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Dipartimento di
Filosofia e
Scienze dell'Educazione

Gen Z and social media in contemporary society

10 March 2025

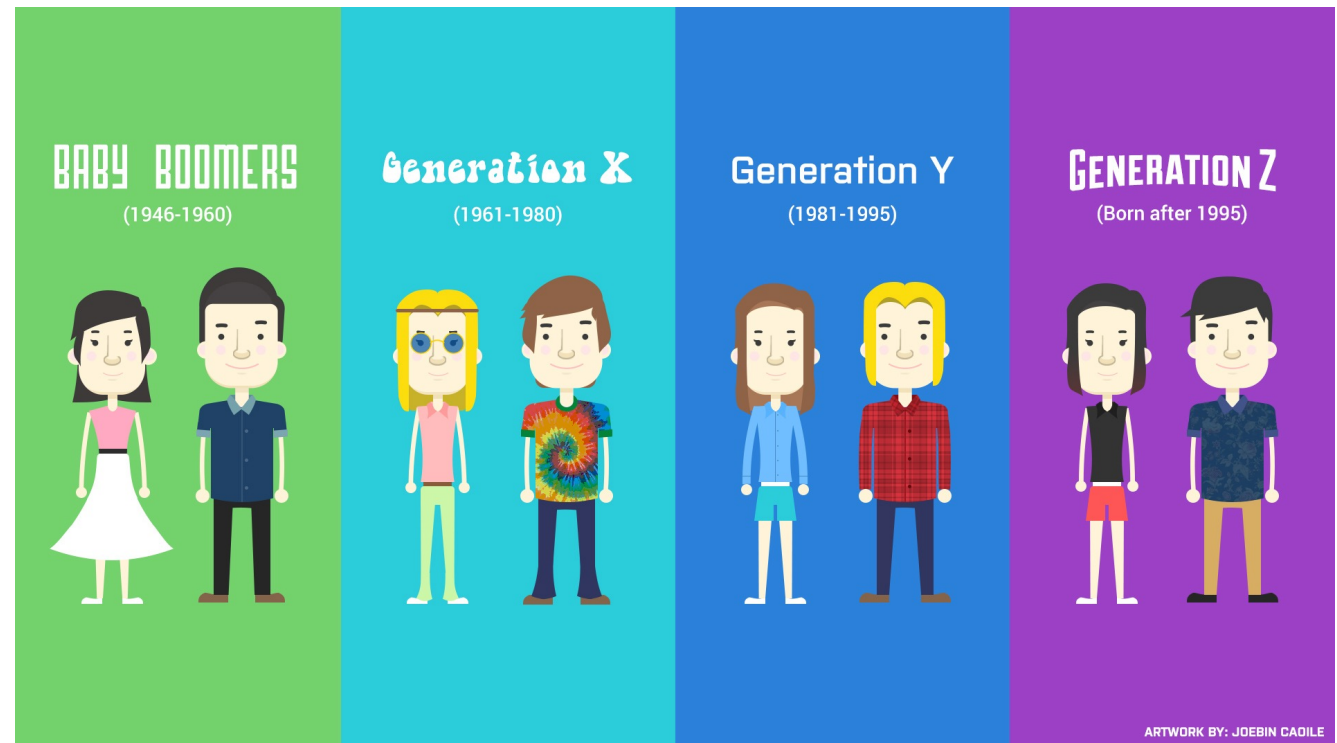
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BEYOND DIGITAL NATIVES



Gen-Z

- Today, however, people refer to you as **Generation Z** - a generation for whom **social media** represents not just **entertainment**, but also an environment for **growth** and **socialization**.



What kind of society?

Liquid society (Bauman, 2009)

Risk society (Beck, 1992)

Pandemic and post-pandemic society (Peters, 2020)



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The Impact of the Pandemic

- In **2020**, the pandemic forced us to **rethink our lives overnight**. Many countries had to **suspend normal activities** and implement **lockdowns**, where people were required to **stay at home** (Tirocchi et al., 2023).
- Education had to be **redesigned** for remote learning, relying on **digital technologies**. Both **teachers** and **students** had to **adapt** to completely different conditions.
- For these reasons, the **pandemic also changed social relationships**, which became **mainly digital** and led to **new forms of connection**, completely different from those of the past.

Television: window to the world

Television, in fact, functioned as a kind of “window to the world”, allowing people to experience events that were far beyond their personal reality.

It was the first medium to truly kickstart globalization.



