How to Promote Social Campaigns?-An Analysis of Media Exposure of Generations X to Z

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Abstract

Against the growing difficulty in societies to separate confusing information, development organizations are struggling to get their message through. A fundamental problem lies in the changing habit of processing information by various generations. Gen X generation who are above 40, for example, receive and process information differently than Gen Z generation who are only 25 or less. In this research, using internet-based campaign messages different generations are tracked in terms of how they receive and process information on social changes. Results show that the new generation i.e. Gen Z is harder to reach using the usual strategies like street plays, ads, and billboards. Unlike others, Gen Z uses social media to collect information. This shows that to reach the new generations on social issues, campaigners must use social media rather than the traditional print and electronic media like radio and TV whereas, Gen X and Ys still use traditional media to receive and process information, but they are also gradually switching to other electronic media outlets.

Keywords: Social Media, Media Use, Gen Z, Gen X, Gen Y, Social Campaign

1. Introduction

As the world is bracing to vaccinate the people against COVID-19, there has been a renewed interest to find out how to succeed in such a difficult and arduous task in a world mixed-up with fake and true news. The classical account of reasoning states that people ineffectively discern between true and false news headlines when they fail to deliberate (and instead rely on intuition) and that deliberation facilitates accurate belief formation and not partisan bias (Bago et al., 2020). Similar studies further reveals that fake, misleading and over-interpreted health news in social media is the potential threat for public health (Waszak et al., 2018).

On the other hand, there has been a change in the habit of individuals to receive and process information as societies are transitioning into IR4. In terms of psychological characteristics there are several definitions based on

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which age groups can be labelled as distinctively separate generations. There are some consensuses on them. For example, Gen Z are the ones born between 1997 and 2012, Millennials or Gen Ys are born between 1981 and 1996 (also divided in two groups Gen Y1 and Gen Y2 aged between 25-35, and between 36-44 years as of 2022) and Gen X are born between 1965 and 1980 (Brunjes, 2022). These generations are likely to have a completely different way of thinking and organizing their values as well as different way of processing information. As such, reaching out to them to promote social changes may become a challenging task. Psychologists have analyzed behavioral patterns of these generations and have used these terminologies in analyzing their sales, finance, employment and also information processing behavior (Black, 2010; Bristow et al., 2011; Kasasa, 2021). The primary motivation for this empirical study came from the fact that development organizations have been spending millions of dollars to alter the social psyche on human trafficking, rights of the women, violence against women, human rights and many other issues. To make them effective, the right media shall be used and so it is important to understand how different generations use media and process information related to similar issues.

A recent study relates that nearly 1/4 of a million people have died and four million people are affected either with mild or serious health problems caused by coronavirus. (Naeem et al., 2021). Similarly, there has been a rise in vaccine hesitancy which is contributing to prolonging the sequences of Covid outbreaks across the world. Much of these are fed through misleading or fake news circulating on the internet. Consequently, fighting fake or misleading news has been a major issue to deal with issues related public health, social vices, prejudices, etc. Development organizations across the world have been constantly working to alter the public opinion against many of such threats. However, with the rise the in social media, the traditional public broadcast media like TV, Radio, Billboards are losing its influences to form public opinion in many societies. In USA, for example, newspaper circulation has declined significantly with the rise in social media whereas in India, it has not happened at the same rate (Rajendran & Thesinghraja, 2014). Rejendran and Thesinghraja (2014) further reveals that the drop in circulation of print media is attributed to mostly younger population [i.e. Gen Z or Gen Alpha[*]], who prefer the interactive nature of the new media and its ease of access (Rajendran & Thesinghraja, 2014). Similarly, organizations working on fundraising for non-profit organizations have been promoting certain strategies to promote their causes. For example, Onecause (2022) suggests social media

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[*] Gen Alpha are born after 2012.

campaigns and viral challenges, ambassador campaigns, virtual awareness events, etc. As some of the comment events to promote social causes in 2021 (Onecause, 2021). While these may be true for the West, is it also the same in the East or more specifically in Bangladesh?

Against this backdrop, this paper uses primary data to understand access to media (traditional as well as social) by different age groups with a view to seeing how they use the media to process information related to various social issues and whether their access and use of media have any bearing on their attitude and understanding of them.   The research is part of a supervised research paper completed as a requirement for the Master of Development Studies at East West University.

