The New Generation Z in Asia
THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF MANAGING PEOPLE

Series Editor: Professor Emma Parry, Cranfield School of Management, Swindon, UK

The past two decades have represented a time of unprecedented social, technological and economic change that has required a transformation in human resource management (HRM). Shifts in demographics, continued increases of women in the workforce and greater mobility across national borders have led to higher diversity in the workplace. Advances in technology, including social media, have enabled new ways of doing business through faster communications and vast amounts of data made available to all. Mobile technology with its ubiquitous connectivity has led to renewed concerns over work–life balance and extreme jobs. These and many other changes have seen evolving attitudes towards work and careers, leading to different expectations of the workplace and mean that existing ways of managing people may no longer be effective. This series examines in depth the changing context to identify its impact on the HRM and the workforce.

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The New Generation Z in Asia: Dynamics, Differences, Digitalisation

EDITED BY

ELODIE GENTINA
IESEG School of Management, France

EMMA PARRY
Cranfield School of Management, United Kingdom
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Many researchers, teachers, and students who are part of the international scientific community probably once came across the name of Christian Scholz. As a university professor from Saarbrücken, Germany, his oeuvre covered various disciplines in social science, such as business-related human resource management, information management, and media management, conflating it with psychological, historical, and sociological references. Since 2014, when he started his topical journey with a seminal book (Wiley, 2014), he was one of the first international researchers profoundly focussing on the ‘Generation Z’, its characteristics, qualities, attitudes, preferences, and expectations towards employers and society. This focus on Generation Z directed his attention to Southeast Asia and its young generation ready to shape the future.

Through this book, I pay tribute to Christian Scholz who passed away 4 October 2019 at the age of 66. It would have never been written without the expertise and effort of Christian. In 2017, he brought together various researchers and young academics in a conference in Bangkok to discuss the particularities of the Generation Z in Asia. In his research, Christian pursued the idea that there is globally more than one type of Generation Z and that the cross-cultural differences could be identified. Based on our mutual interest, I made friends with Christian, and we both decided to bring our knowledge together in the first book on Generation Z in Asia. I would have very much loved to finalise it and celebrate its release together with him.

Christian Scholz was a researcher of great intellectual originality and his deep knowledge of Generation Z around the world – his research trips on this topic took him across Europe, America, Africa, and Asia that were reflected in further international publications, among them ‘Generation Z in Europe’ (Emerald, 2019) – made him a respected researcher in our academic community. Beyond that, he published far more than 20 scientific books and more than 670 journal articles.

In addition to his scientific competence which characterised him, to his great intellectual curiosity and to his immense and remarkable scholarliness, he was very sympathetic, friendly, pleasant, and generous. The academic community will always remember Christian Scholz with honour and gratitude.

Today, I dedicate this work to you, Christian!

Elodie Gentina
About the Contributors

Editors

**Elodie Gentina** is an Associate Professor of Marketing at IESEG School of Management in France. Her principal research interests lie in Generation Z and consumer behaviour/management. She is the author of two books on Generation Z (Dunod). She has published many articles on Generation Z in *Journal of Business Research, Journal of Business Ethics, Information and Management, and Computers and Education*. She regularly presents papers at international conferences, including Europe, United States, and Asia-Pacific. She is also the CEO of E&G Consulting Group, specialising in Generation Z (Management). She acts as a consultant to numerous companies on management, Human Resource issues.

**Emma Parry** is a Professor of Human Resource Management and Head of the Changing World of Work Group at Cranfield School of Management in the United Kingdom. Her research interests focus on the impact of the changing context on work, the workplace, and the workforce, specifically the influence of national context, changing workforce demographics, and technological advancement. She has published several books and numerous peer reviewed articles in these areas, including several that focus on generational diversity. She is a Fellow of the British Academy of Management, an Academic Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, and an Honorary Fellow of the Institute for Employment Studies, as well as a Visiting Fellow at Westminster Business School.

Chapter Authors

**Muhamad Irfan Agia** is a Consumer Psychologist who holds a Master’s Degree in Economic and Consumer Psychology from Leiden University, Netherlands. He applies insights from psychology and behavioural economy to better understand consumer behaviour, decision-making, and behaviour change.