The new media ecosystem

- The **media ecosystem** of the **platform society** is characterized by some **specific elements** related to **Web 2.0**, including:
- **User-generated content** - The ability to **create original content independently**. This includes posting **stories, memes, stickers, and fan fiction**, which many young people create based on their favorite **franchises and sagas** (e.g., *Twilight*, *Harry Potter*).
- **Sharing** - The **instant dissemination of content** is now **much simpler and more immediate** thanks to social media.

We can **post content** and **share it immediately** afterward.

Social Network Sites: A Definition

We define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to

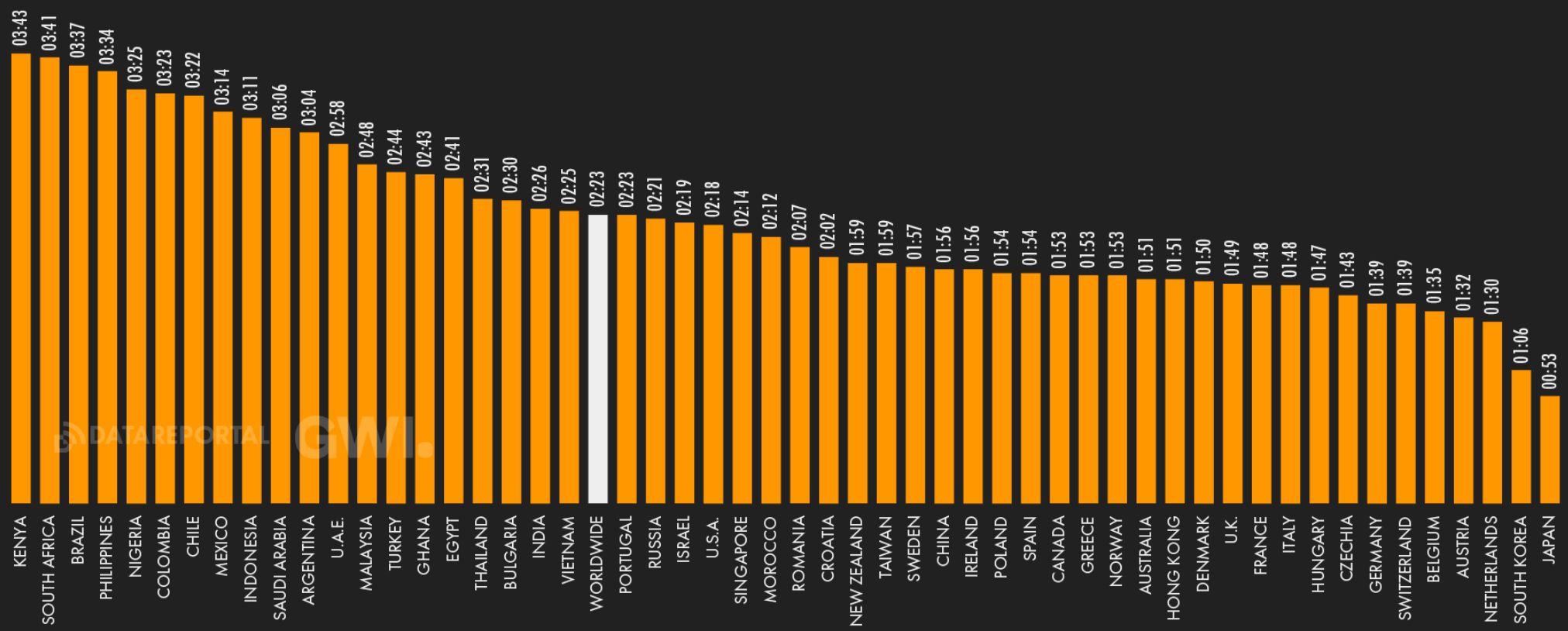
- (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system
- (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and
- (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site.

boyd and Ellison, 2008

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DAILY TIME SPENT USING SOCIAL MEDIA

AVERAGE AMOUNT OF TIME (IN HOURS AND MINUTES) THAT INTERNET USERS AGED 16 TO 64 SPEND USING SOCIAL MEDIA EACH DAY





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SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITIES BY PLATFORM

PERCENTAGE OF ACTIVE USERS OF EACH SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM AGED 16 TO 64 WHO SAY THEY USE THAT PLATFORM FOR EACH KIND OF ACTIVITY

