

# Generation Time

Work, ambitions  
and attitudes  
from A to Gen Z

 openknowledge

bip. Group

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# Zeneration Time

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Selfie-taking yet unselfish,  
connected yet lonely,  
anxious yet pragmatic,  
risk-averse yet entrepreneurial,  
Generation K is a distinct cadre,  
a generation very different  
from those that preceded them.  
Think millennials have it tough?  
For “Generation K”, life is even harsher

*Noreena Hertz (Hertz, 2016)*

# GenZers

Gen K *The Founders* Centennials

## Digital Natives

True Gen Post-Millennial Pivot

Zoomer iGeneration

## The Final Generation

### Preface

Digital Natives, Centennials, GenZers, True Gen, Post-Millennials, Zoomers, iGeneration, The Founders, Pivot, Gen K, The Final Generation. These are just some of the names that identify the generation **born between 1996 and 2010**, i.e. those who came into the world between the end of the old millennium and the beginning of the new. They are the true digital natives, those who have changed their perspective on technology and connectivity: the first people with no memory of a world before the widespread diffusion of the Internet. They are the ones who for several years have been entering the world of work and adult life, promising, with their life and consumer choices, to question the logic that has guided the system up till now.

Getting to know this generation in more depth, understanding their habits, their ways of thinking and their relationship to each other and with technology, means having a more accurate idea of **the im-**

**pact that Gen Z will have on the world in the coming years**; it means identifying with greater awareness the approach to take when designing new services, products and experiences that place GenZers centre-stage.

It is, thus, our curiosity about this new generation that in late 2019 prompted OpenKnowledge to undertake a **research journey into Generation Z**, to understand the needs and expectations of this group of young people who are so peculiar and disruptive in how they approach the challenges they face in adult life. This report represents the results of our survey. It aims to illustrate the **characteristics and behaviours** of Gen Z from a global point of view, to find the patterns and understand the motivations that will guide – or rather, are already guiding – their choices.

The entry of Generation Z into the market is an interesting topic to study as a consumer phenomenon: with new logics of interaction and new ideals,

Zoomers promise to redefine how brands approach people and consequently how they will reformulate their **Customer Experience**. Even more interesting, however, is studying how these same examples of innovation will lead to rethinking the relationship between people and organisations, i.e. how GenZers will, thanks to a new paradigm of **Employee Experience**, define the way in which companies and work itself are experienced.

The **pandemic** has further accelerated this process of redefining the relationship between employees and companies, steering the debate towards the issues of hybrid and remote working, the fluidity of work and the rethinking of corporate culture paradigms, and towards horizontal and decentralized leadership.

For OpenKnowledge, a thought leader in Employee Experience, understanding what contribution Generation Z can make to organisations is a key theme: those organisations that can reach GenZers will have the possibility to access a hybrid talent pool with great potential for innovation. The contribution of this talent - if well directed - will certainly benefit companies, both in the market and internally, in the process of defining their purpose and corporate mission.

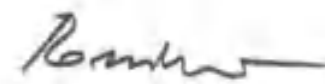
The research presented here brings together the most interesting data and information on Generation Z currently available to the public, formulating a user-centric picture of how it will affect the way Customer and Employee Experience must be activated and offered to the market. The insights ga-

thered here will be useful to people and companies to begin to understand what the attitudes of this new generation are, in order to orient their strategy both towards consumption and towards the labour market, maximising the possibilities of meeting, exchange and contamination with the most ambitious and free generation ever born: Generation Z.

This research presents a broad overview of the younger generation's new approach to work, which will be critical in the coming years. The report illustrates practical techniques and articulates new organisational dynamics that businesses need in order to recognise and welcome the new paradigm.

I am particularly grateful to all my colleagues for the incredible effort they have put into the research that has led to the birth of this supplement and I wish to thank them here. An extended thanks is also due to all the friends who agreed to contribute to enriching this report with their testimonies in key passages. This work is dedicated to Gen Z, which forms the majority of people who make up OpenKnowledge, and to the authors who are also GenZers. It is to be hoped that they may live in a future where organisational contexts are more human, true and above all capable of being welcomed with new approaches.

