and interests of Generation Z (Gen Z) to transmedia storytelling provides a comprehensive understanding of how they interact with transmedia stories. In social sciences, transmedia storytelling is seen to create more immersive and engaging narratives for the readers. It creates a social phenomenon as reading is no longer on paper but now, online, especially to the new generation of readers, Gen Z. Gen Z's interests in transmedia storytelling are varied and influenced by their diverse range of interests. They enjoy a range of genres, including young adult fiction, science fiction, and fantasy, as well as contemporary fiction. This research is based on qualitative data where a conversation analysis was assessed to undergraduates belonging to Gen Z from a selected university in Malaysia. Results highlighted that Gen Z's reading habits are diverse, with many readers enjoying transmedia stories through multiple media formats. Gen Z readers also tend to participate in online book communities and share their reading experiences. Overall, the study concludes that Gen Z is highly engaged with transmedia storytelling, with diverse reading habits and interests. The findings have implications for creators, publishers, and educators in terms of curating and creating transmedia content that resonates with Gen Z readers. Understanding Gen Z's reading habits, attitudes, and interests provides a unique opportunity to develop and adapt transmedia stories that can engage reading better.

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1. Introduction

Reading materials nowadays has taken up many forms. One popular material is the materials from the internet namely known as Transmedia Narratives or Transmedia Storytelling. Transmedia storytelling is a popular and exciting storytelling technique that has been embraced mainly by Generation Z, a generation that has grown up with technology and digital media. Generation Z are those born from 1997 onwards (Parker & Igielnik, 2020). This is illustrated in Figure 1 below:
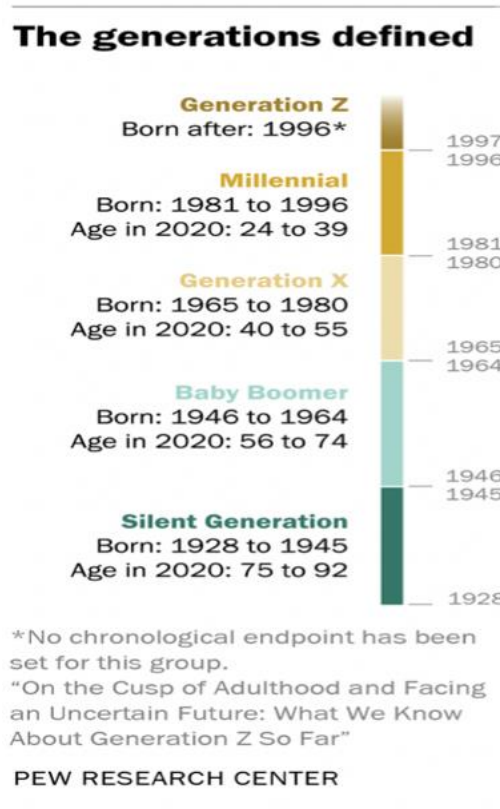

The generations defined

Generation Z
Born after: 1996*
1997
1996

Millennial
Born: 1981 to 1996
Age in 2020: 24 to 39
1981
1980

Generation X
Born: 1965 to 1980
Age in 2020: 40 to 55
1965
1964

Baby Boomer
Born: 1946 to 1964
Age in 2020: 56 to 74
1946
1945

Silent Generation
Born: 1928 to 1945
Age in 2020: 75 to 92
1928

*No chronological endpoint has been set for this group.
"On the Cusp of Adulthood and Facing an Uncertain Future: What We Know About Generation Z So Far"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 1. Generations Definition by Pew Research Center in Parker and Igielnik (2020).

Transmedia stories involve the use of multiple media platforms and formats to tell a single story or narrative (Gee, 2017; Ito et al., 2013; Jenkins et al., 2009). This can include books, films, television shows, video games, comics, and social media, among others. By utilizing multiple media platforms, transmedia stories provide a unique and immersive experience for audiences, which is particularly appealing to Gen Z. One of the reasons why transmedia stories have become increasingly popular among Gen Z is that it offers a multi-dimensional and interactive experience (Pratten, 2011). Through transmedia stories, Gen Z audiences can engage with their favourite characters and stories in ways that were previously not possible. They can explore the story world through different media formats, participate in the narrative, and become more invested in the characters and the world they inhabit. This interactive approach to storytelling is highly appealing to Gen Z, who are known for their preference for user-generated content and the ability to participate in content creation.