2. Background

NGOs in Bangladesh used to deploy resources for open-air play of street play (*poth natok)*, billboards, posters, and newspaper ads or supplements to raise awareness among its population on issues related to health, education, environment, and social and human rights. Many NGOs still employs cultural teams to write the plays for rural communities, and show-case them in rural bazaars, schools, and community halls through cultural road shows (Nair, 2019). The strategy of using cultural roadshows has been quite successful in the past, and over the past 50 years Bangladesh has been able to fight many social vices. For example, "Bangladesh is one of the top performers in ensuring nutrition and basic medical care, and health and wellness, according to the Social Progress Index 2016 prepared on a study of 133 countries" (Daily Star, 2017).

However, since the 80s, there has been a steady rise in literacy rate, and recently there has been a significant rise in access to mobile internet facilities in Bangladesh. As such, it is time to examine what alternative campaign strategies are required to address new social challenges. This is particularly true during the COVID-19 pandemic as countries around the globe are struggling hard to fight smear campaigns, fake news, etc. which are widely circulated in many social and electronic platforms.

It has been mentioned that in the twenty first century we are dealing with a different generation - Gen Z (1997-2012), who is just now entering the labor market and so policy makers need to be prepared for their arrival. While Gen Z shares many traits with the Millennial Generation (Gen Ys), they also bring in new patterns of behavior (Schroth, 2019). As such, public policy makers, social influencers, in Bangladesh, also must learn about access, use and influence of electronic media of this generations.   While studies on

access to media in Bangladesh is a bit old (M. M. Islam & Hasan, 2000), it is time to revisit the information processing attitude and the habit of using social media for processing information of these generations. This will help NGOs and public policy makers to develop alternative strategies to fight the menace of misinformation and prejudice in the society.

This study is designed to understand access to electronic media and its use to process information by various generations. Results can be used to design a better public awareness campaign by the government to deal with challenges of social media. In particular, it will help Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) and also the Government of Bangladesh to develop and create an effective public awareness campaign on various issues.

3. Electronic Media in Bangladesh

Bangladesh went through a significant transformation in terms of its literacy rate and access to internet. As of March 2021, nearly 116 million people or 70% of its population have access to mobile internet facilities and the current literacy rate is around 74.9% (Wikipedia, 2022b; World Bank, 2021). While this transformation is good news for many, it has also brought a significant challenge for public policy makers who are constantly fighting against spread of prejudice and misleading news. This is evident in every country of the world with the rise in vaccine hesitancy in recent times.

The role of NGOs in Bangladesh to make changes in the social psyche or in the social values cannot be underestimated. NGOs began to operate in Bangladesh after its independence in 1971 when patriotic people came forward to help the newly established government to begin its massive restoration and rehabilitation activities. Many of the pioneers, who established these voluntary organizations, were living abroad and they came back to Bangladesh with resources from foreign countries to build up the war-ravaged economy. Many of them were social activists in Bangladesh who worked passionately to make real changes in Bangladesh. Sir Fazle Hasan Abed of BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee), Md. Shafiqul Haque Chowdhury of ASA (Association for Social Advancement) established there NGOs in the early 70s. Caritas (originally known as Christian Organization for Relief and Rehabilitation – CORR and was reorganized and reintroduced as Caritas in 1976), CCDB (The Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh) were some of the social NGO that began working in Bangladesh at around the same time (Sheikh Kabir Uddin Haider, 2011). These and many other NGOs have been working on issues related to equality and justice, human rights, relief, health, education, addictions, violence against women, human trafficking, and so on, to

transform Bangladesh into a modern society. As we have discussed above, historically they used street plays using cultural teams to reach the large number of rural communities who had no access to newspapers and TVs. The low literacy rate also prevented them from exploiting the power of print media in this regard. However, this has changed.

