Abstract
Known as the true ‘digital natives’ with ‘digital’ ingrained in their genetic materials, this extremely tech ‘ savoir-faire ’ platoon, branded as ‘Generation Z’ is constantly and incontestably surrounded by and immersed in digital technology like laptops, tablets, smart phones and regular mobiles most of the time in their 24 hour day schedules. This paper tries to explain the natural affinity of Generation Z with tech gadgets. It also presents a case study based on the behaviour exhibited by a Gen Zee, a fourteen year old boy, his extreme attachment to mobile games / smart phones, his interests and mannerisms. Academic research papers from popular online databases/resources based on select criteria were looked for the purpose for relevant literature background. Further a case study based on personal experiences shared by the author’s acquaintance has been incorporated. While a few general suggestions are offered at the end for all those who fall in the year-range of Gen Zees, the case invites students and teachers, the principal constituents of the academic community to examine the associated predicaments and deal with the issues related to the same.

Keywords: Gen Z; Generation Z; Gen Zee; Techilicious; Generation; Digital Natives; Digital Technology; Mobile; Smart Phones; Teaching; Case Study.

1 Introduction:
Recall the precious golden old days when we had to personally travel to the nearby libraries, or even far off, eagerly wait for the news to be aired on radio or broadcasted on television or even hang on for the morning dailies along with tea to get an insight into the world around us; wait to get back home or to a telephone booth nearby to have precious and to-the-point conversation with a friend or relative; walk down to a friend’s place to take down the notes missed in the class; make a list of the songs you wanted to get recorded; write letters and send hand-made cards to friends and cousins; go to grandma’s place to note down your favourite recipes; click photographs with the cine-camera and wait for the complete roll to finish to see how one looked and finally labouriously prepare the hard and heavy photo-albums…….

Does this not sound a bit alien to this so called ‘Generation Z’? Of course, as in all probability it cannot recall having seen or gone through any such things as it had most certainly no such experiences. Generation Z, the generation born between the years 1995-2009 (en.wikipedia.org), the first generation who has not at all witnessed or experienced the pre-internet aeon has recently or will shortly be entering the workforce. They now are seen everywhere, easily recognizable with their fingers and thumbs holding and pressing on to buttons or merely touching away into instantaneous tête-à-tête composed entirely of unnecessary and excessively punctuated, shoddily constructed, mainly aural or visual, but for sure grammatically hay-wire sentences.

What about their younger and smarter brothers and sisters? Addressed as DTs, the ‘digital toddlers’ who are way ahead of their senior counter-parts are obviously in queue behind them but most certainly before them in terms of being not only surrounded by but completely immersed in tech-gadgets. Gen A or Alpha as they are called are the only generation who can comfortably sit, smile, converse and sleep with technology. They are the sharpest and smartest of all to join the gang, with straightforward approach and no-nonsense attitude. They command as well as demand.

Section 2 focuses on literature review relating to various names being given to Generation Z, its characteristics and connectedness with digital technology gadgets. Section 3 presents a case study based on a young boy’s behaviour, extremely fond of games on smart phones, followed by Section 4, the concluding section.
2 Gen Z – Theoretical Background:

2.1 Generation Z – The Basics and Its Digital Engagement:

The word ‘Generation’ is explained by McCrindle and Wolfinger (2010) as the set of individuals, born in the same life period, in the same life age, in the same time period, affected and influenced by similar technology and experiences.

Generation Z, generally used for kids born between 1994 and 2010 (Hayzlette, 2016), by others to be born between 1995-2010 (Kelly.iu.edu, 2016) and referred for a set of young people who are rebuilding every faction of contemporary life, from office to market; politics to education and down to the basic structure of the family (Tabscott, 2009), often called by different names – zappers or switchers or instantly online age group (Mutte, 2004), the next generation (Mysirlaki and Paraskeva, 2010), net generation (Tabscott, 2009), digital natives (Prensky, 2001, Palfrey and Gasser, 2008; Jones and Czerniewicz, 2010), Generation M (Roberts et al., 2005), wired generation (Goodstein, 2007), post millennials (Oblinger and Oblinger, 2005), Gamer Generation (Carstens and Beck, 2005), Homo Zapiens (Veen, 2003), Google Generation (Rowlands et al. 2008) internet-in-its pockets generation (Knowledge.wharton, 2015) and centennials (Hayzlette, 2016) among others. Different researchers from diverse areas have attempted to identify this age band along with its features that set it apart from earlier generations (Strauss and Howe, 2006; Lancaster and Stillman, 2003; Martin and Tullgan, 2001; Zemke et al., 1999).

