

HOW DO CANADIAN GENERATION Y CONSUMERS USE SOCIAL MEDIA WEBSITES?

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ABSTRACT

In Canada, Generation Y is an extremely socially engaged group. The purpose of this study is to examine the social media habits of Canadian Generation Y customers. Generation Y is synonymous with social media use, and the researcher is interested in learning more about what they do on social media in general. These folks utilize social media on a regular basis to interact with their friends and loved ones, as well as to research information and learn new things. This study examines what Canadian Generation Y consumers believe about security and privacy when they use social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Being that such a large amount of information has been made available on social media, the researcher is interested in knowing whether the interview subjects have any security or privacy concerns and if so what those issues are. On average, 60 percent of those who responded to the questionnaire study spent 1 to 100 hours each month on the Internet, according to the information gathered through the questionnaire survey. Approximately three-quarters of those who answered the survey said they spend between 1 and 20% of their Internet time shopping. Ninety-three percent of those who answered the survey said Facebook was their preferred social media platform, with YouTube coming in second with 87 percent.

Keywords: Generation Y, Social Media, Media Websites, Young Consumers.

INTRODUCTION

Canadian Generation Y is a very socially active generation. They perceive life to be lived to the fullest, by spending quality time with their families, loved ones, and friends, enjoying what they like to do most, and have a work-life balance. This generation is accessing the Internet at their homes, offices, and vehicles, at any time as the Internet transcends time and place (Ahmed & Ganapathy, 2021). Google is the most preferred search engine because of its incomparable search results. The attributes that lure them to the retail websites are product variety, ease of use, price, product attributes, customers' feedback, service reliability, convenience, promotions, item return policy, warranties, free transportation, and the reputation of retail websites and the products (Bynagari & Ahmed, 2021; Ganapathy et al., 2021; Ahmed, 2021; Hussain et al., 2021; Manojkumar et al., 2021; Paruchuri et al., 2021; Siddique & Ahmed, 2015).

This study focuses on the social media use of Canadian Generation Y consumers. Generation Y is synonymous with social media use and the researcher wants to know what they use social media for. This media is commonly used by these individuals daily to communicate with their friends and loved ones and for finding information.

This study describes what Canadian Generation Y consumers think of security and privacy when using social media. As extensive information is being posted on social media, the

researcher is interested to know whether the interviewees have any concerns for security and privacy and if so, what they are.

Canadian Generation Y is heavy users of social media and retailers should take every advantage to promote their products and services by utilising this media. Nevertheless, the importance of security and privacy on social media cannot be ignored. Users who feel secure about their privacy using Facebook are more positive about advertising on Facebook and make positive comments about the features of Facebook (Celebi, 2015). They are also more willing to express themselves and recommend their friends support certain subject matters. Facebook does not identify false information in legal description or automated actions and is dependent on the users' consciousness in reporting such occurrences (Krombholtz, et al. 2012).

METHODOLOGY

The data collected through the questionnaires and personal interviews has been discussed to provide a better understanding for answering the research questions. The results are compared with previous research from literature review in terms of adoption matters. According to the data collected through the questionnaire survey, 60 per cent of the respondents spent 1 to 100 hours per month on the Internet on an average. About three-quarters of the respondents spent between 1 to 20 per cent of their Internet time in shopping. Ninety-three per cent of the respondents chose Facebook as the main choice for social media while YouTube came in second at 87 per cent.

Canadian Generation Y consumers were asked what they think of small businesses' use of social media for selling products and services. There has been a tremendous increase of retailers using social media for advertising.

In addition, Canadian Generation Y consumers were asked what their desired features for social media are. This question was asked due to the growth of social media use and advertising on these platforms.

Additionally, Canadian Generation Y consumers were asked about advertisement for social media. Generation Y consumers are strongly synonymous with social media usage. It is becoming a trend among retailers to advertise on social media to increase the size of their captive audience.

Finally, Canadian Generation Y consumers were asked what they think of small businesses' use of social media for selling products and services. There has been a tremendous increase of retailers using social media for advertising.

Overviews: How Do Use Social Media?

Social networking websites that generate revenue from advertising are addressing privacy issues by allowing users more control over their privacy data but advertisers are still able to profile their customers (Tucker, 2014). Facebook users are found to be twice as likely to respond positively to customised content.

