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Generation "Z" and Social Networks

Keywords

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Abstract

The study presents the context generated with the development of technology and its impact on society in recent decades. The characteristics of each generation are exposed from the perspective of important events, using world-renowned names, namely: Baby Boomers, generation "X", generation "Y", generation "Z". The research analyses more broadly the "Z" generation and provides information about changing the social paradigm and interpersonal relationships through the advent of the Internet and later through the development of online social networks. Perspectives are offered on how the last generation spent their time, during the isolation generated by the pandemic. The widespread use of social networks has influenced individuals and their lifestyles, but the younger generation is the first to be affected by new technological challenges. Understanding the new social paradigm contributes to adapting the approaches to children and young people.

1. Introduction

Given that we live in the development of technology and experience a new social media revolution, it is appropriate to understand the perspectives of social life of groups and society in today's context. Today we discover that the human being has become a producer of information in a new space. public.

Life is digitizing a lot with the monopoly of the Internet (Taplin, 2019). In the past, virtual reality was more of a science fiction topic, but today technology is widely available worldwide. Now interpersonal relationships have entered a new stage of multidimensional communication, and social interactions in the virtual world overlap with those in the real world and even gained supremacy. The communication paradigm is changing, and individuals are becoming interested in the online environment.

With the emergence of several social networks, several areas of interest among the population were covered. Some are oriented towards certain fields of activity, others for the development of romantic relationships or to share common interest - music, travel, gastronomy, etc. (Casadei, Bilotto, 2016). Through the multitude of areas addressed, social networks are in a sense, agora¹ from antiquity.

In the 21st century it is observed that the digitalization of societies "is based on social networks, which have removed the spatial barriers that in the past did not communicate and transformed the world into a global village ... In such a society, the values and norms of conduct are less dictated by place of origin and social position" (Valkenburg; Piotowski, 2017, p. 284). Social networks are part of the daily program, being irresistible.

¹ *The agora was the public square in the cities of ancient Greece where the main institutions were located and where public meetings were held, according to the Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language (2012).*

Individuals are free to access what they want, for the offer is indubitable: a bene placito².

By researching the impact of social networks on young people we can discover how they reinforce traditional values and practices in the new generation (Spyer, 2017). The online environment offers alternatives for all ages. Specifically, adults have accounts on Facebook, teenagers on Tik Tok and Instagram, and most on WhatsApp. However, the young generation remains the category most exposed to the virtual environment, and the implications are long-term.

Every year the number of people using at least one social platform increases. A study by Clement (2020) indicates that, starting with 2019, the average daily use of social networks around the world amounts to 144 minutes per day, compared to 142 minutes in the previous year. Currently, the country with the highest number of social media users per day is the Philippines, with online users spending an average of three hours and 53 minutes per day on social media.

The ability to express yourself freely and communicate according to your own preferences, to collaborate with others by producing and exchanging texts, photos, audio and video materials, present contemporary opportunities. Thus, each user transforms from consumer to content creator, in a context in which knowledge is democratized. The enormous interest in social media is indicated by the large number of active users in each country (Galov, 2020).

The development of technology has contributed to the facilitation of some activities, but has also influenced the behavior of users (Tasente, 2014). Young people are the most exposed to the phenomenon, taking into account the current social context and multiple and very attractive technological offers. The digital

² "A bene placito" is a Latin expression meaning "as you please, as you please," according to the online version of the Merriem Webster Dictionary.

impact is also related to a new family paradigm, in which parents are busy and spend very little time with the younger generation. The interaction between generations is limited to general aspects, which contributed to the rapprochement between children and technology. Moreover, the lack of information from an educational perspective, on the risks taken, favoured the development of the partnership between young people and the virtual world. Therefore, the study focuses on the young generation that lives, having social networks as "reliable friends".

The development of social platforms has influenced several areas, including commercial. The consumer compartment has changed, and the manufacturer has generally tried to adapt to the new conditions. The young people were the first to reorient themselves towards the possibility of purchasing certain products. Any social platform has a continuous flow of content, and the visual story has emerged as a strategy for attracting those from the virtual space (Walter; Gioglio, 2014).

Some studies show that the emergence of social networks has changed the perspective of individuals on life regardless of their habitat. More precisely, as there is a continuity between offline and online space, in the context of connections, there is a transition from rural to urban landscape (Venkatraman, 2017). Participants on social networks can get involved in discussions, sending video or audio messages, even if the recipient is in another part of the world.

The EU Kids Online 2020 (Smahel, 2020) analysis on children and the Internet, conducted in 19 countries, indicates the new perspective on virtual activity. Thus, most children use smartphones almost all the time, which led to an increase in internet usage time compared to a similar survey in 2010 conducted by EU Kids Online. Although in some countries children's daily time in the online environment has doubled, they have not been informed about existing risks, such as the use of

personal data, fraud, exposure to harmful and violent content, but also virtual harassment.

The young generation is becoming interested, regardless of the environment, rural or urban, in the quality of the signal for connecting to the internet. Rene Decartes's statement, "cogito ergo sum" (cogito ergo sum), comes to be updated in the form "post, so I exist". And all this at the cost of losing security, confidentiality and freedom, finally (Taplin, 2019). The following decades will show the repercussions of spending time in the online environment. Currently, interactions in the virtual environment are part of everyday normality, and the absence there means a lack of connection to everyday life.

Over time, defining the term "generation" has been a real challenge, being a fairly broad concept, and any attempt at periodization has its limits. Controversies regarding the definition of the term have arisen against its use in many areas, such as to the social, political, economic to the fields of exact sciences. Therefore, the bipartite vision appears on the meaning of the term generation (Șerban, 2011), considering the broad meaning of the concept, applied at the level of socio-cultural layers in a certain historical period, but also the particular meaning that follows the groups of individuals who act within a society at the level of a specific field (political, artistic, literary, etc.).