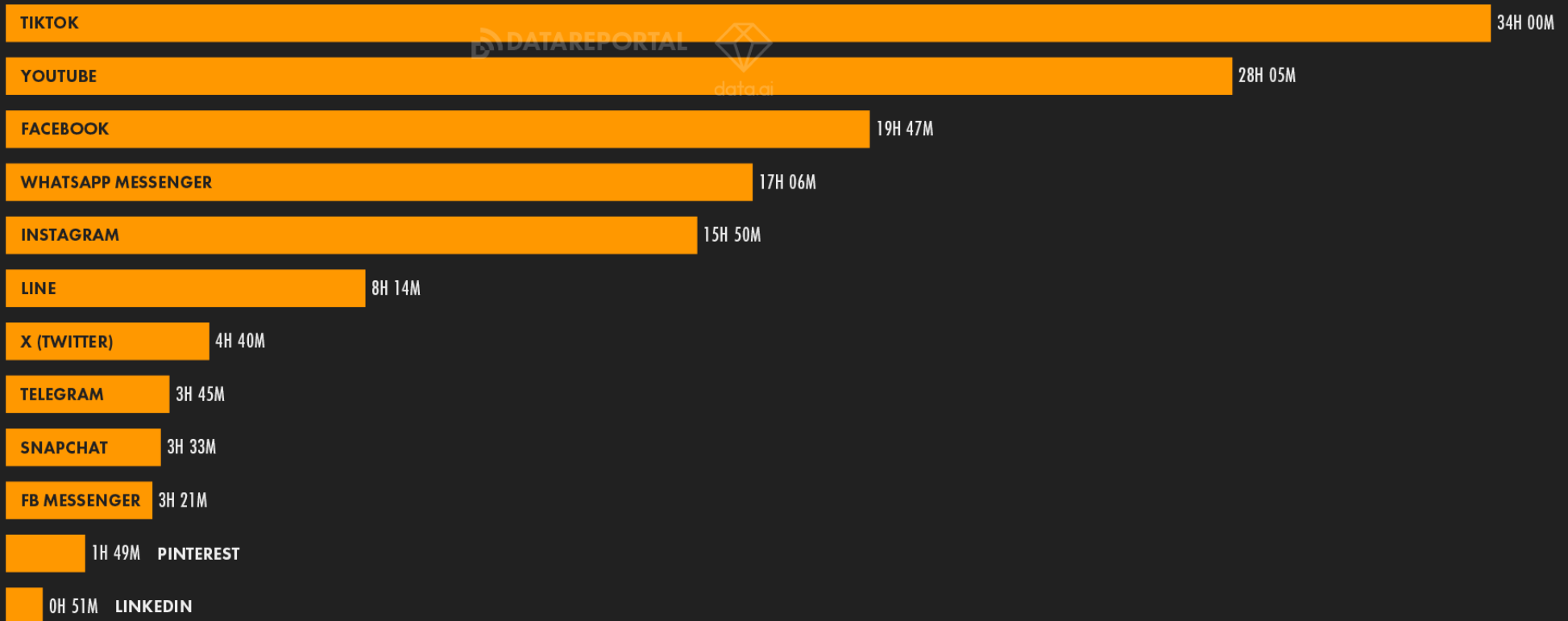


SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM	LOOK FOR FUNNY OR ENTERTAINING CONTENT	FOLLOW OR RESEARCH BRANDS AND PRODUCTS	KEEP UP TO DATE WITH NEWS AND CURRENT EVENTS	MESSAGE FRIENDS AND FAMILY	POST OR SHARE PHOTOS OR VIDEOS
FACEBOOK	54.9%	54.3%	58.7%	72.6%	63.5%
INSTAGRAM	64.8%	62.7%	52.5%	58.3%	70.4%
TIKTOK	80.3%	44.9%	39.0%	17.9%	39.4%
LINKEDIN	10.0%	24.1%	27.7%	11.7%	14.7%
SNAPCHAT	35.1%	22.1%	21.1%	38.7%	42.9%
X (TWITTER)	34.9%	35.7%	60.6%	19.0%	27.2%
REDDIT	33.0%	28.7%	31.0%	7.4%	13.0%
PINTEREST	20.9%	36.6%	13.3%	6.0%	13.6%

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TIME SPENT USING SOCIAL MEDIA APPS

AVERAGE TIME PER MONTH THAT GLOBAL USERS SPENT USING EACH PLATFORM'S ANDROID APP BETWEEN 01 JULY AND 30 SEPTEMBER 2023



OFFLINE/ONLINE

Onlife (Floridi 2015; Boccia Artieri et al. 2018)

