

**The Era of Mediatisation Across Generations: Exploring Interaction and Mutual  
Learning Within Diverse Media Repertoires**

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## Abstract

**Background:** This study explores generational differences in media repertoires within the context of mediatisation and mutual learning. The literature review and theoretical framework define mediatisation, highlight significant generational differences in media repertoires across Generation Z, Millennials, and Baby Boomers, and underscore the limited research in this area, providing a foundation for cross-generational learning.

**Aim:** The research aims to facilitate cross-generational learning by examining Generation Z's, Millennials', and Baby Boomers' media repertoires. The central research question is: 'How do different generations interact with the abundance of media, and what can they learn from each other's media repertoires?'

**Research Design:** Employing a qualitative approach, this study uses semi-structured screen time interviews to obtain detailed descriptions of participants' media practices. The sample comprised 18 participants, with six individuals from each generation. Ethical practices, including obtaining ethical approval, pseudonymising names, and securely storing collected data, were strictly considered.

**Data Analysis:** The phenomenological method was employed to analyse the collected data, aiming to identify essential themes and patterns in participants' media repertoires and their lived experiences.

**Findings:** The study reveals distinct media repertoires: Generation Z prefers high-stimulation and fast-paced digital media while still appreciating long-form content such as podcasts and documentaries when engaged with as a secondary activity, Millennials, as the bridging generation, balance efficiency and entertainment, and Baby Boomers favour traditional media and single-task activities, allowing them to be present in the moment. These findings contribute to understanding different generations distinct media repertoires and offer insights into mutual learning opportunities across age groups.

**Conclusion:** This study provides insights into intergenerational media repertoires, emphasising the potential for cross-generational learning and contributing to the broader field of mediatisation. Addressing the identified limitations and pursuing future research directions will be important in facilitating harmonious media repertoires across generations.

**Keywords:** media repertoires, generational differences, mediatisation, screen time interviews

## Introduction

In the past decades, mediatisation has significantly influenced individuals' daily lives, resulting in the emergence of media repertoires with noticeable generational discrepancies. Mediatisation describes the transformation of daily life, culture, and societal structures in the context of media influence (Krotz, 2017). Mediatisation, as an evolving and dynamic process, has gained recognition as a relatively new area of research (Zierold, 2012). Within the context of mediatisation, individuals have adopted diverse media repertoires, referring to the sets of media-related practices that individuals employ in their everyday lives (Hasebrink & Hepp, 2017). The term 'media repertoires' emerged when researchers shifted their focus from studying single media outlets to exploring a broader range of media consumption across different platforms. This shift was driven by the emergence of the internet, which made it necessary to consider how individuals integrate multiple media sources into their daily lives (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006). Media repertoires encompass many forms of media and are highly individualised, varying significantly among various demographics, including different generations.

Historically, the definition of media has evolved to encompass a broad spectrum of communication forms, such as print, including books, newspapers, magazines, letters, or brochures; audio, such as vinyl, cassettes, CDs, and radio; visual media, such as photos, movies, television, and other videographic materials; digital and interactive media, such as websites, social media, blogs, and video games; and other communication forms, such as the telephone (Krotz, 2017). Despite mediatisation being a currently emerging research topic, the process of mediatisation can be observed in the rising digital media usage among individuals across the globe, particularly in younger generations. Recent research suggests a significant shift towards increased social media use, while traditional media use has declined notably (Twenge et al., 2019). With televisions and computers being present in living- and bedrooms, and cell phones enabling users to be connected at all times, different forms of media have found a constant presence in daily life, resulting in distinct media repertoires. These significant changes show the evolution of mediatisation and the resulting media repertoires.

However, despite the strides made in understanding mediatisation, Pentzold (2018) emphasises the imperative for further research to comprehend this dynamic process and its nuanced effects on individuals' daily lives. Most importantly, generational differences within the context of media repertoires have received limited attention, although mediatisation has resulted in the adaptation of distinct media repertoires across generations (Rue, 2018; Watson-Manheim, 2007). While existing studies delve into the broader implications of mediatisation

on a large scale or study the phenomenon of mediatisation in different layers of society, such as educational level or income, the distinct media repertoires individuals adopt across generations and the potential for mutual learning constitute a less explored area of study (Ghersetti & Westlund, 2016). Therefore, the study aims to address this gap by investigating the research question:

RQ: ‘How do different generations interact with the abundance of media and what can they learn from each other’s media repertoires?’

This research seeks to explore the distinct ways in which generations, particularly Generation Z, Millennials, and Baby Boomers interact with media by examining their media repertoires. To explore the posed research question, this study adopts a qualitative research design. Participants from Generation Z, Millennials, and the Baby Boomer generation were interviewed using a novel form of semi-structured interviews. In the following, the data was transcribed and analysed via the phenomenological approach to detect the essential themes and patterns in the data, followed by a demonstration and discussion of the findings.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The concept of media repertoires, developed in the early 2000s, provides an approach to understanding the diverse ways individuals engage with various forms of media (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006; Vorderer et al., 2003). By focusing on the combination of media types, the media repertoires approach seeks to capture the complexity of media use in today’s society (Hepp & Krotz, 2014). Research has highlighted that media repertoires are highly individualised, influenced by demographic factors such as age, socio-economic status, and personal interests. Additionally, it has shown how media repertoires evolve with technological advancements, altering the landscape of media consumption (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006).

