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## Social Media in the Opinions of Polish Generation 'Z' in the Context of Gender

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**Abstract:**

**Purpose:** The aim of the article is to identify the relationships between generation Z's opinions on social media and their gender, and their self-assessed engagement with these media.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** A review of the literature indicates a cognitive and research gap in this area, which has not been studied in the manner proposed in this article. This study aligns with H2H Marketing Theory and Media Richness Theory. To address the identified gaps, empirical research was conducted using a survey method. The study involved 340 Polish adult representatives of generation 'Z'. The collected primary data were subjected to statistical analysis.

**Findings:** The results allowed for the testing research hypotheses formulated based on the literature review. It was discovered that among the twelve analysed opinions about social media, statistically significant relationships exist between only three opinions and the gender of respondents. No such relationships were found between self-assessed levels of activity in social media and gender. Another result showed statistically significant relationships between self-assessed activity levels in social media and four opinions about them.

**Practical implications:** The research results enabled the drawing of important conclusions that enrich theory and have practical application value.

**Originality/value:**

**Keywords:** Social media, gender, generation 'Z', Polish young users, level of activity in social media.

**JEL Codes:** D83, J16, J10, Z13, L82.

**Paper type:** Research article.

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## **1. Introduction**

Understanding and comprehending the perspectives of recipients is crucial for effective communication in the contemporary market. Communication is a fundamental process in human relationships, regardless of the generation, social status, or other characteristics, including gender and activity level of the individual.

However, it can be assumed that communication plays a particularly significant role for generation 'Z', defined as those born between 1995 and 2010 (according to Horovitz, 2012) or between 1997 and 2012 (as indicated by Dąbrowski and Środa-Murawska, 2022). Despite slight differences in the periods mentioned in the literature, it is undeniable that this generation comprises individuals who have grown up within a fully digitised society. Therefore, this is the first generation consisting exclusively of individuals who do not know any other civilizational context.

Given this circumstance, which clearly distinguishes generation 'Z' from previous generations, i.e. the 'Baby Boomers' ('BB'), 'X' and 'Y' generations, it is possible to speak of the key role of communication through social media, which have been known to these people since birth. Indeed, it is assumed that the first social media appeared in 1997, a Six Degrees platform that allowed people to create an account and meet other users (McIntyre, 2014).

According to the widely accepted definition, social media platforms meet three conditions simultaneously (Gaál, Szabó, Obermayer-Kovács, and Csepregi, 2015): 1) they allow users to create profiles; 2) they enable users to publish specific content without time constraints; 3) they facilitate users in discussing published content and connecting with other users.

The primary purpose of using social media is therefore to facilitate the establishment and strengthening of social interactions and to shape patterns of emotional expression (Lüders, Dinkelberg, and Quayle, 2022). The widespread use of social media is another significant aspect, leading some researchers to consider 2004 as the true beginning of social media. This is because in this year MySpace as the first social media platform reached 1 million active users within a month (Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson, and Seymour, 2011).

Research results indicate that, regardless of a country, individuals under the age of 30, and therefore also representatives of generation 'Z', are the most active users of social media. In this age group, the percentage of social media users exceeds 90% in many countries (OECD Society at a Glance, 2024). Representatives of previous generations did not have such opportunities throughout their lives, as they were born before the advent of social media.

Indeed, the 'Baby Boomers' generation includes those born between 1946 and 1964, generation 'X' consists of individuals born between 1965 and 1980, and generation

‘Y’ includes those born between 1981 and 1994 (McKercher, 2023). It is therefore all the more important to conduct research on the opinions of generation ‘Z’ representatives regarding the significance of social media in their lives. As revealed by the literature review presented later in this article, these issues have not been previously analysed in the manner proposed in this study.

The research approach adopted in the article aligns with the Human-2-Human (H2H) Marketing Theory and the Media Richness Theory. The primary assumption of the former is to focus on the human being as the central subject of interaction (Kotler, Pfoertsch, and Sponholz, 2021). The latter theory is based on the premise that the effectiveness of communication can be enhanced by tailoring media, including social media, to the informational needs of users (Shahbaznezhad, Dolan, and Rashidirad, 2021).