PUBLIC/PRIVATE



Gen-Z and media



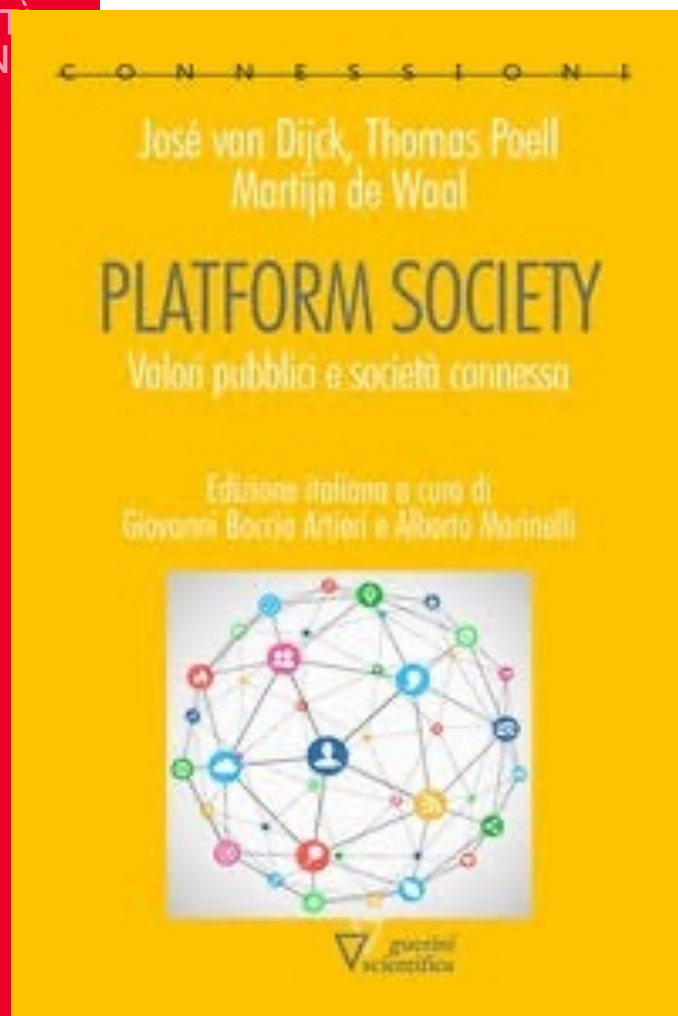
- While Baby Boomers grew up with the expansion of television, Generation X (Gen X) had its childhood shaped by the emerging computer revolution, and Generation Y (i.e. Millennials) experienced the explosion of the Internet (Dimock 2019; Madden 2019), Gen Z came of age in the image- and information-saturated twenty-first century.

Worldwide, Gen Z internet users spend over eight hours on their devices each day (GlobalWebIndex 2020). Due to the prominence of Wi-Fi and digital media in their lives, Gen Z does not distinguish between the digital and physical worlds (Madden 2019) and, instead, has 'seamlessly integrated technology into almost all areas of their lives, thereby being known as digital integrators' (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2010, p. 15).



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Platform society



Generation Z and Social Media: New Digital Languages

Memes

- Shifman (2013) defines a meme as a group of digital items that share common characteristics of content, form, and stance, which are circulated and transformed by internet users.
- Memes, by definition, exist in multiple variations, each referencing a shared “core” or template (Segev et al., 2015).





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Point of View (POV)

No need for you to be confused here — point of view means the same thing on TikTok as it does in real life. 🤔 POV is used to **signal when the viewer should be watching the video from a specific perspective.**

However on TikTok, people often use “POV” for the “nostalgiacore” trend. This is when users try to **evoke a specific memory or common occurrence**, such as the POV of remembering what it was like to wake up early for school only for it to be a snow day (90’s babies will understand).

Example:

| *“#pov we have to come up with an alibi for our crime.”*

TikTok



Existing studies emphasize two key communicative values in TikTok's platform culture:

1. Affiliation
2. Authenticity

1. Zulli and Zulli (2022) interpret connections between TikTok users as “imitation publics” — networks of individuals that form through imitation rather than personal bonds, shared sentiment, or lived experiences.

2. On TikTok, authenticity is strongly associated with:

Intimacy, immediacy, and relatability, which are conveyed through face-focused videos set in private spaces such as bedrooms and bathrooms (Abidin, 2020).

The platform's algorithmically curated feed, which contributes to the perception of authenticity.

Instagram



BEREAL generation?



BeReal.

La vostra dose
quotidiana di
vita reale.

- 😊 Collegamenti significativi
- ⚠️ Momenti spontanei
- 📱 Vita reale autentica

Ogni giorno ricevete una notifica per
condividere uno scorcio autentico della
vostra vita reale con le persone a cui
tenete di più.

