GENERATION Z: MEDIA CONSUMPTION AND MIL

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to analyse and discuss Generation Z (the generation of people born in the late 1990s and early 2000s) media consumption patterns and their understanding and adoption of MIL. Digital and media literacy are recognized as tools of particular importance in strengthening young people's civic participation and understanding of the news. This element has become increasingly important with the proliferation of mis/disinformation especially on digital platforms. Generation Z, like Millennials before them, spend considerable screen time. They are native technophiles that have had touchscreen devices and smart features from their very early years. That is a critical factor in their media consumption as they reach adulthood. Yet, while they swipe, tap, like, and share, they're aware of how much attention their tech is getting. Through a study regarding media and information literacy among Generation Z (those who are 26 or younger) we provide data about the youngest generation in Greece (Generation Z) regarding their media and information consumption, and their relationship with MIL, Disinformation in relation with a critical factor that of reliability and trust in news sources and institutions.

Keywords: Generation Z, Media Literacy, Trust, Media Use, News Consumption.

INTRODUCTION

Generation Z, the so-called "zoomers", iGeneration, or digital natives, that is the generation that was born between mid-1990s and 2010, have grown up within an Internet-connected environment since they were born. To add to this, the pervasiveness of the ever-evolving portable handheld devices defines this generation's characteristics, stances, and attitudes as they have replaced to a large extent traditional means of human communication, interaction, and access to information. Despite living in diverse contexts from a cultural, social, economic, or political perspective, they tend to bear common characteristics and striking similarities due to the globalization and technologicalization impact. They navigate from formal to non-formal and informal online environments interacting with peers in a globally connected

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world. In light of this, their values and norms of conduct are more than ever before less dictated by place of origin and social position, willing to adopt new trends, converging to a new cultural imprint that distinctively differentiates them at large from previous generations (Harber 2011; Valkenburg; Piotowski 2017; Radut 2021). Generation Z has the following characteristics: i) they are highly adept at using new media, ii) while they do spend large amounts of time consuming both new and traditional media they are not necessarily content producers, iii) they primarily use media for entertainment, connecting with their social circles, to complete schoolwork, but less often for civic engagement. Nevertheless, despite this generation claiming competency in the field of technology, it may not come with a deep understanding of how technology works and the effects it may entail. Wada (2019) posits that while digital technology gave birth to new media and access to a wide variety of resources, "it has failed to moderate an invasion of bloggers and novice writers armed only with a cheap technology, most out just to express themselves and their 'opinions' without any supporting facts to back it up" (p. 59), without considering the consequences of their irresponsible or even illegal writing. He contends that youth is a vulnerable generation that may not bear critical thinking skills to discern quality information and tends to digest any information available. Considering the 'infodemic' era this generation is experiencing, with no spatial limits, it is apparent that there is a need to investigate the extent of their exposure to disinformation, fake news, or even low quality information that may shape a generation that will lack fundamental skills for the sustainability of democratic values.

In relation with the previous generations according to Reuters 2021 Digital News Report, we fnd that Baby Boomers, Traditionalists, and, almost to the same extent, Generation X consume news a lot; they access it daily, and most of them even do so multiple times per day. Millennials and Generation Z also score relatively high on news consumption but access news less frequently, and a sizeable group (about oneffth) consume news only once a week or less frequently. In terms of news interest, Millennials and members of Generation Z are typically 'somewhat interested' in news, while older generations are very to extremely interested in news. These news consumption patters and in general communication ones, for Generation Z takes place through mostly social media. As Hadiza Isa Wada argues (2019) their is an increased use from generation Z of new media and social media as news sources, even as they revealed that they cannot guarantee their sources' reliability. In addition to this element we should take into account are the two major shifts that Generation Z is witnessing. The rapidly changing technology, as well as the slow speed or inability of culture to adjust quick enough to

accommodate such changes (Neufeld & Mate 2006). Gen Z is more technologically driven than any other generation, while they are systematic users of social media. According to the Edelman survey, trust is an important factor that determines media use for Generation Z. The number one trusted media source is YouTube, while TikTok trails in fifth place. They trust content on search engines significantly (58 percent) as a main search tool (Edelman 2021).

Generation Z or Zer's?

The Brosdahl and Carpenter's (2011) classification of generations using the birth year category for each cohort: Generation X (1961-1980), Generation Y (1981-1990) and Generation Z (1991 and after) is followed. Gen Z is the first to have Internet technology so readily available and they have been exposed to an unprecedented amount of technology in their upbringing, due to the web revolution that occurred throughout the 1990s. They are the largest generation on earth, making up 42% of the global population. They have a strong sense of social duty, are socially inclusive, and are globally connected. Young people around the world are motivated to improve the world; 67% of them think that having a greater impact on society than just themselves is important (Pew Research Center 2021).Despite the confusion and catastrophe that social institutions are experiencing, people still have mistrust for them, so instead of trying to get the system to change or pay attention, they are coming up with their own repairs, answers, and life plans. They are doing more than just fixing faulty systems; rather, they are inventing and creating an entirely new universe. They are driven by an insatiable urge to travel, experiment, and learn new things—both virtually and physically. They are 'researchers" who invest time in online self-education. Generation Z in comparison with other generations enduringly share a similar outlook and as they mature, they build up certain distinctiveness that differentiates them from the older generations: behavioural qualities, work ethics, attitudes, learning capability and motivational skills (Yadav & Rai 2017). Members of Generation Z are true "digital natives", being small accustomed to manipulating devices, i.e. smartphones and tablets. They have unprecedented access to the Internet, watch posts on YouTube and are the first to grow up with social media. Members of this generation report to the computer as boomers report to television.

