

## Research Article

# The Utilization of Social Media by Generation Z in Information Seeking: A Systematic Review

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**Abstract.**

The aim of this study is to identify the use of social media by Generation Z (Gen Z) in information seeking. This study employs a systematic review method with planning, implementation, and reporting phases. The databases utilized in this research are Google Scholar and Portal Garuda, with a publication timeframe of the last 10 years (2013-2023). The search yielded a total of 85 articles. After the elimination process, there were a total of 10 articles analyzed in this study. The research results indicate that Gen Z uses social media to seek information related to health, education, entertainment, and religion. Some Gen Z validates the information they obtain on social media, while others do not. The Ellis and Kuhlthau, information-seeking behavior (ISB) model is used to elucidate the information-seeking patterns of Gen Z. This systematic review is expected to serve as a consideration for educators and policymakers that social media can be used as a tool in the integration of formal and non-formal education.

**Keywords:** generation Z, information seeking, social media

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## 1. Introduction

[1] Statista reported that the number of social media users worldwide reached 2.46 billion, with projections expected to continue increasing to 2.77 billion by 2019. For instance, Facebook has over 2.1 billion active members, while YouTube has 1.9 billion, and WhatsApp reaches 2.1 billion active members, with others also experiencing growth. People access social media not only through computers but also via smartphones and tablets to use platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp.[2] In Indonesia, a major player in the Southeast Asian internet market, despite only 53.7% of its population having internet access, there is a robust social media user base that spends an average of 3.28 hours per day on these platforms.[3] The demographic of social media users in Indonesia tends to be dominated by the younger age group falling into the category of Generation Z. Generation Z, often referred to as Gen Z, pertains to the demographic

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group that emerged after the Millennial generation (Generation Y).[4] The range of birth years used to identify Gen Z can vary, but it generally includes individuals born from the mid-1990s to the early 2010s.[5] Researchers often use data and analysis to explore topics such as technology usage, social attitudes, educational preferences, and various other aspects related to this generation.[2]

In the digital era, social media has become an integral part of teenage life. Gen Z not only uses these platforms for social interaction but also as a primary source for news, educational content, lifestyle trends, and various other sources of information. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and Snapchat have not only changed the way individuals interact with each other but have also become dynamic spaces for the dissemination and consumption of information.[6] The pervasive integration of social media into the daily lives of Gen Z has transformed how they communicate, socialize, and, most importantly, seek information.[7] The interaction between social media usage and ISB is a highly complex and ever-evolving phenomenon. It is crucial to understand thoroughly how Gen Z interacts with social media when they are seeking information. With an understanding of how Gen Z seeks information, we can design methods to improve their academic outcomes. This means that we can leverage this understanding in teaching approaches, helping students develop better research and critical thinking skills. Policy makers can also use this insight to formulate rules and guidelines that protect teenagers while they engage in online activities and ensure they can access quality information.

This systematic review aims to delve into the use of social media by Gen Z in seeking information. Through a systematic and thorough literature review approach, we intend to integrate, evaluate, and summarize the findings from previous research in this field. The results of this systematic review are expected not only to advance scientific understanding but also to provide valuable insights for educators, marketers, policymakers, and all parties interested in understanding how Gen Z utilizes social media in information-seeking within the continuously evolving digital era.

## 2. Methods

This study is a systematic review utilizing a qualitative approach. Data collection involves three stages: planning, execution, and reporting.[8]

## 2.1. Planning

In the planning stage, researchers delineate the research scope and formulate research questions using the Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcomes, and Context (PICOC) approach.[9] The use of research limitations is crucial to ensure that the journal articles to be reviewed can specifically address the research questions. In this study, the research limitations encompass the ISB of Gen Z on social media platforms. The research questions in this study are:

RQ1: What types of information are sought by Generation Z on social media?

RQ2: Do Generation Z verify the accuracy of information they encounter on social media?

## 2.2. Execution

This study applies the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) method to assist in determining relevant keywords and alternative terms related to the research. The search was conducted in two databases, namely Google Scholar and Portal Garuda, aiming to identify scholarly sources discussing Gen Z's ISB through social media published within the last ten years, from 2013 to 2023. Our search was focused on scholarly journal articles as they are considered the most relevant source within the context of this research.

We identified keywords related to Gen Z's ISB through social media. We utilized Mendeley reference management to assist us in storing relevant journal articles and to streamline the elimination process. In our endeavor to locate articles pertinent to our research, we combined various keywords and synonyms using Boolean search operators such as OR, AND, and NOT. The search terms we employed for this study were: (Perilaku Pencarian Informasi) AND (Gen Z OR Generasi Z OR Remaja OR Siswa) AND (Sosial Media OR Jejaring Sosial).