Figure 1 below shows the use of the Six C's model for security and privacy for social media based on the data. The context is based on the lack of effect of security and privacy over Canadian Generation Y consumers' use of social media. The condition is based on personal information, security and privacy controls, and identity checking as to why Canadian Generation Y consumers are unaffected by security and privacy concerns when using social media. The causes are personal information, security and privacy controls, and identity checking. The category is called the importance of security and privacy on social media. The consequences are

the causes of personal information, security and privacy controls, and identity checking do not affect the concern of security and privacy of the use of social media by Canadian Generation Y consumers. Covariance is based on strategies to support the causes of the unimportance of security and privacy concerns. Contingencies are based on non-disclosure personal information, heightened security and privacy controls, and verification of identity checking.

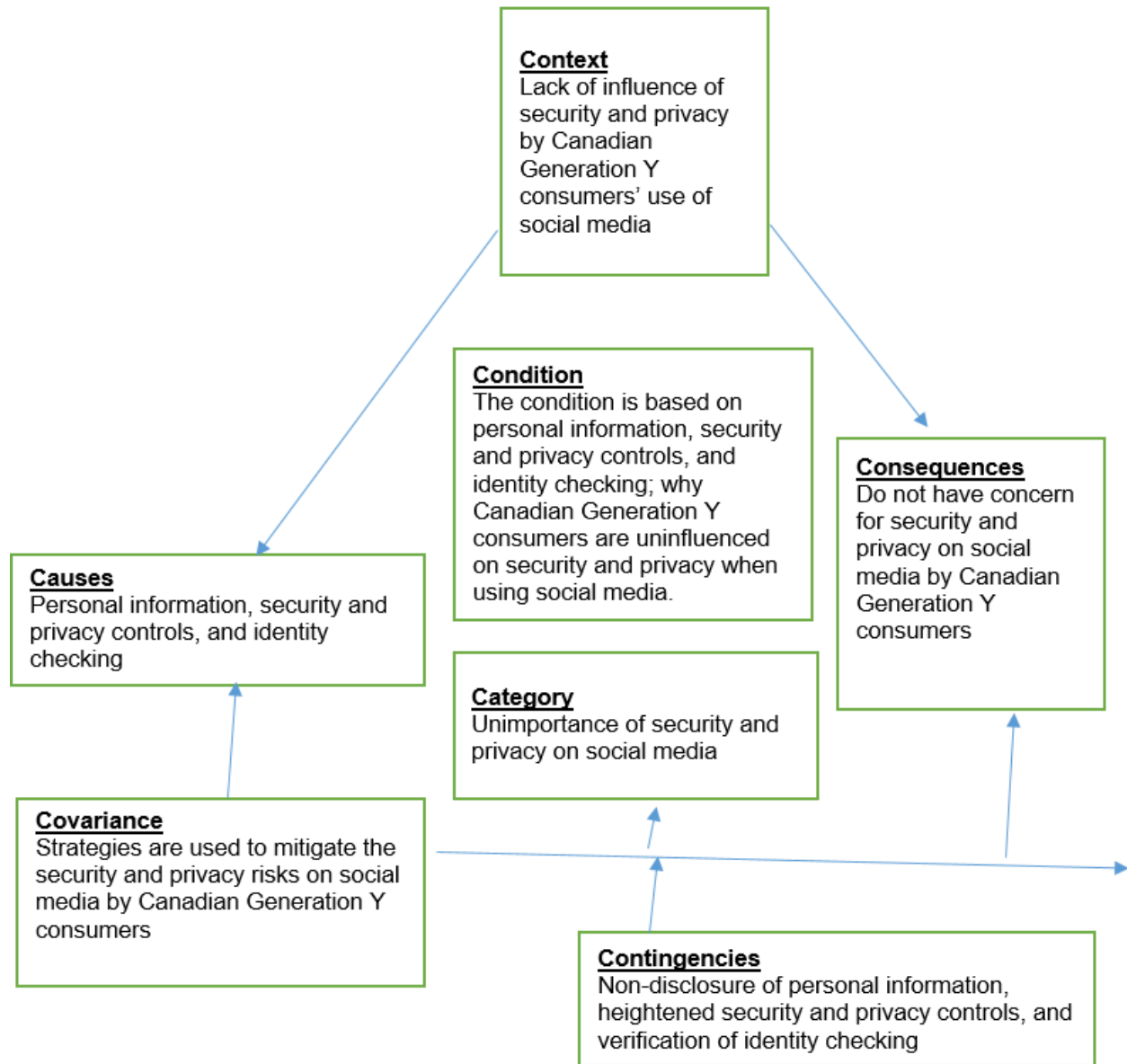


Figure 1
SECURITY AND PRIVACY FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

Context

The context is based on the lack of influence of security and privacy over Canadian Generation Y consumers' use of social media.