Also branded as the new Silent Generation (Saldik, 2007), and the brood of Generation X, it is expected and believed to be the most eco-friendly generation in contrast to their earlier counterparts (Korean Times, 2007), though a little less loyal and ever ready to change their workplaces (Mutte, 2004) with extremely high level of doubt with companies they work in and thereby more apt to quit their job and/or change their careers more speedily than Generation Y (Korean Times, 2007). This generation is categorized by fast shifts, quicker life rhythm, vigorous use of technologies and web applications, autonomy, customization, cooperation and teamwork, enquiry, morality, jolliness, rapidity and novelty (Mutte, 2004; Tabscott, 2009). Moreover, this generation longs for alternatives in all processes and/or the perception of choice and desires structure and personalization in all they do (Howe and Strauss, 2000). It is the generation which has witnessed extensive use of electronic gadgets and digital technologies like the internet and social networking sites and are branded as tech-savvy, globally connected (in the virtual world), flexible, smarter, and non-judgmental and broad-minded of various cultures (Grail Research, 2010). Shaped and trained by technology almost from birth with their foremost lingo being a technological one, being exceedingly technology dependent, they are the first global and most technologically literate, most scientifically and socially empowered generation ever.

Having brought up in a rapidly moving and ever-changing society; they place more importance on pace than accuracy. They think in hyperlinks, juggle between various tasks and soak up information from numerous sources (McCrindle, 2006; Grail Research, 2010), and are considered to be duly well-educated generation, having started school early, and likely to carry on with learning comparatively longer than other generations (McCrindle, 2010).

An all time connected generation (Palfrey and Gasser, 2008) it is stylish, amazing pragmatic and prudent, and according to Tabscott (2009) they’re innate collaborators, who take pleasure in a dialogue, not lectures. ‘Born with a chip’, Generation Z is the foremost generation of children to have access on a extensive level to online communication, mobiles and inter-active computer games at their homes (Berk, 2009; Abram and Luther, 2004). In many households, the children are more comfortable with digital technology compared to parents, giving them a source of specialist power (Tufte and Rasmussen, 2010; Tinson and Nancarrow, 2005; McDermott et al. 2006; Ekström, 2007; Sutherland and Thomson, 2003). This power has had the effect of enabling children to ask for and exercise independent choice in decisions which affect them at a much younger age (Sutherland and Thomson, 2003). They may claim an equal right to adults to have their viewpoint heard (Thomson et al., 2007) and like them use this right liberally on social networking and mobile media, developing credence in ways of articulateness within peer groups (Bassioni and Hackley, 2014). Unlike children of previous generations, Generation Z children are therefore different in certain aspects (Strauss and Howe, 2006; Lancaster and Stillman, 2003; Martin and Tullgan, 2001; Zemke et al., 1999). The potent point of
distinction is believed to occur from their early contact with and inclusion of digital communications: particularly, video and computer games which actually have generated concerns over reduced attention on conventional education and minimal exercise and outdoor play. Concerns often hub around the role of video games, originally intended for young adults, in the lives of these children. Video games, have become a central part of the everyday life of many children (Snyder, 2000) which in fact are preferred to TV (Griffiths, 1996). Although, video games have been shown to optimistically influence some aspects of children’s learning, concentration and remembrance/recall, another prevalent supposition is that video games are anti-social, yet the increase in online playing has created a virtual community. A community of parents have an apprehension that such online access makes children susceptible to the influence of unknown individuals (Gunter et al., 2004), but there is emerging corroboration that children connect online with other children that they already are acquainted with (Bassiouni, 2013). There is also a conjecture that the game consol itself becomes an ‘electronic friend’ (Selnow, 1984) and hinders the augmentation of social skills in children (Bacigalupa, 2005). Nevertheless, several existing games allow communiqué with other players and teamwork on strategic tasks, opening possibilities for co-operation, competition and conflict (Buckingham and Green, 2003; Olson et al., 2008) much like face-to-face forms of socialisation. There remains the possibility that electronically connected socialization is different to in person socialisation, possibly with regard to the physical expressions of body language. However, emerging evidence suggests that online communication is often an add-on to, and not an alternative for, face-to-face interaction for some children (Bassiouni, 2013). Generation Z children are considered as proficient human beings rather than growing but lacking humans (Qvortrup, 1994; Lee, 2001; Ekström, 2007).