**Nisreen Ameen** is a Lecturer in Marketing at Royal Holloway, University of London. Her research interests include digital marketing, human–computer interaction, consumer behaviour, artificial intelligence enabled customers service, security and ethics of retailers use of consumers’ data, digital education, and e-business and technology adoption.
About the Contributors

Amitabh Anand is an Assistant Professor at SKEMA Business School, Université Côte d’Azur, France. His research interests are in human behaviour in a multidisciplinary context and discovering new ways to perform scientific reviews and has won several awards in research. Furthermore, his works are published in leading management journals and he is also part of the editorial advisory/review board of Management Decision and Employee Relations.

Adilla Anggraeni is currently a Faculty Member of Binus Business School, Bina Nusantara University International Undergraduate Programme. She received her doctoral degree from the University of Indonesia. Her research interests include consumer behaviour, retail management, tourism marketing, and luxury branding. She has published several articles in International Journal of Business and Information Management, Pertanika Social Science, as well as International Journal of Online Marketing.

Ryan Brading is an Assistant Professor at the College of Management, National Sun Yat-sen University, Kaohsiung, Taiwan. During his PhD research in the Ideology of Discourse Analysis Programme, University of Essex, England, he was trained as a political scientist. He also learned business management skills during his postgraduate studies at Royal Holloway, University of London. His publications and research interests are about populist practices, student movements, youth’s apolitical attitude distrust of traditional party politics, and ambitions.

Shaheema Hameed is an Assistant Professor (Management), Banasthali Vidyapith, India. Her doctoral research focussed on the managerial competencies of the Generation Z. She has presented her research work in various national and international forums. Her areas of specialisation are human resource management, organisational behaviour, and business communication.

Zahrotur Rusyda Hinduan or Rosie is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Psychology Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. She received her PhD degree from the Department of Work and Social Psychology, Maastricht University, The Netherlands. Her research areas focus on the behaviours of young people in work and health settings as well as the behavioural intervention. She has also demonstrated history of working in the higher education management.

Jiyoung Hwang is an Associate Professor of Marketing at Bryan School of Business and Economics, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, United States. She holds her PhD in Retailing and Consumer Studies from Ohio State University and MS in International Retailing from Michigan State University. Her research interests include the impact of cross-cultural consumer behaviours and global branding. She has published articles in European Journal of Marketing, Journal of Business Research, Journal of Small Business Management, and Journal of Services Marketing, among others. She also wrote a book, The Future of Retail Business: How Technology Has Reshaped Consumption.
Ahmad Jamal is a Reader in Marketing and Strategy, and the Deputy Head of Section, Learning, and Teaching (Marketing) at Cardiff University Business School, United Kingdom. His research interests include exploring the interplay among culture, ethnicity and consumption in offline, and online digital contexts. His work has appeared in scholarly journals such as *Journal of Business Research, European Journal of Marketing,* or *Information Systems Frontiers.* He is the co-author for *Routledge Companion to Ethnic Marketing.* He has presented his work at many international conferences across the world.

Yunus Kalender is an undergraduate student in the Department of Business Administration, TOBB University of Economics and Technology, Ankara, Turkey. He is continuing his education with specialisation on marketing and consumer behaviour. He intends to pursue his academic career in the same field. At the same time, he engages in assisting business projects by collecting and analysing data and guiding start-up firms build their marketing and branding plans. His main research interests include the interaction between and among consumers and markets. For instance, he is working on a research project on how consumers build romantic relationships or develop relationship habits by utilising consumption objects and services available on the market.

Ghazala Khan, PhD, is a Lecturer at Monash University Malaysia. She has over 23 years in tertiary education in Malaysia. She has won numerous teaching awards including the Best Lecturer Award for School of Business under the Monash University Student Association. Her research interests lie in Islamic marketing, consumer socialisation, and pedagogy. She has presented her work at numerous international conferences and published in international refereed journals, such as *Journal of Islamic Marketing and International Journal of Business and Globalisation.*

Vimala Kunchamboo, PhD, is a Lecturer at Monash University Malaysia in the Marketing Department. Her research interest focusses on consumer behaviour and marketing, specifically on areas related to sustainable consumption and self-identity. She has research manuscripts published in some of the top marketing journals and conferences such as *Journal of Business Research* and *The Association of Consumer Research.*

Meera Mathur is a Professor (Management) at MLS University, Udaipur, India. She has a vast teaching and research experience of over 20 years. Her research papers have been presented at various conferences and seminars and are published in reputed national and international journals. Her research interests are human resource management, consumer behaviour, and environmental sustainability.