Such tailoring is not possible without identifying these needs. They are reflected in users’ opinions on the significance of social media in various aspects of contemporary communication. As highlighted in the literature, due to these assumptions, Media Richness Theory is applicable in numerous areas (Tseng, Cheng, Li, and Teng, 2017; Shahbaznezhad, Dolan, and Rashidirad, 2021), underscoring its universality.

Justifying the choice of research field, it is also important to note that the literature highlights clear research gaps that should be filled in the area of social media studies (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2021). There is a discussion about the current focus on studies of a specific platform (e.g., Facebook) and the need to conduct research on various platforms (Gaber, Wright, and Kooli, 2019).

Additionally, there is a call for more research on the impact of age and gender on users (Kim and Jang, 2019). This article presents research that addresses social media as a whole group of virtual platforms, while also examining the role of gender in the perception of these media. This research thus aligns with the directions proposed in the literature.

It should be emphasized that, to the best knowledge of the author of this article, the opinions of generation ‘Z’ individuals regarding the significance of social media in their lives have not been studied so far in the context of variables such as the gender of social media users and their self-assessed level of activity on these platforms.

Thus, there is a cognitive and research gap in this area. The pursuit of filling this gap was the basis for formulating the research problem as follows: what opinions do male and female representatives of generation ‘Z’ express about social media, considering their self-assessed engagement with these media? In addressing this problem, an attempt was made to achieve the goal of identifying the relationships between generation Z’s opinions on social media and their gender and self-assessed

level of activity on these platforms. This goal was accomplished by verifying research hypotheses formulated based on the results of a literature review.

The structure of the article is designed to address the research problem, achieve the article's objective, and test the research hypotheses. The introduction serves as a starting point for presenting the theoretical foundations related to social media and their significance in the communication of generation 'Z' individuals.

This foundation allowed for the formulation of research hypotheses, which were tested through primary research. The methodology and results of these studies are presented in subsequent sections of the article. These results are then subjected to academic discussion, and the final section of the article highlights the main conclusions, limitations of the conducted research, and directions for future studies.

## **2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses Development**

### **2.1 The Use of Social Media versus Gender**

One of the key demographic characteristics shaping contemporary human attitudes and behaviours is gender. In this article, gender is considered a social structure and group identity that determines social relationships and behaviours at various levels of the social world (Armentor-Cota, 2011). Gender plays a significant role in both the real-world and the virtual realm (Krasnova, Veltri, Eling, and Buxmann, 2017).

Given the clearly visible dynamism towards the virtualisation of many spheres of life, it can be assumed that this characteristic plays a particularly significant role in internet activity, and in the opinions around it. Previous research confirms the significant differences between the online activities of representatives of different genders (Song, Oh, Kim, Na, Jung, and Park, 2009; Idemudia, Raisinghani, Adeola, and Achebo, 2017).

One of the main areas of the Internet is social media, which is used for professional and non-professional purposes by most members of contemporary society, especially in highly developed countries, regardless of gender. According to the literature, gender significantly determines the purposes for using Facebook (Mazman and Usluel, 2011). Among young users, aged 18 to 25, gender influenced each of the analysed purposes for using this social medium, which included strengthening existing relationships, establishing new relationships, as well as academic (and other professional) purposes.

The strongest correlation was found in the context of establishing new relationships. Women tended to use social media to maintain already established relationships, while men were more likely to use social media to make new acquaintances (Muscanell and Guadagno, 2012).

This phenomenon might be the result of findings identified by Guadagno, Muscanell, Okdie, Burke, and Ward (2011). Their research confirms that despite social and mental changes, including those related to the virtualisation of life, people continue to behave in social media according to traditional behavioural patterns associated with their socially defined roles based on a polarised understanding of gender, even though they have significant freedom to choose different patterns.

This is also reflected in the scope of existing research, which still predominantly focuses on the traditional binary division of people by gender, analysing the attitudes, behaviours, and opinions of both women and men. There are only a few attempts to conduct research outside this framework.

These studies then typically involve only non-binary individuals, without simultaneously analysing women and men, and mainly relate to the motives for these users' social media usage (such studies are presented by, inter alia, Colosi, Cowen, and Todd, 2023; McNroy, McCloskey, Craig, and Eaton, 2019; Craig, Eaton, McNroy, Leung, and Krishnan, 2021; Buss, Le, and Haimson, 2021), without attempting to discover potential correlations between gender group membership and specific attitudes or behaviours in the virtual world as compared to those of binary users.

