

# A STUDY OF GENERATION Z FROM THE COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE OF UNIVERSITIES

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***Abstract:** This paper deals with the examination of high school and college students' preferences for choosing the university who were born in the period of mid 1990s. The goal of the paper is to conduct more detailed analysis of the most common means of communication from the perspective of potential and existing customers (in this case, students). We approach how members of this generation make decisions when they choose a university to study and what content of the information affects their final decisions. Research conducted for this article include at most 900 respondents from among high school students and first year university students. It is evident that students are affected more by information concerning their future than those that make life in the study. A big influence on the decisions of the university have information that students gained from their friends or family who the studied similar schools in the past. We found that within a generation Z the older generation does not have such an influence on their decisions. Our findings also show a degree of decision-making dynamics of two students subgroups comparison - students who doesn't study the university and those who already are studying. The valuable information for business sphere about the way how examined groups of student gather information is presented in the paper. This information can significantly help to understand and better targeting that groups.*

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**JEL Classification:** *M31, I23.*

## **Introduction**

This paper deals with the problem of targeting the generation that has been termed Generation Z. Businesses and organizations offering their products on the consumer goods market or in the government or non-profit sectors to people born in the second half of the 1990's or after the turn of the century are discovering that this generation shows distinctly different behaviour than previous generations. Currently, the children of Generation Z are already studying at university. Some studies have dealt with the problem of educating this generation within academia. However, there are not many studies that have mapped how this generation makes decisions when selecting an institute of higher education. This paper deals with that issue.

Generation Z also demonstrates specific traits, because there was a significant decrease in the number of children born. If up to now we have been dealing with a market that has been termed saturated, the market will have an even greater problem acquiring and maintaining customers with the ascent of a generation that is distinctly smaller demographically. This now reveals the problems facing institutes of higher education (IHE). However, this problem will increase via a domino effect to all other markets and will intensify with the demise of demographically larger generations. This paper focuses on investigating Generation Z – the way they make decisions when opting to study

at an IHE. It also deals with how this generation uses new technology and how they allow the previous generations advise them (whether parental influence is significant). The paper investigates two groups of students. One group is comprised of students in their last year of secondary school (SS) and the second includes students in their first year at an IHE; these are located in various regions across the Czech Republic. The research can help reveal important information for organizations and businesses that are starting to learn how to target Generation Z and to use or confront their specific traits. The research sample contained nearly 900 respondents. This expands on previous research, which was conducted at only one university in the preceding years.

## **1 Objectives and Research Questions**

The paper focuses on communication by organizations offering higher education. The goal is to conduct more detailed analysis of the most common means of communication from the perspective of potential and existing customers (in this case, students). An important factor for each generation is the means they use to find out information. An individual makes decisions concerning their future and contemplates their behaviour on the basis of information with a specific predilection. We determined how the participants (Generation Z) try to find out information and communicate with organizations using various communication channels. The paper presents new information on students' decision-making methods concerning their future, i.e., higher education.

Another objective was to find factors helping describe Generation Z, which is currently entering productive age and is becoming active – by becoming a paying constituent of the market.

The research questions:

- 1) How do different factors influence Generation Z's decision making (how far the school is from home, the quality of accommodation, opportunities for employment, etc.)?
- 2) It is beneficial for universities to divide students into groups and target these individually?
- 3) Is the choice of university dependent on the type of secondary school where the students study?
- 4) In what way are students able to be influenced by media, promotional events, or friends' recommendations?
- 5) Can the previous generations (parent recommendations, parents' field of education, school counsellors) influence Generation Z students' decision making?

## **2 Literature review**

Scientific papers primarily focus on the reasons for choosing higher education, and there are a great many papers that deal with the option of whether or not to continue with education. The process of how American students select universities is presented by Hoxby (2004) as well as Cabrera and La Nasa (2000), for example. The primary focus of these studies is the personal role of a student's character, such as family background, socioeconomic status, etc. In this paper, we opted to focus on how the individuals who do decide to continue their studies select institutions.

If we are to discuss the state of data availability, then most papers use data at the institutional level, which are available and applicable when selecting a university as part of the university application. (Bezmen and Depken, 1998) have compared the applications of 722 American universities and tried to find a correlation between the quality of the students, the degree that studies are completed, costs per student, and the student to faculty ratio. (Monks and Ehrenberg, 1999) investigate the influence that a university's standing in various rankings has on making the decision of whether or not to study at the given university and also whether the ranking influences the amount that it costs to study at the given school. As is evident, when the position in the rankings is higher, the educational costs (including tuition fees, etc.) are also higher, and the costs decrease along with the rankings.

