

Tracing the Multitasking Generation The Hungarian Case

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Abstract

From research conducted in the field of media consumption and communication habits, the conclusion can be drawn that the generation socialised in the digital age is different from its predecessors not only in its habits but also its thinking and paths of acquiring knowledge. Multitasking, as a generally recognised and important feature of young people's ways of gaining information and, as such, media consumption, also plays an important role in describing the character of young generations. In this study, I seek to answer the question of whether it is possible to provide empirical evidence supporting the existence of the so-called "multitasking generation"—a concept defined in multiple and often contradictory terms—and if the result is positive, where the concept's boundaries lie. I attempt to assess the effects of age and generational influence concerning parallel media consumption and the extent of media consumption in general, based on quantitative questionnaire surveys.

Keywords: young generation, media consumption, media and communications multitasking, resource enhancement, recreation, multitasking generation

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.71134/YGS.2026.1.1>

Introduction

From research conducted in the field of media consumption and communication habits, the conclusion can be drawn that the generation socialised in the digital age is different from its predecessors not only in its habits but also its thinking and paths of acquiring knowledge. One of the features of the transformation, which is occurring mainly among the young generation, is that activities that were earlier clearly separable from each other are becoming increasingly intertwined; scholarly literature labels this phenomenon "multitasking".

While Prensky (2001) and Evriza and Ridwan (2025) considers multitasking one of the important characteristics of young generations, general assessments of other international empirical research, such as Hulme (2009), Carrier et al. (2009), Vandewater and Lee (2009), Kenyon (2008), Roberts and Foehr (2008) or Hundley and Shyles (2010) also stress the heavily increased presence of multitasking among younger age groups. However, other studies emphasize that older people also engage in multitasking behaviors similar to those of younger generations (Kononova et al., 2019).

The majority of the interpretations in youth generation research dealing with multitasking address the question whether a “multitasking generation” actually exists, and if the answer is yes, where the notion’s boundaries lie.

Although the definition of certain generations in scholarly literature is usually based on the year of birth, several competing definitions using other birth cohorts are also in use. In this study, I seek to assess the effects of age and generational influence on the basis of empirical data, concerning parallel media consumption and the extent of media consumption in general.

II. Theoretical approaches

Earlier, time-scale analyses did not deal with parallel activities and although the importance of the phenomenon was recognised early on¹, such figures were generally only recorded and analysed decades later (Kenyon, 2008). Although the frequency of simultaneous activities can be easily ascertained in everyday life, these had not appeared earlier in times-scale surveys due to difficulties concerning data handling. The linear approach to time is questioned by several experts, who claim that it is fully unrealistic to assume that we only perform a given activity until a certain moment in time, fully separated from another function (Adams, 1995; Gershuny and Sullivan, 1998). Time-scale surveys which dealt with the phenomenon of simultaneously performed activities found that the overwhelming majority of the population reports such experiences. Referring to earlier research (Hungerford, 2001; Bittman – Wajcman, 2000; Floro – Miles, 2001; Ruuskanene, 2004), Kenyon (2008) alleges that multitasking activity is typical of 95 per cent of humanity, while parallel activities are performed on around one-third of days (Kenyon, 2008).

Situations in which we divide our attention are common, as are activities which by nature demand the division of attention. “Multitasking” can refer to the combination of cognitive and physical actions, to two or more tasks performed in a competing or sequential manner, including shifting between tasks (Spink et al., 2007). Certain pursuits count among secondary activities, such as childrearing² (Ironmonger cited by Kenyon, 2008), which is a secondary activity for three-quarters of the time devoted to it. This is similar to housework (Sullivan, 1997; Bittman-Wajcman, 2000), the passive enjoyment of free time or communication activities (Ironmonger, 2003; Baron, 2005). Certain scholars point out the connection between the rise of simultaneous activities with travel, claiming that time spent travelling is unexploited and therefore especially practical to connect with other activities, such as entertainment, communication or work. Recently, studies on transportation have started to deal with the phenomenon of multitasking; Kenyon (2008) cites the works of Laurier (2004), Lyons and Urry (2005) and Kenyon and Lyons (2007). The listed studies emphasise the

1 Kenyon (2008) refers to Szalai’s 1972 work as an example (Szalai, A. (1972): *The Use of Time: Daily Activities of Urban and Suburban Populations in Twelve Countries*. The Hague: Mouton). The phenomenon, identified as simultaneous processes, activities overlapping each other, concurrent tasks, parallel activities, secondary activities, polychronic use of time or multitasking, is a long-since known and important question of time-scale analyses.