3 Case Study
Case Character – Ruven (name changed)
Grade – Nine
Age – Fourteen
State and Country of Origin – New Delhi, India
He can be described as an extremely bubbly, active or to be precise hyper-active and agile kid full of vigour and strength. He was also a non-stop chatterer with extreme confidence for all wrong reasons, disinterested in studies, non-focused, always willing to play and jump. A weird style of teasing and bullying his junior friends and kid brothers is what gave him a high. Glued to the latest gadgets, he easily had access to since he was around six, he had absolutely no sense of control over his thoughts and fingers. What was required to calm and pacify this lad was a smart phone and his world would certainly become beautiful and worth living. He never realized the enormity or severity of side effect or consequences his mannerisms and smart phone addictions caused him and people around. Never willing to listen or even hear his elders, he would just start uttering words, singing songs, banging doors or screaming in funky ways. He would be unperturbed even if someone pointed out or requested him to stop or change for the better. Sometimes, when scolded loudly or his ways imitated to make him realize about his uncomfortable behaviour he would even start crying making the other person feel like a villain. The way he walked and moved around the house was just to attract the much needed attention and would feel elated when got it after disturbing others. Hitting small kids, unnecessarily giggling in the most intolerable tone and picking and swinging objects not required to be picked were his regular styles. Obviously, exercising control after looking and hearing him was not an easy task considering the level and intensity of actions exhibited by him. Trying to retain one’s sanity was almost impossible and there was no question of expecting sanity from him. Despite years of lecturing and tutoring in both positive and negative ways his ears, head and heart would pay no heed to requests, counselling or shouting. In his own sweet world he wondered, unaware of the impatience, pain and anxieties caused to not only people around him but most of all himself. He remained extremely indifferent in situations that required at least some kind of action or re-action be it positive or negative. Studies and subjects he hated and wishing someone or seeing off friends and relatives least occurred in his mind. Bombarding like a volcano to pick up goodies served to guests, ignoring all else was his trademark style. Somebody resting and sleeping and he wouldn’t shout that was next to impossible.
Mother and father dear and all uncles and aunts tried their best in their own special best recipe way to counsel and coach but it seemed only the supernatural could be of any help. Restless he was and restlessness he caused. Upsetting someone wouldn’t cause any kind of guilt or regret but it was like breathing air or drinking water. If one wanted to see him happy and a non-trouble maker television, mobile and video games was the best solution. What would become of him? How to change and constructively channelize his loads of energy which seemed to be squandering remained a challenge. Members of the family had always understood and were sticking to the small regular patient dozens of love, care and understanding rather than the heavy, one time solution or remedy of loud outbursts which would prove detrimental but it seemed none were working.

Then there was this extremely positive and impressive side too that could not be sidetracked or ignored. An artist, he was, wherein you just point and you would get the result reproduced, a complete replica even better than the original on wood, mirror, paper, cloth, plastic, rubber or any material you would name in the form of a beautiful, striking and gorgeous sketch. His aptitude, interest and finesse in art and craft could most certainly not be brushed off. Having won accolades in school for his art he eagerly waited for competitions and would enthusiastically participate in the same. He was famous among his subject teachers for all the art work drawn in between and end of the papers of even English and Mathematics. You annoy him and there he would instantly scribble and infact draw the most difficult sketch in a matter of minutes. He was highly appreciated for his skill by both family and friends and knew his strength well. Examination fever he never got and did not develop even the so called positive levels of stress called eustress. Considered to be most obedient in school, he was the most notorious at home. Loudly wishing aunties and uncles in the park he played in, with a mischievous giggle or sound was his style he couldn’t leave. Smart phones had made this smart kid a little more stubborn. It wasn’t as if he didn’t have an idea of what he was doing or going into but it was that it always happened and it was OK. Junk food was what he craved for along with surfing and downloading the content he desired on the internet.

No parent would give up seeing their kids wander in wrong directions or loose out. Ruven’s parents too wouldn’t. Father would be too polite, too accommodating and always backing him up like nothing had ever happened. Being always supportive of all ways leading to real learning in life was what he thought. That was his style. He had been a major source of supplier of these so called tech gadgets, his introducer to the tech world and endorser of all his whims and fancies but never took keen interest in trying to prune or control the destructive elements in a constructive way. He would infact get upset and annoyed on the person pointing about Ruven’s behaviour to him and defend his actions in all possible ways. Mother would be the one to encourage and motivate him to improve his grades and work hard on his artistic side being an artist herself. She would yearn for his attention which she occasionally got after loads of both mild and wild explanations. Little fights would sometimes result in heavy heated arguments among parents due to Ruven’s habit of postponing the so called urgent and desired things appropriate to the time and age. Smart phones and other gadgets were robbing him of the real childhood and he had already entered his teens. Ruven would keep running his fingers on the gadgets carefree and unaware of its consequences and feel restless all the time. A sedentary lifestyle coupled with poor diet and focus on videogames and mobiles was definitely not making him sharper. Is there a solution to the problem that never did exist before these smart phones were introduced or is the problem elsewhere? Had it been too late now or was their still time to make this smart, brainy artist realize to use his fingers in a more productive and creative way and to master all odds using the intellect he was blessed with rather than just letting everything just flow.