However, one of the significant shortcomings of the media repertoires framework is its varying applicability across different generations. A digital divide between generations creates significant differences, with older generations potentially having less access to or familiarity with new media compared to younger generations and younger generations developing significantly different media repertoires in comparison to older generations (Karim, 2019; Vorderer et al., 2003). This generational gap can influence media repertoires, as older individuals may rely more on traditional media, while younger people might prefer new digital

and social media (Ghersetti & Westlund, 2016). This discrepancy can lead to challenges in understanding media repertoires across generations.

Generation Z was born between the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, while Millennials' births range from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s, and Baby Boomers were born after World War II, between 1946 and 1964 (Köksal, 2019). Research conducted by Twenge et al. (2019) suggests a substantial increase in average social media usage in individuals of all ages, while traditional media consumption, such as print media, TV, and movies, has declined significantly, an effect that is primarily observed amongst adolescents. In their longitudinal research, 60% of individuals indicated reading a book or a magazine every day in 1970, which decreased to only 16% in 2016. In contrast, social media use amongst adolescents has doubled from three to six hours per day between 2006 and 2016, affirming the growing presence of new media repertoires in contemporary life. Before World War II, mass media generally consisted of magazines, newspapers, books, and radio, which changed drastically following the introduction of television, transforming media repertoires across generations. After World War II, television distribution sets went from 0.5% of households in 1946 to 55% in 1956 and 87% in 1960 (Robert & Foehr, 2008). This new media presence rose continuously with the introduction of the internet in the early 1990s, with internet use increasing from 22% of individuals in 1997 to 63% in 2003. Although a consistent shift in media use can be observed across generations, generational differences in the adaptation of distinct media repertoires can be observed.

### **Generation Z and the Phenomenon of Limited Attention**

Generation Z's media repertoires encompass a great variety of media, particularly in the context of digital media since they are considered to be digital natives (Rue, 2018). This means that Generation Z individuals have grown up in an era defined by mediatisation and the rapid evolution of technology, including the internet and social media (Serbanescu, 2022). This early exposure to the developing field of media has led to a sense of complacency in Generation Z, with younger individuals showing less appreciation for technological advancements than Millennials and Baby Boomers (Rue, 2018). Generation Z, also referred to as iGen, spends the majority of their time in front of a screen. In fact, research conducted by Rue (2018) indicates that 90% of Generation Z respondents own a cell phone and spend up to seven hours a day on their devices. Further research found that Generation Z spends an average of nearly eight hours per day online, with respondents reporting a constant hybridisation between their online and offline lives (Serbanescu, 2022). Teenagers also report a significant decline in reading books

for pleasure, alongside an observable decreased magazine and newspaper readership which has plummeted in the past decade (Rue, 2018).

Generation Z has adopted a unique variety of media repertoires; existing research suggests that they tend to heavily engage with media for entertainment and information gathering and less for communication purposes, in contrast to their Millennial counterparts (Serbanescu, 2022). Furthermore, they typically prefer platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat, over platforms like Facebook, favouring short and visually engaging content (Towner & Muñoz, 2016). Due to this frequent media engagement and the continuous evaluation of content, Generation Z has cultivated advanced information processing, quickly judging whether information is useful and worth engaging with (Karim, 2019; Rue, 2018). At the same time, Generation Z tends to have a limited attention span, and 90% of teenagers report feeling overwhelmed with the plethora of information they are confronted with at all times (Serbanescu, 2022). This indicates more fast-paced and new media-oriented media repertoires.

### **Millennials: The Bridging Generation**

Millennials, on the other hand, are more likely to have experienced the transition from analogue to digital media and have adapted their own distinct media repertoires. This means that Millennials have adapted to the internet and social media during their formative years, with many of them remembering a time before smartphones. This has led to advanced adaptation skills to the changing media environment in Millennials but also explains traditional media being part of their media repertoires (Botterill et al., 2015). Millennials, like Generation Z, tend to engage heavily with social media but also show interest in more traditional media such as television and news websites, similar to the Baby Boomer generation (Sayyed & Gupta, 2020; Towner & Muñoz, 2016). More than 55% of Millennials use online platforms, predominantly to socialise and stay updated with the news and their friends' lives (Botterill et al., 2015). Most Millennials show a more practical approach when using the internet by focusing on finding answers to their questions and staying up to date with the news (Sayyed & Gupta, 2020). They also value time efficiency and clarity when seeking information, giving them the characterisation of the burnout generation (Akyildiz, 2023). The most used social network in this generation is Facebook, with 88% of Millennials using the social platform, followed by YouTube with 83% of Millennial users (Serbanescu, 2022). Unlike their Generation Z counterparts, Millennials are more likely to use additional devices besides their smartphones, such as computers, tablets, and smart TVs. The evolution of media has made its impact on the Millennial generation but their appreciation for traditional media has persisted.

