INTRODUCTION

Generation Z is the first cohort to have Internet technology throughout their whole life, which has given mobility and immediacy to Generation Z consumption habits. While social media is mainly used for developing and maintaining relationships with people whom others are in proximity to, it is also used for keeping up with news, which has caused a drastic increase in the number of information channels and possible interactions available. This study is the only one the researchers are aware of that segments the current generation-Z adult (18 to 24 years of age) marketplace for news consumption.

METHODOLOGY

We conducted an online survey utilizing Qualtrics. Qualtrics afforded us greater reach and the opportunity to include a more diverse group of respondents while helping to ensure valid findings through technology that eliminates duplication. The survey consisted of 102 questions that included seven-point Likert scale, open-ended, forced choice option, and closed-ended, as appropriate. The study was distributed over different social media channels including Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat to reach potential respondents. The online survey utilized our prior findings to further measure perceptions and behaviors towards news consumption, as well as respondent personality traits, psychographics, and demographics. There was a total of 270 respondents, providing a sample size large enough to hold significant explanatory and inferential value. Data was analyzed using SPSS.

RESULTS

Most respondents were currently enrolled in some form of post-high school education (i.e., technical school, community college, or traditional university). A wide range of majors, household incomes, and race/ethnicities were represented with respondents coming from 18 states representing all regions of the United States. Constructs measured with multi-item measures (e.g., media brand personality dimensions, big five personality dimensions, media locus of control, news media skepticism, news consumptions motivations, opinion leadership, mindful thought processing, etc.) were factor analyzed and collapsed into single items. All were found to be valid and meet standard reliability criteria (alpha > .70). We obtained a wide distribution of responses to these questions. The responders, used in conjunction with respondent opinion, perceptions, and behaviors, were particularly useful for identifying actionable market segments. Segments were identified utilizing the k-means approach to clustering which performs an iterative alternating fitting process to form the number of specified clusters. We identified three segments in the 18-24-year market in the United States. Summaries of the identified clusters are provided in the form of personas.

CONCLUSION

To explore and solidify consumer perceptions and attitudes regarding news consumption, key consumer insights were obtained through a quantitative study. By fully understanding the Generation Z target market segments, news providers can better tailor their messaging and communications. Our findings identified three distinct market segments containing 30.6 million people who are members of the adult Generation Z consumer group in the United States. Although each of the identified segments has unique characteristics, they all have some important commonalities. By understanding these different customer personas, news sources will be able to more strategically approach Generation Z consumers and deliver news content in more effective ways.