

The Celebrities, the Fake Celebrities, Media and the New Generations

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Abstract: *Pandemic experiences have made us aware of how vulnerable we are as a society. The dangers have been and still are innumerable: gross media manipulation based on conspiracy theories, twisted and truncated news to gain likes and notoriety. These are just two of the major dangers facing our society over the past two years. Although some of the information overloaded public managed to fend off the assault, others were left out in the cold under the siege of an avalanche of misleading news and manipulation. The young generations are particularly important to us, since we all invest our hopes in a brighter future. However, we do not know how to help them overcome the cruel information frontier.*

Keywords: *manipulation, disinformation, new generations, celebrities, stardom*

There is a lot of information circulating right now that is confusing and hard to understand. But we're trying to figure out how to make it more clear to everyone, especially the young people who are growing up now. We talk about the Y¹ and Z², generations, people born between 1980 and 2000. Generation Y (those who grew up with the Internet) and Generation Z (those born after the

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1 Generation Y, also known as Millennials, represents that sociological category that includes people born between the 1980s and the early 2000s. Generation Y grew up in a period of rapid change and technological development, which influenced the attitudes and behaviors of its members. These people are recognized as a digital generation, who grew up with access to the Internet and the latest technology. Generation Y is also a generation that has been exposed to great cultural diversity and has a more open attitude towards differences in gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity. Its members are also known to be part of a generation that is more aware of its impact on the environment and is more interested in career than achieving a high social status.

Internet became commonplace) are different in many ways¹. However, technology has had a big impact on the attitudes and behaviors of all their members. We're talking about two generations that have a lot of access to information, but they're finding it harder to understand the real messages in traditional and new media.

The spread of misinformation on the internet is not only the result of artificial intelligence algorithms used to select, process and transmit information, but also the work of celebrities with a large following among internet users, those with a reputation for being good at spreading disinformation, and mainstream media outlets that are biased towards sensationalism and propaganda².

From a psychological point of view, the people concerned suffer from what can simply be called "stardom syndrome", a term often used to describe an attitude or behavior³ of an individual who does everything possible to attract attention and to be the center of attention. Either in a large group, in a real/physical location, or in a virtual social position. It can be seen as a form of selfishness or a desire to make your own voice heard more often, ignoring the interests or needs of others.

The emergence of the stardom concept is rooted in the mists of history. We can talk about the birth of the concept, without being mistaken at all, by associating it with the birth of the first magazines and newspapers, one of the main occupations of their readers being to devour information such as cancan, fashion and the private life of social leaders of those times.

Obviously, there is no need for us to generalize. We acknowledge that there are stars among the people, such as those who achieve success in the

2 Generation Z is a digital generation, born after the 2000s that grew up with access to the Internet and the latest technology, that lives in a perfect symbiosis with the digital communication process and accustomed to obtaining information exclusively through the Internet. Gen Z is more independent and autonomous than previous generations, tending to rely more on their own resources and less concerned with social status and the approval of others, but they are a more diverse generation and more aware of social issues and politics from the world in which they live.

1 For example, Generation Z is more used to technology than Generation Y.

2 All the opinion polls carried out during the two years of the pandemic, lockdown and semi-lockdown confirmed the fact that Romanians agreed with all the conspiracy theories circulated worldwide. This happened despite the fact that globalization and easy access to information would have to help inform the population as correctly as possible. Conspiracies and all such information related to them prevailed over all the data and statements provided either by representatives of the various scientific entities or by the authorities.

3 This behavior may also include methods of trying to make himself noticed by public wearing brightly colored clothes or accessories, by speaking loudly, by using provocative / derogatory expressions / statements, all to draw attention to himself.

performing arts, cinematography, music, or sports, while others make themselves known through their professional achievements, such as their contributions to science, politics, or business.

The list is completed by some people who make themselves known through their appearances in the media, such as television or reality TV programs.

Generally speaking, it all depends on someone's talent, hard work, determination and being the right person, in the right place at the right time.

