

# Perception of Sri Lankan Marketing Mangers regarding the Big Five Personality Traits: Generations Y and Z

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## Abstract

*Innovation and technology propel in an explosive rate and utilization of marketing strategies should be based on generational profiles. The aim of this study is to review the purported qualities of personality traits of Generation Y and Generation Z, recommending mangers in utilization of profile responsive strategies of marketing using Big Five Personality traits. The study relies on qualitative approach, where emergent themes were revealed from secondary resource reviews, articles, journals and identifying the manager's perspective towards generational profiles by conducting a series of interviews on semi-structured question setting with marketing managers. Results revealed that the value for technology, innovation, freedom, and diversity varied across the generational profiles and managers across vivid industries comprehended the significance of applying divergent marketing techniques to Generation Y and Generation Z independently. Edutainment, tech savvy, honest and transparency were emerging personality traits explored through the study regarding the two cohorts which was a significant finding. Impeccable knowledge gained from the study can be utilized by managers to develop compelling strategies considering Generation Y and Generation Z cohorts bridging the knowledge gap existed in the context facilitating managers to effectively communicate. Edutainment and maintaining corporate responsibility through marketing communications is an eyeopener to the marketers to reach the consumers effectively by minimising the cost to reach. A novel study in the Sri Lankan context exploring big five personality traits of Generation Y and Generation Z that can have a sequel of social media approach and marketing by managers addressing generational profiles. The study widened the knowledge that can be recommended to managers to enrich their marketing strategies to be meaningful for customers.*

**Keywords:** Generation Y, Generation Z, Social Media Marketing, Big Five Personality Trait

## Introduction

With technological advancements different generations accustoms and adopt to technology in different ways which changes the buying behaviours of the consumers which marketers need to thoroughly study to customise its approach to market products more effectively. In 2020, the latest two generations are Generation Y and Generation Z. Vast technological developments has led social media to be one of the prioritized mode of media for digital communication in every aspect of business operation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Generation Y is the cohort which was exposed to social/digital media during their youth, but Generation Z had the benefit of using social/digital media from the day they were born. Based on the study conducted by Berkup in 2014 classified Generation Y as the cohort born between the years of 1980 to 1994 which is termed as 'millennials' (children of globalization) while Generation Z was born after 1995 which is considered as the 'technology generation'. The usage and purpose of using goods & service across the two cohorts varies drastically therefore the marketers cannot uniformly strategized pitching their messages to the two vivid generations which are completely diverse with personality traits. Therefore, when pitching a message to build a strong brand perception

marketers need to pay attention to important factors such as medium of delivery, time frame, perceptions and personalities of brand ambassadors attracted by individuals in different cohorts, the mentality of receivers of the message along with other significant internal and external factors should be taken into consideration. Therefore, the role of the marketers has become more challenging to build marketing strategies which will attract different cohorts cost efficiently and this study is conducted to identify the perception of the marketers towards the personality traits of the two cohorts in consideration within the context of Sri Lanka.

What happens in one geographic market is transmitted swiftly via global media to receptive consumers via computer, television, and cell phone screens and is almost immediately accessible. The world of such information accessibility and the demise of corporate invisibility is a communications reality for businesses and consumers today (Kitchen & Protocol, 2015). Hence, Digital Media plays a crucial role as a connection stream among consumers and marketers which has created a platform through instant feedbacks an organization's corporate reputation can be appreciated or depreciated within a single click therefore modern marketers needs to minimise

vulnerabilities and deliver strong messages to the society which is been supported by all generations without any backlashes

Prior, research have been conducted in illustrating identification on social media influences on young consumer behaviours (Duffett, 2017) and identification on marketing communication in the post-world (Kitchen and Protocol, 2015). However, the real question is whether it is effective to practice the same marketing communication techniques using the same tools to deliver messages for the mere reason that the two generations use digital media. The marketers must understand that one generation is tech savvy while the other is using technology for survival in day-to-day routine activities, therefore different personality traits should lead to different approaches of reaching. It was observed in the context that there was a lack of research study on providing recommendations to marketers on effective marketing strategies, considering the traits of Generation Y and Generation Z.

The purpose of the study was to identify the perspective of marketing manager in regards to the big five personality traits of two cohorts of Generation Y and Generation Z while exploring further personality traits where the knowledge can enrich marketers approach in social/digital media communication strategies

based on the results of the study. This study aims to deliver more contented, engaging, and well responsive marketing strategies up to date. The specific objective of the study is to obtain a detailed understanding of the traits, features and trends of both cohorts from the perspective of the marketing managers and to identify digital marketing strategies that marketers should follow or aim to successfully pitch goods and services to the two cohorts in consideration.

Mostly, research have been performed by considering Growth in smartphones, Log on Frequency, Gender, age, and population group as independent variables in influencing digital media marketing (Duffett, 2017) and Family life cycle, Occupation, Behavioural lifestyle in building marketing communication in post-world (Kitchen and Protocol, 2015). Even though usage and frequency has been evidently tested very rarely consumer's traits related to innovation, trend, technology, socially responsibility, wholistic view were examine in the context. This study provides more opportunities to explore the big five personality traits of generation Y & generation Z and other factors to examine. The results of the study will lead marketers to formulate quality and effective marketing strategies while using the communication tools cost effectively.