What is unique for Generation Z is that all of the above have been part of their lives from the start. The oldest members of Generation Z were 10 when the iPhone first debuted. By the time they were in their teens, mobile devices, WiFi, and high-bandwidth cellular service were the main ways that young Americans connected to the internet. Millennials were

accustomed to technological advancements like social media, constant connectivity, and on-demand entertainment and communication as they reached adulthood. According to Pew Research Center survey (2018) regarding social media consumption and Generation Z "YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat are among their favorite online destinations. Some 85% say they use YouTube, 72% use Instagram and 69% use Snapchat. Facebook is less popular with teens – 51%. 45% of the respondents suggest they are online "almost constantly". A percentage of 40% of kids who believe social media has had a generally positive impact on their lives cite this as a major reason why they feel this way about it: it keeps them in touch with friends and family. The most frequent justification given by those who believe social media has a largely negative impact on youth is that it encourages bullying and rumor-mongering (27% of them). Every year the number of people using at least one social platform increases. The analysis presented by the international agency "We Are Social" in 2021, indicates useful data for understanding the general context. Out of the total population of 7.83 billion inhabitants, the social media use around the world amounts to 66% of the total population are unique mobile phone users, 59% are Internet users and 53,6% are active social media users. EU Kids Online 2020 (Smahel 2020) analysis on children and the Internet, conducted in 19 countries, highlights a new perspective on virtual activity. As a result, most kids use their smartphones virtually constantly, which increased their time online compared to a poll done by EU Kids Online in 2010. 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. Compared to the data from 2020, 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. 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.

Methodology

Study Design: Variables of Study and Instrument

For our study we use a quantitative, descriptive, and exploratory approach. The questionnaire was considered as the most appropriate ad hoc design-adapted tool to collect the necessary study variables. The definition of the study variables was based on three research constructs related to research questions and according to a previous study by Couldry,

Livingstone, and Markha (2007): (1) media consumption habits (2) use of social networks, and (3) approaches/stances in relation with disinformation and fake news. The final questionnaire was the result of a twofold process: (1) first, the team designed an adapted questionnaire in which four different blocks were established: (a) sociodemographic variables, (b) variables related to media consumption, (c) variables related to social network consumption, and (d) variables related to disinformation and fake news.

Sample

Our sample, conceived as the set of elements of the population that are asked to participate in the investigation, corresponded to pupils and undergraduate students from different parts of Greece. We have focused in Greece due to the low resilience to disinformation rank in the country, and more specifically, rank 4 with rank 5 indicated at the lowest level Media Literacy Index 2021 (OSIS 2021) In order to achieve the most representative sample, we posted the questionnaire to nation-wide social media groups asking members of the desired age group to respond anonymously. To reach out to populations of younger ages that may not have a social media account, we asked members to pass the questionnaires to this age group and respond anonymously and according to willingness. This may included parents or acquaintances that could be based on the snowball effect method. We gathered responses from a total sample of 115 young people students aged between 12 and 24 years old. The sample composition was as follows: 45,2% of the sample (N = 52) was male, and 54,8% (N = 63) was female. Regarding the age distribution 12-15 31% (n=35) 16-19 33%(n=38)/ 20-24 36% (n=42)

In our survey, we examine and present media literacy, how young people (generation Z) evaluate media consumption patterns and their understanding and adoption of Media and Information Literacy.

The following research questions are examined :

1)What are their primary uses of media, entertainment, connecting with their social circles, or civic engagement?

2) What type of media do they trust and to what extent it affects their media consumption patterns?

3) To what extent, due to the technophile factor, Generation Z has the capacity to analyze, and authenticate information found online, in print, or any media format?

4) To what extent they can spot, flag disinformation in relation with other generations

5) How can MIL be applied in a generation that has extended technological capabilities and consumption patterns?

Our research has been conducted through an online questionnaire (quantitative). The questionnaire was designed so as to respond to the research questions posted and identify key elements of Gen Z trends and stances towards information consumption and creation throughout the country. Our participants group was between 12-24 years old, from different areas of North Greece, especially areas of Thrace and South Macedonia. Northern Greece has been selected due to the fact that in these schools we have conducted various programs for media literacy and thus it would help evaluate the role and impact of MIL in media consumptions patterns in comparison to schools of the same area were we have not applied MIL The survey was conducted from November to December 2021.