Originally, the word generation comes from the Latin generātiō, -onis, which means "reproduction". This in turn, derives etymologically from generō, -are, -avi, -atum, meaning "to give birth", "to create", "to produce". Both words, however, have their origin in the Greek gignomai ("to give birth"), gignosko (to know from within the known or to have knowledge), genos (small parental groups that identify themselves as units) and genesis ("birth", "Origin") (Ilie, Botezatu, 2016). In Romanian, the word was adopted in the French chain and, according to DEX³, means first of

³ *The Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language, 2012, page 433*

all, "all people in a given social community who are about the same age" defining "the period of time that separates the age of the father from that of the son".

At the beginning of the twentieth century, several researchers studied the subject by presenting certain directions of thinking to understand the concept. The Frenchman François Mentré (1920), in the spirit of positivism and under the influence of the rhetoric of Auguste Comte⁴, emphasizes the idea that social generation has its origin in the idea of family generation, given that the mentality of a dominant group imprints its aspirations on a society. historical time.

On the other hand, the Spaniard Ortega y Gasset considers that generation seems to be the most useful tool for exploring the past or anticipating the future. Individuals of about the same age, with intellectual training within similar parameters, experiencing certain social, cultural events, special policies are landmarks for defining a generation (Jorge Acevedo-Guerra, 2017). The discovery of a perspective on the reality of human life over a period of time is related, according to Ortega y Gasset, with the implementation of a past structure in the present challenges.

The German sociologist Karl Mannheim in his work *The Problem of Generation*, published in 1928, emphasizes the idea that the notion of generation changes its meaning over time, but also according to successive ideological changes (Wolff, 1993). The affirmations are based on the positive interpretation aimed at identifying a pattern, based on which progress is made at the social level, and the romantic interpretation, ie explaining the spirit of the era, neither progressive nor unitary. Environment, heredity and education are the basic pillars for defining the sociological state of a generation.

⁴ *Auguste Comte (1798-1857) was a French sociologist and considered the founder of the theory of positivism a philosophical and political movement that enjoyed a very wide diffusion in the second half of the nineteenth century.*

Given the complexity of the subject, establishing an exhaustive definition of generations is not an easy task. Professor Julius Petersen, a disciple of the Germans Erich Schmidt and Gustav Roethe, considers that “a new generation emerges when the work of the previous one has its accounts clearly completed. The gaps that the previous generation's system leaves open indicate to the next generation the way forward” (Petersen, 2013, p. 136). From the perspective of the French critic Albert Thibaudet, a generation is “a true measure of social duration”, and for semantic delimitation uses two phrases: the biological generation, based on age, and the creative generation, defined by the profile of individuals who share the same vision socio-cultural mechanism (Șerban, 2016).

In Romania, the preoccupations for this subject appear at the beginning of the '30s when the Romanian Philosophy Society holds meetings on the topic “The problem of generations” in which thinkers from that time participate. The controversies and conflicts of interest were determined by the various opinions expressed on the topic under study. The sociologist Mircea Vulcănescu is the first to publish in 1930 a series of articles about the phenomenon of generations, and in 1934 he made the study “Generation” published in the magazine “Criterion”. People living in a certain period of time are defined from a multiple perspective considering all areas, from biological to sociological, historical, psychological, cultural and economic (Perian, 2011).

The phrase “generational cohort” defines how a group of individuals are similar, not only because they were born in the same time period, but also because they experienced major events together with a major impact on society (Meredith and Schewe, 1994). Each collective experience has contributed to the establishment of a set of values, beliefs, and lifestyles that distinguish a generation cohort from the previous one (Rogler, 2002).

Thus, a generation represents the demographic cohort from a certain period, and the name is related to the context in society. In essence, the fundamental notion of generation cohort is that individuals are formed and formed through their personal attachment to the historical and societal events that took place in their formative years (Holbrook and Schindler, 1994).

Generally, generation labels, such as Baby Boomers, Generation "X", Generation "Y", Generation "Z" come from America, but are used in research in many countries around the world, the basis of lived experiences and events. The division into categories helps to conduct studies in various fields, but also to develop strategies that capitalize on the potential of each historical period (Ting H., Lim T., Run E., Koh H., Sahdan M, 2018).

Periodization based on the evolution of society is related to certain events that had a major impact in that context. For example, the "Baby Boom" generation targets people born after World War II, the generation being so named because of the "boom"⁵ in birth rates in the United States (Smith, 2020).

Studies over time continue with the new cohort, called "X" because the lack of problems, prosperity have contributed to superficiality and loss of identity. The representatives of this period did not stand out with some major achievements. In order for there to be a certain logic, we continued with the letters of the alphabet for the following cohorts Y, Z.

Regarding social networks, the term refers to the web service designed to create virtual links between users, with social, commercial, political and educational applications. The interconnection of individuals through the congruence between the internet, the network platform and its users has contributed to the formation of a social structure used throughout the world.

⁵ *Boom means prosperity in English according to <https://www.dictionarenglez.ro/englez-roman/boom>, but in this context it has the meaning of demographic explosion*

2. Description of the young generation in the XXI century in the literature

Since 1952 in the paper *The Problem of Generations*, the German sociologist Karl Mannheim considers that each generation inherits a collective consciousness that occurs when individuals, from a similar age group or cohort, experience similar social and political events. To define the identity of a generation, the moment when individuals reach maturity is followed, and the rhythm and intensity of social or political events play an important role (Pilcher 1994).

The research of a generation considers the similarities and differences of individuals, and their relation to life, family, work, money and social interaction. In recent years, studies of generational cohorts have gone through different stages, and currently the communities of psychology and sociology explore patterns of similarity and difference between generations. People in a certain generation are those who have common habits and form a collective memory, helping them to integrate into a social paradigm (Eyerman, Turner 1998). An individual's life comprises four life cycles: youth, adulthood, middle age, and old age. Thus, a cohort is a group that lives the same phase of life and sets its limits and ideals according to peers (Strauss, Howe, 1991).

Researchers such as Tapscott, Twenge, Meredith, Noble, Miller have defined, according to age categories, people in recent decades according to the following structure: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, Generation Z. The main directions about generations are similar in studies. Over time, small differences occur in establishing the beginning and end of a cohort (Edge, 2013). What is certain is that contemporary people of a certain period have specific features, similar lifestyle and identical relationship to technology.