Generation Z, preferences and values

Sexuality and LGBTQ+ Issues

Disabilities

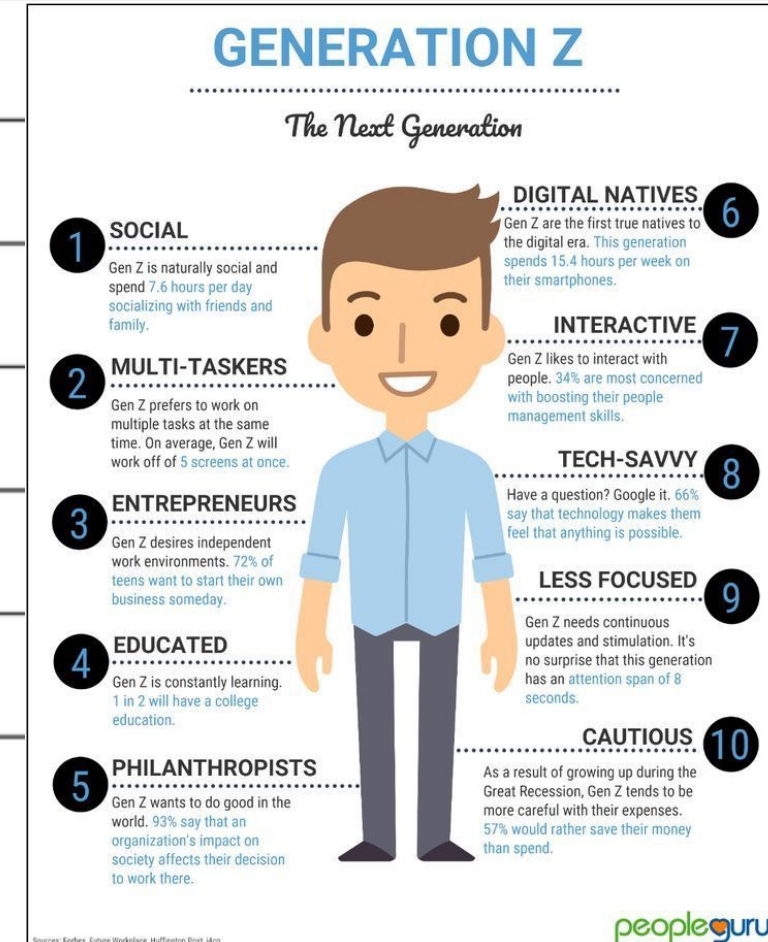
Authenticity, Genuineness, and Sustainability

Digital Nomadism, Travel, Nature

True and Reliable Information

Comedy and Entertainment

Personal Growth, Psychology, Education





Why is it Important to Use Media Consciously?

- We know that social media is increasingly a place where **negative phenomena emerge**, such as:
 - **Hate speech**
 - **Bullying**
 - **Body shaming**

How Does AI Challenge Generation Z?

- Finally, what **challenges** does **Generation Z** face with the rise of **artificial intelligence**?
- We know that **generative AI**, such as **ChatGPT**, has an **extraordinary ability** to perform tasks that increasingly resemble **human behavior**.

The Need for AI Literacy

Thus, there is a growing need for AI literacy—an educational framework that helps people understand and critically engage with AI technologies.

Currently, scientific literature has yet to establish a complete model of AI literacy (Ng et al., 2021).

Yi (2021, p.361) defines AI literacy as:

“The fundamental skill needed to become an independent citizen in the AI era.”

Long & Magerko (2020) outline the core competencies of AI literacy, including:

- Recognizing AI-based systems and their capabilities.
- Understanding how AI representations shape reality.
- Developing a critical perspective on AI's impact on society.
- Addressing the ethical implications of AI, which are central to any comprehensive and effective AI literacy framework.



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Why is Digital Literacy So Important?

- Because **youth identity formation** today takes place primarily through informal learning environments, particularly through **digital platforms and social media**.





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Media are powerful forces
in the lives of youth.



Fonte: Mediasmart, 2014

Digital citizenship

- **What Does It Mean to Be a Conscious Digital Citizen?**

- Actively engaging in society in an informed way
- Taking advantage of opportunities while respecting differences, perspectives, and cultures.

- **Who Should Be Responsible for Promoting Digital Citizenship?**

There should be a collaboration between families and schools.

However, *young people themselves should start reflecting on the significance of their actions on social media*. Every action - whether it be a comment, like, repost, or share - has meaning and impact.

- **What Are the Consequences of Your Actions on Social Media?**

This is a fundamental question that every digital user should ask themselves.



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Thank you!

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