We applied inclusion and exclusion criteria to filter relevant journal articles aligned with the objectives of our research.[9] Details regarding the inclusion and exclusion criteria in this study can be found in Table 1.

After applying these criteria, we conducted an evaluation of the selected articles. This evaluation aimed to assess the quality of the journal articles and the relevance of the data obtained. We used the following questions to aid in this evaluation, as listed in Table 2. Each question could be answered with three options: Yes = 1; Uncertain = 0.5; No = 0.[10]

TABLE 1: *Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.*

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
All Indonesian-language journal articles we used are sourced from Google Scholar and Portal Garuda databases	Grey literature
All Indonesian-language journal articles published from 2013 to 2023	All articles measuring the influence of social media on ISB
Indonesian-language journal articles discussing Gen Z's ISB through social media	

Source: analysed from the primary source.

TABLE 2: *Assessment Criteria.*

Quality Criteria	Questions	Answers
Q1	Is the purpose and aim of this research clearly depicted?	Yes/Uncertain/No
Q2	Is this research based on a case study?	Yes/Uncertain/No
Q3	Is this research a result of analysis of an event or a report based on expert viewpoints?	Yes/Uncertain/No
Q4	Does this research explain Gen Z's ISB through social media?	Yes/Uncertain/No

Source: analysed from the primary source.

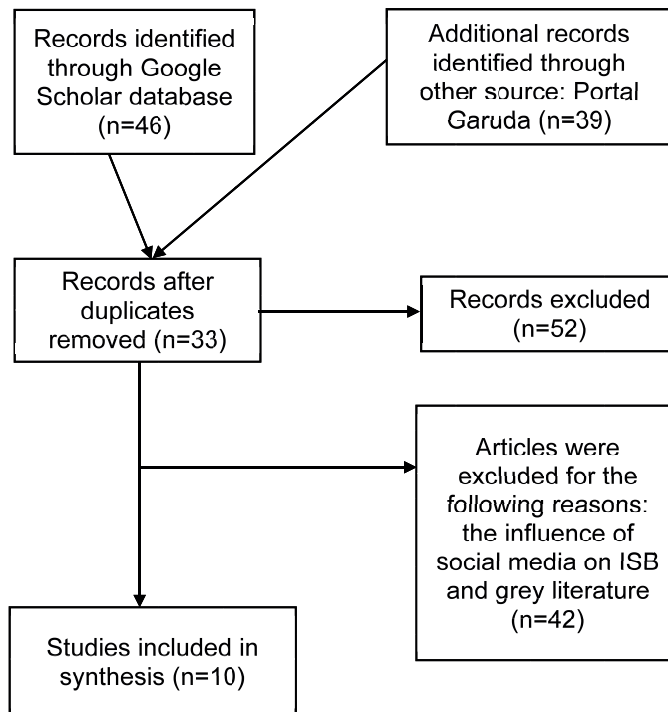
### 3. Reporting

The primary aim at this stage is to integrate various research findings from the literature successfully gathered. Before synthesis, the initial step taken involves conducting literature mapping. The mapping of data is conducted using an analysis table containing authors, article titles, journal/year, and research outcomes. Once the data is inputted into the table, they are arranged according to the ID of each article. Subsequently, conclusions can be drawn inductively to generate significant research findings that are beneficial for all involved parties.

### 4. Results and Discussion

The processing of search results begins with the selection and extraction of data. This process involves researchers engaging in the screening and evaluation of all identified articles. Researchers gather all studies considered relevant, and the initial screening process is carried out by applying the PRISMA method. After eliminating duplicate articles and applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria established, the final set of articles to be analyzed in this study was successfully obtained. To provide a clearer view

of these selection steps, the PRISMA flow diagram illustrating the selection procedure can be observed in Figure 1 below:



**Figure 1: PRISMA FLOW DIAGRAM** Source: analysed from the primary source.

Based on the results of the search in Google Scholar and Portal Garuda databases, a total of 85 articles were identified. After eliminating duplicates, the number reduced to 33 articles. Subsequently, through the application of inclusion and exclusion criteria, 10 articles were selected for review in this study. Based on the gathered data and the assessment of the quality of the articles using specific criteria, it was found that the article with code 007 obtained the lowest score (see Table 3). The following is an overview of the quality scores of the selected articles.

Furthermore, we conducted a literature analysis by mapping 10 literature sources that are the focus of analysis in this study (Table 4). The following is the mapping of selected journal articles:

The results of the selected literature mapping show that the number of publications discussing the ISB of Gen Z through social media has experienced a significant increase, particularly since 2017 and beyond.

TABLE 3: Assessment of the Quality of Selected Articles.