Based on research conducted among American students, Lin and Wang (2020) demonstrated that gender strongly determines the engagement in shaping user attitudes towards information sharing via social media, as well as influences the intentions to share information with other users. Similarly, studies conducted among young Filipinos from generation 'Z' revealed a correlation between users' gender and their use of social media (Reyes, 2022). Female representatives of this generation used social media primarily for relational purposes, whereas their male counterparts were mainly driven by competitive motives.

Among the studies conducted so far regarding the influence of gender on social media usage, some have focused on very narrow areas of online activity. For instance, Karatsoli, and Nathanail (2020) discovered that for all social media users regardless of age, there is a correlation between gender and social media activity related to travel planning. As seen, previous studies have addressed different aspects than opinions about social media and self-assessment of activity within them. However, they all share the fact that gender is a determining factor in the dependent variables analysed in these studies.

Therefore, this article attempts to verify the following hypotheses:

**H1:** *There is a statistically significant relationship between generation 'Z' users' opinions about social media and their gender.*

**H2:** *There is a statistically significant relationship between generation 'Z' users' self-assessed level of activity in social media and their gender.*

## **2.2 Social Media and their Importance for Generation 'Z'**

Social media can be described as an environment of everyday activity for contemporary individuals (Bengtsson and Johansson, 2022). This is particularly evident among the younger generations. The percentage of social media users is especially high among representatives of generation 'Z' and generation 'Alpha', i.e., those born after 2010 (Carter, 2016).

Generation 'Z' is even referred to as the digital generation, acquiring most of their information and knowledge from social media, which influences their decisions (Djafarova and Bowes, 2021) by stimulating their psychological well-being (Sharma, Kaushal, and Joshi, 2023). Compared to representatives of generation 'Y', they use social media much more intensively and frequently for educational, entertainment, shopping, and socialising purposes (Mude and Undale, 2023).

Only in the area of information seeking can one speak of a similar intensity of social media use between generation 'Y' and generation 'Z'. Young adults communicate more frequently through social media than through face-to-face interactions (Velten, Arif, 2016), transferring a significant portion of their activities to the virtual world.

The areas of activity for young adults in social media mentioned in the literature include (Levenson, Shensa, Sidani, Colditz, and Primack, 2016): communication and connectivity, self-expression and creativity, entertainment and content consumption, information and news, social networking, learning and education, cultural exchange and global interaction, social activism and awareness, shopping and e-commerce, and health and wellness. This list is truly multidimensional and multifaceted.

Replacing interpersonal contacts with virtual interactions is one of the primary negative aspects of social media use, which is particularly evident in generation 'Z' and 'Alpha'. Besides socialising threats, social media also poses dangers to mental and physical health, including sleep disorders and reduced immune system resistance (Levenson, Shensa, Sidani, Colditz, and Primack, 2016).

Awareness of these risks does not undermine the undeniable benefits of using social media. However, it is crucial to use social media wisely, especially since there are many other associated threats, as discussed by McCarthy, Rowan, Mahony, and Vergne (2023); Boroon, Abedin, and Erfani (2021); Baccarella, Wagner, Kietzmann, and McCarthy (2018).

Considering the results of previous research, this article posits that:

**H3:** *There is a statistically significant relationship between generation 'Z' users' opinions about social media and their self-assessed level of activity on these platforms.*

Verifying all the formulated hypotheses will contribute significantly to theory, especially the H2H Marketing Theory and Media Richness Theory. Understanding the relationships between opinions about social media, gender, and the self-assessed activity level of young adult users can better tailor social media to the needs of this critical user group. The results of the literature review indicate that studies have not previously been conducted in the manner proposed in this article.

Despite the identified diversity of research approaches and the broad range of subjects covered in previous studies, the opinions of generation Z users about social media have not been analysed concerning gender or the self-assessed level of their activity online. To fill this identified cognitive and research gap, this article aims to identify the relationships between generation 'Z' representatives' opinions on social media and their gender as well as their self-assessed level of activity in these media. Achieving this goal was possible by verifying the research hypotheses formulated based on the literature review findings.