Stephens and his colleagues have drawn attention to several adjoining notions, such as the parallel or simultaneous use of several infocommunications technologies (ICTs) (Monge – Kalman, 1996), recombinant use (Lievrouw – Livingstone, 2002), the mixing of media in educational environments (Rice et al., 2004, Stephens et al., 2008).

2 Bianchi (2008) considers multitasking activity related to child upbringing and household tasks to be an obligate stress-involving strategy applied by families in an attempt to manage their time because as a result of stretched schedules, they decide to have children at an ever later phase, ultimately leading to the ageing of society.

advantages of multitasking during travel as an opportunity to communicate, recreate or do paid work while on a journey (Kenyon, 2008). In connection with the role of travel, Schroeder (2010) citing Haddon (2004) points out that mobile telephone use often occurs during dead time, e.g. travel³. The advantages of multitasking strongly influence millennials' travel mode choices (Malokin et al., 2021). The use of devices during dead time became genuinely popular with the spread of smartphones, presumably for the reason that the functionality and array of experiences offered by smartphones are much broader than those of traditional mobile phones. A profoundly everyday activity, using smartphones in dead time (instant games, surfing the Internet, visiting social networking sites or checking e-mail) is also called "snacking culture". Experience shows that alongside use in dead time, this form of "snacking" is becoming increasingly popular during other activities such as Sunday lunch, during conversations with friends or colleagues, or while consuming media content) which can therefore now be categorised as overlapping activities⁴.

Scholars appear to agree that parallelism is, in a sense, a response to time pressure, meaning that an ever-increasing number of tasks have to be performed within a decreasing amount of time. From the individual's perspective, multitasking refers to attempting to condense two or more activities—consecutively consuming more than the given unit of time—into a single time interval. According to Kenyon's calculations (2008), parallelism adds an average of seven hours to a day, corresponding to Ironmonger's result of 7.5 hours.

Time as a flexibly variable parameter has never been as important as it is today. Time-based competition and the resulting abundance of products and services push members of the information society into a time spiral in which on the one hand, resource-enhancing activities such as working to a deadline or studying for examinations require flexibility and on the other hand, a larger range of leisure pastimes stimulates the more effective management of time. "Overturned" time manifests itself not only in night shifts or the constantly "open" Internet, but also vanishing boundaries between basic functions (e.g. lifelong learning) and phases of life (e. g. the development of certain periods in youth). Consequently, parallelism can be regarded as a tool or skill which, under the pressure of time, enables us to adapt to conditions from minor tasks such as chatting online while watching television to activities with a fundamental impact on life such as the co-ordination of work and studying—all due to the fact that the ability to adapt is one of the most important elements of human character.

3 Schroeder (2010) compares Internet use in Sweden, the United States, Japan and Korea through mobile appliances and computers. In Far Eastern countries, the proportion of mobile Internet use can be considered high and browsing on computers is less typical, while the opposite of this can be observed in the case of Sweden and the US. An explanation for this could possibly be that the Japanese and the Koreans generally spend a large amount of time travelling on public transport, during which they can perform their necessary tasks on the Internet; even reading literature on mobile appliances is more feasible due to lengthy periods spent travelling on public transport. This leads to the conclusion that a single appliance can be used for competing functions (e-mail correspondence, telephone conversations, watching videos, etc.), although this is restricted by limits to the user's attention.

4 Turkle (2011) claims that we often turn to our electronic devices while engaging in social activity because there is an opportunity to do something much more important if we consider the context to be dead time. The author alleges that this can lead to a form of loneliness while remaining socially embedded.

III. Tracing the multitasking generation

Most of the researchers dealing with the phenomenon of multitasking state that in demographic terms, older people less frequently engage in parallel activities, especially media consumption. Several authors explain this by pointing out that older generations grew up in an environment in which offline sources such as print media were typical as opposed to today's screens (Ahlers, 2006), which not only provide the grounds for parallel consumption but expressly encourage it.

If the effects of socialisation prove durable and their sphere of influence spreads to the most important periods of life in which social norms are interiorised—namely, childhood and youth—they also have the ability to define the character of a generation. The nature of agents of socialisation can fundamentally differ; while the family as a natural environment has been present since ancient times and is a foundation of society, the secondary agent of schooling presupposes a level of development and institutionalisation (public education) that usually corresponds to the birth of nation-states. Although organised education already existed in ancient Egypt, general and formal educational activity spanning large sections of society is an attribute of modern nation-states.