## **Baby Boomers: Tradition Versus Trend**

Baby Boomers grew up in the beginning of what can be considered the era of mediatisation, leading to media repertoires that reflect a time of more traditional media. As witnesses of the technological revolution, they had to adapt to new media as it emerged. Having grown up with traditional media like print, radio, and television, their social media use is comparatively low or limited to connecting with family and friends (Hilt & Lipschultz, 2016). Furthermore, Baby Boomers place more trust in traditional media, such as newspapers and television, rather than new media and online sources (Towner & Muñoz, 2016). This phenomenon is further described by Bakardjieva (2005), exploring how the emergence and growing presence of the internet has transformed everyday life. The evolution of media can be exemplified by the conventional telephone, or so-called landline, traditionally located in the living room. Attached by a wire without unlimited minutes, phone calls used to be of a more practical nature, granting less privacy as callers could be observed by other members of the family. This traditional setup has decreased over time, with landlines being of more use in the Baby Boomer generation, as opposed to Generation Z, often exclusively using their mobile phones (Bakardjieva, 2001). This maintenance of traditional media practices indicates a larger trend in the Baby Boomer generation, demonstrating more traditional media repertoires and a limited willingness to adapt to new technologies.

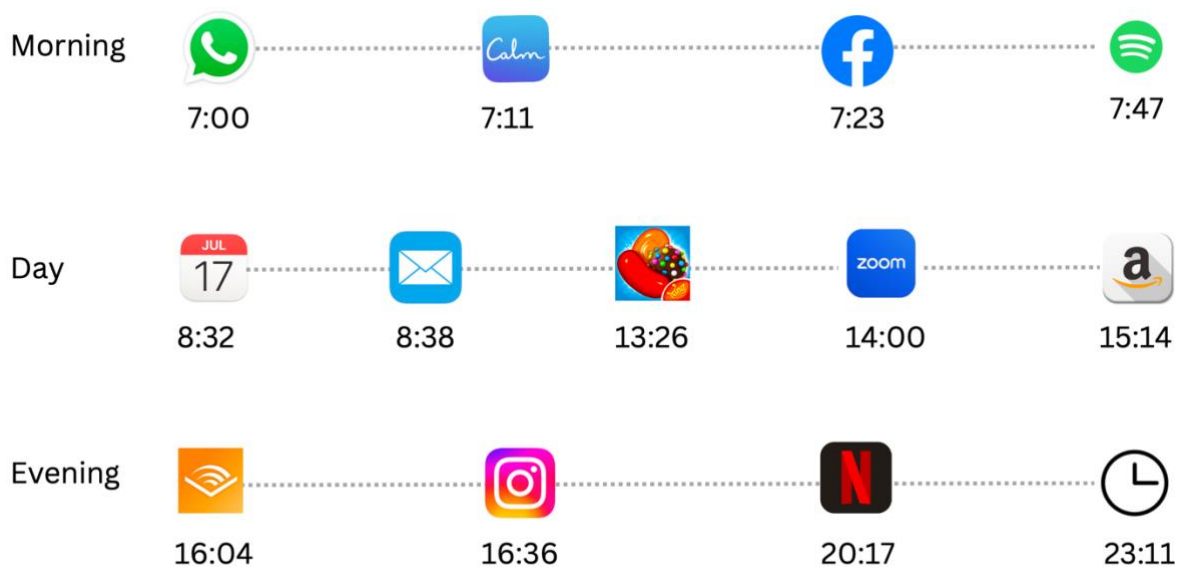
The existing research on media repertoires is limited but shows the disparities in media repertoires across generations. However, there is little existing research addressing the intergenerational gap of mutual learning. One important concept this research aims to contribute is the concept of harmony and mutual learning within the context of cross-generational media repertoires. Harmony, in this context, refers to how well media repertoires can harmonise within and across generations, referring to how they fit into the overall lifestyle of individuals or groups (Van Der Zeeuw et al., 2023). The established theoretical framework indicates a significant potential for harmony and mutual cross-generational learning. This emphasises the relevance of exploring how different generations interact with the abundance of media and revealing what they can learn from each other's media repertoires. The existing theoretical findings form a starting point for the exploration of the central research question, ultimately allowing this research to close an empirical gap by offering a theoretical contribution of cross-generational media repertoires and harmonious mutual learning.

## Research Design

This study aims to investigate generational differences in media repertoires by using a novel form of semi-structured screen time interviews that uses participants' screen times as a starting point to explore their media repertoires and identify generational differences in media interaction. As identified by Hasebrink & Hepp (2017) in their research on cross-media practices, the best way to qualitatively investigate media repertoires is by using interviews. Furthermore, conducting individual, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions allows for deeper insights into participants' media repertoires (Evans, 2011; Züll, 2016). Participants with an Android mobile phone were asked to download the 'App Usage' application by AZSoft Technology Inc., which provides a timeline showing participants' mobile phone use, also known as screen time; an approach similar to wardrobe interviews or house tours (Buse & Twigg, 2015). Participants with an iPhone were asked to use the screen time function on their smartphone. In the following, respondents were asked to utilise the provided timeline as guidance to describe their daily life in the context of mediatisation, more specifically, the overlap of their online and offline practices in relation to media, as presented in Figure 1. By describing their lives in the context of media, interviewees could reflect further and provide additional insight into their media repertoires. A complete overview of the interview scheme and participants' screen times can be found in Appendix B and C.

**Figure 1**

*Provided Exemplary Timeline*





## **Participants**

Participants were selected from different generations, more specifically Generation Z, Millennials, and Baby Boomers, to capture diverse perspectives on media usage. Generation-specific sampling aims to uncover generational discrepancies in media repertoires. The sampling procedure consisted of purposive sampling, describing the recruitment of participants using the researcher's personal network (Tongco, 2007). The criteria for inclusion required participants to be of legal age. In looking for rich media repertoires, participants were selected based on the assumption that they would provide rich data, following the concept of information richness as a sampling method (Patton, 2015). The sampling group consisted of 18 participants, with 6 from each respective generation. Interviews were held for an average interview duration of 40 minutes.