ID	Criteria for Quality Level				Total Score
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
001	1	1	1	0,5	3,5
002	1	1	1	0,5	3,5
003	1	1	1	1	4
004	1	1	1	1	4
005	1	1	1	0,5	3,5
006	1	1	1	0,5	3,5
007	1	0	0,5	0,5	2
008	1	1	1	1	4
009	1	1	1	1	4
010	0,5	1	1	0,5	3

Source: analysed from the primary source

#### 4.1. RQ1: What types of information are sought by Generation Z on social media?

Generation Z generally seeks various types of information on social media platforms according to their needs. The findings of this study indicate that Gen Z utilizes social media to search for health-related information [11-14], politics [15,16], education [17,18], fashion [19] and religion [20]. As for the social media accessed by Generation Z, it is highly diverse, including websites, WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, LINE, Google Meet, and Zoom Meeting. The majority access information on Instagram, justifying it by the ease of access.

Generation Z accesses health information with various focuses, ranging from general health [12], reproduction [11,13] to COVID-19 vaccination [14]. Generation Z seeks information related to their everyday physical experiences, particularly regarding reproductive health issues. Their motivation to seek this information is more driven by external factors than internal factors. The results of this study indicate that Generation Z rarely consults reproductive health issues with medical professionals unless they happen to encounter them coincidentally. As for COVID-19 vaccination, they decide to seek information on social media because they still have doubts about whether to get vaccinated or not. From the above findings, it can be concluded that information-seeking on social media helps them in making decisions. Based on previous research, the use of the internet to seek health information has increased since 2010 [21], with not only individuals with specific health conditions accessing health information but also their friends and family. In relation to this, scholars from the health sciences field also conduct studies, and the

TABLE 4: List of Selected Journal Articles.

ID	Author(s)	Title	Journal/Year	Research Results
001	Hisan, U.K.	Studi Perilaku Pencarian Informasi Kesehatan oleh Generasi Z Terkait Vaksinasi COVID-19	Media Informasi/2022	The information sought pertains to COVID-19 vaccination, and the social media platform utilized is Instagram.
002	Sari, I. A., & Candrasari, Y.	Perilaku Pencarian Informasi Politik di Media Sosial Bagi Pemilih Pemula Kota Surabaya	Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan/2023	The information sought pertains to politics for electoral participation. The social media platform utilized is TikTok.
003	Nasution, B., & Rimayanti, N.	Perilaku Pencarian Informasi Pemilihan Umum Tahun 2019 Pemilih Pemula di Kota Pekanbaru	Jurnal Komunikatif/2021	The information sought is related to politics for electoral participation. The social media platforms used are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. Information validation processes are employed. The ISB model is elucidated through the Ellis Theory.
004	Farasabila, T., & Rachman, Y. B.	Perilaku Pencarian Informasi Mengenai Perguruan Tinggi oleh Siswa Kelas 12 SMA Negeri 26 Jakarta	Jurnal Ilmu Informasi, Perpustakaan, dan Kearsipan/2019	The information sought is related to higher education. The social media platforms used are Instagram and the official website of the university. Information validation processes are employed. The ISB model is delineated through the Ellis Theory.
005	Azizah, R. N., & Sidik, A. P.	Perilaku Pencarian Informasi Produk Fashion Melalui Media Sosial Instagram	Buana Komunikasi/2020	The information sought is related to fashion. The social media platform used is Instagram. The ISB model is elucidated through Wilson's active search theory.
006	Meilinda, N., Prabujaya, S. P., & Murti, K.	Pola pencarian informasi tentang reproduksi seksual pada mahasiswa Universitas Sriwijaya	Prosiding Konferensi Nasional Komunikasi/2017	The information sought pertains to reproductive health. The social media platforms used are Facebook and Instagram. The ISB model is elucidated through Wilson's passive search theory.
007	Hariyani, S., KM, M., Fitriani, S., KM, S., & KM, M.	Pola Pencarian Informasi Kesehatan Reproduksi Remaja di Indonesia (Literature Review)	Jurnal Kesehatan Bidkesmas Respati/2022	The information sought is related to reproductive health. The social media platform used is Instagram.
008	Sitorus, D., Winoto, Y., & Rodiah, S.	Studi tentang perilaku pencarian informasi pada official account line KABIM Universitas padjadjaran	Indonesian Journal of Academic Librarianship/2020	The information sought is related to scholarships. The social media platform used is LINE. Information validation processes are employed. The ISB model is elucidated through Kuhlthau's theory.
009	Prasanti, D., & El Karimah, K.	Pencarian Informasi Dakwah Islam melalui Media Online Pada Masa Pandemi COVID-19 bagi Komunitas Muslim	Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi/2020	The information sought is related to religious matters, specifically Islamic preaching (dakwah). The social media platforms used are Google Meet, Zoom Meeting, and WhatsApp. Information validation processes are employed. The ISB model is elucidated through Kuhlthau's theory.
010	Prasanti, D.	Penggunaan Media Komunikasi Bagi Remaja Perempuan dalam Pencarian Informasi Kesehatan	Jurnal Lontar/2018	The information sought pertains to health. The social media platforms used are the website, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook.