Naturally, the crystallisation of tertiary and quaternary agents of socialisation⁵ is a consequence of the establishment of information societies, which have been in development continuously since the 1960s. Free time in childhood and youth is a (side-)product of the rationality of industrial society that has only partially been institutionalised. Electronic media are playing an ever more important role in the consumption of non-institutionalised free time, with initially radio, later television and now the Internet consuming a large chunk of available free time. Time-use surveys also reflect the electronic “colonisation” of free time (Nyeste, 2003).

Alongside the institutionalised and non-institutionalised consumption of free time, it has been afforded space in areas dominated earlier by family, school or work. Updating one's Facebook status during a family dinner or chatting during school lessons are everyday activities which often go hand in hand with the conflict of agents of socialisation⁶. The influencing effects of tertiary and quaternary agents of socialisation appear also in certain partitions on the basis of generation, as features endowing the young generation with a distinctive character. Several types of breakdown by generation are conceivable, especially with regard to the borderlines between certain generations⁷.

5 Although traditional and new types of media differ from each other in a considerable number of aspects, the two are heading in the direction of integration as a result of convergent processes. Due to the convergence of appliances and content, it is possible to interpret the entire spectrum of occurrences in traditional and new media alike as a single agent.

6 The eruption of conflict between agents of socialisation did not happen as a result of the entry of tertiary and quaternary agents. The introduction of general and compulsory public education was also accompanied by conflicts; furthermore, the education system assumed not only the organisation of routines for the time spent at school but also “colonised” the family environment through homework as infocommunications technology is seeking its place today in certain surroundings, such as the classroom. According to the latest study on the presence of mobile telephones, multimedia appliances and multitasking involved by the use of these, every second student sends or receives a text message and every fourth uses social networking sites during class (Burak, 2012).

7 It would be pointless to establish exact boundaries because it would be difficult to argue why someone born on the 31st of December of a certain year belongs to a different generation than a person born on the 1st of January of the succeeding year. Experiences reflect that with respect to age boundaries, it is necessary to apply transitory categories spanning at least three to four years of birth.

Generational research is often based on the alphabet-generation framework (Generations X, Y, Z, and Alpha), although this approach has been criticised for primarily reflecting the social and cultural context of the United States, making it less applicable across different societies. Despite variations in age boundaries, these classifications are largely defined by shared media experiences and consumption patterns rather than purely demographic criteria (Székely, 2014; 2025). Proponents argue that globalisation and digitalisation have reduced cultural differences between younger generations, particularly in developed societies, resulting in increasingly similar generational experiences. Empirical attempts to refine generational boundaries remain limited, even though media use is one of the central foundations of generational classification. Research demonstrates that age-related differences in media consumption are sufficiently stable to support the existence of distinct media generations. However, findings also suggest that generational boundaries are inherently flexible, as minor shifts in age cut-offs produce largely similar results. Furthermore, studies show a strong correspondence between media-based classifications and individuals' self-identification with particular generations (Székely, 2018). Survey evidence indicates that members of different generations perceive their cohorts through distinct characteristics that often reflect broader patterns of media.

IV. Methodological framework

The chief question in connection with the agents of socialisation and features typical of age and generation that form the framework of multitasking is whether today's youth possesses empirically provable generational characteristics that also affect media consumption. Although it is possible to get a comprehensive picture of the area on the basis of various approaches to the issue, the examination of whether it is the generational or age aspect of differences apparent in various forms of media use such as parallel media consumption that is stronger is generally absent. Therefore, the chief question my research raises is whether features of media consumption such as parallelism, most common among young people, are specific to age, or whether the youth of the digital age are the carriers of qualitative change, meaning that the effect is typical of an entire age group or generation. To put it more simply: with the progression of age, does the behaviour of today's "revellers" eventually organically fit into the texture of media consumption handed down by older generations or not?

Empirical data at our disposal enables the examination of mainly Generation Y and its predecessors. The last data collection in Hungary for the World Internet Project⁸ which extended to the age group between 14 and 17 years of age was completed in 2007, meaning that the youngest respondents of the survey were born in 1993. Under the 2009 data collection, questions were put only to those eighteen years old or above. When collecting data for the *Hungarian Youth 2012*⁹ survey, prepared with the use of an 8,000-member sample also encompassing the youngest age group, young people between the ages of 15 and 29 were defined as having been born between 1983 and 1997. From

⁸ The World Internet Project (WIP) is a comprehensive international project aimed at the study of the effects of the Internet on society, initiated by the Californian UCLA Center of Communications Policy and Singapore's NTU School of Communications Studies in 1999. Hungary has been a participant in the WIP project since 2001, during which eight collections of data have taken place, primarily on the basis of representative samples of the Hungarian population aged 14 and above.