Condition

The condition is based on personal information, security and privacy controls, and identity checking, which are required for Canadian Generation Y consumers not to be influenced by security and privacy when using social media.

Causes

The causes are (a) personal information, (b) security and privacy controls, and (c) identity checking.

Non-Disclosure of Personal Information

Through non-disclosure of personal information on social media by consumers, security and privacy risks can be alleviated. According to A1, *"In general, retailers are able to promote and advertise their products in social media and their websites without many hiccups. Social media sites such as Facebook are not as safe as retail websites because the nature of Facebook is to post personal information by users. Take, for example, although a woman passed away one or two years ago, the latest updated information on the Facebook still shows that she is alive."* A17 points out that *"Social media is not that private, and security needs to be enhanced."* A5 states, *"Security and privacy should be enhanced, as many people are getting their sites hacked, and people's names and photos have been tampered with."*

The ability to connect with so many people by means of social media as compared to various degrees of concern regarding security and privacy serve as a mitigating act that social media has become a cliché. A26 thinks that *"Facebook can ruin your life. Hackers can pretend to be you and can cause a lot of damage."* This can be prevented by not disclosing sensitive personal information on Facebook.

Knowledge is significant in the view of Generation Y. A6 explains that as many social media users are young people and *"These youngsters may not have enough life experience and/or be mature enough to understand the photos and content they post on social media can have negative impact on them in future. They need to be aware and be told of any implications of their actions."* These users may not have the life experience to gauge the impact of their actions at a younger age. A8 appeals for awareness by expressing that *"There seems to be no issues on security and privacy on social media. Social media users should not be sharing information that is too personal unless wanting to review information they want to share."* The interviewee expresses that there are no security and privacy issues, but users should practice self-censorship. Similarly, A13 points out that *"One cannot place all his information on the Facebook indiscriminately."* This re-enforces the view that personal responsibility is deemed to be important by some Generation Y interviewees.

Users should give a second thought to posting personal information on social media as this information can be viewed publicly and the information may be negatively perceived by others, who may not analyse the whole aspect of an issue but rather the "face value." It is also not

practical for Facebook to check whether all its billions of members are still alive. Social media is just a platform for users to pose information and it is not a publishing entity.

Some users are more concerned about security and privacy than others. *“Security and privacy for social media is bound by the terms of security and privacy of the specific program used. If a user uses Facebook, that individual has granted Facebook the ability to access the information revealed”*, points out A2. A3 stated, *“When it comes to security and privacy, it depends on individuals. A lot of people tend to keep information exposed to the online public. Individuals should be wise and protect themselves by not posting personal information such as telephone number and credit card number.”* Just like any other public domains, adult users who have freedom of expression should be mature and responsible enough to know what information can and cannot be posted on a public domain.

Users should be aware that if they disclose their personal information on public social media, the public will be able to access it. It is best that sensitive personal information should be kept private as it may come back and haunt users. This may occur in the form of employers researching their perspective employees, authorities checking on their citizens’ personal information, or unscrupulous individuals trying to take advantage of the users’ personal information for monetary gains.

Some of the sample group expressed concerns specifically related to either security or privacy or both. According to A9, *“Social media has security, but privacy is a concern. Anybody can take individual pictures and read information on social media.”* Alternatively, A22 deliberates that *“Privacy on social media can be controlled whereas security is more questionable.”* A15 expressed that *“There is no security and privacy on social media and any network is not safe. People can alter a photo, post a photo online, and claim that a particular woman is his wife.”* A28 shared the same opinion as A15. The researcher suggested that since photos can be tampered with, it is best not to post photos on social media. Users can still communicate with others within their private groups.

Furthermore, many interviewees express concerns overall in relation to a lack of security and privacy. A21 highlights that *“Security and privacy on social media do not really exist and they are tenuous. Social media seems to be easy to get people’s profile hacked.”* A23 shares the same view by expressing that *“Security and privacy on social media are still a problem. A lot of things are being exposed on the virtual world and people’s privacy is being invaded.”* A30 rationalised by affirming that *“Social media has to be strict and private to keep people comfortable because there is a lot of personal stuff.”* A20 argued that he feels that there is no security and privacy on social media, mentioning that *“If you do not believe, do not say it.”* However, according to him, he does not have the experience and technical expertise to discuss security and privacy.