Hoa Phuong Nguyen is a Lecturer in the Department of Publication and Distribution, Hanoi University of Culture, Vietnam. She has completed her Master in Management in University of Technology in Vietnam and has over 18 years of teaching experience. Her specialisation is applied mathematics and business
strategy. She is active in consulting and training for various businesses in the nation. Her research area concerns market analyses and pricing methods for technology products in Vietnam. She has co-authored several ministry-funded applied research projects and book chapters for local university’s press.

**Linh Hoang Nguyen** is a Lecturer at Hanoi Open University, Faculty of Tourism, Vietnam. He has completed his Master in Management at IESEG School of Management and is currently pursuing his PhD degree in University of Lille, France. His doctoral dissertation addresses advertising efficiency in smartphone. His research interest lies in the behaviours of Vietnamese consumers in a modern context, especially in digital communication and green consumption. He has published in various international academic journals and presented his work at several international conferences, such as Young Consumers, OMEE, Macro Marketing Conference, and CERR.

**Mototaka Sakashita** is a Professor of Marketing at Graduate School of Business Administration, Keio University and Keio Business School, Japan. He obtained his PhD from Kobe University (Japan) in 2004 and worked at Sophia University (Japan) as an Assistant Professor from 2004 to 2007. He has been a Faculty Member at Keio University since 2007. He was a Research Fellow of the Retail Analytics Council at Northwestern University from 2015 to 2018, and has been a research affiliate of the Spiegel Digital & Database Research Center at Northwestern University since 2018. He serves as an editorial board of International Journal of Marketing & Distribution since 2019. His research interests include consumer behaviour, retail management, brand management, and integrated marketing communications.

**Berna Tarı-Kasnakoğlu** is an Associate Professor of Marketing at TOBB University of Economics and Technology, Ankara, Turkey. She is a Consumer Behaviour Researcher in Turkey. She obtained her PhD degree in Marketing from Bilkent University, where she focussed on the (medical) consumption of aesthetic surgery and qualitative research methodologies. Her research interests particularly focus on patient–consumer behaviour, co-creation, and service relationships.

**Fandy Tjiptono** is currently a Senior Lecturer at the School of Marketing and International Business, Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), New Zealand. Prior to joining VUW, he was an Academic Staff at Monash University Malaysia. His main research interest is consumer behaviour and marketing practices in Southeast Asia. His research has been published in several reputable journals such as *Journal of Business Ethics*, *European Journal of Marketing*, and *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, among others.

**Meltem Türe** is a Senior Lecturer in Marketing at Royal Holloway, University of London, United Kingdom. She received her PhD in Marketing from Bilkent University in Turkey. Her research interests involve sustainability and waste, value, ethical consumption, and ideology. She has published her work in journals
such as *Journal of Consumer Research, Journal of Business Research, Consumption Markets & Culture*, and *Marketing Theory* as well as in edited book chapters. She has been teaching marketing courses including marketing principles, consumer behaviour, ethical marketing, research writing, and marketing research at undergraduate and graduate levels.

Ying Wang is an Assistant Professor of Economics at the School of International Economics and Trade at Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics, Nanchang, China. Her research focusses on culture and trade. Her work has appeared in prestigious academic journals in China, such as *Journal of International Trade and Contemporary Finance and Economics*. She also has published a monograph titled *Research on the Cultural Trade Policy of China*.

Zhiyong Yang is a Professor of Marketing and Department Head of the Department of Marketing, Entrepreneurship, Sustainable Tourism and Hospitality at the University of North Carolina Greensboro. His research focusses on consumer decision-making. His work has appeared in over 30 journals, including the *Journal of Marketing, Journal of Consumer Research*, and *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*. His research has been funded by Statistics Canada, FQRSC Canada, and NSF China. He serves on the guest editorship and the editorial review boards of several reputed journals. He also received competitive research awards from Harvard Center for Risk Analysis, the University of Texas-Arlington, and Cardiff University.