### 3. Research Methods

To achieve the objective of this article and to verify the formulated research hypotheses, empirical studies were prepared and conducted. The primary data was collected using a survey method. Respondents were contacted remotely. An email was sent with a link to an online questionnaire specifically prepared for this research process. The research was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2023 among 340 adult individuals representing Polish social media users from generation 'Z', i.e., individuals aged 18 to 29 years (the approach of Horovitz (2012) was adopted, according to which generation 'Z' comprises individuals born between 1995 and 2010).

The representatives of this age group were included in the study due to 1) their relatively high activity in social media and 2) their significant importance for economic and social development (as highlighted in many demographic studies (*Sytuacja społeczno - zawodowa osób w wieku 18-24 lata w ostatnim 30-leciu*). The geographic scope of the study was nationwide (across Poland). A quota sampling method was used. Its demographic structure was proportional to the structure of the general population provided by the Central Statistical Office (GUS) (*Struktura ludności*) and the Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS) (*Sytuacja społeczno - zawodowa osób w wieku 18-24 lata w ostatnim 30-leciu*).

In 2023, among people in Poland aged 18-29, the percentage of women was 49.01%. There were no available statistics specifying the percentage of people who do not identify as either female or male. Despite this, the respondents, when answering the gender question, had the option to choose from three options: female, male, or a person not identifying with either of these genders. However, no one selected the third option. Among the respondents, 49% were women and 51% were men.

The research was fully anonymous, objective, and confidential, in accordance with the recommendations for conducting quantitative research (Podsakoff, Podsakoff, Williams, Huang, and Yang, 2024). The research process analysed the following variables reflecting the subject scope of the study: gender, opinions on social media, and self-assessed activity level in social media.

The respondents were asked to determine the degree of their agreement with each of the presented opinions about social media on a Likert scale, which is the most commonly used psychometric tool in social sciences (Joshi, Kale, Chandel, and Pal, 2015). A five-point variant was used in this study (strongly disagree, disagree, hard to say, agree, strongly agree). Also, the respondents assessed their level of activity in social media using a three-point scale (low, medium, high).

The respondents were also presented with twelve opinions on social media to which they were asked to respond. These opinions were selected based on the results of the literature analysis (Sumadevi, 2023; Qudah, Al-Shboul, Al-Zoubi, Al-Sayyed, and Cristea, 2020) and the results of unstructured interviews. These were conducted prior to the survey research among 20 representatives of generation 'Z' in order to refine the survey questionnaire.

The primary data collected were subjected to quantitative analysis. The comparative analysis method, Pearson's chi-square test of independence, and V-Cramer contingency coefficient analysis method were used.

The chi-square test was applied to check whether there were statistically significant relationships between the analysed variables, while V-Cramer coefficient analysis method was used to check the strength of relationships between the analysed variables.

This coefficient is used when at least one variable takes more than two values (King, Rosopa, Minium, 2018), i.e. if the contingency table dimensions are at least 2×3. The statistical analysis of the primary data collected was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics Ver. 25.

#### **4. Results of Empirical Studies**

As shown in Table 1, at least one in four respondents strongly agreed with four specific statements. Notably, the highest percentage of all respondents highlighted that using social media involves many risks. It is worth noting that a significantly larger proportion of female respondents than male respondents expressed this opinion (a difference of almost 10%).

Additionally, it was consistently emphasised that the use of social media promotes the dynamic development of businesses and allows for the building of good relationships between businesses and their clients and partners. Among the four

statements that garnered the highest share of strongly positive responses, there was also the opinion that marketing activities of companies should be conducted simultaneously in traditional media and social media. Therefore, respondents did not exhibit uncritical enthusiasm for social media and its use. The percentage of such opinions was similar among both women and men.

The cross-tabulation, showing opinions on social media considering the gender of respondents, indicates differences only in the case of some opinions analysed. Besides the opinion concerning the dangers associated with social media, differences can also be observed regarding the opinion that "marketing activities of companies should be conducted simultaneously in traditional media and social media".

However, this pertains to negative responses. More than three times as many men as women categorically disagree with this opinion. This raises the question of whether gender is a statistically significant variable determining opinions on social media.