Source: analyzed from the primary source

results indicate that the role of social networking sites (SNS) in disseminating public health information and disease prevention guidelines is crucial.[22]

In relation to politics, Gen Z uses social media to access information regarding political candidates.[15,16] The information they seek pertains to the backgrounds of the political candidates, as they do so to make informed decisions during general elections. Social media is increasingly used for political discussions and as a channel for the dissemination of information by various parties, including individuals, political actors, and traditional news media.[23] Social media platforms provide users with a space to choose from various channels of information. Besides politics, Gen Z also uses social media to seek information related to education, such as searching for information about the universities they want to attend after graduating from school [17] and scholarships they can obtain [18]. There is no similar research that outlines the ISB of Gen Z through social media, specifically focusing on seeking information about these two aspects. However, previous research has stated that social media can serve as a tool to integrate formal and informal learning.[24]

The fashion industry is currently experiencing rapid growth; it is not surprising that Gen Z utilizes social media to seek information related to fashion.[19] The study found that information sought through the Instagram social media platform regarding fashion products includes specifications such as material, model, color, size, and price. This information serves as the primary consideration for Gen Z before deciding to purchase the product. As for information related to religion, Gen Z seeks information about religious preaching. [20] They do this because during the pandemic, religious activities that involve gatherings are prohibited by the government. Therefore, they still want to worship and seek information related to it through social media. As a follow-up to this information, activities such as religious lectures are also conducted online, utilizing available social media platforms.

#### **4.2. RQ2: Do Generation Z verify the accuracy of the information they encounter on social media?**

The research results indicate that not all Gen Z individuals verify the information they encounter. In some selected articles, the information verification process is outlined using the Ellis ISB model [15,17] and Kuhlthau [18,20]. The Ellis ISB model consists of several stages, namely: starting, chaining, browsing, differentiating, monitoring, extracting, verifying, and ending.[25] In the Ellis Model, the information-seeking process begins



with the identification of information sources, which in this case, are social media. Subsequently, information from various relevant sources is interconnected and supportive, assisting Gen Z in finding the information they actually need. Once the information needs and the interconnections of information sources are identified, the next step is to explore and search for information. Afterward, they will compare the information found with other possible information, whether from other platforms or more recent sources. The next stage is extraction. In this step, information search can also be conducted on secondary information sources. After obtaining relevant information from the initial sources, information verification becomes necessary. This includes seeking reliable information sources, for example, in the study by Farasabila & Rachma [17], official university websites are considered trustworthy sources; hence, Gen Z validates information through these websites.

In the ISB model proposed by Kuhlthau, [26] the process is delineated through the stages of initiation, selection, exploration, formulation, collection, and presentation. During the initiation stage, Generation Z feels the need to acquire information related to education and religion, with social media serving as their primary source of information. In the selection stage, Generation Z generally succeeds in finding the information they require and becomes interested in seeking other types of information. Subsequently, in the exploration stage, many members of Generation Z begin searching for the specific information they need or desire. During the formulation stage, the majority of Generation Z has comprehended information regarding education and religion. Subsequently, in the collection stage, most Gen Z individuals are confident that the information obtained from social media is accurate. Furthermore, they document this information by taking screenshots or sharing it on their timelines, as well as recording the acquired information. In the presentation stage, the majority of Generation Z expresses satisfaction with the information they have obtained and their knowledge of education and religion.

## 5. Conclusion

Generation Z generally seeks various types of information across multiple social media platforms according to their needs. This research finds that Gen Z utilizes social media to gather information on diverse topics such as health, politics, education, fashion, and religion. They access various social media platforms, including websites, WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, LINE, Google Meet, and Zoom Meeting. The majority of them tend to access information through Instagram due to its ease of accessibility.

However, not all Gen Z individuals verify the validity of the information they encounter on social media. Some articles delineate the information validation process undertaken by Gen Z using the ISB models proposed by Ellis and Kuhlthau. This study has limitations, specifically focusing on the research locus in Indonesia, thereby restricting its ability to project field conditions globally. Subsequent research addressing the obstacles and challenges in information retrieval through social media is needed to identify suitable strategies for assisting Gen Z in obtaining the information they need quickly and accurately.

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