No generation has been spared challenges, but it has also benefited from certain opportunities that have contributed to the

maturation of individuals. According to Vincent (2005), different historical generations have had greater or lesser opportunities for economic success, social mobility, migration, personal security, marriage and family development. Edmunds and Turner (2005) also mention that the temporal position of a generation is important from the perspective of the opportunities and resources available. Depending on the use of existing means, there have been some changes in family and social life, but also in society. . Thus, the existing specific elements prepare the context for a new generational cohort.

Following the research conducted by the Pew Research Center⁶, the generations were divided according to year of birth, family structure, life stage or historical events. Each generation is influenced by the cultural environment and socio-political context that determines the formation of certain habits, and therefore values and perspectives on the world differ from generation to generation (Smith & Clurman, 1997).

In this paper, the generational picture is presented, according to the structure of Don Tapscot from the book *Digital Growths* (2011). At the last cohort, more information appears, because it represents the target group of the study.

Characteristics of the "Baby Boomers" generation

The "Baby Boomers" generation includes people born between 1945 and 1964 and are called the "Cold War Generation" or "Generation of Economic Growth" (Tapscott, 2011, p. 41). The name is related to the Second World War, when the United States experienced prosperous times and, as a result, the birth rate increased, generating a population explosion during that period.

⁶ *The Pew Research Center is an objective research center that informs the public about the issues, attitudes, and trends that shape the world. The center conducts public opinion polls, demographic research, content analysis and other research in the field of data-based social sciences.*

The advent of television, at the same time, shaped the lives of individuals, and the new information channel became a strong counter-candidate for the radio and film industry.

Representatives of this generation grew up during the post-war economic prosperity characterized by social and political unrest. Other key events in the United States were, for example, the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, and the assassination of President Kennedy and Martin Luther King (Bradford 1993). During this period there are mass protests against the national authority and institutions caused by the failures of some political leaders and not only (Kupperschmidt 2000). Consumerism is on the rise, being influenced by the prioritization of work and self-fulfillment, even to the detriment of time spent in the family.

Individuals of this generation are active, optimistic, and have been contemporaries in the United States with the human rights movement and the hippie movement. Later, economic problems changed the perspective, so that people became more skeptical and selfish.

In general, individualism, optimism and self-confidence define this age group. Professional development and interest in the material part are constantly pursued objectives. Despite their age, people want to be approached directly and seek to be useful to society (Rowson, 2016). There is interest in adapting to technology, and the most used social platform is Facebook (Walgrove, 2015).

Characteristics of the "X" generation

Generation X represents people born between 1965 and 1979. It is also known as the "generation with the key to the neck" or "the MTV generation". During this period the birth rate decreased a lot and hence the use of the term "baby bust"⁷. But

⁷ *Baby bust - an expression that refers to the decline in population growth that followed the baby boom period; bust (lb.eng.): decline, decrease, Tapscott, 2011, p. 43.*

the expression that managed to impose itself for the name of this generation was Generation X, after the title of Douglas Coupland's novel (Tapscott, 2011, p. 43). People of this generation lived their adolescence during the expansion period of television, but kept the habit of reading newspapers and listening to the radio.

In terms of technology, efficiency is recognized and social media are used. Withdrawals arise when it comes to online financial transfers. It is no coincidence that Generation X is described as falling between two seats, ie between the digital and analog eras (Slootweg, Emilie; Rowson, Bill, 2018). Every day, people in this cohort check emails, and research shows that Generation X individuals prefer to be informed when buying a service (Vavre, 2015).

Generation "X" appreciates the opinions of other people, is loyal to a brand, and the online environment is seen as the main channel for connecting with the world. Also called the "lost" generation⁸, being exposed to divorces and long-term kindergartens. The children did not have good relations with their parents and hence the desire not to imitate their behavior. Individuals in this age group are passive, uninterested in going to the polls, characterized by skepticism and increased selfishness. Often questions like, "What do I get out of this?" "Why me?" (Taylor; Gao, 2014).

In the context of societal challenges, he is particularly interested in traditional values and family security. Then, the representatives of this generation try to maintain a balance between professional and personal life. They are ingenious, self-esteem and independent appreciating the moments spent with friends (Harber, 2011). Compared to other generations, the Xs live

⁸ *The phrase "Lost Generation" appears in the literature and refers to a group of American authors, including Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and TS Eliot, whose works often depict the internal struggles of those who lived after the First World War. world, also called the "lost generation"*

in more tense situations, so they seek to maintain a positive image of their own lives.

Representatives of this generation were more interested in completing higher education compared to the previous generation (Reeves, 2006). Therefore, they are more responsible, attentive to family relationships and financial management. In our country it is known as the generation of "decree"⁹, ie individuals born since the summer of '67, when the fertility rate in Romania exploded from 1.9 to 3.7 children / woman, following the policy of banning abortions (Full, 2015). They spent their childhood during communism and in the transition years, aspects that determined their attitude of concern in capitalism towards procuring the means necessary for a decent living. The large number led to the development of competitiveness, personal resource planning, and the period lived it was characterized by a change in mentalities and habits.

Members of this generation have been labeled "latchkey", given their adolescence spent at home alone, because, in addition to fathers, their mothers were at work. Terms such as "sandwich" or "slacker" also appear in the increase in the number of single-parent families, music videos, personal computers, have led to the development of independent and self-sufficient attitudes (Berl, 2006). Flexibility, freedom, informal structures, resistance to authority and the traditional hierarchy are specific elements for this generation (Edge, 2013).

Characteristics of the "Y" generation

Generation Y, also known as "Millennials"¹⁰, is made up of people born between 1980 and 1994. Childhood and adolescence

⁹ *decreșel, decreșei s. m. child born between 1968-1990, when the communist regime banned abortions and discouraged the use of contraceptives according to the Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language, online version.*

¹⁰ *Millennials - "children of the end of the millennium"*

were lived without a smartphone and social media, as the first iPhone appeared in early 2007, and the social network Facebook impacted the world in 2008. Therefore, technology gets used daily, it becomes part of everyday life (Slootweg; Rowson, 2018).