⁹ Under the *Hungarian Youth 2012* survey, we put questions on their lifestyle and personal situation to 8000 young people between the age of 15 and 29 with the help of an approximately 70-minute questionnaire. The research is representative for the Hungarian population between the age of 15 and 29 by region, type of settlement, age group and gender.

the regular large-sample questionnaire survey conducted by *Kutatópont* and targeted specifically at media consumption habits, data for the Autumn 2012 phase is currently available, but because the target group of this survey consisted of those who had already reached 18 years of age at the time of data collection, figures representing the youngest age group can only be drawn from *Magyar Ifjúság 2012 [Hungarian Youth 2012]*.

The examination of databases of surveys conducted in various periods serves as a background for monitoring; in other terms, the existence of generational features which endure as years pass can be verified by attempting to identify generational characteristics that seemingly appear in one set of answers with the results of another survey. In different wording again, and approaching the question from another angle, the effect of time and thus changes affecting the entire society, such as features brought on by the marginalisation of traditional media and the expanding online media scene, can be kept under control by applying surveys conducted in different periods.

The foundation of the procedure used to test the generation-age dilemma is linear regression, in which the dependent variable is constituted by the quantity of the consumption of a given type of media (e.g. hours/week), the assessment of the importance of each type of media and – in the case of parallel consumption – the multitasking index (MI0-100)¹⁰, while the independent variable is age in years. When examining the hypothesis, it is especially important to study whether a linear connection between the variables can be proven. In the case of a significant linear connection, one can emphasise the role of age, while if linearity in the simple regression model is weak, it is worthwhile to study the phenomenon's generational attributes¹¹.

V. Age and generational effects

Statistics produced by the World Internet Project for Hungary reflect that almost two-thirds of the Internet-using population tends to consume another type of media while online. Results for 2007 and 2009 show a remarkable similarity taking into account that the youngest age group (15 to

¹⁰ In order to numerically measure the phenomenon, Ophir and colleagues (2009) propose an index (*Media Multitasking Index; MMI*), which displays the amount of time spent with simultaneous media consumption compared to the full extent of media use. Keeping to this methodology in part, I devised the following index:

Using data received from the 1000 respondents of an online survey we conducted in 2008, I summarised the frequency of multitasking in an integrated index containing both online-offline and online-online multitasking. The components of the index were the following: listening to the radio or music/watching television while using a computer/browsing the Internet; also engages in other activities while listening to music or online radio/television broadcasts / chatting through real-time messaging programmes / browsing / gaming / studying or working / sending or receiving e-mails

By simply adding up the original variables, we arrive at a variable summing up the various multitasking activities. This variable can then be converted into a multitasking index adopting figures between 0 and 100 (MI0-100), where *mi* refers to parallel use in relation to a certain type of media.