Security and Privacy Controls

Security and privacy controls on social media can help offset the security and privacy risks on social media. A5 feels that *“Security and privacy should be enhanced, as many people are getting their sites hacked, and people’s names and photos had been tampered with.”* A24 is more analytical, stating, *“When it comes to security and privacy on social media, it depends on what the users intend to post.”* He mentioned that *“if it is private, it can pose problem and it is the person’s problem to begin with.”* A7 claimed that *“Security and privacy on social media is good, and Facebook has features that can keep everything private.”* A25 and A29 are not too concerned with security and privacy on social media as it is rare just like other mishaps. There is

a need for social media to clearly categorise their information control to different categories of people based on the personal information's sensitivity. Information shared between family members and close friends should be different from what is shown publicly. The user interface activating these controls should be placed on the webpage so that it can be clearly seen.

Progressively, Facebook, the largest social media website, has made amendments to its security and privacy controls. A16 has had an experience and explains by saying that "*Security and privacy on social media are very important.*" He gives an account of Facebook updates that keep changing privacy rules and users must read the rules. "*Social media is bound by security and privacy setup. Let's say that by being a user of Facebook, the user has granted Facebook the user information.*" By allowing users the freedom of what information can be shared among different groups, the researcher believes that the data control process has been passed on to the users. This liberty is only right and is to be expected of a social media platform such as Facebook.

Identity Checking

Identity checking can mitigate the security and privacy risks for social media. The Internet is a wide expanse where many people may prove not to be who they claim to be or may be using pseudonyms. To be able to confirm an identity, social media should verify the person by asking for photos, biography, telephone number, and email. This can help prevent fraud in terms of identity theft and discrimination. Identity theft still remains an issue and the best practice for social media users is to not place sensitive information online. Discrimination can occur when a user reveals his or her age on social media. This may have various impacts based on prejudice. This includes prospective employers discriminating against a person. The user, who is also responsible for his or her statements on social media, may find any controversial or sensitive statements turned against them in the future. Different readers have different understandings, perspectives, and interests. This can be especially serious with access to credit card transactions and issues of libel and defamation. The objective of social media is to identify people and communicate. Social media is not a disruptive technology and is a platform that can bring people together, transcending space and time. Canadian Generation Y consumers are synonymously associated with the use of social media. Despite A19's suggestion that users should use pseudonyms when registering with social media, this practice is very rare. This generation grew up with computers and the use of mobile apps. PDAs and other devices come as second nature. Despite some of the interviewees having various levels of concerns for security and privacy for social media, the risks can be mitigated and social media influence continues to be ubiquitous.

Category

The category is called security and privacy on social media.

Consequences

Because of the consequences of personal information, security and privacy controls, and identity checking, security and privacy do not influence Canadian Generation Y consumers with regard to using social media.

Covariance

Covariance refers to strategies to support what causes the unconcern of security and privacy for social media.

Contingencies

Contingencies are non-disclosure of personal information, heightened security and privacy controls, and the verification of identity checking.

FINDINGS: USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

For Selling Products and Services

Research suggests overall, small businesses can use social media to introduce their products and services and communicate with customers. Positive reviews by consumers can be a positive step to increasing sales. Social media enables small businesses to carry out sales activities, marketing, customer service, and for their back-end operations to market more efficiently and reduce operational costs (Schaupp & Belanger, 2014). Most Facebook users have known each other before becoming members (Ross, et al. 2009). Dell found that feedback from social media is more effective than customer focus groups and linking certain important customer groups (Mullaney, 2012). Small businesses can use Facebook Business Pages to develop a profile that is separate from the owner's profile within Facebook (Geho & Dangelo, 2012). Facebook Insights provide analytics report for Facebook Business Pages. Social media cannot be based on a one-size-fits-all marketing strategy. An inactive Facebook page or out-of-date tweets could be counterproductive to the overall marketing strategy of a small business.

From the consumers' perspective, consumers are no longer only interested in viewing marketing content but would like to engage in contributing their ideas on how to improve the products and services they intend to buy (Diffley, et al. 2011). Since consumers trust each other more, the electronic word of mouth feedback on products and services communicated over social media is more trusted than marketing promotions. Then again, it is difficult to confirm the authenticity of a reviewer.