Research Findings

The questionnaire includes 27 questions. We had 115 answers from pupils and students during November - December 2021. The first questions were regarding their demographic profile. It was observed that there was a balance on the numbers of age group responses as further examined categorized on three levels, i.e. early/junior high school students n=35 (12-15 years old), senior high school students n=38 (16-19 years old), and university undergraduates or early career participants n=42 (20-24 years old). Applying a correlation investigation among "Age" and other factors, there was no correlation significance found. For instance, with regard to privacy issues, when examining Age – Device location permissions, Figure 1 illustrates that p=0.541, that is, p>0.05.

Figure 1: Correlation Age – Device location permissions

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	$46.342a$	48	.541

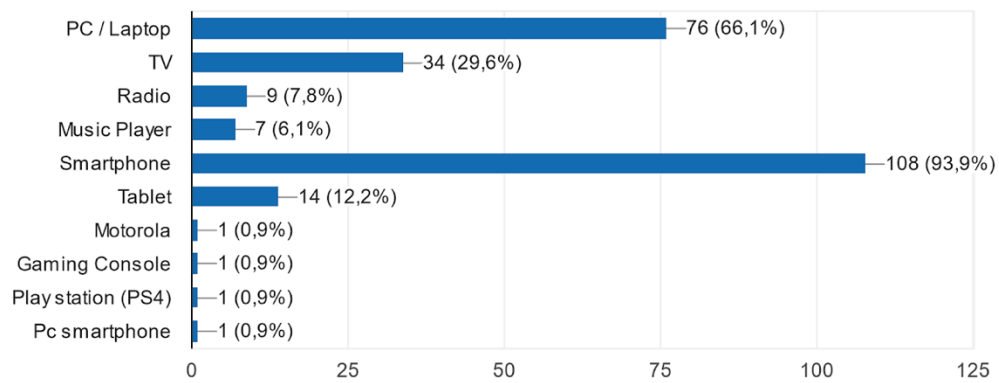|			
Likelihood Ratio	50.563	48	.373
Linear-by-Linear Association	.968	1	.325
Number of Valid	115		

a. 64 cells (94,1%) have expected count less than 5.

The minimum expected count is .03.

Figure 2: Electronic devices used on a daily basis

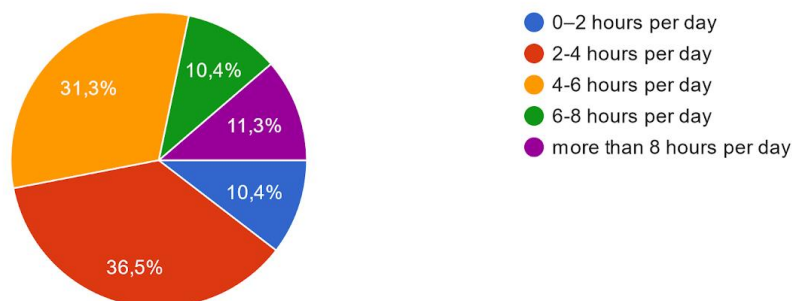3. Which electronic devices do you use on a daily basis?
115 απαντήσεις

Most of the respondents (36.5%) answered that they spend 2-4 hours on a daily basis for different purposes, including being informed about the news.

Figure 3: Daily Time Spent Online

4. How much time do you spend online on a daily basis?
115 απαντήσεις

- 0–2 hours per day
- 2-4 hours per day
- 4-6 hours per day
- 6-8 hours per day
- more than 8 hours per day

The majority of the respondents (87%) watch television on a daily basis 0-2 hours and less than 10% of them watch television 2-4 hours. Regarding listening to the radio, 91% of the respondents spend 0-2 hours per day, unlike less than 10% of the respondents who listen to the radio less than 2 hours daily. When the respondents were asked how much time they spend posting on blogs and sending private messages on social networking sites, almost half of them (47.8%) answered that they spend 0-2 hours per day, almost the other half (41,7%) spend 2-4 hours on a daily basis and less than 10% spend more than 4 hours a day online for posting on blogs and private messages. Also, most of the respondents (51,3%) watch television or listen to the radio when they are online, which constitutes an important finding regarding their media consumption trends. Despite an assumption that this generation mostly consumes online content, we have found that TV through various means, TV set, tablet, laptop etc continues to attract their interest and be among their favorable media. The rise of subscription-based streaming services such as Netflix, AppleTV etc contributed a lot in this finding while it resulted in promoting an engagement with television as a medium and content delivery.