Ewe Soo Yeong is a Lecturer at Monash University Malaysia. Her specialties lie in consumer psychology and experimental research methods. Her current research interest is in consumer decision making, specifically irrational behaviour in decision making. Her other areas of research interest include information processing and message framing. Her multidisciplinary training in economics, finance and marketing is particularly useful when solving research problems. Her work has been published in respected journals such as *Marketing Intelligence and Planning* and *Journal of Behavioral Finance*.

Melannie Zhan is a Part-Time Lecturer. She received her PhD in Communication and MSocSc in Media Management at Hong Kong Baptist University. Her research areas mainly lie in the field of advertising, health communication, and strategic marketing communication. In particular, she examines the message framing effects, health communication campaigns, and motivational effectiveness relating to self-regulation. Her research publications are in *PR* magazine (Germany) and *International Journal of Human Movement and Sports Sciences*. Before she joined academia, she worked in the advertising profession in Hong Kong for more than six years.
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Generations Z in Asia: Foreword

Around 18 months ago I had the privilege of contributing both a chapter (on Generation Z in the UK), and the foreword, to a book on Generations Z in Europe, edited by Christian Scholz and Anne Renning. This book provided a useful and unique analysis of the characteristics of the younger generation in different European countries. For some time, I have been complaining about the tendency for both scholars and practitioners to take a universal approach to generations and to assume that the characteristics of generations are the same regardless of the country in which the generations that an author is discussing are based. It was therefore a delight to be part of a book that took a contextual approach to studying the characteristics of a particular generation. It was because of this experience that I jumped at the chance to co-edit this current text – on Generations Z in Asia – and to include this within my book series on The Changing Context of Managing People.

It is important to note, of course, that accepting this request was also tinged with sadness – a co-editor for this text was only needed because Professor Christian Scholz – who both conceptualised and started work on this text had been taken seriously ill, and later passed away. Having worked with Christian on the previous text, I feel compelled to recognise his passion for this topic and the enthusiasm that both got this manuscript moving and brought the first text to fruition. This book undoubtedly belongs to Christian (along with Elodie Gentina) – I see myself therefore as no more than a caretaker in seeing this book to its completion.

My personal involvement in editing this text – and the memory of Christian – means of course that I am particularly delighted to be able to introduce this new book as part of the series. The continent of Asia becomes increasingly dominant in the world landscape in relation to its economic growth, population size and growing influence on aspects such as technologies and fashion. With this in mind, it is important that we understand the characteristics of the Asian people both as consumers and employees. And yet, research in this area is still limited. In relation to generational differences, scholars have historically drawn on western models of generational groups with very few researchers exploring the attitudes and expectations of different age cohorts in Asia in particular. Not only does this book address that need, but it also goes one step further by considering the values and preferences of the younger generation in different countries and regions of Asia to examine the similarities and differences between those of different nationalities. Given the rich historical and cultural landscape within Asia, alongside...
differences in religion, economic climate and tradition, this provides a fascinating discussion of Generation Z in different Asian countries and the factors that have driven their values and expectations. I hope that you will enjoy this text as much as I have enjoyed editing and reading it.

Emma Parry
Series Editor
Part I

Generation Z in Asia: A Research Agenda
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Chapter 1

Generation Z in Asia: A Research Agenda

Elodie Gentina

Abstract

Generation Z, including individuals born from the mid-1990s to the late 2000s, is said to be different from other generations before. Generation Z is said to be the generation of digital natives, with multiple identities; a worried and creative generation who value collaborative consumption; and a generation looking forward. The authors present here tentative observations of Generation Z in Asia using theoretical approaches and scientific backgrounds: the authors show how socialisation theory (parents and peer group) and technology (relationship with smartphones) offer meaningful perspectives to understand Generation Z behaviours in Asia. Finally, the authors ask some key questions about dealing with Generation Z in Asia in the field of smartphone use, consumer behaviour (shopping orientation), collaborative consumption (sharing), and work context.