## **Data Analysis**

The collected data was transcribed by the researcher using the intelligent verbatim transcription method, describing the process of transcribing the data while excluding grammatical errors, pauses, or other content that is less relevant to addressing the research question (McMullin, 2021). Subsequently, the transcripts were analysed via the qualitative data analysis platform ATLAS.ti using the phenomenological analysis research method (Barry, 1998). Phenomenological analysis is used to obtain insight into the essence of a phenomenon through an individual's lived experience (Hycner, 1985; Larkin et al., 2006). After collecting data through in-depth interviews, the process of phenomenological reduction was applied, referring to the process of coding the data by identifying essential themes and patterns through thematic analysis. The approach of phenomenological reduction is intended to uncover the essence of the underlying phenomenon, thereby describing the world-as-experienced by the participants (Baker et al., 1992). Furthermore, the approach of descriptive phenomenology was applied, referring to the detailed description of individuals' lived experiences, including descriptions and quotes that capture the participants' experiences. The quotes used to describe this study's findings are the most insightful yet least identifiable, showing the sentiments that are generally found in the data, indicating a consensus between participants.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Prior to the recruitment of participants, ethical approval was obtained from the BMS Ethics Committee (case number: 240162). Participants' privacy and confidentiality were strictly maintained as all collected data remained anonymous and interview transcriptions were stored securely on the UT P-Drive for a duration of two years following the end of the

interviews. To ensure anonymity, all participant names were pseudonymised (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Informed consent was obtained orally before the commencement of the interviews.

## **Findings**

In examining cross-generational media repertoires, individuals' media consumption and interaction, media dependency and the need to escape discomfort are examined first to reveal different generations' media consumption control strategies. Finally, the theme of harmony and mutual learning, describing the potential for exchanging knowledge and skills between generations, is discussed.

### **Media Consumption Habits**

Current research suggests a shift in consumers' media repertoires that reflect a transition from traditional to digital media (Twenge et al., 2019). This shift is especially prevalent in younger generations while older generations still cultivate habits related to traditional media (Hilt & Lipschultz, 2016). These findings are in line with this study's findings, indicating that younger individuals tend to own fewer devices, such as solely owning a smartphone and a laptop, while preferring new, digital media such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Older generations, on the other hand, tend to own more devices, such as televisions and CD players, and prefer traditional media such as books, newspapers, and CDs, while preferring platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp in the context of new media.

Furthermore, research suggest that young people's media repertoires have evolved, with them spending a majority of their time in front of a screen, specifically while using their smartphones (Karim, 2019; Krotz, 2017). This suggestion is in line with participants' screen time in this study with Generation Z participants averaging a screen time of 4 hours and 52 minutes in the week previous to the interview while Millennials average 2 hours and 43 minutes and Baby Boomers average only 1 hour and 12 minutes.

However, current research also suggests that younger individuals prefer fast-paced, short-form content while older generations maintained the habit of consuming long-format content (Serbanescu, 2022). Although this seems to be partially true, this study's findings offer a new, more nuanced perspective on this phenomenon. When asked whether they would prefer to watch a documentary or read an article about a topic they are interested in, a majority of Generation Z individuals stated preferring a documentary even if the time investment would be significantly higher, which seems contradictory to existing studies' findings. When asked whether she preferred an article a documentary, Generation Z participant Emily stated:

I don't like reading articles, I'm so sick of that because of university, endless reading, I'd definitely watch a documentary. It probably takes longer but it's just more entertaining.

Although it is contradictory to previous research, a key component to media preferences in Generation Z seems to be the level of entertainment and stimulation rather than length of the format; although it 'takes longer', it is 'just more entertaining'. This finding highlights a trend among young people who seek more engaging and less text-heavy content (Rue, 2018). The entertainment of visual and auditory media may therefore outweigh the time investment, reflecting a shift towards media that combines multiple stimuli. The opposite seems to apply for older Generations, with Baby Boomer participant Roger stating:

Overall, I'd probably rather read. I like to process information in my own time. So, I would prefer reading an article, as I said, I want to do it in my own time. It's often information of higher quality summarised quite clearly. I prefer that.

This indicates different values in Generation Z and Baby Boomers. Roger's preference for reading an article indicates a value placed on concise and high-quality information that can be consumed at one's own pace, suggesting that Baby Boomers prioritise more depth and control in their media consumption habits compared to Generation Z. Millennials, as the bridging generation between Generation Z and Baby Boomers, indicate feeling rather neutral, with Finn stating:

I like reading articles, but I also really like documentaries. But I think it's more time effective if I just read an article, so I'd choose that. I receive the local newspaper and read the news online on various websites.

Millennials exhibit a balanced and more practical approach, appreciating both articles and documentaries. Finn's preference of a more 'time effective' approach reflects Millennials' reputation of being the burnout generation (Akyildiz, 2023). They share more pragmatic perspectives, valuing time efficiency and perceived validity in written content, while also recognising the value and entertainment of visual media.