Representatives of this generation are linked to the following key events: the fall of the World Center towers, the Columbine massacre, multiculturalism, globalization, the Internet, non-hourly news and reality TV. They grew up in a more diverse and tolerant society, in which equality was promoted (Berl 2006). There is also interest in working digitally, for personal development, for teamwork and for contacts based on social networks (Espinoza, Ukleja and Rusch 2010).

The "Generation Y" study, conducted in 2016, highlights the fact that individuals in this generation are immune to marketing and sales techniques because they have become accustomed to them from an early age amid the diversity of advertising campaigns and technology development. People in this cohort have a special interest in achieving specific goals and are very creative. From the perspective of education, it is one of the most educated generations, being in the attention of young parents and living in accessible social groups. The use of the Internet has contributed to their flexibility in terms of communication, fashion and daily choices (Sendek & Hobart, 2016).

Regardless of the changes around them, they adapt very easily, but they have problems in the financial field. Large investments are made on loans, and parents also contribute to the payment of instalments. Although they are not loyal to some brands, from the perspective of the unit and have the courage to uphold their rights through public demonstrations (Kubiatko, 2013). Millennials were contemporaries of the development of the Internet and computers, but the relationship was "love and hate" in terms of technology. They are delighted with the authenticity, appreciate the experiences in which they actively participate, from concerts, social events to sports concerns.

3. The profile of the “Z” generation in the context of the expansion of the current social networks

According to the study "Innovation Report by Samsung" generation "Z", called iGeneration, Centennials or "digital natives", refers to people born after 1995 to 2012. Currently, 32% of the world's population is part of Generation Z, being thus the category with the largest representation in the world, and in Romania there are approximately 2.26 million people from Generation Z aged between 13 and 23 years (Seol, 2020, page 7). Therefore, globalization and technologicalization has influenced them since they came into contact with the world, shaping their conception of life.

Members of Generation Z are true "digital natives", being small accustomed to manipulating devices, ie smartphones and tablets. They had access to the Internet, watched posts on YouTube and are the first to grow up with social media. Members of this generation reported to the computer as boomers reported to television (Tapscott, 2011).

Compared to previous generations, the “Z” generation, although it places great emphasis on autonomy and independence, prefers to be part of certain groups on social networks (Snow, 2020). To find out information, search the internet, avoiding the help of other people. Individuals of this generation are multitasking, using several devices at the same time, which leads to a decrease in their degree of concentration.

Generation Z, as a whole, is defined “by technology, fluidity, openness to the new, a new cultural imprint (uniqueness, authenticity, creativity, recognition) and paradoxes. Their profile is deeply divided between vanity and community spirit; however, they are inevitably linked to striking similarities” (Seol, 2020, p.8).

With the help of technology, individuals are informed by Wikipedia¹¹ and Google¹², which represent their encyclopedias. Facebook, the most used by Millennials and Generation X, is being replaced by Instagram and Snapchat. Whatsapp replaces email, being more direct and faster, and YouTube takes the place of traditional TV. Communication has priority through social media, and must be short and incisive, able to stimulate curiosity starting from a visual image. The visual is a key element in the daily activity and the self-image is directly related to the number of followers. The members of this generation accept collaboration activities and personalized content within some projects.

Life for this generation takes place between reality and virtual, between online and offline. Despite the advantages of technology, studies indicate that the morbid and excessive relationship with the Internet has negative effects on their sense of happiness and contentment. The virtual world is accessible, through portable means, and with a click the connection with friends can take place. The biggest fear is related to disconnection, which automatically means losing the ability to see the posts of others.

The emergence of the "Z" generation coincides with some characters who have marked history in one way or another, such as Dolly the sheep, the first mammal successfully cloned from an adult cell, with Michael Joseph Jackson Jr., the first child of the late pop star Michael Jackson, but also with the McCaughey septuplets, the first known set in the world of surviving septuplets. For the representatives of this cohort, Hong Kong has always been under Chinese rule, the Lion King has been present on Broadway, and Harry Potter is the star of the books read (White, 2017).

¹¹ *Wikipedia is an online encyclopedia with free access, according to information from https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Despre_Wikipedia*

¹² *Google is the most used search engine in the world according to the study presented by Shaw (2020)*

Moreover, technology is a normality, ambition a virtue from a strategic point of view, passion a motivating factor, and religious interest is very low. According to White (2017), Generation Z is defined by five important factors as follows: (1) marked by recession - growth in a post-9/11 world; (2) Wi-Fi enabled; (3) multiracial; (4) sexual fluid; and (5) post-Christian.

According to the study conducted by Francis and Hoefel (2018), members of Generation Z are interested in the truth and want to follow, as motivation, stories based on real facts. This explains why they appreciate influencers, youtubers and instagram stories. They are confident in their potential and I know that only through work can they succeed. Generation Z children were born in a time of economic and financial crisis and are therefore accustomed to a fast and unstable world. Representatives of this generation are creative, and social media applications such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube are incorporated into daily life. Regular discussions address issues such as gun protection, immigration, fair and equal treatment of minorities. There is a special interest in personal branding and openness to posting privacy issues online.

Generation Z is interested in physical health, but also sensitive to environmental issues, such as global warming and ecology. It also promotes projects to improve civil society and citizens' rights. With the help of technology, representatives of this generation believe that they can transform the way people work and live in the 21st century (Hackl, 2020).

Next, we will present the main characteristics of Generation Z (Figure no. 3) in order to better understand the particularities of the individuals in this cohort. Looking at the specific characteristics, we find that each generation, beyond those normal differences, has contributed to the development of society from one point of view.

4. Generation Z and internet connection

The analysis presented by the international agency We Are Social (Kemp, 2020, figure no. 4) in October 2020 indicates useful data for understanding the general context. Out of the total population of 7.81 billion inhabitants, 5.20 billion have a personal mobile phone, 4.6 billion have internet access, and 4.14 billion have an account on a social network.