**Table 1.** Cross-tabulation of opinions on social media in the context of respondents' gender (%).

Opinions on social media		Gender		Total
		Women	Men	
I cannot imagine life without social media	Strongly disagree	6.8	14.4	10.3
	Disagree	14.3	23.2	18.4
	Hard to say	14.3	22.4	18.0
	Agree	47.6	24.0	36.8
	Strongly agree	17.0	16.0	16.5
Using social media entails many risks	Strongly disagree	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Disagree	8.8	8.0	8.5
	Hard to say	8.8	16.8	12.5
	Agree	38.1	40.8	39.3
	Strongly agree	44.2	34.4	39.7
Social media are the future and cannot be replaced	Strongly disagree	2.0	5.6	3.7
	Disagree	8.2	16.0	11.8
	Hard to say	25.2	25.6	25.4
	Agree	46.9	36.0	41.9
	Strongly agree	17.7	16.8	17.3
The world would be better without social media	Strongly disagree	2.7	8.0	5.1
	Disagree	21.8	24.0	22.8
	Hard to say	40.8	36.0	38.6
	Agree	23.1	21.6	22.4
	Strongly agree	11.6	10.4	11.0
Using social media promotes the dynamic development of businesses	Strongly disagree	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Disagree	3.4	1.6	2.6
	Hard to say	12.9	13.6	13.2
	Agree	47.6	44.0	46.0
	Strongly agree	36.1	40.8	38.2
Using social media is a barrier	Strongly disagree	33.3	35.2	34.2

hindering business development	Disagree	40.8	32.0	36.8
	Hard to say	19.0	23.2	21.0
	Agree	4.8	4.8	4.8
	Strongly agree	2.0	4.8	3.3
Using social media allows building good relationships between businesses and the recipients	Strongly disagree	1.4	3.2	2.2
	Disagree	4.1	4.0	4.0
	Hard to say	17.0	17.6	17.3
	Agree	52.4	45.6	49.3
Using social media does not allow building good relationships between businesses and the recipients	Strongly disagree	30.6	25.6	28.3
	Disagree	36.1	36.0	36.0
	Hard to say	21.1	21.6	21.3
	Agree	8.8	10.4	9.6
Social media are more important in the lives of individual users than in businesses	Strongly disagree	3.4	6.4	4.8
	Disagree	2.7	1.6	2.2
	Hard to say	15.0	16.8	15.8
	Agree	41.5	24.8	33.8
Social media are more important for businesses than for individual users	Strongly disagree	25.2	36.0	30.1
	Disagree	15.6	20.8	18.0
	Hard to say	7.5	13.6	10.3
	Agree	29.3	30.4	29.8
Marketing activities of companies should be conducted only in social media	Strongly disagree	42.9	26.4	35.3
	Disagree	14.3	20.0	16.9
	Hard to say	6.1	9.6	7.7
	Agree	24.5	31.2	27.6
Marketing activities of companies should be conducted simultaneously in traditional media and social media	Strongly disagree	36.7	37.6	37.1
	Disagree	20.4	12.8	16.9
	Hard to say	14.3	10.4	12.5
	Agree	4.1	8.0	5.9
	Strongly disagree	2.7	9.6	5.9
	Disagree	4.1	4.0	4.0
	Hard to say	12.2	12.8	12.5
	Agree	42.9	40.8	41.9
	Strongly agree	38.1	32.8	35.7

**Source:** Own study based on the results of the research.

The application of the chi-squared test makes it possible to conclude that statistically significant relationships exist for three opinions analysed, for which the significance level 'p' is less than the accepted threshold value of 0.05 (Table 2). These have been highlighted in bold. The relatively strongest relationship was discovered for the opinion that one cannot imagine life without social media.

The statement in hypothesis H1 for respondents is valid for these three opinions about social media. However, none of the relationships discovered are strong. This is evidenced by the values of the V-Cramer coefficient, which in no case exceed the threshold of 0.3.

**Table 2.** Respondents' opinions on social media by gender criterion

Opinions on social media	Respondents' gender		
	chi2 test	V-Cramer coefficient	Level of significance 'p'
I cannot imagine life without social media	19.469	.268	<b>.001</b>
Using social media entails many risks	5.244	.139	.155
Social media are the future and cannot be replaced	7.819	.170	.098
The world would be better without social media	4.365	.127	.359
Using social media promotes the dynamic development of businesses	1.465	.073	.690
Using social media is a barrier hindering business development	3.607	.115	.462
Using social media allows building good relationships between businesses and the recipients	2.169	.089	.705
Using social media does not allow building good relationships between businesses and the recipients	2.050	.087	.727
Social media are more important in the lives of individual users than in businesses	9.721	.189	<b>.045</b>
Social media are more important for businesses than for individual users	10.032	.192	<b>.040</b>
Marketing activities of companies should be conducted only in social media	6.008	.149	.199
Marketing activities of companies should be conducted simultaneously in traditional media and social media	6.051	.149	.195

*Source:* Own study based on the results of the research.