(Manski and Wise, 1983) use microdata to determine how individuals make decisions when selecting a particular school. In their study, they use an approach that incorporates the logit statistical method; computational limitations prevented them from using multinomial logit regression analysis, which uses individual characteristics as a variable instead of attributes based on choice. (Montgomery, 2002) presents a model for selection among trade school graduates; he finds that the combination of costs, university location, and school quality has a significant effect. (Long, 2004) presents a conditional logit model for selecting which institutions to visit using data from 1972, 1982, and 1992. For those who are deciding which school to visit, the aspect of costs and distance is important, and the role of school quality and costs per student play a greater role in 1992 than in 1972. (Avery and Hoxby, 2004) bring the conditional logit model to data derived from original questionnaires given to talented secondary school graduates and find the expected effect that net costs and the institution's quality are influential. It is interesting to note that their results show that distance does not influence decision making on the choice of an IHE. As state,

Society has changed significantly between the period of 1972 to 1992 and 2016. Certain factors influencing the choice of an IHE remain. This paper is focuses on investigating these factors. In a globalized market economy, it is necessary for companies to deal with the factors influencing consumer purchasing behaviour. One of the advantages this brings to companies is faster, more reliable, and skilful managerial decision making as part of commercial policy that is based on using the selected factors as stated in (Novotný and Duspiva, 2014).

An important issue that is necessary to consider is the nature of Generation Z (Behan, 2016), which is currently applying to university. As of the second half of the 20th century, the individual generations have shown increasingly stronger and clearer demarcation. Differences between generations (Stanciu and Stefan, 2016) are becoming deeper, so it cannot be assumed that the current applicants for higher education make decisions using the same criteria as those preceding them. Not only is this intensification of differences the subject of studies between academics, but the "usefulness" of these differences is also being increasingly noticed by politicians, employers, and marketing professionals. Many of today's problems are derived from unclear differences in the expectations of the participating parties. Having the option to at least roughly guess what the other party uses as a basis for decision making can help improve communication and sharing.

Labelling generations using the letters X, Y, and Z (McCrindle and Wolfinger, 2009) is purely a matter of marketing. Each generation has its specific traits, which should be taking into consideration when reaching out to them.

The term Generation Z is used for people that were born during the 1990's and at the beginning of the new millennium (Shatto and Erwin, 2016). Generation Z is so far the most fragmented and varied generation. It is defined by the internet, globalization and the multiculturalism associated with this, terrorism, the financial crisis, the breakdown of the family, and essentially a complete loss of security. Their priorities are education and developing their capabilities. They have entirely different expectations of their access to education than the previous generations. This is a generation surrounded by new technologies and interactivity. Above all, they believe in their own ability to solve all problems in their own way. There are many studies on term of Generation Z or differences between previous generations, e.g. (Mladkova, 2016) or (Panus and Jonasova, 2014).

One of this group's basic features is nearly permanent online presence, which pervades both interpersonal communication as well as customer behaviour and expectations. They quickly familiarize themselves with information and do not want to spend time studying confusing offers. It is a generation that is "used to advertising" and simultaneously exhibits media behaviour distinguished by a preference for moving away from traditional in favour of online media. All this must be taken into consideration when planning marketing activities and communication.

### **3 Research Methods**

The concept for the questionnaire was developed using current theoretical and practical findings relating to the factors influencing applicants when selecting an IHE. The questionnaire's basic structure is derived from a previous questionnaire that was conducted at the University of Pardubice's Faculty of Economics and Administration in 2014 and 2015 (Panus and Jonasova, 2014). A pre-test was conducted before initiating the research; the method of brainstorming was used in connection with this for choosing significant factors affecting applicant behaviour when choosing an institute of higher education. On the basis of the participants' reaction, the questionnaire was improved and expanded to include questions determining the ties between parents' field of study and the choice of IHE specialization, for example. Conversely, some of the questions were eliminated on account of the current questionnaire's objectives. We took into consideration for specific criteria used in (Schüller and Rašticová, 2014).

The questionnaire's criteria were reviewed as part of the pre-test, which was given to students as part of the subject of Marketing Management. Spearman's correlation coefficient was also calculated for determining the amount of dependence between individual questions. With two exceptions, the coefficients were not found to be significant at a 5% level of significance.