A popular way to become a star has been recently through social media. This is where people can build an almost immeasurable, much larger audience based on the essential contribution of the content they post on social media¹.

Romania is not immune to the trend of promoting celebrities' lifestyles in the media, articles and shows devoted to them, which are frequently shown up. The audience for these types of content is, besides, not limited to the older generations, with many young people following the stars and promoting their content. This helps to perpetuate the promotion of irrelevant information about celebrities in the media². Non-information, as it is called, is a concept that refers to information that is not relevant to daily human existence. Non-information can therefore be any type of information that does not bring any value to human existence. In this category we find false, irrelevant or redundant information³.

We believe that it is important for new generations to be able to distinguish true information from false information, so we are teaching them how to do so. This is especially important in the digital world, where so much information is available. We want to make sure that the next generation is not misled by fake news, so we are teaching them how to identify it and reject it.

In today's society, with so much information available to us, children are especially affected. Some people, because they consume more information

1 At the same time, the classic TV channels started to take over the content promoted online by certain celebrities, under the title of "viral", exposing them to the public, without any other notoriously remarkable achievement, outside the audience generated by them appearance in the virtual space. This is what we come across in the specialized scientific language as "cardboard celebrity".

2 Nowadays, in all radio and television shows, stars who expose their personal lives are present more and more often, this with the main goal of obtaining the largest possible audience. The latest media audiences in the audiovisual sector indicate the presence of ANTENA STARS, the only niche station devoted entirely to star life, focused on scandal, or what is called non-information, in the TOP 10, on the 8th place of the most watched televisions (Bunea, 2022).

3 It is important to everyone to distinguish non-information from real information because confusion can have negative consequences if taken into account or used incorrectly.

quickly, are more affected than others. This is especially true for kids who are more interested in technology and the new media. They can get a lot of information through games, videos, and other productions. And, as a result, the information that kids are exposed to shapes their thinking¹.

Obviously, a consistent help for young people in distinguishing informational correctness can come, formally, both from classical educators and trainers, from the school environment, and especially, informally, from stars/celebrities both in the real space and in the virtual space². And here we are referring again to the concept of “stardom”, which we mentioned earlier, which can be understood as an attitude or behavior that involves the desire to be in the center of attention and to draw attention to oneself,

Curelaru (2002) highlights a portrait of the star intended to define what this person should look like when he arrives on television sets. In this regard, this is considered a synonym for the star, namely a public person who has a public personality. Public figures who meet the necessary criteria are those that are accessible to many people and that are seen as representing excellence in their respective social structures. Their images are often promoted through the mass media and tend to have a large group of supporters. They may have different behavioral patterns, which makes them interesting to watch. Their opinions have a great impact on the public and society at large.

If we look at the negative³ side of things, we come across several types of celebrity behavior. People who are self-centered often have a difficult time maintaining healthy relationships with others. Because they are focused on themselves, these individuals may not be able to see the needs of others. People who are non-empathetic often have trouble putting themselves in other people's shoes. This can lead to them behaving selfishly or excluding others from conversations or activities. People who are selfish often focus strictly on their own needs and desires, to the detriment of the needs of others. These people can be difficult to empathize with, as they often have a selfish way of behaving. They may also try to maintain a false image to make themselves look better to others.

1 Handrabura (2016) states that children / youths do not succeed as effectively in critically analyzing and synthesizing good information and eliminating negative ones, as mature people do.

2 According to Dinu (2007), the new era of the Internet represents a strong pillar of support for the mass media and the formation of new values, and as a result of this approach, innovative technology has led to the highlighting of celebrities, replacing in this way the figure of the common man and his / her average existence.

3 We can say that promoting the stars in audiovisual in a negative light helps them to manage their problems. Being in the spotlight, they are more likely to be helped by fans and family to overcome the difficult times they are going through.

Nazare-Aga (1999) tries to draw the portrait-robots of the manipulators, identifying the masks under which they hide in their daily social life¹. From his perspective, these people are friendly, persuasive, and altruistic. They also have a shy demeanor and use others to promote their ideas. They are dictators, and their goal is to abuse the power they have to criticize violently, to attack violently, and to benefit from various services.