Since the 80s, a large number of TV stations began to operate in Bangladesh and its number has reached around 45 channels (Wikipedia, 2022a). In addition, government has also allowed 68 radio stations including FM, MW, SW, and community radio stations (Wikipedia, 2022) to diversify the entertainment world and also to reach various social groups. According to Kantar Research[*], a marketing research company in Bangladesh, a total of BDT 1.1 billion (equivalent of $ 13 million) was spent on public awareness-based TV media advertisements in 2019[†]. Of this, BDT 75 million ($ 0.9 million) was spent on TV based public awareness messages which were paid by local and international NGOs. While it is only 7% of total value of TV based public media advertisement, the rest (93%) of public awareness messages were financed by Government, Private Organizations, and other Associations in Bangladesh. TV advertisements were the most popular among all the media to promote social awareness campaigns in 2019. Media Source Ltd. provides real time data service in both Print and TV media in Bangladesh. According to Media Source Ltd. nearly 455 million[‡] taka (equivalent of $5.4 million) was spent on print media on public awareness campaign and NGOs paid BDT 2.8 million ($ 32.5 Thousand) to promote social awareness messages in 2019[§] which is less than 1% of the total amount. UNICEF is among the highest spender in print media-based public awareness campaign in 2019. According to the news reports, Bangladesh is a market for two thousand crore taka for Digital Advertising (M. Z. Islam, 2019). According to 'We Are Social', a creative marketing agency, 41% (66.4 million) of the population uses internet in Bangladesh and 40 million of them can be reached by Facebook which is the most dominant social media. Similarly, statistics on web data shows UNICEF and BRAC have nearly 8.4 and 1.1 million visitors on their web pages in Bangladesh and these are the fastest growing web pages in terms of visitors in Bangladesh. It is now evident that there has been a change in promoting social messages and it has moved from cultural roadshows to electronic media.

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[*] Classified information received from Kantar Research by the authors.
[†] Based on modified TV channels rate (classified information)
[‡] Classified information collected by the authors.
[§] Based on post-discount print media rate (classified information)

Therefore, this study explores the behavior of media users and their uptake of social messages channeled through electronic media. This study used a social media campaign to reach out to targeted various audiences and collected feedback on the use and attitude of using electronic media to influence social causes. Accordingly, the campaign was seen by 255 visitors of which 100 of them provided feedback for this study. According to Facebook Ads manager and NMS 2018, nearly 60% of electronic media users are within 18-34 age group. In addition, secondary data were collected from KANTAR Research (Bangladesh) and Media Source Ltd for this study. Primary data for this study was collected in 2019 using an electronic questionnaire-based survey on the individuals who participated in the campaign. Data from secondary sources show that out of 157.2 million mobile device users, only 34 million use social media. Following snapshot shows key digital statistical indicators of 2019 in Bangladesh;
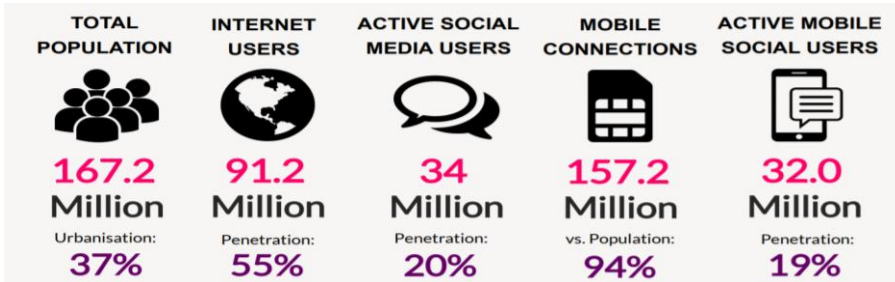
Source: GSMA intelligence. Internet: internet world stats; ITU; World Bank; CIA world factbook; Eurostat; Local government bodies and regulatory authorities; mideastmedia.org; reports in reputable media. social media: platforms' self-serve advertising tools; press releases and investor earnings announcements; Arab social media report; Techrasa; Niki Aghaei; rose.ru. (Data of 2019)

4. Method of data collection

Based on the current media use pattern, the study was designed to tap electronic media users through a internet based media campaign using Facebook, Listserv and webpages, to collect information on their access, use and level awareness on social issues. The campaign ran for a month to collect information. As such, the responses are voluntary. This created a problem in terms of representativeness of the dataset in terms of media users. There is a problem of 'self-selection' in the data. Keeping this in view, the analysis utilized 'weights' to correct for over-sampling and under-sampling in terms of gender and generation.