Another reason why transmedia storytelling resonates with Gen Z is that it allows for greater diversity and representation in storytelling (Jenkins et al., 2009). By utilizing different media formats, creators can explore different aspects of a story, delve deeper into the characters, and create new storylines that appeal to a wider range of audiences. This is especially important to Gen Z, who are more socially and culturally aware, and who demand that their entertainment reflects their values and beliefs. Transmedia storytelling allows for more representation of diverse stories and perspectives, providing Gen Z with a more inclusive and authentic experience.

In addition, transmedia storytelling provides creators with new opportunities for innovation and creativity. (Jenkins et al., 2009; Pratten, 2011) By exploring different media platforms, creators can experiment with new storytelling techniques, integrate new technologies, and provide audiences with an immersive experience. This allows for the development of more complex and sophisticated stories that can evolve and expand over time.

Overall, transmedia storytelling provides a unique and exciting opportunity for creators to engage with Gen Z audiences in a way that is more interactive, inclusive, and immersive than traditional storytelling (Jenkins et al., 2009). As the trend toward transmedia storytelling continues to grow, Gen Z will likely continue to be at the forefront of this exciting and innovative approach to storytelling.

2. Related Literature Review

This research is grounded in the relevant related literature review that is being used in this study.

2.1. Generation Z reading habits

Generation Z, also known as Gen Z, refers to the cohort of people born between the mid-1990s and the mid-2010s. As a generation that has grown up in a digital age, their reading habits, attitudes, and interests differ from those of previous generations. According to Ullah et al. (2022) in their research on Gen Z in Pakistan, Barcellos and Gil (2020) in their research on Gen Z in Brazil, Tazijan et al. (2022) in their research on Gen Z in Malaysia, some key characteristics of Gen Z's reading habits, attitudes, and interests are being highlighted in the three studies. The common characteristics are shown in Table 1:

Table 1. Characteristic and Elaboration of Generation Z Reading Habits based on three research.

Characteristics	Elaboration
1. Digital reading	Gen Z is more likely to read digital content rather than physical books. They are comfortable reading on electronic devices such as smartphones, tablets, and e-readers.
2. Shorter attention spans	Due to the vast amount of information available on the internet, Gen Z has a shorter attention span than previous generations. They prefer shorter, bite-sized pieces of content that they can quickly consume
3. Socially and culturally aware	Gen Z is known for being socially and culturally aware. They are interested in reading about diverse perspectives and social issues that affect their generation and the world around them.

4. Interactive content	Gen Z enjoys content that is interactive and allows them to participate in the narrative. This includes gamification, interactive fiction, and choose-your-own-adventure stories
5. Authenticity	Gen Z values authenticity in their reading material. They are more likely to trust the content that is written by people with lived experiences, rather than those who are perceived as being experts
6. Visual storytelling	Gen Z prefers visual storytelling and is more likely to engage with content that includes images, videos, and infographics.
7. Online-book communities	Gen Z is more likely to connect with other readers and join online book communities to discuss and share their reading experiences
8. Genre diversity	Gen Z has a diverse range of interests and is open to exploring different genres of literature. They are more likely to read young adult fiction, science fiction, and fantasy, as well as contemporary fiction.

Overall, Gen Z's reading habits, attitudes, and interests are influenced by the digital age and their desire for authentic, diverse, and interactive content. They are more likely to engage with content that is visual, short, and socially and culturally aware, and they are open to exploring different genres and joining online book communities.

2.2. Features of transmedia stories

According to White, A. (2022), transmedia storytelling is the practice of telling a single story or narrative across multiple media platforms and formats, such as books, films, television shows, comics, video games, and social media. There are some features of transmedia stories that allow the stories to be immersive. Conferring to this, Pratten (2011) further elaborated that storytelling tells stories across multiple platforms as transmedia stories are characterized by their use of different media platforms to tell a story. The story starts in one medium and continues in another, or different aspects of the story may be explored in different media. Another feature of transmedia stories is the multiple entry points. Transmedia stories are designed to be accessible to audiences through different entry points. For example, a television show may be the primary medium for telling the story, but the story may also be accessible through a video game, a novel, or a mobile app.