A similar phenomenon can be observed in the context of podcasts. Podcasts describe a digital audio or, in some cases, video file that can be streamed or downloaded from the internet and typically involve one or multiple individuals discussing a certain topic (Berry, 2015). According to contemporary research, this long-format content would not be part of younger people's media repertoires, however, when being asked, Generation Z participant Jenny stated:

I listen to the same two podcasts generally. And the context is usually something easy I'm doing on autopilot like cycling or cleaning the house. I sometimes listen to podcasts at night too, it helps me to fall asleep.

Like Jenny, multiple Generation Z participants stated enjoying podcasts and listening to them regularly. This confirms the notion that it is not necessarily the length of the format but rather the amount of stimulation that shapes media repertoires. Furthermore, a pattern can be seen in the activity of listening to podcasts being viewed as secondary to more automated activities such as walking, cleaning, or cycling in younger generations, or being seen as something one can engage with to fall asleep. The opposite can be seen in the Baby Boomer generation, with some participants not being aware of what podcasts entail or finding the concept rather strange as it is 'just strangers talking to each other' This is in line with prior research on the Baby Boomer generation, suggesting a preference for more traditional media repertoires in older generations (Botterill et al., 2015). Millennials, on the other hand, seem to be more open-minded toward listening to podcasts but show less interest compared to Generation Z, once again constituting a bridging element between generations. This shows that media consumption habits include more than fast paced or short form content versus long form formats and go beyond simplistic categorisations. Instead, media repertoires fall in line with generational cultures: Baby Boomers prefer summarised content in their own time, Millennials value time efficiency, and Generation Z places importance on entertainment, which surprisingly does not eliminate long form content.

### **Escaping Discomfort**

Current research shows a steady incline in digital media and internet use amongst all generations over the past decade (Robert & Foehr, 2008; Twenge et al., 2019). Causes for this addition to people's media repertoires are portrayed as enjoyment due to entertainment, convenience and practicality, and even the necessity of engaging with new media in today's world (Karim, 2019). Research also suggests that this incline in digital media use has

negatively influenced individuals' attention spans, leading to decreased focus and sustained attention (Rue, 2018). This is especially prevalent in Generation Z, who are often seen grabbing their phone at any given opportunity. When being asked about whether her attention span seems to be limited, Generation Z participant Emily stated:

Absolutely, it's fried, I'm constantly on my phone during lectures because they're just not entertaining enough. I'm so glad I'm in university now, so I'm actually allowed to go on my phone. I wouldn't survive high school anymore. I think everyone is addicted to their phones now, it makes me feel like some medieval maid when I just sit somewhere and read, you don't really see that anymore. People just sitting down somewhere to read, everyone is on their phones. Honestly, I think so many of us are also just pretending, we're uncomfortable sitting in silence or waiting somewhere without looking like we're busy. I literally just scroll through my camera roll or pretend to be typing and I know for a fact that I'm not the only one.

This statement about why a Generation Z participant spends time consuming digital media on her smartphone offers a new perspective that goes beyond the necessity or entertainment of digital media while also showing that a limited attention span is not the sole cause for this increased use. Instead, according to this participant, younger individuals like Emily can feel the need to escape sensations of discomfort caused by waiting or enduring silence without appearing to do be busy. In this context, the phone is used as a tool to cope with discomfort and retreat to a more private space. The participant expressing that she feels as if she could not survive without attending to her phone to escape the discomfort of a less entertaining lecture shows the significance this theme holds in her media repertoire.

Baby Boomers, on the other hand, do not seem to struggle with the same discomfort arising from the same context. To some Generation Z participants, simply waiting somewhere without using one's smartphone might seem anxiety-inducing, while it appears to be just fine for older individuals. When asked whether she feels as if her attention span seemed limited to her, Baby Boomer participant Chrystal shared:

No, not really. I enjoy taking my time with books and radio programs, I can also just sit in my garden and enjoy the weather for hours. I rarely experience boredom,

to be honest. I cannot stand a lot of noise and fuzz. I like being in a calm home, no babbling from a TV.

Baby Boomers like Chrystal demonstrate a preference for focused, single-task activities and an ability to deeply engage with content without the need for additional stimulation. This contrasts sharply with the multitasking habits and needs observed in Generation Z participants. Millennials, despite being the bridging generation, seem to lean more towards the side of Baby Boomers and do not seek distraction as frequently as Generation Z. Millennial participant Phil recounted:

I just watch and listen. I don't want to multitask; I really want to focus. To me, that's like driving and playing a video game. The younger generations do it, but I don't believe in it, it explains why your brain focus is so limited.

Another Millennial participant, Dan, even expressed contempt for Generation Z: 'I like not being a Gen Z iPad kid, staring at four different screens while eating.' This shows that attention span might be the most noticeable variable, but the difference between generations seems to lie in being at comfortable and at peace with yourself without distractions. Each generation demonstrates a distinct pace of life, one intertwined with new media and the tendency to escape discomfort by using it as a tool like Generation Z, one more separate from new media and present in the moment like the Baby Boomer generation, and one between both paces with media repertoires that include new media but a preference for being present and focused, like the Millennial generation.