4.1 The Sample

The study collected responses from 152 respondents using an electronic survey through web sources, email lists and Facebook groups. Figure 2 shows the distribution of various generations in the survey. Gen Z's are

born after 1997[*], Generation Y1 and Y2 are technically millennials born between are born 1980 and 1997 and Gen Xs are born before 1980 (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2009). It has been mentioned that while there is a broad consensus on defining various generations there is no one definition for them. So, in this study, we have used the age group 15-24 as Gen Z, 25-34 as Gen Y1, 35-44 as Gen Y2 and 45+ as Gen X.

Figure 2: Percent of various generations in the survey
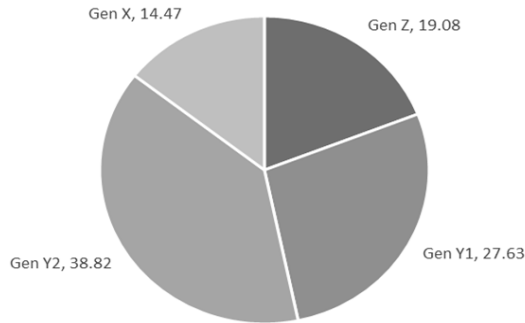
Source: Primary Survey, 2019

The sample collected using internet-based e-questionnaire did not result in equal proportion of responses from each generation. As such, analytical weights are calculated for each generation using equal proportion in the population so that their responses are not biased with number of respondents in each generation. This will ensure that results are corrected for over-sampling and under-sampling in different generations in the primary sample.

Table 1: Distribution of generations by gender

|	Percent		Gender Weights		Generation
Generations	Male	Female	Male	Female	Weights
Gen Z	41.38	58.62	1.2228	0.8427	1.3103
Gen Y1	69.05	30.95	0.7328	1.5961	0.9048
Gen Y2	79.66	20.34	0.6352	2.4287	0.6440
Gen X	68.18	31.82	0.7422	1.5525	1.7277
Total	67.76	32.24	0.7468	1.5323	1.0000

Note: Primary Survey 2019

Table 1 shows the gender distribution in the sample by generations. Overall, 67.76 percent in the sample are male and 32.24 percent are female. This is different from the existing gender ratio between male and female in Bangladesh, which is 50.6 to 49.4 (World Bank Atlas, 2021). Using this ratio, we have also created analytical weights for male and female so that

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[*] *Alpha generation* born after 2012 are not included in this survey.

the gender-based analysis of the data also remains unbiased. Based on the analytical weights, we have analyzed all the responses.

4.2 Media exposure of different generations

In terms of media exposure, Figure 3 reveals that while Gen X (the boomers) in Bangladesh are mostly using TV, social media and print media, the Gen Ys (the millennials) are using social media, TV and print media, and Gen Z are also using online social media, TV and print media to receive information. However, the percent of exposure varies between these generations.

Figure 3: Media exposure by generations

Note: Primary Survey 2019
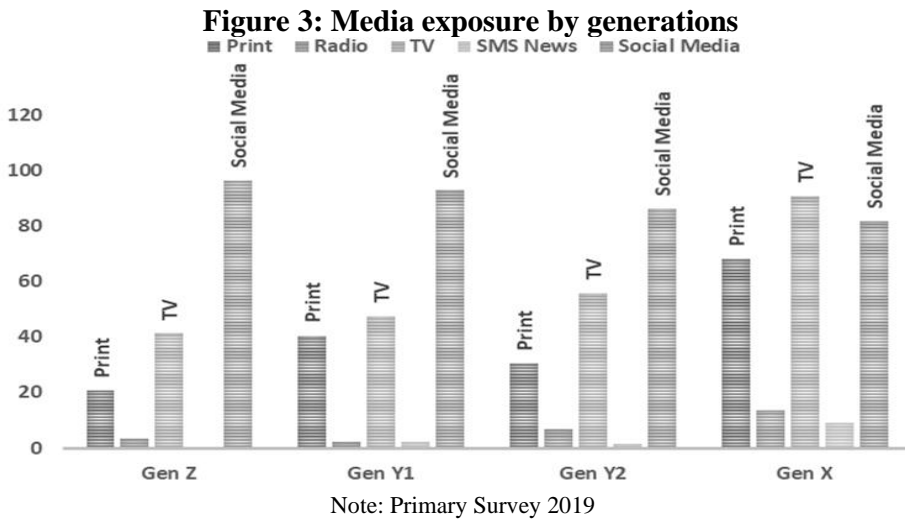
4.3 TV Viewing habit