## Literature Review

### Big Five personality traits

According to the study conducted by Costa and McCrae (2008) found that individual personality is a strong mental well-being which doesn't vary over situations and stabilises overtime. Namely the five factors are openness, Conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. The big five personality trait framework has been able to explain many different relationships between personality and behaviour of individuals. With the latest advancements of technology could change individual personalities where traits of a consumer personality are hard to be universal. The attempt of the study to understand the managers perception regarding the theory been applied in the Sri Lankan context and are there any other personality traits the marketers do capitalise to market goods and services to the two different cohorts in consideration. The five traits are further described with comparison to previous literature in relation to the two cohort's generation Y and generation Z.

### Openness

Openness is seen as the extent of one exposed to new knowledge, out of box thinking, new ideas and adventurous spirits; often being spontaneous; flexible; and creative is openness. According to the research

carried out by Deloitte (2019), it was identified Generation Z as first digital native generation whose attention span is only eight seconds compared to Generation Y where their attention span lied at 12 seconds. According to Business Insider Intelligence (2019), before the 12<sup>th</sup> birthday of a member from Generation Z, he/she starts to use a smartphone first time and is exposed to at least five digital monitors - television, phone, tab, desktop and laptop that is available in a household of Generation Z (Artemova, 2018).

Generation Z is exposed to vulnerability which impacts the decision-making process regarding career or educational path which add pressure on the generation in substituting creative technological approaches (Sparks and Honey, 2015). Generation Z is quite comfortable with the procedures of AI technology and automation where the member of this cohort is willing to explore the unfamiliar while Generation Y is accustomed to technology which is already evolved and is not risking for a novel experience (Vision Critical Report, 2016).

Generation Y experienced economic prosperity and that influenced the generation to be idealistic, backward to accept differences between individuals along with diverse perceptions. But Generation Z was heavily exposed to economic

recessions globally which made the generation rely on more analytic and pragmatic approaches in decision making forcing the generation to explore uncertainty (McKinsey and Company, 2018). Based on the studies conducted by Lan (2019) it was observed from the literature survey that Generation Z are open minded towards breaking gender boundaries which has led to accept same sex marriages. These perceptions lead marketers to develop gender – neutral marketing policies. This type of openness is not observed within Generation Y members. Besides, Generation Z looks for diversity in consumption; ranges of products and services within shorter period time whereas Generation Y is consistent with consumption for a significant period.

### **Conscientiousness**

Conscientiousness means the extent of one exposed to be efficient, organized, strong-willed and determined. Generation Z prefers entrepreneurial opportunities with a stable employment which is valued immensely due to the exposure of the generation to economic recessions with a strong goal attainment while Generation Y prefers team-based tasks for the survival. This indicates Generation Z is stronger willed to be individualistic while half of Generation Z accepts interesting jobs with lower pay than a boring job opportunity with higher pay whereas

most of Generation Y consider the salary and allowances received when seeking job opportunities (Deloitte,2019). Generation Z believes in being independent. They are strong willed and determined to explore things at own, rather than seeking for a help whereas Generation Y seeks for the support and guidance from others.

### **Extraversion**

Extraversion means the extent of one exposed to focus on sociability, talkativeness; optimistic; interpersonal involvement. Generation Z prefers to spend time at home though they are more social with others. They prefer unique products which delivers personalized experiences. Generation Z likes to involve in different tasks using AI technology controlling household settings (Lan, 2019).

Forbes (2017) opined that Generation Y are hardworking and ambiverts whereas Generation Z is so extroverted, and passionate while Sulainman and Mahbob (2017) stressed that generation Z tends to form communities with those who never met each other from different geographical locations which makes them virtually sociable, chatty and collaborative but less when compared in the real world.

### **Agreeableness**

Agreeableness means the extent of one exposed to be sympathetic and

possesses willingness to help others; being approachable and friendly; being themselves. According to Hughes (2017), Generation Z values to be independent and they aspire to care the world they like to live. Deloitte (2019) stressed that Generation Z understand everyone and believe that everyone needs to live in the world, and they accept norms of diverse communities. While Generation Y subject others into judgements and reluctant to accept if someone or something rise out of the society's values they brought up to (Artemova, 2018).

### **Neuroticism**

Neuroticism means the extent of an individual been exposed to the feelings of fear, sadness, anger, and nervous; ability to handle stress; emotional stability. Generation Z are not psychologically impacted by celebrities and influencers like Generation Y and Generation Z prefers real opinion from known people around them (Lan, 2019).

Lenhart and Madden (2007) highlights the adverse side of media saturation is that attention span is shorter, self-esteem is lower, higher bullying and peer pressure. Nevertheless, Generation Z are creative, adaptive and include a highly marketable mindset. Since Generation Y uses social media lesser than Generation Z, their attention span is greater relatively.

Based on the previous literature Generation Z is considered to be higher on openness, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness and neuroticism compared to Generation Y. Generation Z is more open, independent, and exposed to new ideas than Generation Y. Generation Z is highly extrovert on digital platform while Generation Y value live interaction in their routine activities. Generation Z is strong willed and determined on individual tasks; has high conscientiousness whereas Generation Y seeks for team-based activities focusing towards achieving common goals. Generation Z expects others to be respected equally and raise voices against social concerns such as Gender equality, pets, spirituals, and feminism; able to form communities. Generation Z scores high on impatience, irritable, and restless than whereas Generation Y is calmer, controlling action and reactions possessed through maturity. Generation Z's attention span is lower since attached to technology much whereas Generation Y has relatively longer attention span.