Another feature of transmedia stories is coherence and consistency. Despite being told across multiple media, transmedia stories are designed to maintain coherence and consistency. The story should make sense and be enjoyable regardless of the medium through which it is experienced. Another feature of transmedia stories is the audience participation. Transmedia stories often involve audience participation and engagement. Audiences may be encouraged to contribute to the story or participate in activities related to the story. Pratten (2011) stresses that in the expansion of the story world, transmedia stories often expand on the world and characters of the original story. As such, additional stories, characters, and background information may be created for the overall narrative. In addition, this will create synergy between media as Transmedia stories are designed to take advantage of the strengths of each medium used in the storytelling. Each medium is used to add a unique dimension to the story, rather than simply repeating the same content. Finally, one of the features is the immersive experience. Transmedia stories aim to create an immersive experience for the audience, blurring the lines between

reality and fiction. The audience is invited to become part of the story world and experience it on a deeper level. This research is based on the following conceptual framework that is being designed using the literature presented as depicted in Figure 2.
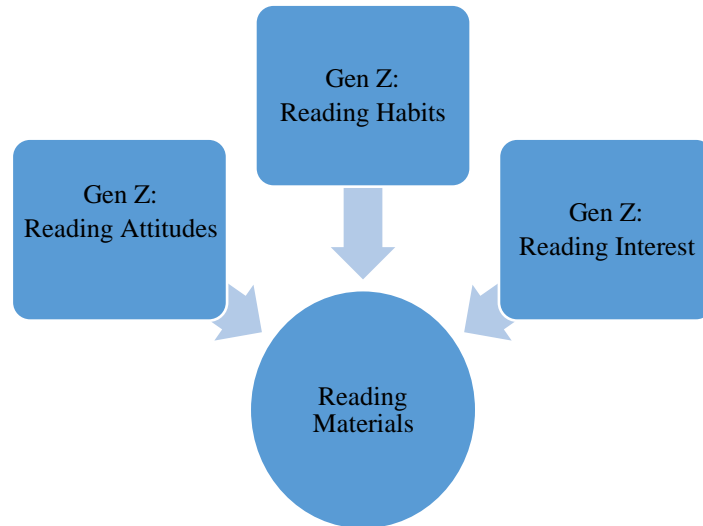

Figure 2. Triangulation of Reading Attitudes, Habits, and Interests of Generation Z

3. Methodology

This research aims to answer the question, "What are the profiles of the readers who read transmedia stories among Gen Z?". The triangulation of the research was done through the conversation analysis among 238 respondents of Generation Z in a selected university in Malaysia. The respondents were selected based on purposive sampling where the respondents shared the same age group born from 1997 onwards and were interviewed using the Motivation to Read Profile adapted from Gambrell et al. (1996).

There are two phases in this research, in phase 1, the samples were asked about their reading interest, habits, and attitude. Samples were given online questionnaires via Survey Monkey on questions about the three factors mentioned. Questions like "What are your reading habits?", "How many hours do you spend on reading?', "How do you feel when you read?" were asked in the questionnaire. Samples were given Likert scaling options from "somewhat different" to "somewhat me" to choose. From this, scoring was tabulated based on the respondents' answers.