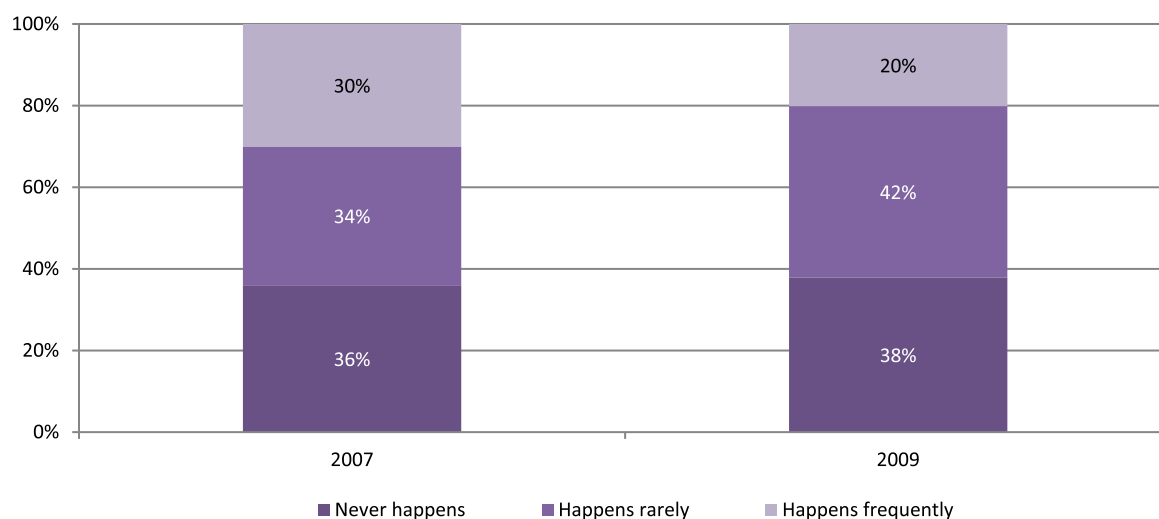
$$MI_{(0-100)} = \sum_{i=1}^n m_i$$

High figures of the established index reflect common parallel use, while low values hint to the opposite. The expected value of the index is 51 and its deviation amounts to 18 index point. The normality test of the created MI0-100 test shows that the distribution produced is closed to normal, although at 18.97, the value of the Chi-statistics is twice the threshold level received at a significance level of 5 per cent; despite this, it may be considered suitable as a dependent variable in robust multi-variable models such as analysis of variance.

¹¹ The study of generational character is also based on methodology for the analysis of linear regression, with the specification that for every few years, the independent age variable is converted into a dummy (dichotomous) variable. This method is practical for a variety of reasons; while it makes it possible to establish a reference category, the method is also able to expose the not necessarily linear connection between the dependent and the independent variable and the necessity of the normality of regression may also be decreased with its help. Based on the regressive model created following the above methodology, it is possible to ascertain the extent and direction of the discrepancy of other age groups in relation to the reference group, as well as whether the difference can be considered significant.

17-year-olds) were left out of the survey. It is possible to identify a smaller group that frequently engages in multitasking (20 to 30 per cent), a group that less often consumes media simultaneously (30 to 40 per cent) and a group of similar size that stays away from multitasking altogether.

1. graph: Prevalence of consuming other types of media while using the Internet (Source: WIP, 2009)



In earlier research based on the findings of the World Internet Project for Hungary (Pintér – Székely, 2006; Székely 2006; 2007) we have already dealt with the connection between media consumption and age. In the course of these surveys, the characteristics of certain age groups were compared with each other, proving that young people's (teenagers') media consumption differs profoundly from that of more senior members of society; the extent of this discrepancy is such that today's young generation may redefine the world of media consumption as we know it.

Young people's media consumption differs from that of older generations both with regard to the time spent using a given medium and the frequency of consumption. The "generational breakpoint" concerning time spent with certain media can be found in many cases among people in the second half of their twenties (in 2012, the beginning of their thirties) (Pintér – Székely, 2006).

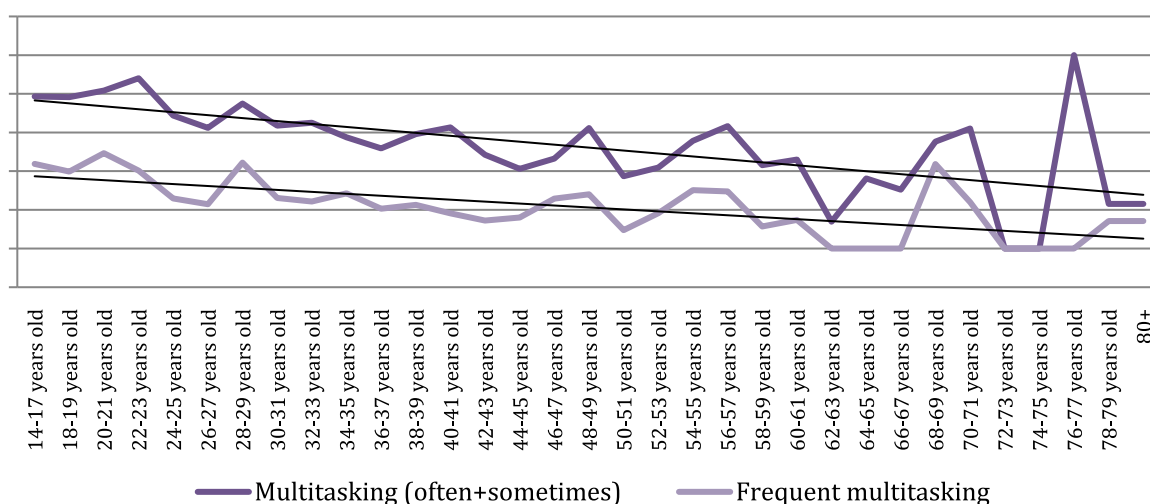
With regard to multitasking, analysis of data produced by the 2007 World Internet Project covering young age groups shows first of all that the proportion of those engaging in other activities while using the Internet is significantly higher among younger age groups. The study of age-related characteristics of multitasking while using the Internet proves that substantial differences can be detected between the multitasking behaviour of 14 to 17-year-olds and those aged 30-31 or above. In the case of frequent simultaneous activities, this discrepancy is already apparent in comparison to the age group of 25-26-year-olds¹². Approaching the situation from another angle, it can be observed that the average age of those frequently engaging in parallel activities is twenty-nine,

¹² The fact that the proportion of Internet users among the 60+ age group was low at the time of data collection – only 50 Internet users were located in this age group – provides a simple explanation for the trend-defying figures for those in their sixties or above. As statistics were calculated for each age group on the basis of only a small number of individuals, greater extremities are possible.

which differs significantly from the average age of people not pursuing such activities, which is thirty-eight.