The questionnaire itself was conducted from April 26 to May 26, 2016. The questionnaire was prepared electronically as a form on Google site<sup>1</sup>. Students in their first year of further education at the University of Pardubice's Faculty of Economics and Administration were involved in data collection training. Each questioner approached between 5 and 10 respondents directly and also used the services offered by Google directly to approach respondents via email or Facebook. The main condition for further processing was that the respondent must be a current student in the first year of higher education or the fourth year of secondary school. Furthermore, on account of feedback and in order to make

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<sup>1</sup> <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1vb3BiI5NxDMIGk6vWOUg7gAWHAlsTzrZB2d7wahYE/edit#>

sure that the questionnaire was actually filled in by the respondent, each interviewer needed to list the contact information for at least three of their respondents.

The research was not very extensive in order to try to achieve a high rate of return. The questionnaire contained 18 questions. Of these, 6 concerned identities (gender, type of secondary school, home address, parents' education, etc.), 5 questions concerned preferences for their studies (department, city, type of education, etc.), and 7 questions concerned criteria when choosing a school and the use of communication channels.

The research criteria were defined so that the students must be in their first year of higher education or their fourth year of a secondary school with leaving examinations and they must be interested in studying at an IHE. After establishing these criteria, the respondent sample was determined according to the equation 1,

$$n = z^2 * \frac{d * (1 - d)}{(d - r)^2} \quad (1)$$

where

*z* is the required level of certainty (confidence),  
*d* is the acceptable margin of error, and  
*r* is the expected margin of error.

After establishing the criteria, the number of respondents in the sample was determined according to the equation for an unknown sample ( $d=50\%$ ). For calculating the minimum sample size, the confidence level was set at 95%, and we expected the margin of error to be 4%. From the results, it can be seen that it is necessary for a minimum of 600 respondents to participate in the survey in order for the study to be representative according to the criteria we have established.

There were 552 secondary school students who responded and planned to apply to the IHE of their choice. There were 339 students who responded that they were studying their first year of Bachelor's studies, and 45 that either did not list a school or stated they had already finished their first year. These were eliminated from the processing. This means that 891 questionnaires were processed. Next, the questionnaires were checked to see if they were complete. The number of completed questionnaires was sufficiently representative, because there were more than the required 600.

The principles of logic and logical thinking were used during the research and while evaluating the results. They were primarily used when applying methods that are mutually interconnected. There are many potential view on this issue on of this is in (Schüller and Rašticová, 2014) brings general outline of this problem, we used different methods in our paper (Cabrera and La Nasa, 2000). Regarding the previous research, cluster analysis conducted with the goal of accomplishing the subdivision of respondents into individual identifiable clusters.

### **3.1 The Feasibility of Subdivision**

However, the results showed that the method of cluster analysis was not suitable for this respondent sample. The individual clusters were not different enough from each other for it to be possible to identify each of them properly and thus define individual target groups. Therefore, in this case, it is possible to answer to Research Question No. 2: "Is it beneficial for universities to divide students into groups and target these individually?" From the

questionnaire, it can be seen that this method is not an appropriate tool. Consequently, it is better to target the group as a whole.

### 3.2 Identifying Data

The following information was obtained from the respondents using completed questionnaires. Of the respondents, 95% were students engaged in on-campus studies, or had selected this form of study (the group of secondary school students). Both these groups were divided by gender – roughly 65% in favour of female. The respondents were primarily from the Pardubice and Hradec Králové regions.

**Tab. 1: The Type of Secondary Schools Where You Studied**

| Subject of study | SS  | Univ | Total | % total |
|------------------|-----|------|-------|---------|
| general          | 275 | 134  | 409   | 46%     |
| economics        | 69  | 98   | 167   | 19%     |
| social science   | 92  | 49   | 141   | 16%     |
| technical        | 64  | 37   | 101   | 11%     |
| educational      | 27  | 8    | 35    | 4%      |
| medical          | 17  | 6    | 23    | 3%      |
| others           | 8   | 7    | 15    | 2%      |

*Source: authors*

The relationship between where the secondary school student studied and their subsequent choice of type of institute of higher education is a very important issue. Here, we were interested in how this fact influences what type of higher education the respondents selected. This concerns the answer to Research Question No. 3: “Is the choice of university dependent on the type of secondary school where the students are study?”

Respondents answered in the following way to the question concerning the type of secondary school where they studied in Tab 1.

## 4 Evaluating the Questionnaire

### 4.1 Influence of individual factors

Because the answers to the subsequent questions are given using a Likert scale, they can be considered ordinal variables. Verbal responses were given weight according to how important it is for the evaluator. This means that the more the given criterion influences the respondent’s decision making, the greater its weight.