### **Marketing Strategies**

Core activities of marketing are developing effective marketing strategies in deciding what is the consumer category to target and build relationships. For the purpose of this, marketers should locate their Segmentation, Targeting and

Positioning (STP). Traditionally, this process was recognizing bracket of consumers who has similar or distinct behaviours offline. Segmentation means execute market research and analyse customer data online to penetrate customers' expectations on certain segment category (Viitanen, 2019). Today all prospective consumers are affected by inordinate marketing messages, and all messages are the homogenous, therefore, it's rigid to persuade prospective consumers (Alqvist, 2018). Hence there should be necessity of upgrading within marketing strategies. (McClellan, 2012). While getting to customers at right time and place, it is essential to get to know behaviours of consumers and factors determine their decision in reaching consumers in terms of most influence their decision (Viitanen, 2019).

### **Generational theories**

Commonly, it is idealized that birth year is the base to discuss about generational distinctions but in real, history, social factors and individual characteristic are also should be placed in mind regarding evaluation of generations' distinctions (Artemova, 2018). From one generation to another, the view of personality matters. According to Eysenck (1952), five core traits and interconnections have been identified in outlining one's personality. This is called Big Five personality theory as

per Eysenck, With the support of this theory, it is helpful to understand personalities of individual among both generations. The personality would be affected not only by internal factors, but also by external factors such as characteristic of peer group, culture, social status, technological, economical, education, and childhood memories because individual is linked with environment (Ryder, 2014). In evaluating how generations use social medias to make them engaged, environmental factors and individual level factors (stable and dynamic factors) would be considered. Environmental factors concern such as Economical, Technological, Cultural, and Legal factors and stable individual level factors such as socio- economic status, personal preferences, lifecycle stage and dynamic individual factors such as goals, emotions and norms (Bolton et al, 2013).

### **Generation Y**

According to Bloomberg analysis of United Nation data (2019), 31.5% of global population is from Generation Y. Member of the cohort has been dominant technology enthusiasts, while many members has created social networking profile and used cell phones to exchange text messages more likely to other previous generations (Ordun, 2015). Generation Y possess inflated purchasing power and eagerness to commit in online purchasing

comparing to all other prior generations (Ang, et al, 2009). The standout identity of this generation is social media usage and technological methods. While being appreciating market opportunities, this generation is hugely social influenced to familiar and influential brands or people (Ordun, 2015). This generation prefers products quick through online services with their digital behaviours on social medias and Internet (Valentine and Powers, 2013). Marketers has adjusted their marketing when the time was arrived to consider for Generation Y attributes with the equilibrium of word of mouth and digital medias.

Emotional based choices are usual in era of Generation Y which leads to less loyalty towards the brand. Hence, being innovative to get attracted is crucial in this era (Parment, 2008) As being the generation expecting fast and easy services, marketers started engaging in online shopping where advertisements and promotions are on social media and internet-based strategies (Valentine and Powers, 2013), and web-based marketing but not much exposure in marketing (Williams and Page, 2011).

### **Generation Z**

According to Bloomberg analysis of United Nation data (2019), 32% of global population is from Generation Z. Since Generation Z is emerging

consumer category with their dynamic behaviours, it is expecting that 40% of all consumers would be Generation Z by the year 2020 (Finch, 2015). The generations which concern about more protection than earlier generations and asking for trust and transparency in their performance on the Internet (Forbes 2017, PwC 2017). Consumers from Generation Z is highly connected via with technology, internet, smartphones, sending emails and SMS as their part of Daily lives (Viitanen, 2019).

Generation Z members are most universal and multicultural generation, which witnessed from day one of them in arena of internationalism, gender equality and climate change awareness. Therefore, a social responsibility, social advocacy, and their caring for greater are crucial in altruistic behaviour of Generation Z members, who are sensible of the universal affairs than prior generations and deceived to change the world for the better (Sparks and Honey, 2015).

Sense of intolerance for waiting is common among individuals from this generation. Internet privacy is one of the core concerns of the member of this cohort; hence they are conscious in sharing information online (Vision Critical Report, 2016). For instance, 14% of generation uses vlogs, 17% of generation uses social network page and 19% uses celebrity



endorsement in finding information (Young, 2017). The generation members seek new idea, “Virtual friends” and technology driven trends (Williams and Page, 2011). This cohort expects explicit content and customized experience to be offered by marketers (Grubor and Olja, 2018).

The review insists that there are varies personality traits across the two generations (Berkup, 2014). Thus, it is essential to understand how content of marketing strategies should be at equilibrium to balance the features of both cohorts. Literature has provided ample application of big five personality traits but is the perception of the Sri Lankan marketers the same or do they believe other traits and features that need to be considered in developing a strong marketing strategy in the business environment. With the significant growth of the technology especially digital advancements it is very important for the academics and managers behaviours of the two cohorts to improve the effectiveness of the marketing communication efforts.

### **Methodology**

The objective of the study is to understand the perception of the marketing managers towards the big five trait personality of Generation Y and Generation Z. The study explores

how those perceptions can effectively utilised to send strong marketing communications regard to product offerings of their respective organization. This study is based on qualitative approach attempting to examine Generation Y and Generation Z traits in the perceived mindset of marketing managers in Sri Lanka which assist them in the future to encounter the emerging consumer’s sophisticated needs and approach to market products.