It may come as a surprise that both among all respondents, as well as among the female respondents and among the male respondents, the smallest percentage of individuals rated their level of activity in social media as high (Table 3). Furthermore, among the male respondents, as many as 36.0% rated this level as low.

The application of the  $\chi^2$  indicates that gender is not significant when it comes to respondents' self-assessed of activity level in social media. No statistically significant relationship was found between these variables ( $\chi^2$  test = 3.797; V-Cramer coefficient value = .118; level of significance 'p' = .150). The statement in hypothesis H2 for respondents was therefore found to be invalid.

**Table 3.** Cross-tabulation showing self-assessed level of social media activity in the context of respondents' gender (%).

Self-assessed level of social media activity	Gender		Total
	Women	Men	
Low	27.9	36.0	31.6
Medium	51.7	40.0	46.3
High	20.4	24.0	22.1

*Source:* Own study based on the results of the research.

In the next stage of the analysis an attempt was made to check whether respondents' self-assessed level of activity in social media is significant regarding their opinions about these platforms. The data in Table 4 may indicate that the way respondents assess their level of activity in social media determines their opinions about them.

However, the application of the chi2 test shows that statistically significant relationships can be observed in only four opinions, which are marked in bold (Table 5). The statement in hypothesis H3 for respondents is valid for these four opinions. It is worth mentioning that these opinions included all three opinions for which relationships were identified in relation to the gender of respondents. Here, too, the relatively strongest relationship was discovered for the opinion that one cannot imagine life without social media.

However, none of the four relationships discovered is strong. This is confirmed by the values of the V-Cramer coefficient, which in no case exceed the threshold of 0.3.

**Table 4.** *Cross-tabulation showing respondents' opinions on social media in the context of self-assessed activity level in these media (%).*

Opinions on social media		Self-assessed activity level in social media			Total
		low	medium	high	
I cannot imagine life without social media	Strongly disagree	26.7	4.0	0.0	10.3
	Disagree	17.4	21.4	13.3	18.4
	Hard to say	14.0	23.0	13.3	18.0
	Agree	30.2	36.5	46.7	36.8
	Strongly agree	11.6	15.1	26.7	16.5
Using social media entails many risks	Strongly disagree	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Disagree	11.6	4.0	13.3	8.5
	Hard to say	10.5	14.3	11.7	12.5
	Agree	40.7	40.5	35.0	39.3
	Strongly agree	37.2	41.3	40.0	39.7
Social media are the future and cannot be replaced	Strongly disagree	5.8	2.4	3.3	3.7
	Disagree	12.8	14.3	5.0	11.8
	Hard to say	33.7	19.8	25.0	25.4
	Agree	36.0	46.0	41.7	41.9
	Strongly agree	11.6	17.5	25.0	17.3
The world would be better without social media	Strongly disagree	1.2	6.3	8.3	5.1
	Disagree	22.1	18.3	33.3	22.8
	Hard to say	38.4	41.3	33.3	38.6
	Agree	25.6	24.6	13.3	22.4
	Strongly agree	12.8	9.5	11.7	11.0
Using social media promotes the dynamic development of businesses	Strongly disagree	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Disagree	7.0	0.8	0.0	2.6
	Hard to say	15.1	11.9	13.3	13.2
	Agree	37.2	49.2	51.7	46.0
	Strongly agree	40.7	38.1	35.0	38.2