In the second phase, the samples were asked regarding their reading materials. The conversation took 15-20 minutes for a response from the respondent based on open-ended questions. The conversation asked questions regarding their reading preferences, habits, and interests. Questions like "What kind of books do you read", and "Why do you read these kinds of books?". Respondents vary in giving their types of genres and reasons to be reading those stories and books. Finally, a triangulation of stage 1 and stage 2 are being analyzed to common themes using coding software. The research procedure is described below (Figure 3).
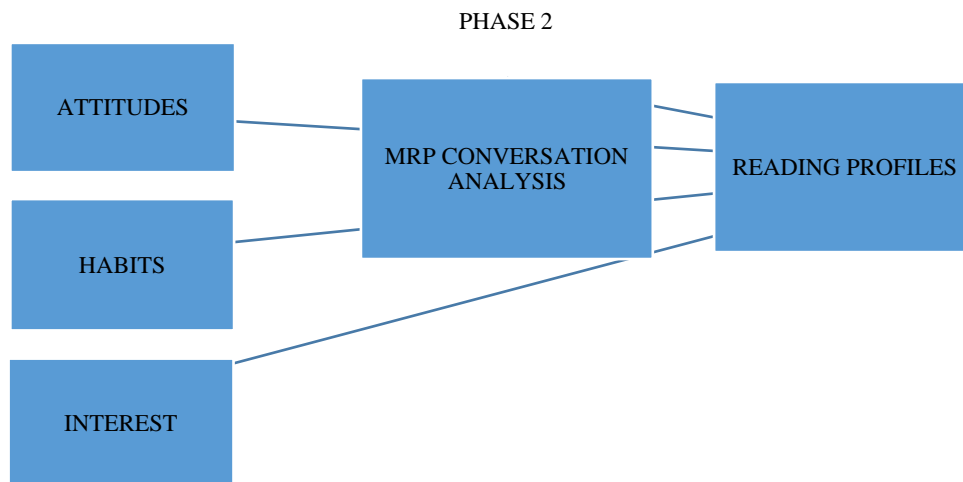
PHASE 2

Figure 3. Research Methodology

4. Results

The results were divided into two phases where results of phase 1 and phase 2 are being discussed. In phase 1, a descriptive analysis was done based on the samples scoring between the three factors of reading.

In this phase, the scoring of the respondents is divided into three factors which are attitudes, interests, and habits. The respondents scored highest for reading interest compared to habits and attitudes. However, the purpose of this result is not to assess the highest or the lowest, as the scores are interrelated with the reading factors. Thus, the score will show motivation of reading is related to attitudes, interests, and habits of readers. This is congruent with a study by Guthrie and Coddington (2009), and Wigfield's book on reading motivation.

For phase 2, a thematic analysis was analyzed based on the conversation analysis using Drouillard's Framework. The analysis was done using Taguette software for coding analysis (Table 2).

Table 2. Score for each reading factor

Score Range (*/40 marks)	Attitudes	Interest	Habits
0 – 5	0	0	15
6 – 11	0	0	20
12 – 17	0	0	30
18 – 23	60	20	20
24 – 29	70	40	0
30 – 35	60	80	0
36 – 40	50	70	0

In this phase, the scoring of the respondents is divided into three factors which are attitudes, interest, and habits. The respondents scored highest for reading interest compared to habits and attitudes. However, the purpose of this result is not to assess the highest or the lowest, as the scores are interrelated with the reading factors. Thus, the score will show the motivation to read is related to the attitudes,

interests, and habits of readers. This is congruent with a study by Guthrie and Coddington (2009), and Wigfield's book on reading motivation. For phase 2, a thematic analysis was analyzed based on the conversation analysis using Douillard's Framework. The analysis was done using Taguette software for coding analysis (mentioned above) as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Themes based on the Conversation Analysis

No	Aspect	Indicator	Number of Items
1	Interest	love reading, Spending more time on reading	28
2	Willingness	Having a desire for reading Reading without coercion	16
3	Happiness	Not feeling bored when reading	30
4	Enthusiasm	Enthusiastic in reading Showing maximum effort in reading	60
5.	Friends	Online friends	40
6	Trend	The new story emerges from movies, the Internet	38

Based on the scoring and conversation analysis, reading profiles were established as such, avid, ambivalent, apathetic, and adverse readers of profiles are as follows.

  i. Avid reader: An avid reader is someone who loves to read and spends a lot of time doing so.

  ii. Ambivalent reader: An ambivalent reader is someone who has mixed feelings about reading.

  iii. Apathetic reader: An apathetic reader is someone who has little interest in reading.

  iv. Adverse reader: An adverse reader is someone who actively dislikes reading.

This is concurrent with studies by Otis et al. (2005). An avid reader is a reader who enjoys a wide variety of genres and often has a large personal library of books. Avid readers are usually very engaged with the reading community and may participate in book clubs, online forums, or social media groups to discuss books and connect with other readers. Whereas an ambivalent reader enjoys certain genres or specific books, overall, they do not prioritize reading in their free time. Ambivalent readers may find it difficult to focus on reading for extended periods and may prefer other forms of entertainment. The third profile is an apathetic reader. They may have negative associations with reading from past experiences or simply do not see the value in it. Apathetic readers may struggle with comprehension or find reading to be a chore rather than a pleasurable activity. Finally, there is an adverse reader. An adverse reader may have difficulty with reading comprehension, struggle with learning disabilities like dyslexia, or simply prefer other forms of entertainment. Adverse readers may have a negative attitude towards books and reading and may avoid it whenever possible. In this study, the samples recorded the highest score belonging to the avid and ambivalent readers.

