

# How Does Gen Z Search and Learn Online?

A photograph showing a person's hands holding a smartphone. The phone screen displays the Google search homepage. In the background, a laptop screen also shows the Google search page, and a white mug is visible on a desk.

## White Paper

Based on recently collected quantitative research, we present introductory research findings on Gen Z and how they search for and learn new information online.

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# Survey Intro

## The Research Question and Preliminary Results

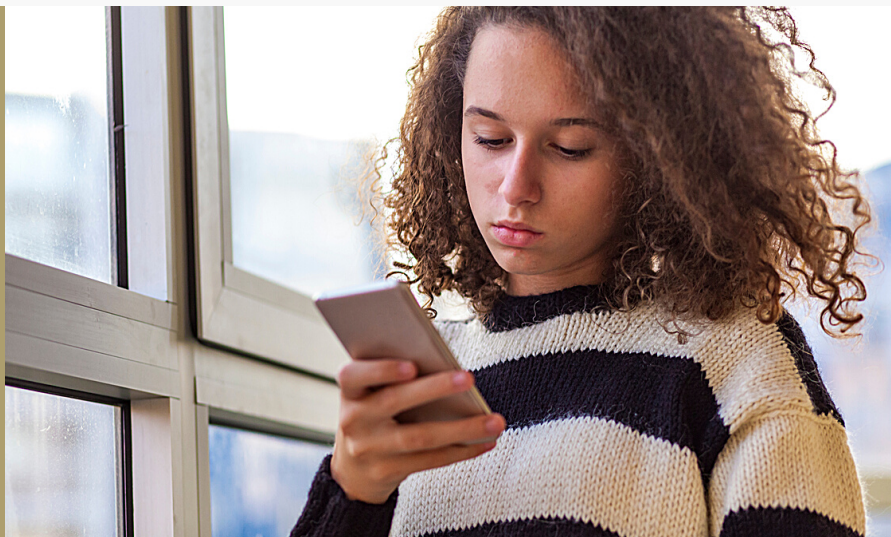
In the Fall 2022 one of our Market Research student groups conducted research on the hypothesis that Gen Z uses social media platforms and technology as their main source to obtain information. Their goal was to ask questions about where Gen Z get their information, news, etc and which platforms they prefer to engage with.

### Demographics

As one of our more successful surveys, the student researchers were able to collect 204 responses. However, they did not collect demographics, though they only shared the survey with college students.

### Preliminary Results

The survey results showed that the majority of Gen Z college students use social media to consume information, and they get that information from their smartphones more than computers or other devices. The survey also found that Gen Z are skeptical of the information they encounter and will often verify information on Google and other search engines.



# Top Platforms



Recent research from [Pew Research Center](#) found that even though TikTok has become the most popular social media platform, 95% of Gen Z use YouTube as their top online platforms. They also spend a lot of time online with 75% claiming they spend their free time online - mostly texting and chatting.

95%

use YouTube  
the most

75%

of teens spend their free  
time online

46%

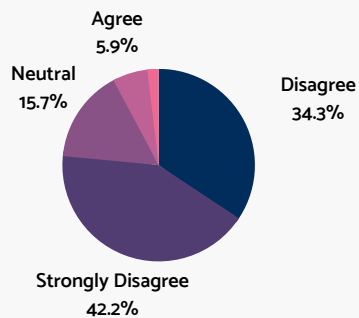
use the internet  
almost constantly



# Is TikTok the New Google?

## How does Gen Z search for information?

One of our main questions stemmed from a [2022 New York Times](#) article that claimed TikTok was the new search engine for Gen Z. Interestingly, most of our survey respondents (76.5%) disagree with the statement that TikTok is a reliable source of news.



"Is TikTok a reliable source of news?"

48.5% would rather read an article online than watch news on TV

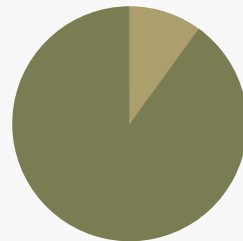
80% use YouTube to teach them new skills



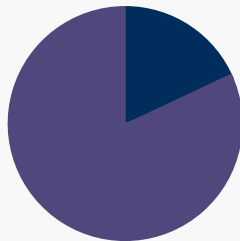
# Informed Choices

Our survey also looked at the level of trust Gen Z college students have in the information they encounter on social media and other online spaces. Though half our respondents admitted that they use social media as a primary source of news, we had several data points that also showed they are making informed choices about the information they consume and the sources they rely on.

**Only 10%**  
believe that the news on their social media feeds is correct



While our survey respondents rejected the idea that TikTok is a reliable source of news, that does not discount the idea that Gen Z is using TikTok as a de facto search engine. Our contention is that for this generation it depends on what kind of information they are looking for online.



**82% Gen Z respondents**  
use Google to verify information that they find on social media

While many older generations might use Google to search for news information, shopping, food, and entertainment, Gen Z likes to take advantage of the personalized content in their TikTok feeds to look for a place for lunch. A generation that is known for curating content wants targeted information about personal choices. However, they will also use online platforms, like Google, to verify information or claims.

# Findings

What does this mean about our understanding of this rising generation and their perspective on engaging with marketing and news online?

Here is what we've learned:

- Our survey showed that Gen Z overwhelmingly use smartphones and social media to consume information.
- We also found that they use specific platforms for specific tasks - with YouTube functioning as a place for skill development, TikTok for recommendations, and Instagram to stay "up to date."
- Our respondents also expressed healthy skepticism on the reliability of social media information, especially for news, and are likely to double-check information on other platforms like Google.

# Applications

What does it all mean?

Every research project tells a story, and here's how this story can help you better understand this rising generation in the workforce:

- Understanding how Gen Z interacts with technology and how it shape their view of the world will help you determine the appropriate communication styles for your young workers.
- Maybe you need to reevaluate your system for providing feedback to adjust to these new expectations.
- Have you considered making a YouTube channel as a way to talk about your company and attract new talent?

# How can we help?

This White Paper only scratched the surface of our understanding of Gen Z and how they use social media and online platforms to find information.

If we can help you or your organization reach a fuller understanding of generations, please reach out via the contact information below, or scan the QR code to book a call with us or learn more about the trainings we offer!



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BOOK A CALL



Our Trainings