Keywords: Generation Z; digital natives, Asia; consumers; workers; research

Introduction

For several years, Millennials, digital natives, and other names for ‘Generation Y’ have been the focus of academic research (e.g. Business Administration, Behavioural Management, Sociology, Psychology, etc.) and even more of practitioners in companies, politicians, teachers, parents, and of course of the media. However, over the past few years, a new generation slowly has moved into focus: Generation Z, including individuals born from the mid-1990s to the late 2000s. This generation of digital natives has grown up in a digital, technology-saturated world. We cannot understand Generation Z without understanding the context in which they have grown up. Then we can examine their characteristics, their behaviour as consumers, and their behaviour at work.
Worldwide, young people from ‘Generation Z’ are characterised by similar consumption practices with respect to clothing, music, and media use, pointing to the evidence of a ‘global youth culture’. This presumed uniformity, however, might be inaccurate. Recent research suggests that ‘Generation Z’ adapts global consumption practices and meanings to fit local contexts (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006). Consistent with this finding is a handful of cross-cultural studies that reports significant differences in consumer behaviour between highly individualistic cultures (e.g. Western cultures) and strongly collectivist cultures (e.g. Eastern cultures). This leaves open questions: How does the Generation Z look in other regions of the world? Are there specific patterns? Unique questions? Global questions? Much remains unknown, in particular about the behaviours of Generation Z especially in Asia.

**The Concept of Generation**

The concept of generation is a cross-disciplinary concept with different meanings, linked to age, genealogy or the filiation, and historical period. We focus here on the definition of generation proposed by Attias-Donfut (1988) in Sociology which relies on four different meanings:

1. generation in the demographic sense, gathering all people belonging to the same age range;
2. generation in the genealogical and family sense, making the distinction between the older generation (e.g. parents and grandparents) and younger generation (children) with a normalised hierarchical relation of the domination of the former over the latter;
3. generation in the historical sense, as the length of time required to renew individuals in public life, estimated as the time needed for a child to become independent and integrated in public life (estimated at 30 years on average);
4. generation in the socio-cognitive or sociological sense, gathering a group of individuals born in the same time period, during which they have shared unique events created by their common age situation within history (referring to generational cohort). For instance, Baby Boomers had the Vietnam War. Millennials had 9/11 and the financial crisis. For Generation Z, their life-altering world event might be the Coronavirus crisis, and the accompanying slew of school closings, quarantines, and high unemployment rates.

There exist different generational cohorts ‘whose members are linked to each other through shared life experiences during their formative years, including macroeconomic conditions’ (Pekerti & Arli, 2017, p. 390):

- Baby Boomers born approximately between 1950 and 1964.
Prior studies in consumer behaviour refer to generational cohorts to explain similarities related to their consumption behaviours inside the same age cohort and differences between different age cohorts (Pekerti & Denni, 2017). For instance, consumers in younger Generation Y are more impulsive (Hsiao & Chang, 2007) and are more permissive of questionable consumer behaviours (Freestone & Mitchell, 2004). Other studies in the management have shown some differences between age cohorts concerning their working relationships. For instance, members of Generation X are more intrinsic in their work motivation than Generation Y. Generation Z is more realistic than Generations Y and Z with regard to perceiving ethicality of work situation (Boyd, 2010).

Given that sharing life experiences related to consumption behaviour and working relationships is concerned, we naturally favour generation in its socio-cognitive or sociological sense. However, we do not focus on this exclusive sociological dimension of generation here, we also take into consideration the genealogical/family and historical perspectives present in socio-cognitive and historical approaches of generation.

**Characteristics of Generation Z**

*A Generation of Digital Natives*

The new generation of digital natives, who were born around the end of the first decade, can be considered as a new breed of digital citizens. They have unprecedented access to technology. Unlike Generation X or Y, who are ‘digital immigrants’, Generation Z gathers the first true digital natives who have abandoned traditional computers for mobile devices. Members of Generation Z do not need to familiarise themselves with technology by comparing it to something else. On the contrary, they propose new ways of thinking about how technology can be effectively used. Generation Z perceives the world through different eyes: what is a novelty for digital immigrants is something ordinary, for digital natives as it is an integral part of their lives. For instance, 55% of parents estimate that their children under the age of 12 are more technologically knowledgeable than themselves (Dingli & Seychell, 2015).