In this section, we deal with the question of the importance of factors such as accommodation, the school’s distance from home, and meal plan choices when making decisions concerning the option of studying at a given institute of higher education. Even though it might seem that this information is not that important, it is a decisive factor for specific groups of students.

Evaluating the acquired data resulted in the following determination and an answer to Question No. 1: “How do different factors influence Generation Z’s decision making

(how far the school is from home, the quality of accommodation, opportunities for employment, etc.)?”

The quality of campus meal plans and accommodation does not influence the choice of an IHE. Much more important factors are opportunities for future employment (69% chose this) and programs of study (55%). Secondary school students next placed emphasis on the possibility of acquiring practice in their field during the course of their studies. For current IHE students, the school’s prestige is rather important. The ordinal dispersion was high for certain factors. Essentially, this means that the answers were dispersed equally across three categories.

This fact plays into the future of younger universities, which cannot build an image on tradition and prestige but can intensify cooperation where work experience is concerned and build their strategy on this differentiation, which also incorporates the requirement of future employment opportunities. If a university with this type of focus makes it possible for its students to obtain good jobs after school – thanks to experience and other activities (competitions, etc.) – it can help compensate for the handicap linked to its lower prestige. Some of these results are shown in Fig. 2. At the same time, such a differentiation can lead to increasing its prestige.

In this section, it is possible to obtain the answer to Research Question No. 4: “In what way are students able to be influenced by media, promotional events, or friends’ recommendations?”

**Fig. 1: How Much Influence Do Individual Factors Have When Selecting an IHE?**

|  | modal category | median category | median value | ordinal dispersion | significant influence | middle influence | no influence |
|--|----------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------|
| The school’s distance from home                  | 2              | 2               | 1,958        | 0,826              | ■                     | ■                | ■            |
| The school’s prestige                            | 2              | 2               | 2,269        | 0,669              | ■                     | ■                | ■            |
| Opportunities for employment in the future       | 3              | 3               | 2,777        | 0,516              | ■                     | ■                | ■            |
| Quality of meal plan                             | 1              | 1               | none         | 0,496              | ■                     | ■                | ■            |
| Possibility to study abroad                      | 1              | 2               | 1,713        | 0,811              | ■                     | ■                | ■            |
| Possibility of acquiring practice in their field | 2              | 2               | 2,327        | 0,733              | ■                     | ■                | ■            |
| Financial difficulty of studies                  | 2              | 2               | 2,088        | 0,756              | ■                     | ■                | ■            |
| Study difficulty (% of successful graduates)     | 2              | 2               | 1,974        | 0,719              | ■                     | ■                | ■            |
| Admissions difficulty                            | 2              | 2               | 2,013        | 0,817              | ■                     | ■                | ■            |
| Programs of study                                | 3              | 3               | 2,595        | 0,629              | ■                     | ■                | ■            |
| Size of city where university is                 | 1              | 2               | 1,598        | 0,785              | ■                     | ■                | ■            |
| Cultural possibilites                            | 1              | 2               | 1,598        | 0,785              | ■                     | ■                | ■            |
| Sports facilities                                | 1              | 1               | none         | 0,764              | ■                     | ■                | ■            |
| Quality of accomodations                         | 1              | 2               | 1,579        | 0,699              | ■                     | ■                | ■            |
| Dormitory close to university                    | 2              | 2               | 2,082        | 0,569              | ■                     | ■                | ■            |
| Friendly school environment                      | 2              | 2               | 2,035        | 0,773              | ■                     | ■                | ■            |
| Others   | 1              | 1               | none         | 0,596              | ■                     | ■                | ■            |

Source: authors

This information is very important to respondents, because it shapes their opinion for further decision making. It was possible to divide the answers into two categories. The respondents stated that information on the given IHE’s website and recommendations from friends studying at the given IHE were the most influential. The ordinal dispersion was very high for some of these factors. This means that the answers were divided equally between the two categories in fig. 3.