Therefore, the data show that over half of the world's population uses a mobile phone. Available information, fast communication, videos and many other opportunities have also contributed to the increase in the number of those connected to the internet. The new technological paradigm has also influenced the interest in social networks. Communicating with friends, posting favorite images and receiving information quickly they have accelerated the process of involvement in the virtual world.

The study shows that technology continues to play an increasingly important role in various aspects of daily life. Based on the results, the following trends are highlighted, such as the fact that the use of social networks has increased by over 12% in the last 12 months, ie over 450 million people spent time in front of modern devices, but also the fact that the number of users on Instagram is There is also a tendency to use technology in many areas of activity, and marketers face many challenges (Kemp, 2020). Therefore, based on the analysis, there is an average of over 14 people who started using social networks every second, which means a double percentage of the study published in early 2020.

Compared to the data from 2019, in terms of the digital world, Kemp shows that the percentages are increasing in each area, namely: mobile phone use, internet access and connection to social networks (figure no. 5). Thus, it is found that more than two thirds of the world now use a mobile phone, ie about 67%, while almost 60% of the population now uses the Internet. If a few months ago, the penetration of social networks exceeded the value

of 50 %, according to the latest data, it has increased to almost 53%. More than 9 out of 10 internet users worldwide connect via mobile devices, and two-thirds also connect via computers. When it comes to accessing social networks, users clearly prefer mobile devices.

According to research conducted by the international agency We are social (Kemp, 2020), the time spent every day on the Internet is 6 hours and 55 minutes, and the time on social networks is 2 hours and 29 minutes (figure no. 6). The trend is growing whether we refer to internet access, social networks or activity on online games.

5. Generation Z and social networks

Social networks have changed people's lifestyles. Today they are a constantly evolving environment that contributes to the interaction between individuals. Communication in various fields is directly related to technological means. Every year the number of users is increasing, and the young generation is interested in daily access.

Social media includes any digital technology in which users connect with other users. In general, the opportunity to comment or change the content of information is a hallmark of social media (Greenhow, 2017). The virtual environment is challenging because there is the possibility of uncensored expression, socializing and making new friends.

In recent years, the number of people using at least one of the channels of online communication, social interaction and the propagation or search for easily accessible information (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc.) has increased worldwide. Therefore, the phenomenon of social media use takes into account the young generation, which is the most active age group on social networks. The technological revolution has influenced social rules, and information can be transmitted much faster, is accessible in

different parts of the world and there is the possibility of permanent updating (Cismaru, 2012).

According to the study conducted by Kemp (2020), there are over 4 billion active users on social networks, and interest and accessibility are constantly growing (figure no.7). Most people connect to the virtual environment via their mobile phone. This explains the fact that every year the number of users is higher. Interest in online interactions has grown, even among adults.

Time spent on social networks varies by country. Thus, Filipinos are still the most "social" people in the world, the average internet user aged 16 to 64 spending almost 4 hours a day on social platforms. However, it is a very different picture at the other end of the scale, with internet users in Japan spending an average of only 45 minutes a day on social media.

International research (Von Abrams, 2020) indicates that Romanians spend an average of seven hours a day in front of a computer, laptop or phone. Interestingly, during the pandemic, there was a decrease of 20 minutes compared to last. Regarding the use of smartphones, the time is about 3 and a half hours, 15 minutes less than last year. According to the study, Romanians spend about 2 hours and 20 minutes every day on social networks.

The increase in the number of users on social networks is directly related to the development of the Internet worldwide (figure no. 8). In first place is Asia (51.8%), where more than half of the population has access to an internet network, then in second place Europe, but with a much lower percentage 14, 8%. The last place is occupied by Oceania and Australia which together have only 0, 6% of the total population.

Despite the various challenges of the last few years, the social network Facebook is still in the top of popularity when it comes to socializing (figure no.9). Trends in the number of users reported in the company's earnings announcements are related to the fact that the number of 2.5 billion (Iqbal, 2020) active users has already been exceeded.

Facebook is the largest social network in the world, originally created by Mark Zuckerberg as an online version of the Harvard University Yearbook. The name Facebook comes from the words face and book, because in the yearbooks of American colleges appear photos of all students. Currently this social network remains the ideal platform both to promote events, products or programs and to monitor the reactions of followers. Facebook remains a global tool for interaction, useful and with “the largest entity on the Internet in history” (Schaefer, 2016, p. 204).

However, for various reasons, marketers cannot reach all of these users using Facebook advertising, and the platform's self-service advertising tools indicate that Facebook's total target audience now stands at \$ 1.95 billion, or about 80 billion. percent of the total MAUs (figure no. 10).

6. Presentation of generations from the perspective of strengths and weaknesses according to specific characteristics

In the analysis presented by GetSmarter¹³ in 2020, each generation has certain strengths, but also some weaknesses. Therefore, individuals, regardless of age, must maximize the benefits of each category. Communication and collaboration are important factors for activities together by young people and adults. Below are the characteristics of each generation in terms of strengths and vulnerabilities. .

The Baby Boomers generation at strong points reminds the availability for work, teamwork and the ability to be excellent mentors for the young generation. The weaknesses reveal the lack of availability for change, everything being judged from the perspective of discipline and a rigid program. Competitiveness

¹³ *GetSmarter, a 2U, Inc. brand, is an online learning expert with over 10 years of experience in developing high quality online short courses at the world's top universities.*

stimulates them, motivation is maintained by gaining rewards, and in terms of technology they are not so familiar (Harber, 2011).

Generation X is the category of professionals who, in addition to fulfilling their responsibilities at work, manage to take time for their family. Then, individuals get a very high income needed to live a balanced life. If the boomer motto is "Live to Work!", those of this generation choose as a motto: "Work to Live!" (Brinckerhoff). The weak points are the most obvious attitude of satisfaction towards superiors and therefore the tendency not to react to the defect's management of the leaders of an organization. He prefers to get things done quickly and avoids spending extra time getting the job done to the highest standards.