3.1 Case Questions (Worth Contemplating):

1. What does the case reveal?
2. Describe Ruven’s personality. Can Ruven deploy his personality traits in a positive and constructive manner?
3. In which areas or fields can Ruven cultivate and develop his skills based on his interests and personality?
4. How can Ruven’s parents cope up with the indifferent and casual attitude of Ruven? Is there a better way, Ruven’s parents can handle him?

5. ‘There isn’t anything weird or different or worrying about Ruven. It’s the Generational change’. Discuss.

This case study is based on the personal experiences of the author’s acquaintance shared with her. Actual name has been omitted to protect confidentiality.

4 Conclusion:
Gen Z, the so called ‘iPad generation’, ‘Zees’, ‘Zeds’, ‘Screenagers’, ‘Smartphone Babies’ or whatever you might call them, wish to hop into latest pursuits without spending too much time in their classrooms being formally groomed. With all kinds of information at their disposal, merely on the touch of a screen, they are particularly impatient and rarely accept things too soon without thorough analysis. Although they wish to try out the whole universe as an experience, they know the track or path they wish to traverse. Defined with attributes such as - pluralists, connected, liberal, fashion and career-oriented, Zees gauge the worth of a thing rightly by experience and practice rather than by knowledge and tutoring alone. Indubitably, it must be appreciated that technology is a blessing and boon for this generation but only if it is used with wisdom. It is fortunate that oodles of information is easily accessible to them in seconds, but how, where and when it is being put to use would essentially determine its blessedness.

With a dazzling array of tools and applications of social media like WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, Google plus, Youtube, MySpace, Bwithyou and Colourlovers among many others readily available at their disposal, it is not surprising to get easily attracted and addicted to these. There is no harm in using, but off-course within limits. Internet their native language, friendships, relationships and break-ups merely involve keying in through e-mails or instant messaging. Hop-on is fast and smooth just like from one web-site to another. Feelings are depicted through virtual emoticons rather than real emotions. There is an impulse to be prompt in replying. There is a second by second, to and fro exchange of information regardless of where you are - be it with family, the bedroom trying to sleep, library and classroom trying hard to study, playground trying to get into some sports, garden to enjoy nature’s beauty or even a loo. This promptness brings in a false sense of being agile, more adept, techno savvy and acceptable among the crowd. There is a temporary elation and thrill in even knowing every non-essential detail of even barely known people. The brain becomes a mere witness to the traffic-jam of its circuits, threatening a shutdown of its analytical and judgemental wing and therefore sadly prematurely retired due to disuse atrophy. This eventually results in reduced focus and concentration and retention difficulties. There is an extreme hesitation and coyness in face-to-face conversations which obviously are incomplete, unclear and full of lackadaisical attitude. With evolution of mankind from apes to human, from a quadruped structure, a C spine and underdeveloped brain to bipedalism, S shaped curved spine and a highly developed intellect, there seems to be a reversal or devolution now with only circuits at play and not brain per-se.

Zees should stop considering and believing these easily accessible privileges to them as their birthright. Not having experienced the frustration and delight of going through an encyclopaedia, thesaurus or dictionary, this is the first generation to have hitherto exclusively by surfing/browsing the
web or using social media. Listening to music at times is absolutely essential and OK but constantly plugging one’s ears with earphones only makes one miss the serene music of nature. Bow your heads as a regard and respect for your elders not just to dwell or sink into the gadget in your hands. Do not fall into the trap of this so as to eventually get addicted to it.

Remember to open your books at times, lest you forget how they look like. Use of pocket dictionary at times should help as an extra effort is involved. Write and jot down a few notes, rather than clicking through smart-phones to find your way. This will only recharge and freshen up your senses. Enjoy quality time with your parents who obviously have not downloaded but have happily and with great effort given birth to you.

I don’t know what I desire and want but I desire and want everything. I am a rest-less generation. Being unconventional is in your genes, GREAT! Nevertheless, remember to use this unconventionality to explore the unconventional and interesting avenues and careers to your advantage. SMARTY you just need to be WISE.

Note:
1 Year range details for Generation Z and some of the titles for Generation Z picked up from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Z

References