**Fig. 2: What Strongly Influences You When Making Your Decision to Study at the Selected IHE?**

|  | modal category | median category | median value | ordinal dispersion | significant influence | no influence |
|--|----------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| Open days of the IHE                                       | 1              | 1               | 0            | 0,954              |                       |              |
| Promotional materials of the IHE                           | 1              | 1               | 0            | 0,943              |                       |              |
| Information gain from web pages                            | 2              | 2               | 1,833        | 0,75               |                       |              |
| Gaudeamus trade show                                       | 1              | 1               | 0            | 0,839              |                       |              |
| Video of universtity                                       | 1              | 1               | 0            | 0,436              |                       |              |
| School counselors recommendations                          | 1              | 1               | 0            | 0,412              |                       |              |
| Parent recommendations                                     | 1              | 1               | 0            | 0,811              |                       |              |
| Recommendations friends who were applying to the given IHE | 1              | 1               | 0            | 0,99               |                       |              |
| Recommendations from friends studying at the IHE           | 2              | 2               | 1,721        | 0,919              |                       |              |
| The opinion of graduates                                   | 1              | 1               | 0            | 0,985              |                       |              |
| I always wanted to study this IHE                          | 1              | 1               | 0            | 0,935              |                       |              |
| Stipend from future employer                               | 1              | 1               | 0            | 0,316              |                       |              |
| Others   | 1              | 1               | 0            | 0,476              |                       |              |

Source: authors

During more detailed analysis, we discovered that the answers to this often differ for future and present IHE students. Half of the respondents from the future IHE students were influenced by the opinion of graduates and friends who were applying to the given IHE.

Open house programs are influential to a degree. This type of activity influenced 40% of the respondents. The current students were also influenced by promotional materials, but this was less than 37% for the SS students.

More than 40% of the respondents had already decided which IHE they were going to. However, this does not mean that they did not list other sources that influenced them. Only a fraction of a percent listed their only influencing factor as the fact that they had always wanted to study at the given IHE. (Of the SS students, 43% listed that they wanted to go to the given school; this was only 27% for the current HE students.) The significant difference between the two groups probably occurred because some students did not get into their first choice.

The question of the influence of a stipend was recently included. This question was listed with an eye to the future. Employees in the present day target the offer of a stipend primarily on students from technical fields, but it is only a question of time before a similar phenomenon will also start to be seen more often for nontechnical fields. It will be interesting to follow this issue.

#### 4.2 The Influence of Media

In this section, it was possible to choose from four categories of questions in Fig. 4. The website of the given IHE unequivocally had the greatest influence. Today, this is the most commonly used medium for IHEs, but with IHEs increasing their use of social networks, the number of applicants saying that they were influenced by social networks has been growing, which supports the answer to the question from the section listed above.



**Fig. 3: Did This Type of Media Influence You When Choosing an IHE?**

|                          | modal category | median category | median value | ordinal dispersion | significant influence | middle influence | small influence | no influence |
|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Website of the given IHE | 4              | 3               | 3,457        | 0,623              |                       |                  |                 |              |
| Social network           | 3              | 3               | 2,574        | 0,728              |                       |                  |                 |              |
| Radio                    | 1              | 1               | none         | 0,391              |                       |                  |                 |              |
| Billboards               | 1              | 1               | none         | 0,414              |                       |                  |                 |              |
| News paper               | 1              | 2               | 1,547        | 0,601              |                       |                  |                 |              |
| Promotional materials    | 3              | 3               | 2,653        | 0,743              |                       |                  |                 |              |
| Addressed materials      | 1              | 1               | none         | 0,471              |                       |                  |                 |              |
| Others                   | 1              | 1               | none         | 0,491              |                       |                  |                 |              |

Source: authors

The significance of individual web servers was also examined. From this data, an IHE can use the possibilities listed in the table as a basis for where to invest their financial resources. According to the data that has been obtained and listed here, the greatest effect is achieved on the website [kampusaturite.cz](http://kampusaturite.cz) at 39.2% and the overview of IHEs presented by the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports at 33.2%. In next place were [jobs.cz](http://jobs.cz) at 29.7%, [vejska.cz](http://vejska.cz) at 25.9%, the list of schools at PZ Scio at 18.5%, and [www.scio.cz/nsz](http://www.scio.cz/nsz) at 16.6%. Because attention spans tend to be scattered when studying information on the internet, it is possible to recommend the combination of a number of the most visited web servers for achieving the greatest effect.

The new phenomenon of social networks. Their influence has been recorded as follows: for both groups of respondents, the answers were similar – 47% of the respondents used the Facebook network, and 41% answered that they did not use any social network when selecting an IHE.

In this section, we explored Research Question No. 5: “Can the previous generations (parent recommendations, parents’ field of education, school counsellors) influence Generation Z students’ decision making?” These groups make up a significant percentage of the people in the life of Generation Z, and it is interesting to investigate how they participate in their decision making.