5. Discussion

5.1. Triangulation of reading habits, attitudes, and interests on Generation Z

The triangulation of reading transmedia stories habits, attitudes, and interests of Generation Z reveals a multi-dimensional picture of how these factors interact with transmedia storytelling. By triangulating the data from a more complete understanding of how Gen Z engages with reading transmedia stories.

From the findings, it can be concluded that Gen Z's reading habits regarding transmedia storytelling are diverse and depend on individual preferences. Gen Z readers prefer to engage with transmedia stories through multiple media formats, while others probably use the o a single format. Digital reading is a common habit among Gen Z readers, who often use electronic devices such as smartphones and tablets to access transmedia content. They also have shorter attention spans and prefer bite-sized content that they can quickly consume.

Gen Z readers are more likely to participate in online book communities and share their reading experiences. From this study, the Gen Z participants showed a new way of reading such as in attitude. The Gen Z's attitudes towards transmedia storytelling are largely positive. They appreciate the immersive and interactive experience that transmedia stories offer, and they value the diversity and representation that transmedia stories can provide. They are socially and culturally aware and are interested in exploring different perspectives and social issues. Gen Z readers value authenticity and are more likely to trust the content that is written by people with lived experiences (Jenkins et al., 2009; Pratten, 2011).

The findings also showed similar findings with Jenkins et al. (2009) and Pratten (2011) for interest. Gen Z's interests in transmedia storytelling are varied and influenced by their diverse range of interests. They enjoy a range of genres, including young adult fiction, science fiction, and fantasy, as well as contemporary fiction. Visual storytelling is a particular interest among Gen Z readers, who are more likely to engage with content that includes images, videos, and infographics. They also enjoy interactive content, such as gamification and choose-your-own-adventure stories.

Overall, the triangulation of reading transmedia stories habits, attitudes, and interests of Generation Z suggests that this cohort is highly engaged in transmedia stories. They appreciate the immersive and interactive experience that transmedia stories offer, and they value the diversity and representation that transmedia stories can provide. They have diverse reading habits and interests, and they are more likely to engage with transmedia content digitally.

6. Conclusion

The rise of transmedia stories (Lähteenmäki, 2021) has opened new avenues for engaging with readers, particularly among the younger generation. Generation Z, or Gen Z, is a cohort that has grown up in the digital age, and their reading habits, attitudes, and interests differ significantly from those of previous generations. We must understand the change in reading among Generation Z.

In Malaysia, transmedia stories have become equally important, especially among Generation Z (Mohd Hasri et al., 2022). There are some examples of transmedia stories in Malaysia that have captured

the attention of Generation Z such as KL Gangster, which is originally from a Malaysian film that has been adapted into a television series, comic book, and mobile game. The story follows the lives of two brothers who become involved in the world of gangsters in Kuala Lumpur. Another popular transmedia story would be Ola Bola. Like KL Gangster, it is a Malaysian film that has been adapted into a television series, novel, and mobile game. The story is based on the true events of the Malaysian national football team's journey to qualify for the 1980 Olympics. A very popular cartoon such as Upin & Ipin is also a transmedia-based story. It is an animated television series that has expanded into movies, mobile games, and merchandise. The story follows the adventures of two twin brothers and their friends in a Malaysian village. Similarly, Amanz Production, which is a technology news website in Malaysia has expanded into a YouTube channel, podcast, and social media accounts. The brand focuses on providing news and reviews related to technology and gadgets. And finally, the most recent production is The Ghost Bride. This is a Netflix original series that is based on a Malaysian novel. The story is set in the 1890s and follows a young woman who becomes a ghost bride to save her family from financial ruin.

With the increasing use of digital technology and social media, transmedia stories will likely continue to grow in popularity in Malaysia and around the world, thus taking reading to a different level altogether.

Acknowledgement

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