Figure 4: Daily Time Spent on Social Networks

7. How much time do you spend on blogging, posting to blogs and sending private messages on social networking sites on a daily basis?
115 απαντήσεις

- 0-2 hours per day
- 2-4 hours per day
- 4-6 hours per day
- more than 6 hours per day
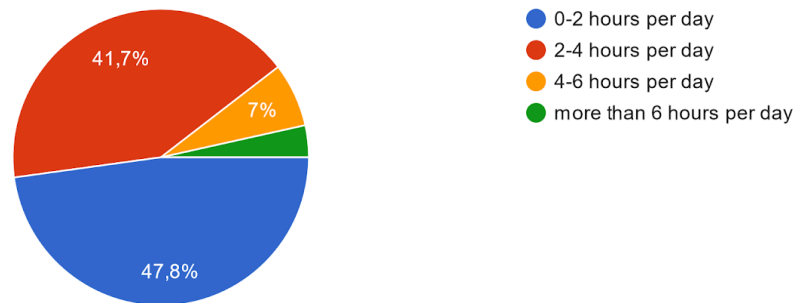
For 92,2% being online is related to being in touch with their peers and their community in general. 65,3% use it for entertainment (downloading music etc) 55,7% of the users for online shopping. The last has been a tendency before but due to Covid-19 it has been accelerated and reached new heights. To that extent that complemented Generation Z tendency for continuous connectivity and reliance on being online.

Figure 5: Main Uses of Internet

9. What do you use the Internet for? Check all that apply.
115 απαντήσεις
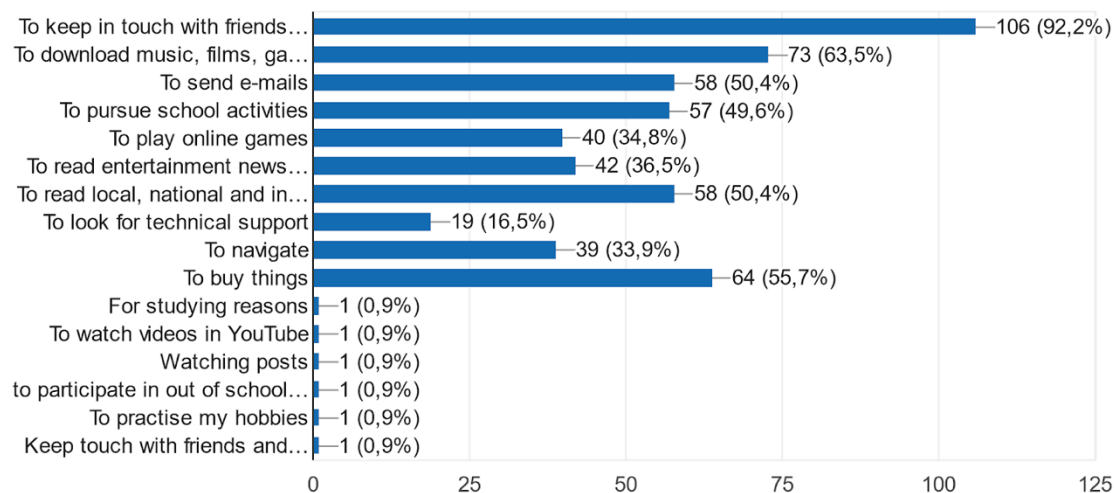
Most of the respondents (80%) answered that the primary device they use for internet access is their smartphone, while 19% of them use their pc and laptops. The medium they use

to arrange meetings with their friends is mostly the cellphone (67%), text messages (57.4%) and via social networks (51,3%).

Figure 6: Means of Online Communication

11. How do you arrange meeting friends - choose the two most important items?
115 απαντήσεις
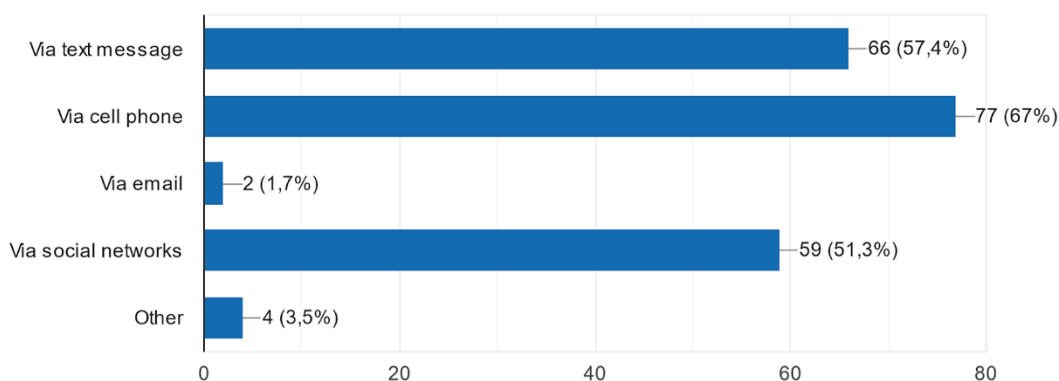
A critical element to examine was the awareness that Generation Z has regarding the protection of personal data. Responses to the question about what kind of information they publish on the internet in public revealed that the majority of the participants (82.6%) publish their name, 58,3% publish their personal picture (profile), 28,7% publish their email, 6,1% their phone number, and only 4,3% their address. Those who are owners of a smartphone were asked if they enable location services on their mobile phones regarding their positions. Almost half of the respondents (48,7%) answered that they enable this kind of service sometimes, 26,1% of the people never enable this feature and 21,7% usually enable the navigation service.