The target population for the study is marketing managers in Sri Lanka and 10 companies from different industries were selected to interview the respective marketing managers who possess knowledge and experience on topic of interest. To understand the traits of the two cohorts which was primary explored through various sources such as articles, journals, reliable websites, reports. This understanding was a value addition to explore for more information and aspects with the interviews conducted with the managers which enriched the knowledge gathered.

In depth exploration of marketer’s points of view towards prevailing generations was carried out through an interview process. This approach aimed at exploring marketing managers experience towards individual traits of the Generation Y and Generation Z. Interviewing managers around the topic of interest

was based on non-probability sampling; with semi structured questions; from different industries, which facilitated to understand the marketer's perception in regard to scenario variations regarding to the personality traits similarities and dissimilarities among the two cohorts in consideration.

Initially the authors investigated the experience and knowledge of marketing managers before they were interviewed whether they fulfil the requirement of the study. Once it was clarified, the next step was to record interviews and summarizes the insights shared. Finally, key points were identified and clustered based on the summarised insights from the interview and was aligned with the purpose of the study.

### Findings: Interviews

The study paid attention on one-to-one interviews with semi structured question. 10 marketing managers from 8 different industries such as online store, beverage, textile and healthcare, insurance, supermarket, digital marketing agency and tech consultancy were participated. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the interviewers.

**Table 1: Demographical characteristics of the respondents**

Characteristic	Frequency	Response code
<b>Gender:</b>	<b>9</b>	MM2 – MM10
Male		
Female	<b>1</b>	MM1
<b>Industries:</b>		
Online store	1	MM1
Textile	2	MM2 & MM3
Beverage	1	MM4
Healthcare	1	MM5
Insurance	2	MM6 & MM9
Supermarket	1	MM7
Digital Marketing Agency	1	MM8
Tech Consultancy	1	MM10

### Social media from the perspective of marketers

All the interviewers indicated that social media is the key for communication operations in today's business world. Social media is considered as the source of engagement with the audience, medium to understand their customers, platform to inspire on CSR projects, platform facilitates to

target the right people at right time with right content compared to the conventional mechanisms which are practiced.

*“Me as CEO of a beverage company, I believed in occasional marketing. Social media connects our product with right audience according to different occasions and seasons we come across. So hence, making our product as their habit.”* (MM5)

Managers express the importance of time and cost-efficiency in delivering their respective messages to the customers as prime activities and switching to social media platforms has been beneficial for companies with the reduction of the conversion cost and marketing related cost.

*“It is the fast-growing channel in my eyes; indeed, very efficient and highly cost effective and very budget friendly channel”* (MM5)

*“It is the ideal and cost-effective platform to communicate and reach the target audience, irrespective of the industry one is in”* (MM9)

Also, the marketers did agree on the fact that the community is gradually witnessing the change of been addicted to social media platforms and spends most of the idle time on it and that it's the time for marketers to concentrate more on marketing strategies using social media platforms rather relying solely on print media and TV, radio marketing.

“Social media is a lifestyle platform, where everyone of us used to it as a habit” (MM10)

### **Adaption of The Big Five Personality traits to strategize marketing operations**

#### **Openness**

The behaviour pattern of Generation Z and Generation Y with regard to periodic trends are significantly impacting on business organizations; to be more competitive, productivity; to supply in line with demand flow and to gain first mover advantages were highlighted during the interview sessions. Researches identified that marketers are continuously learning and monitoring trends due to the high volatility in the market and Generation Z is highly vulnerable as per the views of the respondents. Therefore, marketers stressed the importance of continuous learning of trends and generational behaviours to effectively communicate through digital marketing mechanisms.

*“Generation Y is a stable consumer group that their trend is constant at least for a minimum of one year but surprisingly Generation Z is in one trend for a maximum of 2 months. We consider this as a challenge in our target market because it makes us to be quick and instant on producing, marketing and selling the product. We need to be quick and instant on producing, marketing and selling the product as emerging consumer*

*category expects new things every time. Otherwise, our product will be outdated soon” (MM2)*

As identified in literature Generation Z is open for innovation and expect developments lead to improvement of productivity. Generation Z with its multitasking behaviour expect everything to happen in split seconds and with the dynamic nature of the environment they expect the products to adapt that pace with reaching the consumers through product variations. Consumers are delighted to have a healthy new experience and through the generational trait observations has understood the readiness of Generation Z to experience something new irrespective of the end result compared to Generation Y who values the experience of the entire process. Marketers have understood that new product launch to the market is a new normal situation and is not an exclusive advantage over the other competitors.

*“Generation Z is an instant generation who clicks and gets products delivered to their doorstep. Generation Y loves the experience of visiting stores. I’ve seen the current generation is exposed to smart phones and control everything in life within their fingertips. One is digital banking. During our time, I used to go bank just to check my account balance. Just look at the services that each business tries to offer newly to*

*stand great. This is all because of the influence of Generation Z traits and business operations in a war to attract the members of the cohorts with something new before they get bored with what they have now”. (MM10)*

The term “Innovation” is almost embedded in the core values of all companies. The reason is that innovation is not anymore secondary in the trendy world. A few marketers the researchers interviewed explicitly mentioned the prime objective is not only to create a new experience, but also it is about offering innovative ideas which shapes the consumer experience.