There are many factors that contribute to the success or failure of such personalities who become stars / celebrities. Some are psychological, geographic, physical, and educational in content. Beyond that, there is the current environment in which these people live².

All those who deal with the child's formal education and those who are the artisans of informal education must understand that the young people of the new generation face numerous existential dilemmas that may have existed in the past, minimized by the perceptions of the communities of that time. It is certain that, nowadays, for the new young man, all these dilemmas have a different meaning, with a much greater impact on his psyche. And if their voice is not heard among those who need to hear it, we will witness their degradation.

One of the most significant factors that can affect a child's ability to learn and develop intellectually in a good way is his / her environment. If this environment is hostile or dangerous, the child may have difficulty assimilating information and may even lose interest in learning. A child needs the stability and guidance of an adult to overcome difficult times. Additionally, if they don't have access to quality learning resources, they may struggle to learn effectively. Finally, if they don't have any relevant or motivating learning opportunities, the child may become disengaged from learning altogether.

1 Manipulators are people who use others to get what they want. They are always looking to blame others for their problems and avoid taking responsibility for themselves. They give evasive answers to questions and change their opinions depending on the situation. They often invoke logical reasons to hide their intentions, and lead others to believe that they are the best person for the job. They always doubt the competence of those around them, and prefer intermediaries. They are envious of those around them and always pose as the perfect victim. They ignore what has been given to them for execution, and adopt the ideas of others for their own personal good. They threaten and blackmail others, move from one topic to another without any warning, and avoid official meetings. They always rely on the ignorance of others to get ahead, lie flat out, and distort reality. They suffer from egocentrism and are the one who leaves certain tasks to the last moment. They flatter and offers gifts in order to gain the trust of their victims, but these gifts eventually backfire. Lastly, manipulators suggest goals to their victims that they would never actually achieve. (Nazare-Aga, 1999).

2 For example, it is easier to control an uneducated person than someone who has a college education. The teaching staff is partly to blame for this. The educators are not always prepared to meet the needs of students who are entering school every year.

There are pros and cons to both the media and celebrities promoting healthy lifestyles to young people. The media and celebrities have a responsibility to provide beneficial and real information to the young audience, instead of disseminating disinformation that can have catastrophic effects. All those mentioned above have a great responsibility in managing the information circulated through all types of media, and exposing and propagating disinformation that can have negative consequences¹.

From a psychological standpoint, it is natural for people of all ages to want to imitate what they see on TV or online. However, this tendency is scientifically proven to lead to a recrudescence of the public's desensitization rate. This desensitization results in an increase in the aggressive factor among consumers², who will then associate the negative aspects encountered in the viewed content as common, everyday facts³.

The responsible factors in the family and educational environment do not give any importance to developing the abstract sense of thinking, or do not realize that in order to do so, the young person needs to use verbal language, in conversation with either an adult or another child. This is done without any visual representation of the words used⁴. Children are often exposed to the reality of audio-video productions, in real life, or online, which can lead to the same results: nervousness, agitation and even violence⁵.

The radio has adapted to new social developments, and while its negative impact is not as strong as that of television, it still exists. Sound,

1 A recent analysis carried out by Romanian journalists revealed that during the pandemic, Facebook, which is one of the most popular social networks, became the public place where many false information was distributed by Romanian showbiz stars. These brought more than 30 million views from virtual followers. Luis Lazarus, George Simion, Oana Lovin, Diana Ivanovici Șoșoacă, Adina Alberts, Andrei Laslău, or Dana Budeanu via Antena 3 were among the top stars who promoted various conspiracy theories (Marincea, 2021).

2 The content in these productions is often full of visual projections and vocabulary that is not appropriate for young audiences (Onofrei, 2015).

3 The analyses and studies carried out in the last decade show more and more often that television generates addiction, encourages selfishness, individualism, stoically contributing to amplifying the feeling of stress, depression and even a tendency towards suicide.