Participants are informed daily through mostly online news sources (68,7%), from television 31,3% while 21,7% answered they are not interested in the daily news. These findings are in line with other research findings (Pew Research Center, Digital News Survey 2021 etc). Online sources are the most preferred ones since being online and continuously connected is a major element of their identity.

Figure 7: Sources of News Consumption

14. Where do you get the daily news from?
115 απαντήσεις
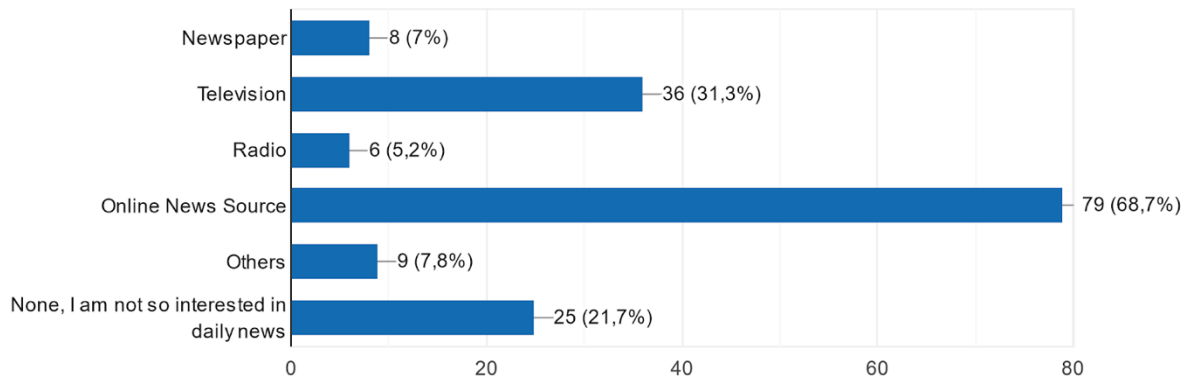
The most popular social media among the participants is Instagram where 93% of the respondents have accounts, 80,9% have viber, 78,3% have a facebook account and 60,9% tik tok as depicted in Figure 7. It is a general tendency that reflects both the need to be connected, communicate and share. It reflects a generation that it using social media as an integral part of their online and offline activity.

Figure 8: Gen Z and Social Media Accounts Preferences

15. Are you a member of any of these sites and social networks
115 απαντήσεις
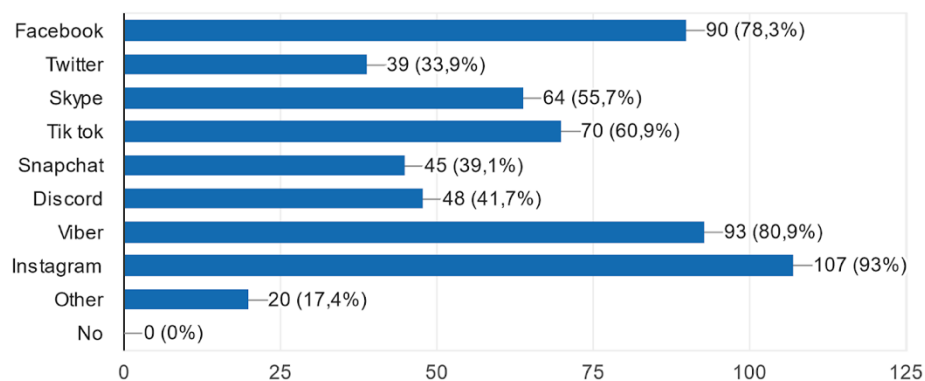
Most of the participants in this survey (63,5%) agreed that accessing news online means there's less need for them to buy and read a newspaper because it's quicker and cheaper to get the latest news. When they were asked if the users of electronic devices meet fewer friends in real life" since they meet them in the virtual world, almost half of them (46,1%) responded in a

negative way, while 27% they are not sure and 27% agreed with that statement. These responses undermine a wide shared belief that the online presence of Generation Z tends to substitute real life relations.

The next questions were about the revolution of new modern media. In the question how this will affect education, the majority (87%) agreed with the statement and the rest (13%) disagreed. In the same mood they felt about answering the question "if this new media will revolutionize the political participation of the citizens. 73% of them agreed and 27% disagreed.

Also, the participants were asked about the extent of digital access to information and how this has enhanced their civic engagement and political awareness. Their response varied from 42,6% as neutral, with a slight difference of participants' positive attitude (39%), while 27% are little or very little engaged in political discourse in the media (Figure 8). This last percentage reflects the same number of responses of those who disagreed with the previous research question on the same topic but focusing on their beliefs rather than practices.