Based on the above considerations, we can ascertain that connections between multitasking while using the Internet and age reflect a similar correlation to results produced by the analysis of media consumption. It is clearly visible from the graph below that although the extent of parallelism in various age groups appears to be varied, the trend line points in a unequivocal direction. From the simple linear model of multitasking in relation to age, we can come to the conclusion that the effect of age is substantial, with the adjusted R-squared standing at 23 per cent as opposed to the 25 per cent with regard to age groups, similarly serving to prove the interrelation between multitasking and age.

2. graph: The presence of multitasking while using the Internet in certain age groups (N = 1338; WIP, 2007)

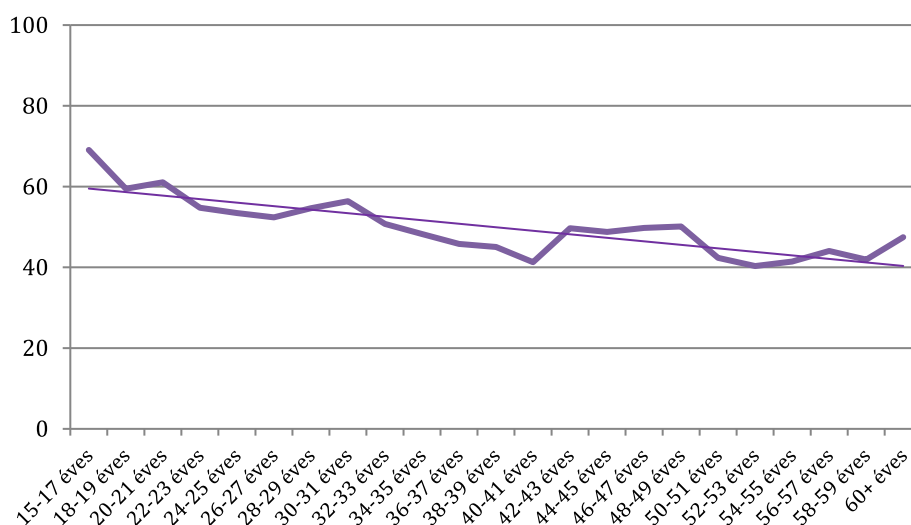


Applying data produced by an online survey conducted in 2008 which saw questions put to 1000 respondents, I summarised the frequency of multitasking in a cumulated multitasking index (MI0-100)¹³, containing both online-offline and online-online multitasking. Analysis of the index along various social demographic traits produces the following results:

Age bears the strongest explanatory power, meaning that the younger the respondents were, the more frequent simultaneous activities are. In addition to this, a dividing line can be detected around the 20-21-year-old age group. Among those above the age of twenty-one, self-assessed multitasking is significantly less common than in the age group comprising young people below the age of twenty. Taking into account a relevant ascertainment of an earlier cited research (Pintér – Székely, 2006), the appearance of this age group is only partially a surprise. On the basis of this, the generational breakpoint apparent in media consumption shifts to an earlier age with respect to the same reference group, encompassing 15 to 17-year-olds.

¹³ For the precise process of establishing the index, see the methodological chapter.

3. graph: The MIO-100 index in age group breakdown (N = 1000; Source: ITTK-NRC, 2008)



Regarding the considerations above, I applied two different methodologies in my study, namely both the separate analysis of data produced by the various surveys and an integrated database. Although the latter solution results in several methodological limitations¹⁴, its advantage lies in the evening out of minor distortions in individual databases and the high number of items (over 22,000 cases). In the case of both classifications, I dealt with the time spent with five separate types of media – the Internet, books, television, radio and newspapers - as well as the importance of these sources in relation to age.

Separately conducted analyses of various databases have shown a significant connection between time spent with the media outlets in question and their position of importance on the one hand and age on the other in almost all instances, in the case of both simple linear connections and interrelations within age groups. A comparison of research compiled in different periods reflects the transformation of media consumption, the marginalisation of traditional media and the upsurge of the Internet. While listening to the radio or reading a newspaper as activities have suffered constant decline since the turn of the millennium until the present day, the extent of Internet use has increased continually during this period. While there is almost no difference in this respect between the explanatory power of regression models testing the age and generational effects, the lack of stability in generational breakpoints is apparent, largely due to the fact that during the time that has passed between studies, media consumption underwent fundamental changes independently from age, too.