Third, Millennials (Generation Y) are considered the most self-employed, being concerned with the ethics and social responsibility of the organization. They are accustomed to looking for the desired information and conceiving their own perspectives, avoiding the acceptance of an already established plan (Brett, 2017). At the weak points, being independent as a structure, they are not interested in teamwork, they do not have a well-developed work ethic. It is the generation that is very impatient and interested in organizations that offer them the opportunity to grow hierarchically.

Generation Z is very competent in the field of technology, able to adopt new discoveries and ambitious from a professional perspective. Those of this generation are natural entrepreneurs and able to be involved in several activities at the same time. At the weak points we mention the total dependence on technology, the cynicism in everyday life and the realism that destroys the idealistic perspective (Harber, 2011).

7. Reporting to technology of each generation during the pandemic

In April 2020, Visual Capitalist¹⁴ presented the results of a study conducted by the research company Global Web Index (Jones, 2020). The topic of the research focused on how, during the pandemic, individuals from different generational cohorts related to technology.

People had to change their schedule, and many of the usual activities of a day could not be done. The time spent online has increased, and every age group has had to resort to modern devices. It is interesting that adults, with life experience on their side, have managed to adapt more easily to the new conditions caused by the pandemic compared to other generations (Jones, 2020).

According to statistics, we find that each generation was creative, adapted and used technological means. Older people were more susceptible to complications from the virus, and younger people were more concerned that someone in the family might get sick (Kendra, 2020). According to these perspectives, the interest in certain areas and the passage of time were different depending on the age of the individuals. The graphics are quite suggestive and clearly indicate what the orientation of each generation was.

Generation "Z", more than the other categories, spent most of their time in the virtual environment. Watching videos and TV shows with the help of the internet, but also online games were the favorite activities (figure no. 14). Also, music was listened to and the online press was read. Communication on social networks was part of the daily program, even if through social media there

¹⁴ *Visual Capitalist is one of the fastest growing online publishers globally, focusing on topics such as markets, technology, energy and the global economy.*

was a danger that the psychological state of individuals would suffer (Liua, Liub, Hongfei, Osburg, 2021).

Part of the time was used for reading, but also listening to audio materials. There was no lack of reading the written press to know the events around the world. In addition to other activities, the study indicates an interest in live events. Looking at the results of the study, we better understand why among the ten important directions that shape the generation "Z" (Twenge, 2020), we find "No hurry" (continuation of childhood in adolescence), "Internet" or "Inclusion" (acceptance, equality and debates on freedom of expression).

Potrivit studiilor realizate, interesele au variat în funcție de vârsta indivizilor (figura nr.15). Pandemia a adus multe schimbări, iar membrii familiei au stat mult timp împreună, în comparație cu alte perioade. Cu toate acestea, activitățile online și nu numai, nu s-au suprapus, căci fiecare generația și-a prioritarizat programul în funcție de propriul stil de viață.

According to the data from the study, during the pandemic, Generation Z compared to other generations, watched more videos on the Internet, was more active in online games, listened to more music and spent more time than usually on TV. The books were not of interest to young people during the pandemic.

8. Conclusions

The research reveals the differences between generations and their way of relating to life. The development of technology in the last decade has influenced individuals of every generation. Age groups have their own specifics, but the major impact of the online environment is related to Generation Z. Internet connection, fast communication and interest in multitasking are specific elements for the current generation.

Interactions in the virtual environment are an intrinsic part of everyday life. Thus, campaigns to protect the environment and

help the sick are promoted more easily. Also, even political parties present their doctrine online to prepare the new generation of voters.

In the context of the pandemic, the representatives of generation Z spent more time in front of the computer, and internet access was an alternative for school classes, but also for leisure. Each generation related differently to technology during the isolation period. For example, studies show that boomers were most interested in TV shows, and z-ists were interested in watching videos or series, online games, and listening to music. The daily program was related to the active involvement in the virtual world in the context generated by the appearance of the Covid -19 virus.

With all the benefits of accessing the internet, spending a long time can negatively affect your values, habits and ultimately your lifestyle. Through information campaigns, appropriate laws and collaboration between educational factors, the skills needed for young people to deal with risk situations can be developed. Thus, the positive effects of the online environment that contribute to personal development must be maximized. Generation Z has the necessary potential to be useful for society, but it also needs the involvement of those of previous generations.

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Tables, figures and appendices

Generation	Strengths	Weaknesses
<i>Baby Boomers</i>	desire to work interest in teamwork ability to mentor	reduced availability for change spirit of competition the need for rewards distance from technology
X	desire for performance time spent with family material resources balanced life	attitude of gratitude towards superiors quick completion of activities superficiality
Y	spirit of independence concern for ethics and social responsibility in the organization creativity	team work work ethic impatience
Z	competence in the field of technology implementation of new discoveries interest in development natural entrepreneurs multitasking	dependence on technology cynicism realism that destroys the idealistic perspective

Table no.1 - Presentation of the characteristics of each generation from the perspective of strengths and weaknesses
Source: GetSmarter, 2020