### **Media Consumption Control**

As suggested in the context of the previous theme of escaping discomfort, many individuals nowadays feel that they depend on their smartphones. Contemporary research suggests this to be especially prevalent in Generation Z (Serbanescu, 2022). However, a sense of addiction seems to be experienced by participants of all generations, although its severity varies. Participants employ strategies such as the deleting of applications, the usage of productivity tools, or physical distancing in order to cope with a sense of addiction to digital media. One example of this was named by Generation Z participant Jordan, who copes with the discomfort of not using his smartphone by setting a time and sitting with his feelings of

discomfort for 25 minutes to increase the control over his media consumption. Studying evokes feelings of discomfort in Jordan, making it more difficult to grab his phone.

I try to work on it, I try to just watch a movie for example, and I also try to focus while studying. I follow the Pomodoro technique, meaning 25 minutes of studying and a five-minute break where I can go on Instagram or WhatsApp, just text my friends or whatever. And then I go back to studying.

The Pomodoro technique mentioned by Jordan is a popular method to increase focus, removing distractions for a limited time followed by a rewarding break. This shows a conscious effort to navigate the media landscape and decrease his media consumption in order to gain back some control. Baby Boomer participant Hannah related:

I don't want to get sucked into the apps; I still want to pay attention to my life outside of the screen. I just keep my phone in the kitchen because that's where I start using it the next day after having my tea.

Hannah shows a more extreme measure to media consumption control in which an individual removes the devices entirely. This can be more difficult for younger generations whose lives have become more digital, such as Generation Z university students and their mandatory online learning environments or Millennial employees whose work lives are intertwined with digital platforms. Another Baby Boomer participant, Julie, stated:

I noticed in the past ten years or so that I am reading a lot less because I'm also a little but addicted to my phone. So, sometimes when it's quiet and I wonder what I should do, I just grab my phone. I wanted to add that I try to turn off my phone at 20:00 already sometimes when I feel like I am too addicted.

These strategies of physically separating themselves from their smartphones or turning them off show a conscious effort to limit their digital media use and preserve time for offline activities. It sets a clear boundary between digital and real-life interactions which may not be feasible for individuals in every generation. Millennials, on the other hand, apply methods such as locking or deinstalling apps instead of physically separating themselves. When being asked

whether he attempts to limit or control his (digital) media consumption, Millennial participant Finn responded:

Yes, especially when I feel it's becoming excessive, I have an app that locks my phone when I want to really focus, I guess that's a form of control. And maybe by not even having certain apps that require all of your attention, like TikTok.

This theme shows different strategies, varying from understanding underlying mechanisms to uninstalling apps or locking phones to physically distancing oneself from the certain media or devices. These distinct attempts to control one's media consumption reveal both varying levels of and a shared need for control.

### **Harmony and Mutual Learning**

These findings show distinct media repertoires with shared themes across generations. Different generations experience differences in coping with the abundance of media; preferences vary from stimulating and entertaining content to short and summarised formats to increase efficiency, and discomfort arising from a lack or surplus of media distraction is apparent in all generations. Furthermore, the ability to disconnect varies in a wider context in which it is easier for older generations to distance themselves from their devices whereas younger generations have to apply more techniques and discipling to control their consumption while still engaging with digital devices. Despite these differences, there is potential for each generation to benefit from learning about others' media repertoires and facilitate harmonious media interaction. Prior research highlights the potential for older generations in learning to adapt to innovations in media, while younger individuals can benefit from learning about older generations' media habits and the value of traditional media (Kiouisis, 2001; Koltay, 2011).

Nelly, a participant from the Generation Z, reflects on her dependency on digital tools and how it contrasts with the experience of older generations, such as Baby Boomers. She highlights the potential for mutual learning by emphasising that younger individuals can share their knowledge and creativity as digital natives, while older generations can impart traditional skills.

I sometimes think about how difficult it would be for me to not have my phone, my grandparents would be completely fine I think, but I'd feel lost. All my passwords are on my phone which is probably not very safe, all my banking is



linked there, I use GPS, AI for homework, there is constant entertainment, it's different for older generations, I think. So, they could teach us to get around without needing a phone, maybe. And maybe we could teach them more about new technology and how to use it. I helped my grandma to set up her phone and now she is also in the family hat and can look at all the pictures we send in there, it's really nice. My dad installed WIFI in their home, but we also still use a landline to call my other grandpa, so we're respecting that he has a different lifestyle and doesn't want a phone. I think that's quite nice, so we're all learning from each other.

Nelly's account underscores the reciprocal nature of mutual learning by sharing each other's media repertoires. Her experience illustrates how bridging the generational gap between traditional and digital media repertoires can enhance understanding and facilitate harmony, for example, by 'respecting (a) different lifestyle', contributing to a more connected and cohesive family dynamic. A key component in this statement is the need for respect, which is not always found, as seen in previous comments describing Generation Z as 'iPad kids'.

Hannah, representing the Baby Boomer generation, emphasises the same value of harmony and bringing together different perspectives and skills. She demonstrates an openness to learning about new media from younger people and benefitting from their media repertoires.

I think it's nice when different perspectives and skills come together. Earlier, I mentioned that my son's girlfriend offered to help me with a social media account for my flower shop. I think that's really nice, maybe she can teach me a thing or two, you know? We can all benefit from each other. I think it's also important to let each other be. My sons are different from me, even my husband is, their media repertoires include many different things, but I think it's okay. I still hope that I can bring some peace and calm into their lives, and maybe they can fill mine with a little more noise.