*“When you look at the great companies such as Apple, you just can realize how innovative the company is. The company has well branded itself and whoever the user of Apple products knows that they will be surprised continuously with the innovation. That’s how iPhone, iPod, and podcast service are all in the list. Now you know why it is called as one of the great companies”. (MM3)*

### **Extraversion**

A few respondents stated an interesting insight that individualism among members of Generation Z has changed the content pattern of marketing. There could be many reasons why an older promotional content cannot be used as a digital

marketing strategy today. The marketers did believe the quality of individualism which is observed in Generation Z will change the marketing environment completely in Sri Lanka within the next two to three years.

*“Generation Z is busier group who values “Individualism” whereas Generation Y values “Togetherness”. As our product is beverage, the target group is aged between 18 to 35. Currently, our promotions are contented with small/mini a bottle which is enough for a person. To speak about the scenario 4 years ago, content was based on a mega bottle which is enough for a family”.* (MM4)

A few marketers addressed the social aspect of the consumers they deal with on a day-to-day basis. They stated that their marketing strategies have been flexed by viewing through a social eye of the consumers which assist the marketers to reach the cohorts more effectively by speaking to their heart directly. Topics such as homosexual relationships or sex or certain aspects of religious views which were intact couple of decades ago has taken a different stance in today’s world moulding social standards which the markers should observe thoroughly in order to communicate to the cohorts effectively.

*“As I deal with many products such as Durex, I’ve seen the turn round of advertising. Talking about the sensational headline like sex education becomes easy. How many of us have watched advertisements related to lingerie and undergarments? Have you watched “Close Up” advertisement where it encourages dating? These kind of open talks were not possible among Generation Y members since they were judgemental and hesitating to accept in the Public. Moreover, it is especially in Sri Lanka where values are highly appreciated”.* MM8)

The respondents common thought process was to identify how the two cohorts face challenges in routine activities. According to the views of respondents Generation Z members are very optimistic while Generation Y is pessimistic in viewing life.

*“I’ve seen Generation Z members are very positive and interested in spreading positivity. They are not kind of people who sit and worry, instead they fight until they reach their objectives. It’s great to see that Generation Z members are very talkative, enjoyable character as a multitasker, and spreading positivity which are lacking at Generational Y members’.* (MM2)

### **Conscientiousness**

A few respondents indicated that the money management behaviour is completely has a different viewpoint

among both considered generations. The reason is the user experience tricks Generation Z members whereas cost effectiveness tricks Generation Y members. Marketers have observed different traits related to monetary rewards where Generation Z members do not prefer to commit to something for the mere fact that they are paying for the product.

*“Generation Y would pay an upfront cost to acquire. Generation Z would prefer subscription basis for the user experience testing. So if satisfaction is not earned with usage, switching is easier. Though Subscription paid will eventually be higher than upfront cost. Generation Z has smartphone; hence needs everything in the tip of their fingers. (4P – Price)“.* (MM10)

A few marketers expressed their view on the entrepreneurial aspects of these two cohorts. They have identified that Generation Y members are more comfortable with team-based tasks. Strong determination and will power commonly exist within the generation Z members. The reason is they accept “Fail, Learn and Succeed” concept.

*“In workplace as well, I’ve experienced those employees below the age of 25 requests for more individual works and not afraid to fail. I’m impressed at their individual contribution to a project and eagerness to be the leader sooner.*

*Generation Z members embraces the entrepreneurship. That’s why we can see many online businesses are at their progress in the Instagram and Facebook. However, Generational Y members are likely to have participation in team-based tasks. They are even more afraid to lose the job in hand”.* (MM9)

A few respondents stated that age of smartphone and internet in use are likely same as the age of Generation Z users. The easy access to information, availability of tools at their fingertips and one click away have caused Generational Z members to be more efficient.

*“Generation Y are relatively considered less efficient. If they wanted to purchase a shoe, they merely had the means of knowing which was better. If they wanted to get a work done by an employee or was in need of communicating to a supplier, it took hours or even days. If they wanted to analyse a company, buying annual report had taken a long time. The scenario is changed now. Everything is a click away. It makes Generation Z members more efficient and allows them to spend time on what is adding value”.* (MM10)

One of the seldom findings of the study was during the interview; marketers expressed that

Generation Z are self-interested to do the things at own without seeking for

extensive support even from the organization they receive service. Generation Z signals that they are risk takers and the fact that they highly value autonomy in engagement with the service providers.

*“I personally feel that Generation Z members are not paying much attention to an assistant; indeed, wish to do things at own with pre-defined set of instruction. This leads to a particular business strategy for upcoming generation; that is to automate all the process without a need of contacting even customer service offline, perhaps through Chat blogs”* (MM1)

### **Neuroticism**

Marketers shared their experience during the interview highlighting that Generation Y is backward and less engaging in relation to technological upgrades and very reluctant to engage in viral campaigns in the beginning, but the marketers observed Generation Z is highly motivated and is willing to make an adventurous run irrespective of the end result.

*“Firstly, Generation Y was reluctant to leave a public review or comment, but later this became a group which is very active in the first level engagement; commenting. Generation Y are not brought up in the way to involve in second level engagement like sending video for a*

*promotional campaign. Generation Z feels motivated to take an effort and engage in second level of engagement. TikTok as a social media platform is a great example for this. The feel of fear of public notice is high among Generational Y members”* (MM5)

Marketers expressed their experience in the patience level of both cohorts. With technology improving efficiency Generation Z expects everything to happen quickly. Personally, the marketers have experienced that Generation Z members have shorter attention span compared to Generation Y members. One of reasons for this is lower patience level among generation Z members since they do have many tasks working in their mind while physically been committed to a specific task.