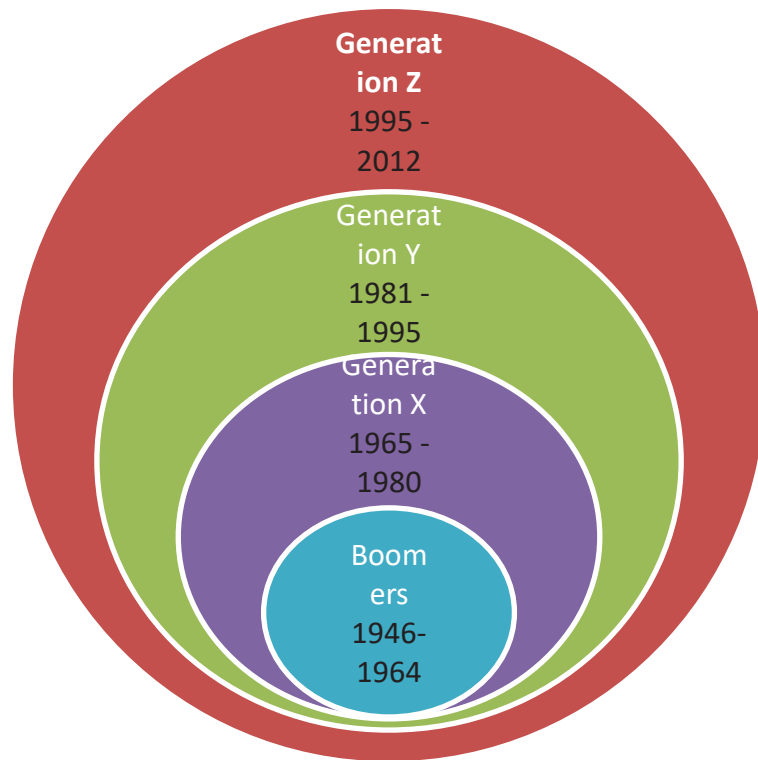


Figure no. 1. Defining the generations according to the chronology of the years of birth in the period 1946 -1996 Source: Dimock, Michael, 2019



Figure no.2 - The division by generations based on a symbol specific to that period; Source: GetSmarter, 2020

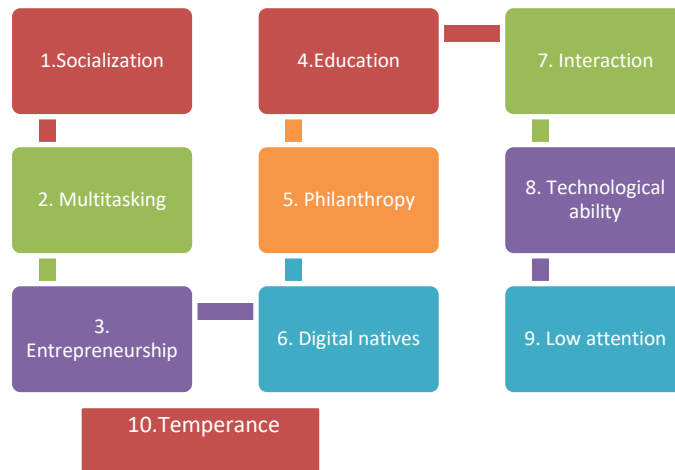


Figure no. 3 - Presentation of the main features of Generation Z
 Source: Forbes, Future Workplace

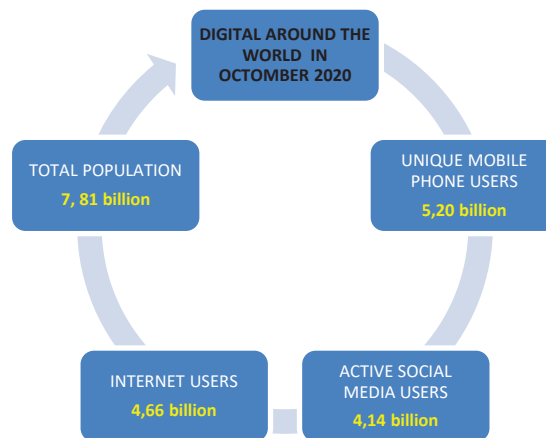


Figure no. 4 - Digital activity globally in October, 2020;
 Source: Digital 2020, Global digital Yearbook, Hootsuite

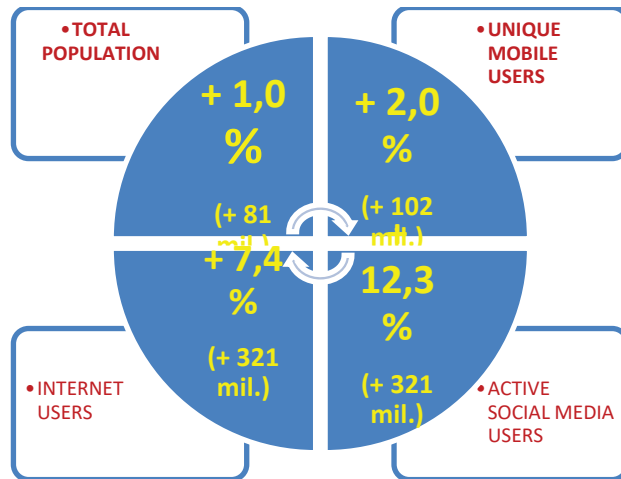


Figure no.5 - Digital activity is growing globally according to comparative data October 2019 versus October 2020 Source: Digital 2020, Global digital Yearbook, Hootsuite

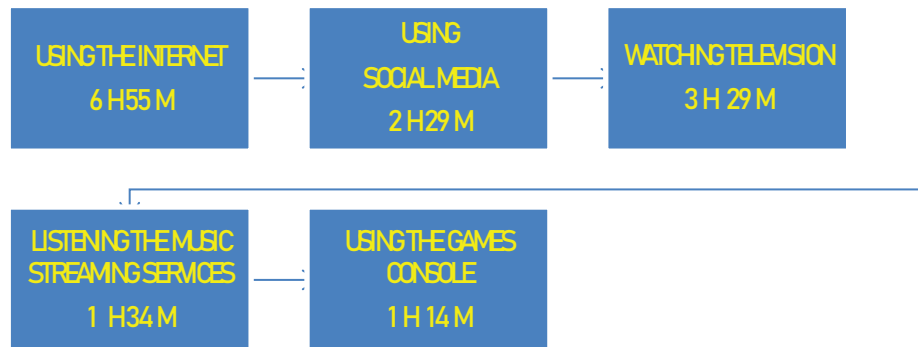


Figure no.6 - Time spent in front of the screens of those between 16 and 64 years old; Source: Digital 2020, Global digital Yearbook, Hootsuite

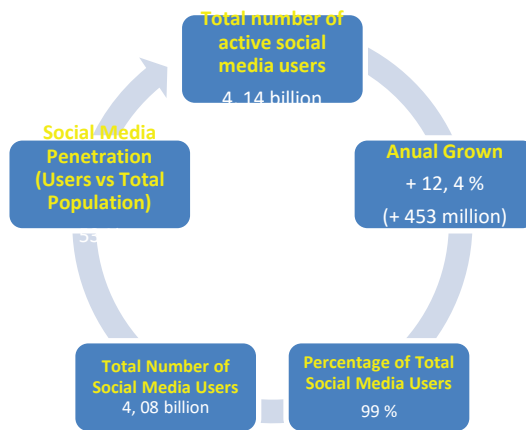


Figure no. 7 - Use of social networks globally;
 Source: Digital 2020, Global digital Yearbook, Hootsuite