Using social media is a barrier hindering business development	Strongly disagree	30.2	36.5	35.0	34.2
	Disagree	43.0	31.7	38.3	36.8
	Hard to say	23.3	20.6	18.3	21.0
	Agree	2.3	7.9	1.7	4.8
	Strongly agree	1.2	3.2	6.7	3.3
Using social media allows building good relationships between businesses and the recipients	Strongly disagree	1.2	3.2	1.7	2.2
	Disagree	5.8	3.2	3.3	4.0
	Hard to say	23.3	19.0	5.0	17.3
	Agree	48.8	46.0	56.7	49.3
	Strongly agree	20.9	28.6	33.3	27.2
Using social media does not allow building good relationships between businesses and the recipients	Strongly disagree	24.4	30.2	30.0	28.3
	Disagree	37.2	34.9	36.7	36.0
	Hard to say	25.6	21.4	15.0	21.3
	Agree	7.0	11.9	8.3	9.6
	Strongly agree	5.8	1.6	10.0	4.8
Social media are more important in the lives of individual users than in businesses	Strongly disagree	4.7	1.6	0.0	2.2
	Disagree	11.6	19.0	15.0	15.8
	Hard to say	39.5	32.5	28.3	33.8
	Agree	27.9	34.9	23.3	30.1
	Strongly agree	16.3	11.9	33.3	18.0
Social media are more important for businesses than for individual users	Strongly disagree	15.1	10.3	3.3	10.3
	Disagree	31.4	31.0	25.0	29.8
	Hard to say	32.6	37.3	35.0	35.3
	Agree	15.1	18.3	16.7	16.9
	Strongly agree	5.8	3.2	20.0	7.7
Marketing activities of companies should be conducted only in social media	Strongly disagree	39.5	24.6	16.7	27.6
	Disagree	37.2	36.5	38.3	37.1
	Hard to say	11.6	17.5	23.3	16.9
	Agree	11.6	15.1	8.3	12.5
	Strongly agree	0.0	6.3	13.3	5.9
Marketing activities of companies should be conducted simultaneously in traditional media and social media	Strongly disagree	3.5	7.9	5.0	5.9
	Disagree	5.8	3.2	3.3	4.0
	Hard to say	11.6%	12.7	13.3	12.5
	Agree	41.9	42.9	40.0	41.9
	Strongly agree	37.2	33.3	38.3	35.7

*Source:* Own study based on the results of the research.

**Table 5.** Respondents' opinions on social media and the criterion for their self-assessed activity level in these media (%).

Opinions on social media	Self-assessed activity level in social media		
	chi <sup>2</sup> test	V- Cramer coefficient	Level of significance 'p'
I cannot imagine life without social media	46.194	.291	<b>.001</b>
Using social media entails many risks	6.935	.113	.327

Social media are the future and cannot be replaced	13.519	.158	.095
The world would be better without social media	12,319	.150	.138
Using social media promotes the dynamic development of businesses	12.421	.151	.053
Using social media is a barrier hindering business development	11.019	.142	.201
Using social media allows building good relationships between businesses and the recipients	12.354	.151	.136
Using social media does not allow building good relationships between businesses and the recipients	10.333	.138	.242
Social media are more important in the lives of individual users than in businesses	19.701	.190	<b>.012</b>
Social media are more important for businesses than for individual users	21.484	.199	<b>.006</b>
Marketing activities of companies should be conducted only in social media	22.721	.204	<b>.004</b>
Marketing activities of companies should be conducted simultaneously in traditional media and social media	3.336	.078	.912

*Source: Own study based on the results of the research.*

## 5. Discussion

The results obtained by various researchers so far indicate significant differences in the attitudes and behaviours of social media users based on their gender. For instance, women are more inclined to use social media for maintaining existing relationships (Special and Li-Barber, 2012), communicating with family members (McAndrew and Jeong, 2012), strengthening friendships with close friends (Thelwall, 2008), and sharing emotions and feelings (Krasnova, Veltri, Eling, and Buxmann, 2017).

On the other hand, men are more focused on forming new relationships (Haferkamp, Eimler, Papadakis, and Kruck, 2012; Mazman and Usluel, 2011), communicating with non-family members for professional purposes (Brandtzaeg and Lüders, 2018), building new friendships (Haferkamp, Eimler, Papadakis, and Kruck, 2012), seeking practical information (Krasnova, Veltri, Eling, and Buxmann, 2017).

Research conducted among students who belong to generation 'Z' by a team of researchers: Aparicio-Martínez, Ruiz-Rubio, Perea-Moreno, and Martínez-Jiménez (2020) and Lin and Wang (2020) suggests that gender influences both how information is shared on social media and how decisions are made on these platforms. Other studies have also found that gender affects the perception of one's social media competencies, with men generally perceiving themselves as more

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competent (Estanyol, Montaña, Fernández-de-Castro, Aranda, and Mohammadi, 2023).