*“This is a personal experience of mine. I waited in the queue of ordering at a famous chicken franchise. It took some time to clear the queue. I did see some of young people were dissatisfied with the long queues and some started complaining the management about their dissatisfaction where I believe the workers were pretty efficient trying to cope up the long queue which isn't a new thing during peak hours. On another situation at my home, internet connection was too slow. I was trying to trouble shoot the problem. Meanwhile, my children*

*were shouting, and they could not wait until the connection return to normalcy. I personally believe it's a real challenge for the Generation Z to be patient when things aren't going their way". (MM5)*

Marketers have understood that attraction towards a product plays a major role in influencing a customer to make a purchase an interesting insight was extracted from the interviews; where marketers strongly believe visuals or colour attraction convince consumers' mind more than any other effort taken by marketers. The product with an incredible visual and aesthetic has commonly been the first choice of the consumers and nowadays corporate giants uses special blended colour coding mechanisms to arrange their products in shelves at outlets to attract customers.

*"Generation Y members had asked about the functionality of the product first to me. Generation Z members see for how it looks and whether it could be the trend setting consumption. Just search in the google for phone covers. It's not surprised to view classier covers with stones and cartoon characters. The consumers are even not sure whether it can protect if the phone falls". (MM1)*

Anger and aggressiveness are powerful trait that Generation Z member possesses according to the

marketer's researchers have interviewed. One unhealthy experience related to the product or service related to can go viral within seconds. Social media has become a platform that has given the opportunity to articulate anger of consumers into hate speech, movements, and propaganda.

*"An unhappy customer can wreak havoc on social media which will counter the campaigns. Generation Y is more reliant on peer feedback and experience which will also usually be affected by open reviews. Remember, there is intense rivalry in the marketplace as well". (MM9)*

*"Generation Z members unite and do even the protest when something bad happens. One's personal anger can become as the whole country's anger and can make the responsible authority to take decisions or destroy the brand name. The good example I can say is the milk powder that children consume" (MM4)*

The social awareness is something that a few marketers brought out an important point. It was mentioned that the fear of anxiety is higher among generation Z members whereas Generation Y members are not afraid to things that Generation Z members are scared of.

*"Though Generation Z members are strong willed and optimistic, it is must to say suicides rate also increases along with. The reason is*



*that more they are into screen; lesser they share with their families or friends. Besides, they are more open to bad experiences as well. More independent they are, lesser they have control over certain things. When something slightly bad happen even, they lose their mind and become scared of public reviews. Generation Y members are not to the extent as Generation Z members".* (MM3)

### **Agreeableness**

Marketers addressed their opinion that the attention to feminism, gender equalities, women rights, greener world, pet rights, hate speeches and other social sensational concerns is very well rooted in the generation Z cohorts. Organizations are also expected to respect and pay attention in all sort of activities it does to a stronger sustainability.

*"Generation Z pays attention on equality, pets right, feminism and social concerns. For an example, "StopHateSpeech" in which 500 companies are out of Social Media to prevent hate speech since Generation Z concerns more on it and I could not witness such mind set among Generation Y members".* (MM5)

*"Gen Z has easy access to information. Hence, they move things in the way of right, ethical, healthy and green ways whereas Gen Y had a limitation in accessing right*

*information at the right time".* (MM4)

Marketers believe that Generation Z members are more sympathetic and willing to help others. The number of voluntary services at difficult times are increasing and the engagement of generation Z members for worthy causes are increasing day by day. Social media has become a great platform shaping sympathetic traits Generation Z members compared to Generation Y viewing them as public stunts to get attention from the society.

*"Generation Z prefers a product or service not only offering for the benefit of the self, but also to the benefit of the whole community. Generation Z members buy a product if the product serves to the society in any means; may be taking care pets from the profit earns. Generation Y members don't focus on such things mostly".* (MM6)

### **Social media as a channel**

Marketers during the interview process expressed that several years back they neglected marketing campaigns been conducted via social media platforms because it wasn't a timely need, but few organizations understood the value of the platform and started investing on the technology. Based on their experience they mentioned there is a paradigm shift in media and communication in the country and

heavy reliance on print media and digital media is switching to social media platform which makes it an hourly need for companies to masterfully deliver its marketing practices across all channels. Even the reliability of information in social media has improved over the years building strong confidence among the users of social media.

*“Previously, stores are the channels to request the certain amount of stock of t-shirts and that would be the estimation for the company to sell. With evolution of Generation Z, it depends on numbers of views on social media. For example, if it has 10000 views, expecting 500 people to buy. Social media evolved as the demand forecasting channel”.* (MM3)

Some respondents highlighted their preference over multiple channels in the social media context and agreed on the fact that these latest developments showed the importance of Omni-channel mechanism to increase customer contact points which has helped many organizations to reach vast number of potential customers and improve their revenue. Though channels such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Tweeter, TikTok, YouTube or any other emerging channels seem competitive to each other's, there is a unique purpose and a market they communicate therefore the marketers express the importance of the

company to be present in the vivid range of platforms available.

*“Communication patterns is substantially get differed in the consideration of tech products under the content marketing context. There are no definite platforms to target for the market. There are timely platforms according to trend. For an example: The survey found that TikTok is the platform covering 99% of consumers for a product like “Dettol”. Instagram is considered as Lifestyle application whereas Facebook is informative application”.* (MM8)

Some respondents were worried in a way that social media is utilized. They viewed that social media is underestimated in Sri Lanka; it is only used for the purposes like scrolling, passing time, chats or online shopping. However, social media is open for much better things.