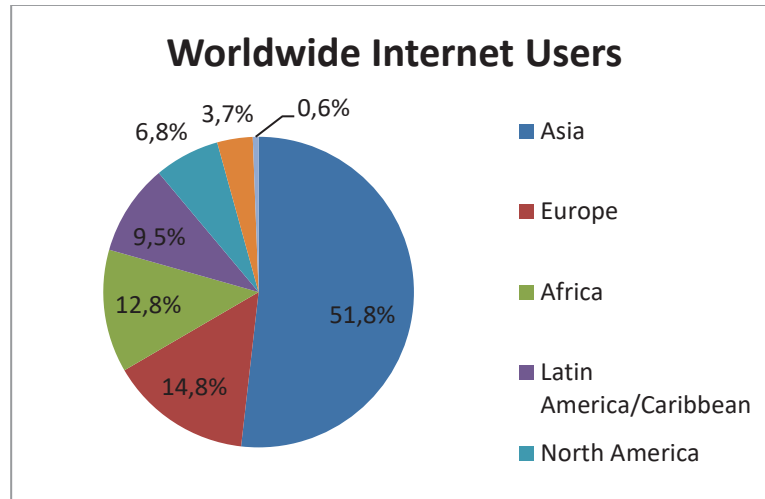


Figure no. 8 Internet users on all continents in 2020 Source:
 Internet World Stats 2021

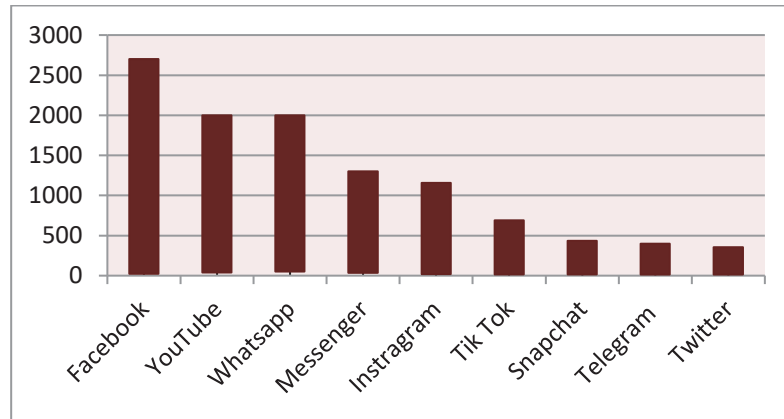


Figure No. 9 - The most used social networks worldwide (monthly / million) ; Source: Digital 2020, Global digital Yearbook, Hootsuite

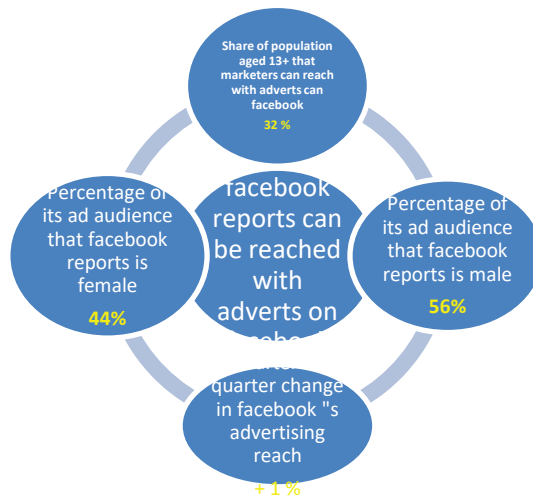


Figure no. 10 - General presentation of the audience on Facebook; Source: Digital 2020, Global digital Yearbook, Hootsuite

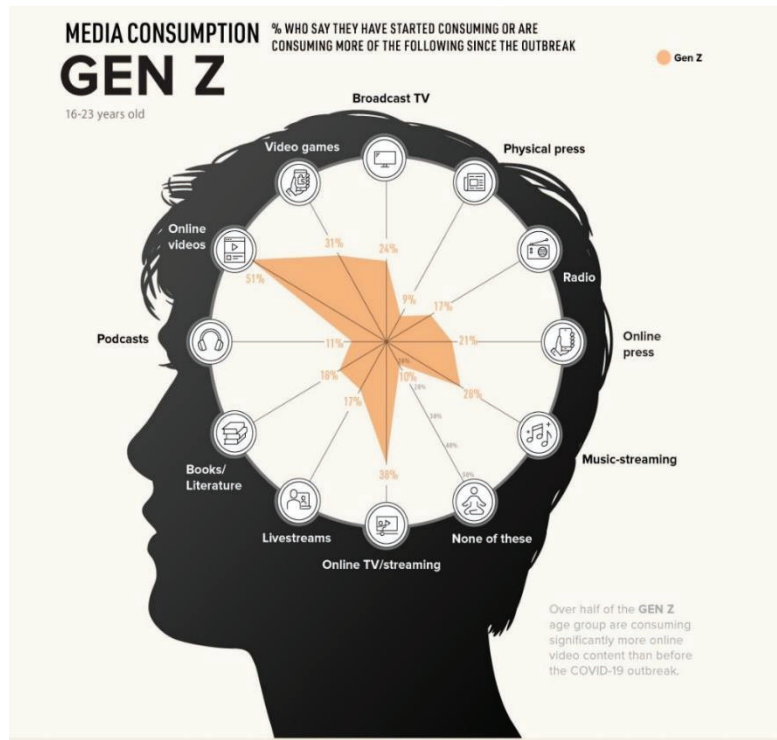


Figure no.12 Media consumption in the Covid era -19 by Generation Z

Source: Visual Capitalist, Global Web Index, Coronavirus Research Report April, 2020