We have divided exposure to media by various categories in the following paragraphs. Table 2 shows that almost all the generations views news and drama or music on TVs. This means, reaching out to these generations, the awareness campaigners must look for placing their messages within these type of TV programs. These two types of programs will reach nearly 80 or more percent of all viewers. A further analysis by gender shows that there is no variation in their viewing behavior by gender. At the same time, our data shows that nearly 28% of the viewers are not reachable through TV and that Gen Z is among the least in watching news on TV.

Table 2: Type of TV programs viewed by generations

Type of TV Program	Gen Z	Gen Y1	Gen Y2	Gen X
News	66.67	90	95	85
Family and Children	16.67	26.67	27.5	35
Drama, serial, music	88.89	83.33	87.5	85
Total	172.22	200	210	205

Source: Primary Survey, 2019

Figure 4 shows the sources of TV connections by viewer generations. It shows that while Gen X is still using cable operators, Gen Z has moved to smart phone and Gen Ys are using PCs and Smart Phone to view the programs.

Figure 4: Source of TV connection by Generations
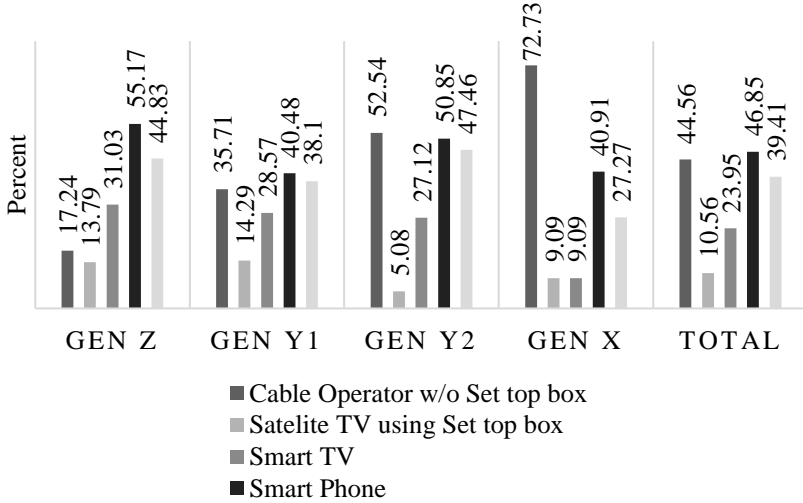
Source: Primary Survey, 2019

This is important for campaigners because the device they use to view their programs has implications for designing any kind of social campaign. It shows that if a campaign is targeted towards the new generation, it must consider smart phone into their considerations while designing the campaign materials. The pattern is similar between male and female across the generations.

Table 3 shows that in terms of various programs, the most effective program to send messages to all generations are the children and family programs of TVs, followed by Talk Shows. In terms of gender of the viewers, male viewers watch children/family, talk show and sports or adventure related programs whereas female viewers watch children/family programs, talk shows, music, and drama/serials. For the Gen Z, the third most important TV program is adventure based or documentary programs.

Table 3: Type of TV program by Viewer Generations

Type of program	Gen Z	Gen Y1	Gen Y2	Gen X
Drama/serial	31.03	50	37.29	40.91
Music	41.38	33.33	33.9	45.45
Children/Family	72.41	90.48	81.36	63.64
Adventure/documentary	51.72	38.1	55.93	27.27
Sports	31.03	38.1	38.98	31.82

|				
Educational	3.45	2.38	1.69	9.09
Talk Show	55.17	45.24	66.1	63.64

Source: Primary Survey, 2019

4.4 News reading habit

Figure 5 illustrates how different generations read information on print media. In Bangladesh, like other countries, print media is undergoing a transformation from hardcopy publication to also publishing their news online. The figure shows that most of the readers use online e-papers to read their information. Data also revealed that about 14.8% do not read any newspaper. While Gen X are still using printed papers but the rest are using online paper in most of the cases. This is important because online versions of the newspaper in Bangladesh still do not print the same ad on their online page. There is, however, no variation in terms of reading habit by gender across generations. Nearly 61% of all generations read newspapers regularly while 25% reads occasionally.