A review of surveys conducted from 2001 until the present raises the legitimate question that if the passage of time plays such an important role, how enduring can generational characteristics

¹⁴ The unification of databases of multiple cross-section researches raises several problems. While differences in methodology, target group and research concept could all constitute problems with unpredictable effects, there nevertheless are factors which require a decision to be made prior to analysis. As such, the most important is the handling of weights in an integrated database (i. e. should the original weights be preserved, should new ones be devised or should their use be discarded). Because I apply the analysis of the integrated database as a sort of control and also due to the contrasting relation between data recorded in varying time intervals and the changing structure of society and the application of different age-group cross-sections, I decided to use a uniform sample.

possibly be. The use of an integrated database provides an opportunity to examine whether there is a statistically verifiable difference between figures recorded in a period spanning several decades, thus enabling us to decide whether media consumption has undergone significant change in relation to the analysed features. By applying the method of two-way analysis of variance, it is possible to ascertain any displacements that have taken place in identical age groups spanning the period between 2001 and 2012; in other words, whether today's teenagers, twenty-somethings, etc., are different from the teenagers, twenty-somethings and so on of ten years ago.

Analyses of variance constitute a smaller or greater but substantial proportion of variance explained in relation to age¹⁵ and time¹⁶, which is the most significant in the case of the importance of the Internet (44 per cent). The effect of age can be generally considered stronger, chiefly with respect to listening to music, multitasking, watching television and the combined importance of television and the Internet. Owing to the fact that a substantial proportion of variance explained could be identified in all of the above activities except watching television, it can be stated that the role of age has remained a defining factor despite the passage of years; at the same time, the effect of time is stronger concerning the extent of Internet use and the assessed importance of traditional media, meaning that the difference between various age groups has become greater during the time passed than what appears with regard to age in cross-section studies conducted in individual years.

1. table: Results of the analyses of variances

Media consumption	Proportion of variance explained (R Squared)	Strength of the age effect (Beta)	Strength of the time effect (Beta)
Reading books	0,01	0,08	0,05
Reading newspapers	0,02	0,13	0,08
Listening to the radio	0,03	0,13	0,11
Watching television	0,14	0,37	0,03
Using the Internet	0,05	0,24	0,05
Reading books	0,27	0,28	0,31
Importance of books	0,04	0,18	0,21
Importance of newspapers	0,06	0,11	0,19
Importance of the radio	0,07	0,11	0,20
Importance of television	0,09	0,23	0,11
Importance of the Internet	0,42	0,44	0,31
Multitasking	0,23	0,41	0,11

Having regard to each of these considerations, it can be stated that media consumption is determined by age in many aspects, reflecting a similar situation to that of a decade ago. At the same time, however, it is important to emphasise that in some cases – such as printed media (books and newspapers), as well as the radio or the Internet – major changes have occurred in the course

¹⁵ Age was integrated into the analysis of variance through seventeen categories (14-15; 16-20; 21-25; ...; 90+ years), each covering an age group for every five years.

¹⁶ Time is identical to the year of data collection in the form of categorical variants (four categories: 1 = 2001; 2 = 2004; 3 = 2007; 4 = 2012).

of the examined decade, resulting in the declining global significance of traditional media and the growing role of online content.

With regard to the analysis of the issues raised in the present study, the above statements imply that it makes sense to speak of the enduring role of age concerning media consumption in general. The effects of age and generation could also be examined by comparing the explanatory powers of regression models as described above; however, the difference between these is so slight that it cannot be stated with certainty that the model assuming generational divisions is better suited to describe the particularities of media consumption.