Figure 9: Social Media and Civic Engagement

20. To what extent has digital access to information enhanced your civic engagement and political awareness?

115 απαντήσεις
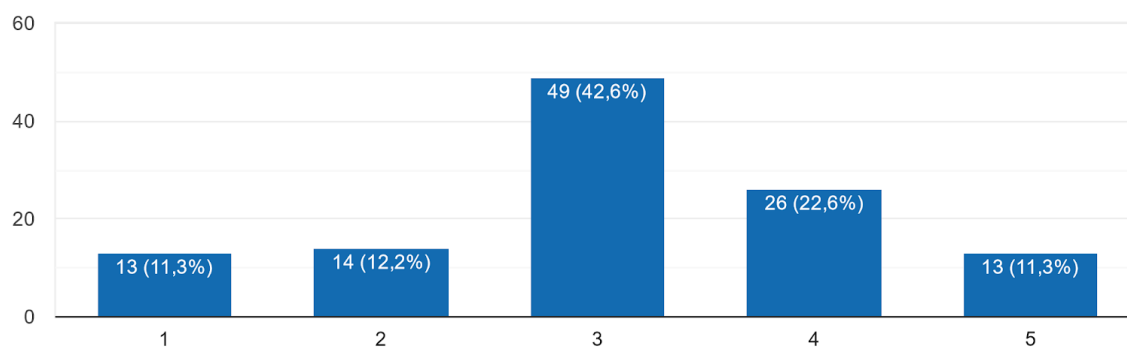
The next question was about the importance of the mobile phone to them and almost half (41.7%) of them answered extremely important, 29.6% replied important, while only (7,9%) consider their mobile phones of little importance in their daily life (Figure 9).

Figure 10: Importance of Mobile Phone ownership for Gen Z

21. How important is your mobile phone / smart phone for you?
115 απαντήσεις
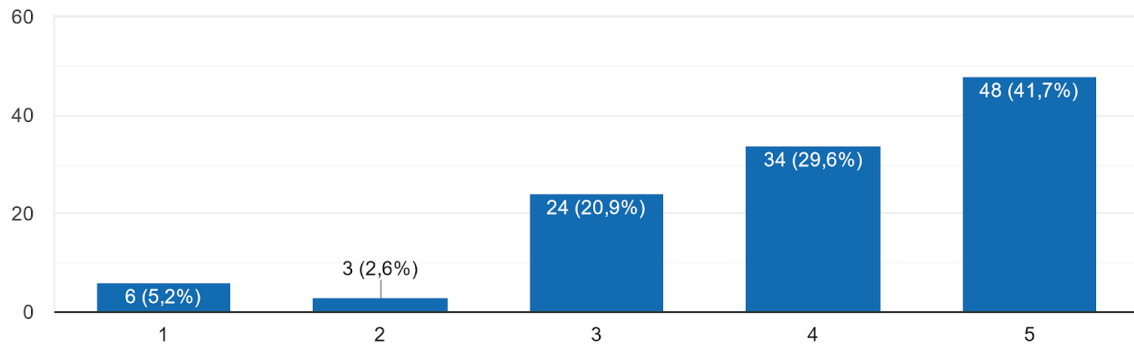
Generation Z despite being digital competent they lack media and news literacy competences. This is shown by the fact that 58,3% stated that they have been influenced by disinformation. For those who answered positively, they were asked about their reactions and 67,1% said they ignored the false news feed while only 20,7% reported it and 12,2% commented on it. An important element on MIL projects regarding Generation Z should be on how to tackle the spread of disinformation and more specifically on tools that can contribute in recognising but also referring to disinformation. The percentages regarding the frequency they encounter fake news are the following: 28,7% answered not very often, 25,2% answered often and 22,6% answered rarely (Figure 10). These findings are in line with similar findings regarding the general population.

Figure 11: Frequency of Fake News Feed Spotted by Gen Zers

25. How frequently do you encounter disinformation/fake news?
115 απαντήσεις
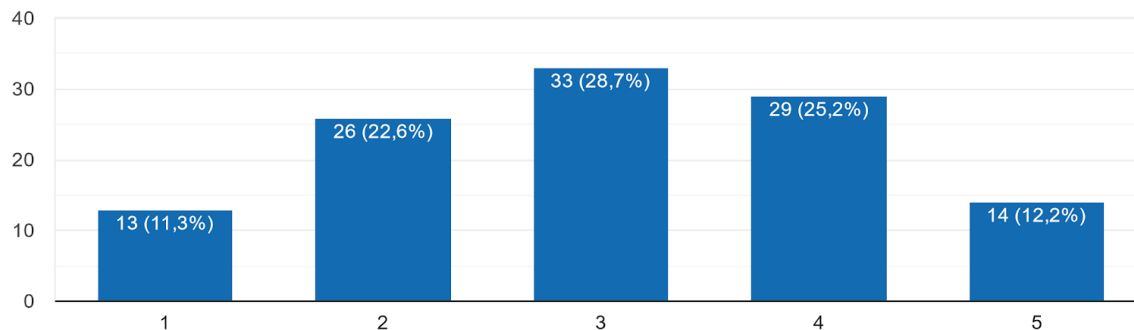
Connectivity and globalisation influence their tolerance, multicultural understanding and respect for diversity as it results from the fact that 72% answered positively. With regard to what extent have their attitudes to access to online information changed during COVID-19 or after, 40 participants responded neutral, 52 of them answered much/very much, and the rest answered very little/little.

