Media Generations –

Development of Media since WWII



Figure 1: Created by ChatGPT

When writing, and later, fonts were invented, the first documents writing was on were stone. Later, different forms of paper were invented that were introduced thousands of years ago. One might say, that paper, such as books are media that endured a long period of time.

But since the mid of the last century, since WWII, development of mass media grew faster and faster. Every generation grew up with their own specific media that are significant for that generation.

You have to consider, that there are several types of media that each serve a different purpose. First, there are media that are a source for news and information. Second, there are media that

enable communication, then, there are entertainment[1] media, and last but not least, there are media that are used for making music.

Then, there are the so-called "Generations", that existed and still exist, from WWII onwards. Each of them are marked by special historic and economic event.

First, we have to take a look at the "Traditionalists", the so-called "Silent Generation". The range of the Traditionalists lasted from approximately 1922-1945. Those were the kids of WWII, that encountered the last years of World War II by themselves. Of course, that is why this generation knows, that sometimes it is better to remain silent, not shouting out too loud. Their media are, from a today's view, on a very old-fashioned level:

- News: Newspaper, Magazine
- Communication: Telephone set (predecessor of modern telephones)
- Entertainment: Books
- Music: Gramophone

After the WWII-Traditionalists, the Boomer-Generation followed, at approximately the range from 1946-1964. This generation is characterized by economically booming years, the restoration after WWII and inclining economic wealth. Their media mostly survived till nowadays:

- News: Radio
- Communication: Telephone
- Entertainment: Cinema
- Music: Cassette Recorder

Later, after the booming years, the cold war started, and with that, several other crises, like the oil crisis. This is the age of Gen X (approximately from 1965-1979). This generation grew up with the computer, and is probably the only generation that really is into computer architecture. The older generations did barely use computers, and the later ones don't really care about the functionality of a computer. They are mostly, what is considered "users", no real architects. The media of Gen X, therefore, are the fundamentum of modern media used by the newer generations:

- News: TV
- Communication: E-Mail
- Entertainment: Personal Computer (PC), Video-Recorder
- Music: Audio CD

When the cold war ended, another prospering age began. The age of Globalization, another time of economic well-being. This is the age of Gen Y, the so-called "Millennials". Their birth ages dated back to approximately 1980 until 1993. Their media are mostly based on what Gen X invented: IT-based digital media throughout all categories:

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[1] The category "Entertainment" consists of Video, Gaming, and other ways of spending spare time.

- News: Internet
- Communication: Mobile Phone, SMS
- Entertainment: Game consoles, (Video-)DVD
- Music: MP3-Player

As Globalization moved on, other problems occurred, such as recession, economic crises, mass migration, new wars, social insecurity. This age is the age of another generation: Gen Z, the so-called "Digital Natives" (approximately 1994-2009). This is the first generation that really was born into a "digitalized world". Their reputation is bad, as they are lazy, as they cannot really focus on one thing, as their academic achievement is rather poor. Statistics proved that they are the first generation less cognitively capable than their parents[2]. Their media mostly focus on social interaction in a digitalized form:

- News: Social Media, Social Networks, "Web 2.0"
- Communication: Smartphone, Instant Messenger
- Entertainment: Smartphone/Tablet Apps, E-Book-Reader
- Music: File-Sharing platforms

Now, there is another Generation: Generation Alpha, or the "AI Generation". The economic development cannot really be classified yet. According to the prior generations, a prospering age should occur now. Generation Alpha starts at about the year 2010 and lasts, according to my sources to about 2024. 2025 is the beginning of the "Generation Beta", that is not really evaluated yet. The media of Generation Alpha are, once again, another development in the digital IT-sector:

- News: News Feed
- Communication: VoIP calls, video conferences (Zoom, etc.)
- Entertainment: Virtual Reality, AI
- Music: Streaming Sources

Video conferences had a prior primetime in the generation of the Millennials, around 2000. Many business meetings were held that way. But then, there was an acknowledgement that personal interaction is necessary for business communication that can't be transferred with video calls or online meetings. Later, within generation Alpha, video conferences took a revival due to Covid pandemic times where personal meetings could not be held due to restrictions.

So, each generation has developed their own media, their own preferred ways of communication, of entertainment and social interaction. But one thing remains: Books endured entire generations, and existed much earlier than any of those listed generations and my prediction is that printed books will endure for a much longer time than all of these other listed media.

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[2] Fortune Magazine (Feb 21, 2026): The U.S. spent $30 billion to ditch textbooks for laptops and tablets: The result is the first generation less cognitively capable than their parents. https://fortune.com/2026/02/21/laptops-tablets-schools-gen-z-less-cognitively-capable-parents-first-time-cellphone-bans-standardized-test-scores/

At a later stage I am going to take a look at the durability of those media, which is worth mentioning, as well. So, stay tuned, my bibliophile friends!

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