A survey by Project Tomorrow (tomorrow.org) found that Generation Z is digitally literate, connected, experiential, social, and demanding of instant gratification. A 2017 Pew Research Center report showed that 92% of American teens go online daily and 91% of them are connected to the Internet through mobile devices. By age 20, these young adults will have spent around 20,000 hours online exploring their place and identity in the world. Many adolescents consider smartphones as integral parts of their lives and can hardly imagine living without them (Roberts, Yala, & Manolis, 2014). For example, in South Korea (the country with the highest smartphone penetration rate worldwide), almost 75% of tweens (aged between 10 and 15) spend more than 5 hours per day using a smartphone (Roberts et al., 2014). Adolescents spend on average more than 3 hours per day on their smartphone, suggesting that smartphone addiction among adolescents is a prevalent problem among members of Generation Z (Gentina & Delécluse,
Smartphone addiction is ‘the excessive use of smartphones in a way that is difficult to control’ (Gökçearslan, Mumcu, Haşlaman, & Çevik., 2016, p. 640). More specifically, nomophobia, defined as a fear of having to go without mobile devices (Roberts et al., 2014), is emerging as a common phenomenon among Generation Z.

Generation Z loves their online audience but also value their anonymity. They know how to manage their digital privacy because they have grown up with a keen understanding of the line between public and private in online settings, and, thus, preserve their privacy. This can explain why Generation Z has less interest in Facebook, preferring social media. Generation Z can more easily keep their interactions restricted to their intimate friends or present a carefully curated image. Generation Z tries to keep communication private, and, thus, prefers private social networks such as Snapchat.

A Generation with Multiple Identities

Members of Generation Z express themselves through their personal characteristics, appearance, clothes, hobbies, and interests. At the same time, members of Generation Z, who spend most of their time online, express themselves in the real world while also extending and complementing their offline social life by using the digital environment. Thus, they manage their identity online and offline.

The way of expressing oneself is the main difference between Generation Z (digital natives) and Generation Y (digital immigrants). Digital natives are able to change many aspects of their personal identities much quicker and easier than it was before, thanks to online applications or online social networks (e.g. Facebook, My Space, Snapchat). They create their identity online thanks to a new profile in a social network, where they present themselves in a way that could be strikingly different from the way they present or express themselves in real space. Thus, members of Generation Z usually change aspects of their personal and social identities almost constantly and experiment with multiple identities online thanks to their profile pictures and avatars (as they change their clothes or hairstyle).

Friendships are important in Generation Z's lives. Adolescence is marked by transformational intrapersonal changes in identity and increased need to belong to a peer group (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). If digital immigrants (Generation Y) still prefer to make friends in person, Generation Z (digital natives) is open for friendship with people from around the world, thanks to their constant access to online social networks. Members of Generation Z flocked to social networks such as Facebook and Twitter to continue their social interactions with people who are already a part of their extended social network (Ellison, 2007). Facebook provides opportunities for young people to make new friends (Madge, Meek, Wellens, & Hooley, 2009). Moreover, Twitter attracts Generation Z who is interested in engaging in short conversations with other teens to receive and share information with others, a way to develop more social interactions (Kwon, Park, & Kim, 2014).

Another major shift between Generation Z and other generations (Generations Y, X, and Baby Boomers) is related to the method of watching television. Among
American adults, 59% of them cite cable or satellite as their primary method of watching television, according to a 2017 Pew Research study. On the contrary, the majority of Generation Z use their smartphone as their primary medium to watch videos. In a recent Business Insider survey (2018) conducted among 104 teens nationwide, only 2% of Generation Z said that cable was their most-used choice for video content. Nearly a third said YouTube was their most-used source for video content, and 62% said streaming including Netflix or Hulu. They watch YouTube as a niche for hobby-driven content, such as beauty or cooking show.