Discussion

The present study involved participants that belong to the so-called Generation Z, aged from 12 to 24, which means that the age range comes from early secondary school students to early graduate career seekers. In an increasingly polarized and chaotic media environment, young people must be adequately prepared to discern fact from fiction when consuming news, especially on the internet. (Pérez-Escoda , et all 2021). With the changing media landscape creating new patterns of information consumption and opportunities for a great number of actors to express themselves and reach others in ways that were previously impossible, understanding the efects of exposure to media content is critical for our societies. Our study provides insightful elements on the issue of MIL in a generation well aquntaited with digital media. More specifically we emphasise upon generation's trends and preferences in their media consumption and creation. The discussion that follows is in correlation with the research questions set that explores four aspects of Gen Zeners' everyday activities and practices, namely, (a) their primary uses of media; (b) their digital and media competences; (c) their resilience to disinformation and their reactions upon identifying it; and (d) their trust in the media.

Primary Uses of Media

Our survey findings suggest that the pervasiveness of handheld devices play a crucial role in Gen Zers online activity for a variety of purposes. Out of the 115 survey participants, 108 participants (93,9%) use their smartphones for their updates. This percentage, as displayed in Figure 4, is very close to their main reason for being online, that is, keeping in touch with their friends. Similarly, the same percentage appears to the respondents that have an Instagram account, followed by Viber, Facebook, and Tik Tok among their primary choices of social media platforms.

Following their use of media for socialization purposes, downloading music, films and other entertainment means is their second most popular online activity. This is a very interesting finding as the internet seems to have replaced to a large extent long lasting traditional means of entertainment, such as television and radio. Traditional means of information and entertainment seem to be on the decline in most of the aspects raised in the present study. As a consequence, the connectivity engagement has an impact on other everyday activities, such as online purchases of products and services. This finding, as the third Gen Zers' primary use of the internet, has a close correlation with their aforementioned top uses. They have an insatiable desire to explore and mostly experience through the use of new technologies. While navigating online, personal data or preferences are shared via Artificial Intelligence (AI) that companies make good use of to advertise products that respond to the user's profile.

Digital and Media Competences

According to DigComp 2.1 Framework (Carretero et al. 2017), 21st century digital citizens need to develop a skillset that involves eight proficiency levels of digital and media competences, ranging from the basic level of identification of one's information needs to the most advanced and proficient level of creating solutions to solve complex problems taking meaningful action, either individual or in collaborative processes related to browsing, searching and filtering data, information and digital content, and proposing new ideas and processes to the field. The last level involves the creativity aspect of developing apps and creating new artifacts that respond to the digital age and the market needs. The framework suggests five competence areas as of ultimate importance in developing a digital citizen identity, namely, information and data literacy; communication and collaboration; digital content creation; safety; and problem solving.

Our findings suggest that Gen Z has developed a set of digital skills on a primary level namely, on navigation and accessing digital content in order to satisfy everyday needs and preferences. For Generation Z digital Media is a more appealing gateway to political information which may, in turn, affect their political engagement and participation accordingly. The different nature of political information on social media is especially appealing to this generation in comparison with traditional media (Briggs 2017; Moeller Kühne & de Vreese 2018). The easy and ubiquitous access on social media, given the connectivity affordances, provides the new field for personal relevance to what matters this age group, diversity in opinion, and directedness and engagement, as identifying factors for their preference for social media platforms for political information use among the participants. As Prensky (2001) contends, Generation Z are better prepared to use social media in political information contexts and therefore benefit more from it than older generations. As for the safety aspect, our findings reveal that the majority of the survey participants are aware of some basic privacy concerns, regarding personal information such as their email, address, and phone number. Low percentages on the two last personal information sharing show that they bear some digital competence characteristics, as they are more skeptical to share them in relation to their name and profile picture. Nevertheless, close to half of them do not hesitate to share further information, mainly location-based, in order to enjoy further online services. The need for connectivity superpasses their concerns regarding personal data protection.

Resilience to Fake News

One of the major issues that has brought about a hot debate in our era, especially after the propaganda and pseudoscience spread of infodemic as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic is the spread of fake news and low levels of resilience according to the Media Literacy Index 2021. Despite the so far initiatives and efforts made, Greece has been found to be among the lowest ranks of resilience to fake news, being on Cluster 4 out of 5, among other Balkan countries (rank 27 out of 35 countries).