Features for Social Media

Overall, Canadian Generation Y social media users like seeing simple and visual layouts. This can enable users to interact, read other people comments, see contrasting colour textures, and navigate at ease. Recent research by Ellahi & Bokhari (2012) also found that the ease of use of social media websites is important. The design of social media websites should be simple and easy to search for information. These websites should allow users to customise their webpages. Website aesthetic is not as important as the addition of sound and animation. Pictures take a long time to upload but increasingly, users of social networking are sharing their photos as well as blogs (Narayaswamy & McGrath, 2014). Social media platforms also offer information updates that identify relevant and contemporary issues in Twitter Trends and Facebook Newsfeed (Ellison & Boyd, 2013). Users maintain a concern for security and privacy.

Advertisement for Social Media

Offering coupons is one of the best advertising approaches because consumers can get discounts and free try-outs. Advertisements can also be placed within games, pop-ups, banners, videos, emails, and side-panels. Social media websites include features such as product reviews, product information, and payment (Kietzmann, et al, 2011). Amazon text reviews can identify consumer likings and predict future sales (Archak, et al. 2011). Consumers have shown that reviews about books are more effective than feedback based on consumer experience of reading other books in the same category (Zhao, et al, 2013). The “*Comment*” and “*Like*” buttons are used by users to comment on product and customer reviews (Huang & Benyousef, 2013). There is an increase in the use of the “*Like*” button when there is an increase in pictures whereas an increase in the amount of text decreases “*Liking*” (Rauschnabel, et al. 2012). The “*Like*” button can be used as a positive online word-of-mouth communication with friends (Morpace, 2010).

There is evidence that YouTube data network’s social influence can shape the opinion and acceptance of a product (Susarla, et al. 2012). New research by Aslanzadeh & Keating (2014) also found that the use of video-chat or live-chat fulfils the needs of consumer interaction at every stage of the decision-making process. Content with strong emotions, such as sorrow, happiness, humour, and fear, can increase the consumers’ engagement with the content and result in it being shared with others (Dobele, et al. 2007). Emotional content written by the company and other users can influence the intensity of virality and amount of interests (Bruni, et al. 2012). Pictures, videos, and posts, for example, can enable social media users to be interactive (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Facebook business model is drawn from advertising and, therefore, its main objectives are based on increasing user time and activities and creating impressive advertisements (Claussen, et al, 2013). Recent research found that tertiary students have a sense of belonging to a group and hold a positive attitude towards Internet and Facebook advertising (Celebi, 2015). When advertising on Facebook, it is more advisable to use advertisements based on segmented markets and online behaviours. These advertisements should generally be more focussed when first advertised to catch the users’ awareness and increase their conviction without any negative experience. The inclusion of animation in advertisements can increase the users’ attention. Nevertheless, the flashing animated banners may agitate users when they are reading text or texting.

Expedia has started a coupon club service that allows registered members to access a newsletter that provides special discounts (Minazzi, 2015). Storytelling in the form of narration concerning occasions, company details, owners, management, employees, and customers, for example, can all increase the chances of the consumers’ engagement (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Contests can be enticing to establish communication; for example, a restaurant could pose a contest on Facebook and ask users to submit their best cake recipe (Minazzi, 2015). The person that submits the best voted cake recipe would be given free dinner. Community users would then be invited for the dinner together with the winner and this occasion could establish personal relationships amongst members and develop future content. After the dinner, community users would like to see comments, photos, and videos. Such an occasion, before, during, and after, could generate high interest on various social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.

Using Facebook, Starbucks can convey information about its messages, products, and services to consumers (Huang & Benyousef, 2013).

Nevertheless, at times, users may not want to see advertisements at all (Ballings & Poel, 2015). Revealing information at that time may isolate such users and reduce the frequency of

visits and usage of time on the site. Facebook may want to consider refining its News Feed algorithm based on user usage to increase forecasting when balancing between social content and advertisements. If a user is expected to increase usage, more advertisements should be shown. However, if a user is predicted to reduce usage, Facebook could turn off the advertisements.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social media is used by Canadian Generation Y to socialise and communicate with friends, relatives, family members, and business associates. It is also used to find information about product and services, communities, events, the weather, current incidents, reviews, entertaining videos, and payments.

In order to protect Canadian Generation Y consumers' security and privacy, the best recourse for these individuals is to keep their personal information private and not exposed on social media. As it is, individuals can create fictitious social media profiles and claim to be anyone without any authentication and post false photos or information. Social media channels such as Facebook should not continuously change their security and privacy features by claiming that they are for enhancement purposes. It is the features and user interfaces that are reorganised in most such occurrences. In order to avoid any confusion for users and to gain their trust, the security and privacy layout should be consistent.