*“Facebook and LinkedIn are not utilized at its optimum. It could be more used in terms of knowledge gaining and networking”.* (MM6)

*“USA based generation Z members are using social media effectively. I feel that Sri Lankans should be understanding the optimum of social media; what a social media can do massively. Getting to know the meaningful use of social media as generation Z who are named for tech savvy is crucial. It is important for*

*the development of the country too”.* (MM2)

An impactful insight was addressed by a respondent. Behaviour of Generation Z members is yet under observation. The maximum age that Generation Z member could old be is 25. Hence most of Generation Z members are not yet grown and even the grown members will have to grow another 25-30 year, it is still an early conclusion on their behaviour.

*“We have limited information on behavioural impact on generation Z members. Max age is 25 a Generation Z member could be now. Hence from 25 to rest of his/ her life, it is clueless how he/she could behave”.* (MM10)

### **Specific Insights gathered**

Most of the respondents highlighted Generation Y seeks content and information on factual basis, simply the marketing strategies should cover all the scope justifying the reason to purchases the product which is comparatively different to the approach that should be practiced with Generation Z. Where generation Z values creativity along with the concept of edutainment which consist of the education and entertainment fused together as a marketing strategy which assist to effectively communicate the target audience of Generation Z. The sense of being cool and be informed can be categorized under extraversion and

openness respectively. However, the mix of personality traits are found within users on the same content/subject. This personality traits mix cannot be considered under only one personality trait of big five personality traits.

*“To whom we do talk to derives what kind of content you should go with”.* *Generation Y interests in factual information whereas Generation Z interests in educational content with more fun related. For an example: An advertisement for a milk powder, content should be including nutritional facts for the target group of generation Y members. The case is different for Generation Z. The content with a video on how a recipe could be made using the milk powder would be attractive for them’.* (MM8)

It was mentioned about the honesty and transparency expected by both cohorts. Most respondents stated explicitly that the usage of words, language, and promotional strategies with gifts are highly important in the content especially in digital marketing campaigns. Hence it is a sensational issue among Generation Z members if it goes wrong. It is identified that honest as a personality trait is underestimated. It can be categorized under agreeableness as it includes compliance or modesty. However, honesty is beyond being truthful; it’s about being consistent and genuine with others in all the situations in line with core values. As

marketers and consumers, it should be incorporated as a well-established separate personality trait.

*Generation Z is highly responsive, and we should be geared to deliver every promise made during Comments to ensure no backlash. Corporates will not be able to get away with. "Conditions apply" when dealing with Generation Z. Deliver as promised will be the expectation and should be the motto of each and every business".* (MM9)

A few respondents from textile and fashion industry highlighted that design of the product or packaging wins the audience differently. From generation to generation, the preference for design which is the content image/ video in marketing changes.

*"It could be subjective, but I see Generation Y as the generation expects simple graphics with simple word to be printed on a T-Shirt; that's what we consider when designing to Generation Y. Generation Z expects complex whole printed patterns. I do know ... know that Generation Z is very concern on what other's perspective if I wear this, but they do choose for complex graphics in design. That could be a reason for maximum 2 months of a trend"* (MM2)

Most of the marketers stated that a specific attention needs to be given within the tech world. The current

and potential consumers are tech-savvy. Their behavioural and thinking pattern will be differing from a typical traditional world. Though Generation Z is open for more new ideas, trends, and experience, it's more beyond being open. Considering the next generation (Generation Alpha), it is must to understand the tech savvy as a separate personality.

*"Tech world is different. It moulds the way we behave, consume, and expect. Understanding tech savvy personality within tech world is a must for future marketing".* (MM8)

The results highlighted big five personality trait and other insights in terms of social media marketing and consumer's behaviour. It indicated to whom to market, what to market, how to market, suggesting there are contradicting individual traits among both considered generation despite of their commonalities. Table 2 below summarizes key findings of the survey.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The study on individual traits of Generation Y and Generation Z subjects to subjectivity of experiences and observation and the findings was clustered under the main five traits based on the Big Five Namely Personality Traits: namely Openness, Agreeableness, Extraversion, Conscientiousness and

Neuroticism. Based on the range of literature survey, it was identified all the characteristics can be simplified under these five traits and understanding Generation Y and Generation Z under those traits will be effective to marketing managers in Sri Lanka to enhance market share through promotions and target marketing strategies more effectively with the insights of the potential customer base. The findings of the study do make a major contribution to the market with marketing managers understanding the timely need that generalised, standardised marketing campaigns aren't going to bear positive results in the future.

Based on the findings of the study, it is identified that there are major personality traits that need specific attention. Generation Z members seek for entertainment, and education whereas Generation Y members seek only for factual information. This illustrates that there is a mix of informative and fun seeking personality of members. Another personality that needs an attention is honesty and transparency.

With many options in the market and technological development leading to perfect information, consumers pay a special focus to the product or service truthfulness. More transparent the promotion is, more reach it has.