This openness to learning about social media from younger generations and her recognition of the value of different media repertoires underscores the potential for mutual learning. Hannah describes the exchange of lifestyle and pace as a non-material resource; simply being in another generation's presence can entail a sense of peace or induce a faster pace of life. Furthermore, her willingness to learn, coupled with the desire to share her own

experience, exemplifies how cross-generational exchange can increase harmony and enrich people's lives. Emma, a Millennial, discusses the differences in media repertoires and provides examples of practical skills that she has taught.

I think it relates back to the differences between each generation, younger people can teach older generations how to navigate the internet and how to be more creative with the tools we have. I showed my mom how to order food online instead of calling the restaurant the other day. And my younger sister edited a picture for me. I still don't know how she did it, but she removed the people in the background and made the dark circles under my eyes look less dark. Maybe younger generations can learn that things are possible without new media, like using the telephone to order food instead of an app. I think it's nice that I grew up in a time where that was still normal, and we were still happy. And maybe they can teach us some patience, we need everything to be so fast. Especially Gen Z, imagine they'd have to wait for a song to download.

Emma's description shows the practical aspects of harmony and mutual learning that can benefit individuals of different generations in their everyday lives. Emma describes the need for a harmonious interaction within the evolving pace of life in the context of media and new technologies (Van Der Zeeuw et al., 2023). Her reflections reveal intergenerational teaching and learning, not only to enhance individual skills but also to preserve valuable knowledge from past media practices, striking a harmonious balance.

### **Discussion**

The analysis of the process of mediatisation and cross-generational media repertoires reveals a distinct intergenerational gap while emphasising the potential for mutual learning among Generation Z, Millennials, and Baby Boomers, answering the research question 'How do different generations interact with the abundance of media and what can they learn from each other's media repertoires?' By employing phenomenological analysis, which obtains insight into the essence of a phenomenon through an individual's lived experience and applying phenomenological reduction to uncover essential themes and patterns, this research provides a nuanced understanding of the world-as-experienced by the participants beyond the insight provided by existing research discussed in the theoretical framework. Each generation shows unique media consumption habits and strategies for managing media dependency and

discomfort, emphasising both the contrasts and commonalities in their approaches. A key finding is that in order to achieve a harmonious interaction within diverse media repertoires, it is essential for media repertoires to harmonise within a wider generational context. When media is effectively integrated into daily routines, it results in a balanced and harmonious relationship with media.

This theme of harmony is particularly evident in the different paces of life adapted by each generation (Karim, 2019; Van Der Zeeuw et al., 2023). Generation Z, characterised by their fast-paced and high-stimulation media repertoires alongside their appreciation for long form content as an addition to more mundane activities thrives on instant access to information and entertainment (Rue, 2018; Sayyed, 2020). This generation's preference for engaging content reflects a broader lifestyle that prioritises a faster pace of life. In contrast, Baby Boomers often prefer slower, more deliberate consumption of media, valuing the quality of information, while consuming media at their own pace (Hilt & Lipschultz, 2016). Their habit of engaging in single-task activities highlight a more measured and reflective pace. Millennials, positioned as the bridging generation, show a blend of these approaches. They value both the efficiency of quick, digital media and the utility of traditional media forms, reflecting their unique position in navigating both worlds (Akyildiz, 2023; Botterijll et al., 2015; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Their balanced media repertoires underscore their role in facilitating harmonious intergenerational exchanges.

The reciprocal nature of intergenerational teaching and learning is crucial for creating a harmonious media environment. Younger individuals have the ability to introduce older generations to new technologies and broader media repertoires, enhancing their connectivity and access to modern conveniences and entertainment, while older generations can share traditional skills and a greater appreciation for traditional media and less technology-dependent lifestyles, emphasising a pace of patience and thoughtful engagement. Millennials facilitate these exchanges by combining practical and digital skills with an understanding of traditional media values. By achieving more harmonious media repertoires, different generational approaches can complement rather than clash (Ghersetti & Westlund, 2016). These findings emphasise the powerful theme of harmony and mutual learning, demonstrating how sharing media repertoires can foster a deeper understanding and connection by enriching lives across generations.

This research offers rich insight into cross-generational media repertoires and enriches our understanding of how the process of mediatisation influences media consumption across generations. The findings align with existing theories on media repertoires, such as the

discussed research conducted by Hasebrink and Hepp (2017) and extend them by highlighting nuanced generational differences in media repertoires. Particularly, it highlights the dynamic nature of media repertoires in a digital era and the varying paces of life associated with them.

This study investigates cross-generational media repertoires in the context of mediatisation, focusing on media consumption habits, the phenomenon of escaping discomfort through media, strategies for controlling media consumption, and uncovering the potential for harmony and mutual learning. The findings reveal distinct paces of life, resulting in different generational preferences: Generation Z favours high-stimulation digital media while also showing an appreciation for long-form content; Millennials adopt a balanced approach valuing efficiency and entertainment; and Baby Boomers lean towards traditional media and single-task activities.