4 Images may obstruct access to the imagination and intuition for children, who are then forced to assimilate a certain set of images. That is why stories intended for such an audience should not be accompanied by graphic representations, in order to give them the opportunity to create their own space for the story's action (Gheorghe, 2006).

5 The child / youth of the new generations live on a subconscious level many sensations of joy, pleasure, anger, frustration, desire for disobedience. These things correspond to hyperactivity in the right hemisphere of the brain, while activity in the left hemisphere, which is responsible for reason and logic, works at low parameters (Cherry, 2022).

verbal aggression, and bad tone and conduct of the radio hosts or their guests are all measurable aspects of this phenomenon¹.

The new audiovisual is a way to connect young people with their home and the world around them. It offers them access to tradition, history and values, through promoting stars, through information, etc. The interactivity conferred by modern media puts them in direct contact with responsible factors, representatives of competent institutions, various public figures, opinion leaders. Interactivity also means participating in discussions on various topics, known or not. This aspect represents one of the attractions of the 21st century media, super-technological and ultra-computerized, with many followers among the classic consumer public, but with much more impact in the virtual space.

The relationship between stars and new generations must be one adapted to the current social context. It is a known fact that stars can influence young people today by the way they behave, by the messages they transmit, or by the example they offer from a professional perspective, in real life, or on social networks.

As sophisticated as the transmission of the message in the new dimension may seem, the principles of communication are the same; respect and equality on the part of the participants. In this process, only people who have something to communicate and who want to communicate must be involved.

Celebrities need to be aware of the impact they can have on the new generation. They must make responsible decisions about how they manage their lives and careers. The way they promote it in the public space is important as well. At the same time, it is important that young people are educated to think critically and form their own opinions, regardless of what the stars say or do. It is the work of all of us: trainers, educators, teachers, journalists.

1 The aggression inside music does not only relate to the lyrics accompanying the musical line. Studies have shown that, in addition to its therapeutic side, music can also generate side effects in the public consciousness. This is one reason why some religious scriptures consider the act of music to be harmful. Some religions do not consider the present musical phenomenon to be beneficial, considering that it affects the intellect, producing great disorders of the nervous system and even some diseases, besides the moral and ethical consequences. However, music has also developmental effects on the personality of the individual. By its hedonistic function, music can cause the audience to shrink in size. For some listeners, a musical piece is only a method of satisfying certain primary needs. In 1999, two punk music fans of Marilyn Manson killed 12 students and a professor at Columbine High School. More than 20 years ago, Judas Priest was the subject of a trial in which they were accused of inciting suicide and violence. The Beatles have been accused by Charles Manson, the famous serial killer, of having inspired him.

From what we know about the negative effects of information on current generations, we think it is important to put in place some proposals to limit those effects. We also need to focus on combating the harmful effects of information in both real space and virtual space. This will require introducing special courses into the school curriculum to help kids develop better coping mechanisms when they are exposed to information online. We need to rethink how parents and children interact to reduce the amount of harmful information they are exposed to.

There are solutions, but they will require cooperation from all the parties involved. The process of thinking, reforming, and rethinking our strategy to deal with the virtual world must be based on the respect of human rights and principles outlined in official documents. Any other measure, which disregards official rules and standards, can lead to rejection. Today's society must learn to live with the virtual world as part of its future. At the same time, it has a responsibility to limit the negative effects that come from the attitudes and behaviors of the stars found in classic media and new media, which are reformulated and retransmitted without taking into account the specific consciousness of humanity.

In conclusion, we are free to listen and follow what we want, but each of us must be the master of our own orientation towards good choices and correct decisions. For each of us, it would be best to adopt those behaviors that we consider positive and that contribute to our development as human beings. We need to motivate ourselves, but we should also avoid any situations that are not geared to our goals.

In the case of young people, all those of the X and Y generations, they can be directed to various personal development shows and can be advised by responsible social leaders about the wrong aspects that are promoted on TV or radio, so that they do not end up in the situation of adopting behaviors that negatively influence their lives and that can become harmful over time.

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