Meanwhile, Twenge and Martin (2020) found that women spend more time on social media than men, although their study focused on younger individuals (aged 13 to 18), which differs from the age group considered in this article. Additionally, the geographical scope of their study was different, involving minors from the USA and the UK.

Idemudia, Raisinghani, Adeola, and Achebo (2017) found that female students in the USA are more aware of the risks associated with using social media compared to male students. However, the results obtained by the author of this article do not support this finding, as no statistically significant relationship was identified between opinions on the dangers of social media use and the gender of respondents. The geographical scope of the studies compared herein was different, although the subject scope (representatives of generation 'Z') was analogous.

Thus, the findings from other researchers suggest that gender is a significant factor in many areas of social media activity.

However, the results obtained by the author of this article do not confirm relationships between gender and respondents' opinions on social media, nor between gender and their self-assessed activity levels on these platforms. Although the scope of the research presented in this article is different, focusing on opinions about social media and respondents' self-assessed activity levels, the analysis of many previous studies might lead one to assume that the variables examined by the author of this article would also be determined by gender. For most of these variables, however, it was found that there are no statistically significant relationships between them and respondents' gender.

It is worth noting that some arguments suggest that differences in attitudes and behaviours based on gender, especially among young people, are more pronounced in the real world than in the virtual realm (Aran-Ramspott, Korres-Alonso, Elexpuru-Albizuri, Moro-Inchaurtieta, and Bergillos-García, 2024). This conclusion is more in line with the findings presented in this article. Indeed, their results do not indicate relationship between gender and most of the variables studied.

## **6. Conclusions**

The research conducted responds to the calls in the literature for studies on social media as a whole, without focusing on specific platforms (Gaber, Wright, and Kooli, 2019), as well as studies on the significance of age and gender in relation to social media activity (Kim and Jang, 2019). The results obtained have led to important discoveries with both cognitive and practical significance, enriching the theory and providing inspiration for business practice.

## **6.1 Theoretical Implications**

The results of the research and the conclusions drawn make a significant contribution to theory by limiting the knowledge gap identified, thereby enriching the current understanding of social media and their users. The most important aspects discovered through this research include:

1. The identification of generation 'Z' respondents' opinions on social media;
2. The identification of differences and similarities in opinion on social media among generation 'Z' respondents based on gender;
3. The identification of opinions on social media for which there are gender-related correlations;
4. The discovery that for most opinions analysed (9 out of 12), there are no statistically significant correlations with the gender of the respondents;
5. The discovery that there is no statistically significant correlation between self-assessed social media activity level and respondents' gender;
6. The identification of self-assessments reflecting the level of activity of generation 'Z' respondents in social media;
7. The identification of differences and similarities in opinions on social media among generation 'Z' respondents based on their self-assessed level of activity in social media;
8. The identification of opinions on social media for which there are correlations with respondents' self-assessed level of activity in social media;
9. The discovery that for most opinions analysed (8 out of 12), there are no statistically significant correlations with respondents' self-assessed level of activity in social media;
10. The discovery that, despite the results presented in the literature indicating gender as a significant determinant of attitudes, behaviours, and opinions, the results of the research conducted do not support this conclusion. They showed that for most of the variables analysed, there were no statistically significant correlations with gender - at least when it comes to Polish representatives of generation 'Z'.

## **6.2 Managerial Implications**

The results of the research conducted also have substantial practical value. Understanding these findings can help managers effectively use social media to communicate with young adults by considering their perspectives as active users of these platforms. In particular, managers will be able to shape the content shared on social media and the way it is communicated through, among other things:

1. Considering users' attitudes towards social media;
2. Taking into account the gender of users;
3. Building good relationships with users;

4. Creating a media mix that meets users' expectations, incorporating both traditional and modern media;
5. Stimulating activity levels in social media.

### 6.3 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The research conducted has certain limitations, which the author fully acknowledges. These limitations are a consequence of the research approach adopted, which determined the subject, scope, and geographical range of the research, as well as the research methods used.

Future research should continue to explore social media and opinions about them among young adult users. This would provide a basis for conducting comparative analyses and drawing conclusions about potential changes over time. The author also recognizes the value of expanding the scope and increasing the level of detail in future research, including not only gender but also other demographic characteristics of users. In addition to quantitative research methods, qualitative research methods could be used, enabling a deeper understanding of the reasons behind respondents' specific ways of thinking.

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