Canadian small retail businesses can use social media to introduce their products and services online. The use of YouTube or other video sharing platforms will enable the viewers to better understand how a product can be used or a service be provided, which can increase their conviction to purchase the specific product or service. It is important for Canadian small retail businesses to understand the users' perceptions and psychologically entice them to their social media webpages. Users prefer to have social media websites that are simple and visual. These can come in the form of contrasting colour textures, easy navigation, interactive segments, and ample customer reviews (Ahmed et al., 2021; Vadlamudi et al., 2021; Ganapathy et al., 2021). By offering coupons through social media, an effective advertising approach can be adopted so that consumers are able to save money and try out new products and services. Advertisements can be positioned on the side-panels, banners, pop-ups, emails, videos, and games. However, pop-ups are severely disliked by almost all of the respondents.

There are numerous contributions from this research for Canadian Generation Y and Canadian society, managers, Canadian government, and theory.

Performance Expectancy (PE) is important for Canadian Generation Y consumers, as it is very common to see them living in a fast-paced environment with many of them having rigorous daily routines of going to school, preparing for assignments and exams, work, commuting, and/or doing household chores. Canadian Generation Y comprises of about 30 percent of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2012) and is expected to represent three out of four Canadians in the workforce by 2028 (ExecuTrade, 2014). As more Canadian Generation Y'ers enter the workforce, and baby boomers become close to retirement or are already retired, the Generation Y will become increasingly more affluent.

Security and Privacy (SP), and Trust (T) factors are added to the original UTAUT2 and are found to be insignificant. This can be explained by the fact that though Canadian Generation Y consumers do not have a high confidence in the security and privacy protection, and trust for Canadian small business retail websites, although, this may not deter them from continuing to buy online. The Canadian Generation Y consumers are comfortable with using the Internet and

online shopping based on their Effort Efficiency (EE) and Facilitating Conditions (FC) scores. This does not come as a surprise as this is the most IT savvy generation in Canada.

In conjunction with that, the importance of Canadian Generation Y consumers cannot be ignored. There are 9.5 million people classified as Generation Y (Desjardins, 2016) and represent the single largest generation in Canada (Scott, 2015) out of 36.16 million people as of April 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2016). This generation represents about 30 per cent of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2012) and is expected to represent 75 per cent by 2028 (ExecuTrade, 2014). They are expected to dominate the workforce for the next 40 years (Spence, 2012). It is expected that, by 2015, the Canadian Generation Y will be the largest portion of the workforce, replacing the Baby Boomers (Sladek, 2014). There is a higher opportunity for small businesses to be able to sell to this segment of the population as they enter the workforce, become more affluent, and have more discretionary and disposable incomes in the coming years.

CONCLUSION

This research makes a distinct contribution to the knowledge of the subject matters in the areas of Generation Y, social media, and Internet commerce that are applicable to academicians and practitioners. This is the first time that a research has been conducted specifically based on Canadian Generation Y consumers' behavioural usage of Canadian social media websites.

This study also creates awareness about the benefits of buying online from Canadian social media businesses. With an increased urbanisation in Canada, the Canadians are rushed for time in the hustle and bustle of their daily lives. By buying online, they are able to overcome the time constraints of driving to shop from brick and mortar establishments.

It is discussed that there is no such thing as having an Internet environment that is 100 percent free of security breaches with no violation of individual privacy. After all, the purpose of the Internet is communication. The irony is that the Internet is leading to its own weaknesses by exposing and subjecting the viewers to read information that may or may not be true, without proper validation. At the same time, new viruses are being developed all the time and no anti-virus product has the remedy to remove all kinds of viruses immediately. These products try to develop an anti-virus software as soon as possible in order to remove a new virus, thereby leaving machines susceptible to cyber-attacks.

In order to extend the present body of knowledge about Generation Y and their usage of social media websites, future research should be carried out in Scandinavian countries such as Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. Just like Canadians, Scandinavians are rushed for time in the hustle and bustle of their daily lives. These countries are similar to Canada as they have a temperate weather and low population in proportion to their land area.

In terms of technology, further research can be focused on whether an increased use of broadband technologies can help Canadian social media users to improve their sales. In tandem with this, research can be carried out to identify what is the best approach to create awareness for these users to better understand the potential of using these technologies to increase their efficiency and effectiveness. As the use of social media and mobile devices by generation Y'ers has become more apparent, research on how they can be used by Canadian small business retailers to increase their sales will benefit small business retailers in general.

The insights into how Generation Y'ers use the Internet, the kind of website design features and attributes they prefer, and the concerns they feel about trust and security, can all be channelized to create a better connect with them.

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