Nonetheless, it is still possible to claim on the basis of analyses that alongside the age effect, the generational effect is also intense, resulting in long-term tendencies in the extent of youth Internet use and the importance of the Internet. In the case of older generations such as Generation X or baby boomers, the dominance of reading the printed press and watching television can be identified in relation to the time spent with these activities. Based on statistical figures, the generational boundaries already introduced could be more or less verifiable. As a result of analyses, certain distinctive generational features seem to have emerged, of which I provide a summary in the following table:

2. table: Generations of media consumption

Generations	Generational boundaries
Veterans	born before 1938-1939
Baby-boom generation	born between 1940-1941 / 1968-1969
Generation X	born between 1970-1971 / 1978-1979
Generation Y	born between 1980-1981 / 1991-1993
Generation Z	born after 1994-1995
Generation Alpha	non-identifiable

Reversing the logic of the analysis, it is also possible to examine whether the above classification is more suitable to explain media consumption than other groupings based on the year of birth. Analyses of variances performed on a combined sample show greater explanatory power only in some cases (the quantity of Internet use, the importance of the Internet and books) than the result produced under the application of five-year age groups; consequently, the conclusion is that the Internet contributes to the greatest extent to generational character. In contrast, models analysing parallel media consumption do not detect a difference, meaning that the linear effect of age may even be considered a primary factor in this case.

3. table: Results of analyses of variance based on age

Media consumption	Strength of the age effect corrected by the control of the time effect (Beta)	Strength of the generational effect corrected by the control of the time effect (Beta)
Reading books	0,08	0,06

Reading newspapers	0,13	0,10
Listening to the radio	0,13	0,11
Watching television	0,37	0,36
Using the Internet	0,24	0,24
Reading books	0,28	0,32
Importance of books	0,18	0,20
Importance of newspapers	0,11	0,11
Importance of the radio	0,11	0,11
Importance of television	0,23	0,24
Importance of the Internet	0,44	0,49
Multitasking	0,41	0,42

The combined database is also suitable to experiment with testing the strength of the generational effect from a different angle; we may also approach the basic question by asking whether a substantial difference exists between e.g. the quantity of time spent using the Internet or the assessment of the importance of television among those born in 1979 in the face of data received in 2001, 2004, 2007 or 2012. The above results show that such a difference doubtlessly exists, but by assuming that this could have occurred only because of the passage of time, the effect of time can be reduced to the minimum while maintaining internal structure through the method of standardisation. Organising figures according to year of birth, a simple analysis of variance performed on the integrated database – where standardised variants of variables concerning media consumption constituted the dependent variable and phases of data collection formed the independent variable – in the face of several thousand F-statistics proves that the above generational categorisation did not fare poorly.

With respect to the generation of Veterans, an average of two of the thirteen variables (amount of media consumption by type of media, assessment of the importance of various types of media and the frequency of multitasking) studied by year of birth produced a result significantly different (sig. > 0.01) in comparison to earlier waves of research, reflecting a change of behaviour within the studied generation. While the same occurred, an average of four times in the case of the baby boom generation and three times with regard to Generation X, seven such instances could be registered for Generation Y, the last which we are able to study. (The analysis of Generation Z was not possible because only 2012 figures are available for this age group, resulting in the absence of a basis of comparison.)

The above arguments prove that despite the methodological restrictions of the combined database, generational features are present in media consumption. This claim is supported by the fact that by and large, there is no significant difference along the studied criteria between data received from surveys conducted in a variety of years, save the global effect of time, meaning that the generations studied generally maintain their characteristics in relation to media consumption. However, this method of analysis also draws attention to the highly similar results produced if generational boundaries are altered by a couple of years; consequently, the methodology is either not suitable for defining more exact boundaries or such distinction may even not exist.

VI. Summary and conclusions

Analyses along certain approaches detailed above have demonstrated that age is a major, if not the most important, explanatory factor of media consumption and media and communicational multitasking in a broader sense. The conclusion can be drawn that although the relevance of certain categorisations by generation is undoubted, generational boundaries are defined rather vaguely and arbitrarily. While it can be proven in detail that generational breakpoints are present in relation to the extent of both media consumption and parallel activities, it should also be established that the linear connection between age and parallel consumption is similarly suitable to describe the relation. The difference between the explanatory power of models testing the age and generational effects is almost non-existent, meaning that it is impossible to determine clear generational boundaries on the basis of parallel media consumption.

My research on media and communicational multitasking has revealed that it is an everyday activity pursued more or less often by the majority of people. Situations in which we divide our attention while consuming media are common, as are activities involving communication during which we also engage in other (often media-related) pursuits.

In connection with the foreseeable future of media and communicational multitasking, it can be said that it will definitely continue to expand due to stimulation by at least three factors: (1) the entry of new generations; (2) the spread of mobile appliances; (3) the strategies of advertisers, media proprietors, as well as producers of contents and appliances. Advertisers and media proprietors are expected to tackle the challenges multitasking raises by stimulating the activity to a still greater degree, offering consumers an even greater array of linked contents, which in turn will further spur the use of mobile appliances. Similarly to those engaged in the advertising industry, other related branches of the economy will also market increasingly sophisticated services that are more and more suitable for multitasking.

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