Figure 5: Reading habit of newspapers by Generation
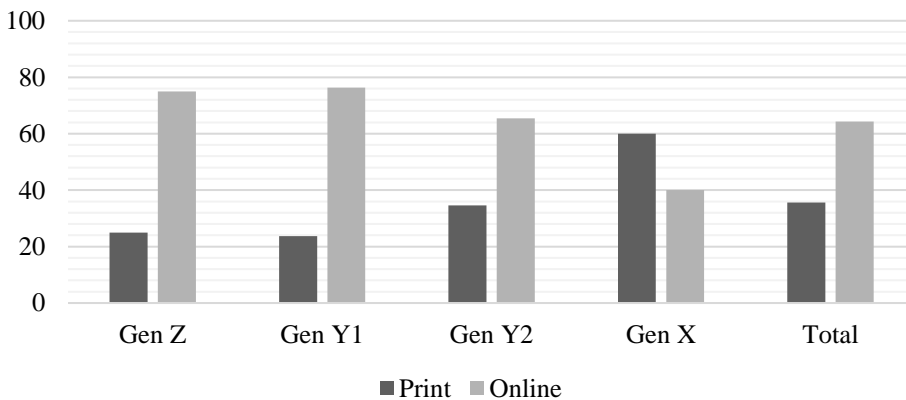
Source: Primary Survey, 2019

4.5 Social Media browsing habit

Nearly 76 percent always use social media to collect information, while about 14% use it occasionally and 10% never use it. This shows the power of social media to all. However, the exposure is 86% for Gen Z while it is only 59% for Gen X. Table 4 shows that most of them use social media to receive information and so it is probably a source of misleading information that often get circulated among all generations of internet users. More than 50 percent of all users also share the information that they receive. There is also not much differences among their behavior across their gender.

Table 4: Purpose of using the social media

	Gen Z	Gen Y1	Gen Y2	Gen X	Total
To find information	86.21	87.8	87.93	76.19	84.6

To share opinion	48.28	58.54	58.62	47.62	53.27
To meet new people	27.59	21.95	15.52	19.05	21.07
To find funny contents	62.07	56.1	43.1	23.81	46.48
To work	6.9	21.95	20.69	23.81	18.24
To do research	10.34	17.07	20.69	0	12.1

Source: Primary Survey, 2019

4.6 Following a 'paid' campaign

Figure 6 shows that majority of the new generations do not even watch paid ads or campaigns on TV. This is due to wide use of remote controls or touch screens which prompts them to browse other channels while there is an advertisement running on TV. This shows the difficulty of reaching them through paid TV ads – even though a huge amount of money is spent in advertising products and information on TV.

Figure 6: Habit of watching TV ads
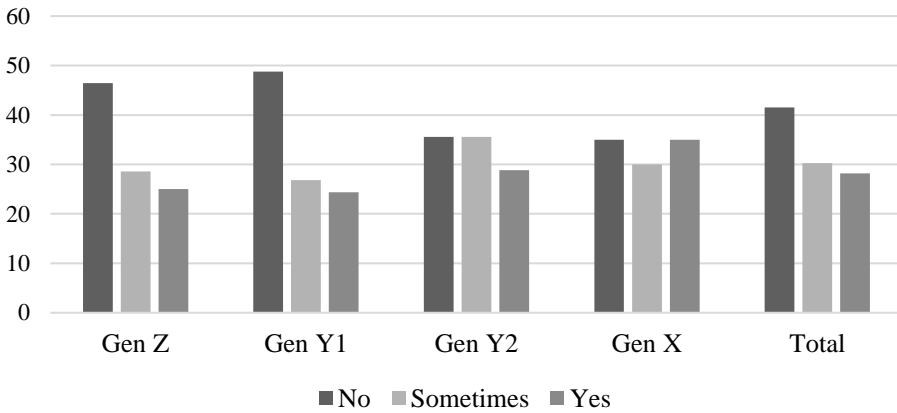
Source: Primary Survey, 2019

Table 5 also shows the pattern of reading newspaper ads and it shows a very similar pattern for all generations. This further makes it difficult for governments and NGOs to influence opinions through advertisements. Nearly half of the newspaper readers never read ads.