**Table 2: Summary of Key Findings**

<p><b>Where to market; social media</b></p> <p>The purpose of social media</p> <p>The extent of utilization of social media</p>
<p><b>Whom to market; The big five personality traits</b></p> <p>Openness (Continuous learning and monitoring trends, innovativeness, and experience)</p> <p>Extraversion (Optimism, Socialization)</p> <p>Conscientiousness (Entrepreneurial Behaviour, autonomy)</p> <p>Neuroticism (Patience, Anger, Aggressiveness)</p> <p>Agreeableness (Acceptance of status quo, sympathetic)</p>
<p><b>How to market; Channel</b></p> <p>Platforms mostly used</p> <p>The reason for the said use</p>
<p><b>Specific insight gathered</b></p> <p>Entertainment; Humour</p> <p>Honest and Transparency</p> <p>Fashion</p> <p>Tech Savvy world</p>

Organization must deliver what they have promised due to the heavy scrutiny which challenges the survival of the product or service. What matters is not the scale of operation even if a SME can assure standard on time delivery, promised quality, succeed objectives without compromising tomorrow's need is highly valued by the cohorts. Thirdly, it was identified tech savvy as the new personality trait. It can be included under the big five trait openness. However, the future world will be more advanced technologically and with sophisticated needs marketers must adapt advance process to give better solutions. As Generation Alpha era will come along with Generation Z, it is more sensible to understand about the tech savvy nature as a separate personality trait. The final personality that deserves a special attention is the fashionable personalities. More than it's about an industry or just another trend, it is a part of a human, and evolves as generations evolve. As the conclusion extracted from the interviews, it was noted that researches can be done on the personalities and behaviours in the utilization of the platforms and channels in the tech world. These mentioned personality traits open a room for future discussion as there are important personality traits that need additional attention in the world of marketing.

Based on the findings from interviews conducted for marketing managers in Sri Lanka, it is noted that respondents considered Generation Z customer insights are already in their customer analysis but there are considerable marketing managers in Sri Lanka accepting that lack of wide range statistical data in relation to the two cohorts available for general use limits the strengths of organizations to develop effective marketing strategies. Based on data collected, researchers identified that Government's Census and Statistics department too does not maintain statistics in relation to Generation Z and Generation Y separately, their purchasing power, the internet users, number of transactions taken place compared to many developed countries. According to interview results, it was identified efficiency in response rate and viewership is highly regarded by the generations and lack of information has led marketing managers targeting and segmenting in the marketing process ineffective.

The study attempted to explore the perspective of managers in regard to big five personality traits of Generation Y and Generation Z which could support the marketing managers to design marketing approaches effectively considering relevancy of the target market. From the interview conducted with marketing managers in Sri Lanka, it

is noted the perception of generational difference in customer insights to support the findings from literature survey were exposed to subjectivity, thoughts from literature reviews and interview outcomes were similar. Based on the findings some implications are suggested to improve better marketing practices in the corporate world; Advertisements should be with lower attention span to convey the right message to Generation Z members. According to Deloitte report, it is 8 seconds whereas it was 12 seconds to members of Generation Y.

Generation Z concerns on social issues such as gender equality, feminism, pollution, animals. Therefore, marketing approach goes beyond creating brand awareness and branding, but it's essential to address social issues in order to build a strong loyal customer base which would ensure repeat purchase. Generation Z is highly vulnerable and therefore marketing campaigns should adhere to strict ethical behaviour and transparent whereas Generation Y in the meantime will not heavily elaborate on social concerns explicitly. Sustainable marketing concepts are important for the growth and survival in the Sri Lankan context.

Words, languages, gestures and rewards needs to be decided with extreme care. Since Generation Y members are not reluctant to

comment, review and dislike publicly, even the negligence in promotion could cause the brand image to be destroyed in a second.

Generation Z members needs a product which goes beyond serving the core purpose of the good or of the service but expects holistic approach favouring the consumer, community, and environment in large.

Marketers in Sri Lanka had enough time to adapt and to adjust to the needs and wants of Generation Y expectations since Generation Y was new as the marketers to technology. Generation Y was not born with digital devices, but the situation is different for Generation Z who were born with technology, and they are digitally savvy. Kids or teenagers today are already well adapted with technology. Hence marketing managers has no time to design and pitch their strategies once Generation Z grows as powerful consumers, marketing managers in Sri Lanka should be well prepared.

This research is only based on selected marketing managers in Sri Lanka across few industries. The in-depth research based on single industry, individual traits of Generation Z and Generation Y and the impact on marketing approaches can be discussed and will further add value. In order to identify individual traits of Generation Z and Generation Y, literature survey was carried out.

To get insights of Sri Lankan consumers can conduct a survey through questionnaire basis and explore the market in local context more clearly. There is no systemic identification of generational cohorts in Sri Lanka.

Considering Sri Lankan market, it is noted that few marketing managers are aware about the importance approaching the two cohorts separately and in the meantime some marketers are reluctant to accept the reality. Many developed countries across the globe has already invested on data of Generation Y and Generation Z to get better consumer insights and to analyse the trends related to buying decisions and other marketing related activities and therefore it's a timely need for Sri Lankan managers to expand their knowledge in regards the two generations in order to sustainably grow their respective brands and corporate reputations.

As overall, it is evident that the big five personality traits understanding is essential to reach the consumers effectively through product offerings. Marketing managers participated for the study have expressed their experience on how Generation Y and Generation Z members behaves. It is noted that the perception of the respondents is in line with the five personalities that are addressed by the model "The Big Five Personality Traits". However, findings of the study paves for a discussion on the additional four personalities such as Entertainment (Humour), Honesty and Transparency, Tech savvy, and fashion. Besides, the study directs further researches toward the personalities or behaviours within emerging cohorts in the tech world exclusively.

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