With regard to the question of the participants' being deceived by news that has later proven to be fake, 58,3% (n=67) responded positively, which is an important finding in our survey for two main reasons. The first reason reveals the need for action to fight disinformation as a new plague in our era that may have a negative impact and cause harm in democratic and everyday practices and decisions with a view to the sustainability of digital citizenship. The second reason lies in the response of participants' further actions upon recognition and

realization of being deceived and misinformed. In the survey question that followed on whether they took action on being deceived, a large percentage (67,1%) confessed that they just ignored it, taking no further action to either report or comment on the falsity of information consumption. This finding suggests that there is no extensive practice of media literacy skills and responsible citizenship engagement. The unfavorable percentages of participants that reported the misleading information (20,7%) or commented on its inappropriateness (12,2%) call for further action to be taken if today's education and political stakeholders aspire to promote Gen Zers' critical thinking and civic engagement. Digital and media literacy should be recognized as tools of particular importance in strengthening young people's civic participation and understanding of the news. The lack of media literacy skills is very disconcerting in this age where misinformation and disinformation are proliferating. This resonates with findings from ours as well as previous studies where Generation Z was found to generally lack the ability to question, analyze, and authenticate information found online, in print, or any media format.

Trust

Today's youth has been appraised to have a considerable higher level of multicultural understanding and diversity tolerance given the globalization and technologicalization impact that diminishes spatial constraints and promotes connectivity (Harber 2011). Valkenburg and Piotrowski (2018) contend that this important characteristic has led to their developing a new cultural imprint, with their "values and norms of conduct less dictated by place of origin and social position" (p. 284). In view of this, one may assume a consequent engagement and active participation in global issues on all facets of social and political discourse.

With regard to their beliefs on how modern media can affect education, the very high percentage (87%) reveals the impact of the shift to online learning that the COVID-19 pandemic to all educational settings. On the premise that the survey participants' age range covered early secondary school students to higher education graduates and early career seekers, trust on new trends in modes of learning are acceptable and maybe pursued. This finding is very promising on the perspectives of how Generation Z levels up standards of quality education beyond the traditional brick-and-mortar mode of communication, collaboration, and content delivery. While there is a general distrust in social institutions and media Generation Z are moving beyond repairing broken systems; instead, they are imagining and building a world with the opportunities offered from technology both physically and virtually. Thus, they have the tools to investigate, evaluate, self-educate and find the information they want and need. Nevertheless,

statistics reveal that they tend to display disengagement in political and democratic dialogue due to their loss of trust. More specifically, while 73% of the participants agreed on the dynamic role the media may have as an actuator that will revolutionize the political participation of the citizens, responding to the question that followed on their actual engagement, there was a 42,6% that stated a neutral attitude with a 39% that stated a positive stance. This finding, given the insignificant difference, may be further interpreted as an ever-evolving new attitude towards media as a means to civic engagement that future research could shed more light.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Generation Z was born within a digital ecosystem where Internet and handheld devices were well-established technologies that previous generations were less familiar with. This generation has a broader definition of news, meaning they consider social media, YouTube videos, memes etc to be accurate sources of information. Given the prominence of the Internet and growing technology, Generation Z was raised within the digital information bombarded ecosystem. With a larger pool of information available to students than other parts of the population, it is even more critical that students can discern what is truthful online. The promotion of media literacy will encourage checking sources, asking questions, and being critical information consumers. We need to know how to examine biases and understand if, and how, they may impact the information presented.

The present study was conducted with the intent to shed light on this generation's views, stances, and practices in four correlated issues, namely, (a) their primary uses of new technologies and media, (b) their digital and media literacy competences, (c) their resilience to fake news, and (d) their trust in the media. The survey findings revealed some crucial issues that enhance previous literature findings but also provide valuable new data to be taken into consideration due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in a variety of domains. The ubiquity and pervasiveness of handheld devices, and mainly their smartphones reveal the high percentage of their round-the-clock engagement with online activity, mainly for communication and entertainment, and online purchases followed by study purposes. Media as a means of getting their news feed is also on a high level related to other traditional means of information, with an additional tendency of showing trust to alternative, online modes and preferences from the education perspective. As a consequence, the technologicalization and globalization characteristics of this generation show a considerable new cultural imprint with a high rate of multicultural understanding, tolerance, and global common trends that diminish socio-cultural,

religious and economic disparities. Nevertheless, the survey findings revealed that Gen Z's digital and media literacy skills and competences in Greece do not correlate with their extensive exposure and use of media in the digital world. Their resilience to fake news is still at a low level, they confess being deceived by fake news and disinformation, while a considerable percentage states not taking action upon discovering it. With regard to their civic engagement, while there is a percentage that believes that media can enhance their political discourse, the majority is disengaged, taking no active participation in public social and political discourse. Generation Z despite being digital competent lacks necessary skills to critically engage with the online content and thus having competences of Media literacy.

All the above mentioned findings set considerations and allow for recommendations and measures to be taken. Our recommendations converge into six main aspects, as follows:

-Applying MIL should take into account changes that occurred in the media consumption and use habits among different generations.

-There is a need to enhance Gen Z MIL skills by taking into account the following elements: i) deeper understanding of media ii) using and sharing content iii) trust mostly online sources

-We have to move beyond the traditional places of teaching MIL and emphasize in new techniques

-MIL skills enhancement should be incorporated in the formal education curricula.

-Experts in education, communication and instructional design should be part of the process to ensure quality in an interdisciplinary approach.

-New technologies and their use in the media industry bring about an ever-evolving need for further research and update of future action.

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