A Worried Generation

A generation is ‘an identifiable group that shares birth years, age, location, and significant life events at critical developmental stages’ (Smola & Sutton 2002: 364). Members of a generation share a history and common experiences, and this collective consciousness creates their worldview. Each generation is shaped by national and international events that take place during their formative years, when their identity and world views are still in flux. Throughout the world, the younger generation has grown up with the War on Terror, the spread of violent jihadism and terrorism. The Coronavirus pandemic might be a watershed moment in the lives of Generation Z. According to survey of US teenagers (ages 13–17) from Common Sense Media taken in March–April 2020, 63% are worried about the effect that COVID-19 has on their family’s ability to make a living or earn money and 42% feel ‘more lonely than usual’. Members of Generation Z have grown up in a world that hasn’t always made them feel secure. Thus, they are pessimistic about the future – and overall seem unhappy with the state of the world that they have inherited. Overall, 37% of young people think the world is getting worse, compared to 20% who think it is getting better (39% think neither) (Broadbent, Gougoulis, Lui, Pota, & Simons, 2017). In March 2020, a Pew Research Center survey showed that half of young people from Generation Z (ages 18–23) reported that they or someone in their household had lost a job or taken a cut in pay because of the outbreak.

Their greatest sources of anxiety, experienced by around half of Generation Z throughout the world, were the age-old concerns of money and school. Despite media focus on the issue, the pressures of social media were only seen by 10% of young people as one of their main sources of anxiety. There is some variation in the level of happiness depending on cultures. The highest happiness levels tend to be in developing countries such as Indonesia (90%), Nigeria (78%), and India (72%), and the lowest happiness levels are in advanced economies such as France (57%), Australia (56%), and the United Kingdom (57%) (Broadbent et al., 2017).

A Creative Generation

Members of Generation Z seek to make, collaborate, and co-create, as they want control and preference settings (Saettler, 2014). They apply their innate talent with new technologies and social media to launch new businesses and participate in the creation of new products that appeal to their peers and others. Online social
networks function not only as socialising channels but also as means to participate in co-creation processes. Generation Z want to collaborate, interact, create, and share their ideas on social media platforms. According to Gurtner and Soyez (2016, p. 101), ‘young consumers can be described as “agents of changes” and thus more open to innovative technologies’. As the most connected, educated, and sophisticated generation in history, they don’t just represent the future, they are creating it (Kingston, 2014).

Growing up in the midst of a recession makes Generation Z less likely to believe in the availability and security of good jobs. Instead, they are more focussed on creating opportunities for themselves. They exhibit strongly innovative, entrepreneurial, and independent spirits, and 40% of Generation Z claim that they plan to invent something that will change the world (Seemiller, 2016). They place a lot of emphasis on being resourceful and entrepreneurial: 72% of high school students and 65% of college students want to start their own business (Gentina & Delécluse, 2018). Not only is Generation Z a group of consumers, but they are also the next generation of business owners. Generation Z will start businesses and the peer-to-peer (P2P) economy will continue expanding.

**A Generation Who Values Collaborative Consumption**

Generation Z is often defined as a specific and unique class of materialistic consumers. Their materialistic values – and modern young consumers (adolescents, children) may be among ‘the most brand-oriented, consumer-involved, and materialistic generation in history’ (Schor, 2004, p. 13) – are primarily determined during their adolescent years, especially if they have sufficient material resources to achieve a specific, positive social identity through their consumption. Yet in contrast with these seemingly widespread concerns about Generation Z’s materialism, we revisit the very fundamental question about the extent to which Generation Z should be considered materialistic consumers, in the conventional sense of the term. Generation Z values experience more than material goods and aims not mainly to possess items but rather to exchange them. More specifically, the Coronavirus pandemic is likely to change Generation Z’s perspective, because it has caused Generation Z to re-think how they spend their money and what their financial goals are. Generation Z seeks consumption-based, alternative means, such as exchanging and sharing practices.

Besides possessions (sharing tangibles), sharing intangibles such as sharing online enables new sharing possibilities. Sharing with others online includes open-source code writing; sharing information on Internet bulletin boards (BBs) and chat rooms; publishing blogs (Weblogs), vlogs (video logs), and Web sites; contributing to collaborative online games; participating in P2P file sharing, maintaining listservs; and responding to e-mail requests. Those who make use of these online resources are a part of Internet sharing. Generation Z is the first digital native generation who is impacting the current P2P economy. According to Nielsen (2018), among 68% of global respondents who rent products from others in shared communities, 35% are Generation Z consumers.

The sharing economy is the result of living through the financial crisis and economic slump, when the concept of ownership could feel fleeting. Collaborative