### **Practical Implications**

Understanding these generational differences may have practical implications for media practitioners and private persons. Media organisations can utilise these findings for marketing purposes and tailor content strategies to better engage diverse audience segments based on their media repertoires. This could, for instance, include a Millennial posting on platforms like TikTok instead of Facebook to reach a Generation Z target audience, or a Generation Z individual using printed media when targeting Baby Boomers. Private persons can refer to these findings to enhance their understanding of others' media repertoires, such as families gaining deeper insight into their younger or older family members' media repertoires and vice versa when trying to connect.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The qualitative phenomenological approach used in this study showed to be effective in capturing the lived experiences and perceptions of participants regarding their media consumption habits. This methodological choice facilitated a deeper understanding of participants' attitudes and behaviours towards media, providing detailed insights that quantitative approaches may overlook. Despite the insights gained, this study has limitations that should be considered. The sample size and demographic may limit the generalisability of findings. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data and retrospective accounts could introduce biases or inaccuracies in participants' recollections of media consumption behaviors, although accurate screen time timelines were used to increase the verifiability of participants' responses. Building on this study, future research could explore longitudinal trends in

generational media consumption habits to capture evolving patterns over time. Comparative studies across different cultural contexts and backgrounds could offer deeper insights into how media repertoires vary globally.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of how mediatisation influences cross-generational media repertoires, revealing distinct media repertoires among Generation Z, Millennials, and Baby Boomers. By integrating theoretical insights, methodological reflections, practical implications, and suggestions for future research, this research contributes to advancing knowledge on the phenomenon of mediatisation, cross-generational media repertoires, and mutual learning. Moving forward, addressing the identified limitations and exploring the evolving media repertoires will be essential for facilitating a harmonious media environment across generations.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Usage of AI Tools**

During the preparation of this work, the author used ChatGPT in order to check for grammatical errors and obtain explanations for unknown terminology. After using this tool, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the work.

## **Appendix B**

### **Interview Scheme**

#### **Informed Consent**

Before we start with the interview, I want to once again make sure that you consent to this conversation being recorded. Any data that could identify you, such as your name and places will be pseudonymised. The interview will last for approximately 40 minutes, and you can withdraw from the study or contact me at any time. This conversation will contribute to a study investigating generational differences in media consumption and result in suggestions for cross-generational learning in the context of media repertoires.

#### **Theme 1: Media Consumption Habits**

- How would you describe your typical media consumption throughout the day?
- What is your screen time at the moment?
- Which platforms or sources of media do you engage with regularly?
- How do you choose which media content to consume?
- Have you noticed any changes in your media consumption habits over time, and if so, what factors do you attribute these changes to?
- Do you feel overwhelmed with the vast amount of information?
- Do you feel like you have a limited attention span?
- Do you use media as a means to distract yourself?
- How do you deal with boredom in your daily life?
- Do you attempt to limit your (digital) media consumption?

#### **Theme 2: Media Preferences and Use Patterns**

- Which devices do you use in your daily life?
- Do you tend to use multiple devices simultaneously for consuming media, and if so, how do you manage this multitasking?
- What types of media content do you find most appealing or enjoyable, and why?
- Are there any particular genres or formats of media that you actively avoid, and if so, why?
- Do you enjoy listening to podcasts and, if so, could you explain in which context?
- Would you prefer watching a documentary or reading an article about a topic you are interested in?
- Could you imagine engaging in a more automated activity, such as cycling, cleaning, or going for a walk without listening to music, a podcast, or being on your phone?

- How do you stay up to date with the latest news?

### **Theme 3: Generational Influences on Media Engagement**

- In what ways do you perceive media consumption habits to be different across generations, including your own and others?
- Have you observed any generational trends or preferences in terms of media content or platform usage?
- Are there any specific media practices or behaviours that you think are unique to your generation, and if so, what are they?
- Do you feel like it is your responsibility to maintain this (e.g., traditional) media?

### **Theme 4: Opportunities for Cross-Generational Learning**

- How do you think individuals from different generations can benefit from learning about each other's media repertoires?
- Can you share any personal experiences or instances where you've learned something about media from interacting with someone from a different generation?
- What do you believe are the biggest misconceptions or stereotypes that different generations hold about each other's media habits?
- In your opinion, what are some ways to facilitate mutual learning and understanding between generations in the context of media consumption?

**Appendix C**  
**Participants' Screen Times**

**Table 2***Screen Time Generation Z*

Participant Name	Screen Time
Jordan Manes	6 hours > 360 minutes
Ryan Jansen	2 hours > 120 minutes
Jenny Overling	5 hours > 300 minutes
Ben Hefting	4 hours > 240 minutes
Emily Hastings	5 hours 9 min > 309 minutes
Nelly Hanes	7 hours > 420 minutes
Average	4 hours 52 minutes > 291.5 minutes

**Table 3***Screen Time Baby Boomers*

Participant Name	Screen Time
Lory Gilmore	2 hours > 120 minutes
Roger Meyer	0.72 hours > 43 minutes
Chrystal Benson	5 minutes
Hannah Josh	1 hour 5 minutes > 65 minutes
Julie Mesmer	1 hour 20 minutes > 140 minutes
Susan Miller	7 minutes
Average	1 hour 12 minutes > 72 mins

**Table 4***Screen Time Millennials*

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Participant Name	Screen Time
Tanja James	2 hours > 120 minutes
Emma Berling	3 hours > 180 minutes
Simon Phillis	2 hours > 120 minutes
Phil Anders	3 hours > 180 minutes
Dan Watson	3 hours 20 minutes > 200 minutes
Finn Bennet	3 hours > 180 minutes
Average	2 hours 43 minutes > 163 minutes

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