School counsellors have absolutely no influence on selection. Here, this is probably a bias caused by generational shift – Generation Z does not allow itself to be advised by the older generation. They need to try things out for themselves, though if they do seek out advice it is from their peers. As to school counsellors’ influence, this fact has remained the same for many years before we conducted similar research.

Parental advice influenced only 28% of the respondents. Again, this can be seen through the context of differing generations – how respondents imagine their education and what they expect from it. However, the parents’ field of specialization was an unmistakable influence. For example, 76% of the respondents that are studying or want to study technical subjects have a father who went to an institute of technology. The respondent might not even be aware of this influence. They do not attach importance to parental advice, but they follow in their parents’ academic footsteps. The following tables depict only the selected (predominant) specialization.

## **5 A Comparison of the Two Respondent Groups**

SS students placed emphasis on the option of gaining experience in their field as part of their education. For current students, the prestige of the school where they are studying tends to be rather important. For both groups, the influence of information from the IHE's website clearly dominated (75%) as well as the recommendation of friends at the selected institute of higher education (69% for SS and 57% for HE). Current HE students were influenced by promotional materials (40%), but it was less than 37% for SS students. Future students were also influenced by the opinion of graduates, friends, and their peers who had applied to the given IHE at around 50% in comparison with IHE students at 39%.

SS respondents gave priority to a friendly school environment above a school's distance from their home. This means that the atmosphere in which its services are offered is more important (the atmosphere surrounding the actual classrooms; communication with their department of study, educators, and department representatives; student interactions; etc.). They have yet to care that much about means of transportation or related difficulties. Respondents already studying at an IHE now possibly understand how the IHE's accessibility influences the quality of their life and their comfort.

As society's level of technology increases (Castells, 2011), emphasis on the financial perspective could possibly be lowered, see Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This can drain certain schools of their applicants, i.e., those who are currently making decisions based on how expensive they are.

However, an even greater challenge – and not only for universities – will be to react to the significantly increased influence of friends and people who have experience with a given service. How to influence existing students – how to satisfy them and make them recommend the given school – has become a key question for universities. Likewise, there is the question of how to communicate with graduates and use them for sharing positive references. It will be an even greater challenge to influence SS applicants, with whom they are not in direct contact. Universities need to find ways to connect with SS students and impress them with a positive image of the given university. This is a question for public relations (cooperation with secondary schools, events, appropriate communication on social networks already focusing on younger secondary school classes, articles, etc.). However, this is a matter for the long term.

### **Conclusion**

This paper offers an overview for organizations such as (but not only) universities on to how to communicate with the generation of young secondary school students who would like to continue with their studies.

Students are very familiar with the present communication trends and know how to seek out large amounts of information. However, there is still the question of how students are able to process this information. An important issue is that students focus more on options for future employment than on the type and quality of accommodations or meal plans directly on campus. Great emphasis is also placed on the option of professional experience and school prestige. From this information, it is possible to deduce that students are more interested in information concerning their future than in information that will make their lives more pleasant during their studies.

Information that students obtain from their friends and acquaintances who are studying or have studied at the given school strongly influences decision making about universities. Therefore, just as in other service sectors, the experiences of people in the individual's surrounding environment who are able to influence them are very important. This fact is important in many areas of marketing. It is also necessary to focus on it when building brands, image, and a sense of belonging – both as they relate to existing IHE students and when communicating with graduates.

Relatively less influential are events such as open houses, promotional materials, etc. However, it is also important to take time to focus on this type of support, because it acts as supplemental publicity and is definitely an important part of building image and branding.

There is an interesting fact concerning the area of intergenerational influence. For Generation Z, the older generation does not have the same influence on decision making as they had in previous generations. For the most part, this generation needs to try everything out for themselves, though there is a very small percentage of respondents that were conscious of the importance of their parents' recommendation.

It is possible to find relatively large differences between current students and those not yet studying at an IHE. This is noticeable precisely because secondary school students do not yet have this type of experience, and they cannot relate to features such as those describing an IHE's quality. However, it is undoubtedly true for both groups that they primarily search for information on a given school's website. Another way both groups are similar is their disinterest in printed media; rather, they devote time to electronic media and share much information through applications such as Facebook, etc.

Our research illustrates the way students select their future education and can thus help universities with their promotional activities. Our conclusions also point to a certain dynamic shown by students when choosing the type of school for their studies by comparing two subcategories – students that are not yet studying at an institute of higher education and those who have already begun their studies. Our research is also able to demonstrate the way the current generation of young people think and how they obtain information about the surrounding world, which can help with understanding this group of people – even in the business world.

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