Table 5: Percent of people read newspaper-based ads or promotional campaigns

|	No	Sometimes	Yes
Gen Z	48.28	20.69	31.03
Gen Y1	45.24	19.05	35.71
Gen Y2	41.38	24.14	34.48
Gen X	47.62	9.52	42.86
Total	45.62	18.43	35.95

Source: Primary Survey, 2019

Furthermore, analysis of responses on reading billboards also shows a similar pattern. Only about 34 percent of respondents have read at least one information (like a campaign) on the media on raising public awareness in their life. This means nearly 66 percent never read or noted any such information even though it was on TVs or on Billboards or on Newspapers in Bangladesh. It shows that a large majority are not reachable via the traditional ads or campaigns. Interestingly, however, nearly 85% of all generations think that raising public awareness is an important task for the society.

Finally, nearly 30% of all respondents think that NGOs in Bangladesh are successful in raising awareness on many social issues while only 56% of them could remember a campaign that has influenced or touched their life or has changed their mindset.

Finally, Figure 7 shows the results of the two famous posters that were presented to the respondents and asked them to identify which one contains gender related violence in order to understand their level of public awareness of this issue. Unfortunately, it shows that only 89 per cent of Gen Z could understand the message in the poster and it is about 83 percent for the Gen Y2 (the millennials), where nearly 100 percent of Gen X could identify the poster that was made to make people aware of gender-based violence. This shows that campaign designers must also work hard to think through the lens of the new generations in order to promote their messages in the coming years.

Figure 7: Level of social awareness by generation
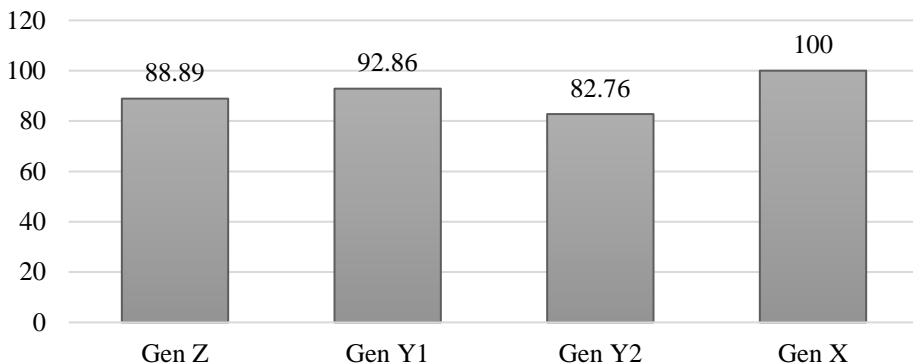
Source: Primary Survey, 2019

5. Concluding Remarks

Raising social awareness is an important social responsibility of NGOs but making the message heard to its target audience seems to be more difficult now than before and it probably shows why campaigns like promoting vaccination to prevent COVID-19 has failed in many countries in the world

as well as in Bangladesh. The research shows that the new generations i.e. Gen Z are even harder to reach if we use the usual strategies to reach them. Unlike others, more proportion of Gen Z use social media to collect information. This shows that to reach the new generations on social issues, campaigners must use social media rather than the traditional print and electronic media like radio and TV. At the same time, their social media use is different than others. New generation also use social media to share funny materials more than older generations and at the same time, they switch their attention when ads appear on the screen. The study used a campaign and asked respondents to identify the message from a picture. While 100% respondents in Gen X identified the message correctly it was not so for other generations.

Finally, this study used e-questionnaire to collect data and so the responses are self-reported and were not monitored like a face-to-face survey. While it is a good news because responses are probably not contaminated by the presence of an interviewer, it is also possible that some of the responses might be simple blind or random keystrokes and hence it would have been better if we had a larger sample and used a random sub-sample to analyze the responses. This was not possible in this case due to a small number of total responses. Results might be different if it was also possible to use Facebook or Google Ad features to randomly target Gen X to Gen Z users on the net. It was not done because there was no funding to cover the Ad expenses.

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