**Rosario Sica**  
CEO & Founder OpenKnowledge



# The identity of Generation Z

1.



### The historical context

Generation Z has grown up in an uncertain and unstable political and economic context, characterised by a fundamental paradigm shift with respect to the past: the affirmation of globalisation as an economic and social phenomenon, which has allowed - thanks to the diffusion of the Internet - a closeness and a systemic connection never previously experienced.

The events that marked the first years of life for Gen Z were unpredictable, global in scope and generated a common sense of instability and anxiety, to the point of challenging the very sense of security felt by Western society. Not surprisingly, a term used alternatively to that of "Generation Z" is the "Homeland Generation" (Ravella, 2017), to emphasise the sense of safety and security that comes from staying at home, a feeling familiar to those who grew up in the years when events in the outside world were threatening and

incomprehensible, especially to the Western population.

The event that has probably defined Generation Z more than any other is the fall of the Twin Towers on 11 September 2001. This date, together with other significant events on a global scale (such as the tsunami of 2004, the economic crisis of 2007 and the more recent problem of migration in the Mediterranean region) has contributed significantly to characterising this generation, with a strong lack of fixed points and a great concern for the fate of our planet.

This feeling of anxiety and fear, which characterises those born at the end of the 1990s, has undoubtedly been heightened by terrorist attacks of a political-religious nature, such as those of 11 September (along with their repercussions, including the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq), as well by isolated and incomprehensible episodes that have occurred with increasing frequency in the last 20

years, such as massacres in American schools and terrorist attacks perpetrated against young people in Europe. Events such as the mass killings at Columbine High School (Colorado, USA), the Gutenberg Gymnasium in Erfurt (Germany) and Utøya (Norway), have accustomed those born in the 2000s to operating in an uncertain and unpredictable context, where the threat of danger is ever-present. These events, which have led to an increase in security in public places, have then had a strong impact on the education of this generation, whose members "are the first group of people who do not know the possibility of passing through an airport without being subjected to thorough inspection and control." (Ravella, 2017).

A further distinguishing factor of Generation Z is the absence of any pre-digital life experience. Born in the era of the democratisation of the Internet, technological development and the spread of big data, GenZers cannot imagine themselves without the web: they think of the smartphone as

an extension of the body and experience social networks as large virtual meeting places where they converse and exchange opinions in a simple and direct way on universal issues (Calvario, 2018).



## How has Generation Z been affected by the historical events characterising its early years?

### How has the pandemic shaped their identity?

### What are the main interests of this group of people?

#### A dynamic generation

Globalisation, which for previous generations is still a topic of great debate, is for Zoomers simply a fact of life, an everyday way of living and connecting, a condition taken for granted. Global openness and the changed **relationship with technology** have certainly contributed to defining the behaviour, identity and value system that characterise this generation and differentiate it from previous ones.

Generation Z has grown up in a world where **the line between the real and the digital** is now non-existent, and this has had a decisive influence on their education, their approach to life and how they define priorities.

Let's take **time**, for example: perceiving time as a precious resource and having been accustomed from a young age to being involved in recreational activities (after school or at weekends) or having had devices and digital tools at their disposal, GenZers do not know what boredom is. Music, video games, the Internet and conversations with friends have always been at their fingertips, and any state of "pause" can be considered a missed opportunity to express themselves and connect with the world. Similarly, the constant flow of information at their disposal has contributed to their **dynamism and impatience**. Accustomed to rapid interactions, Zoomers make it a priority to get what they want very quickly (or else lose interest). It is even estimated that GenZers need 6 to 8 seconds to understand if a piece of content is to be considered interesting (Ravella, 2017).

This speed, which can be interpreted as a symptom of inattention and shallowness, is, rather, a symptom of a different experience in interacting with the digital world. In fact, Generation Z needs to do things and find out quickly, without sacrificing the quality of interactions and, above all, information: 77% believe it is important to be well informed about what is happening (Sparks & Honey, 2015).

As big consumers of information (perhaps because of this, they are more independent in their choices and decisions than were the Millennials and Generation X), Zoomers keep a keen eye on global issues and, hence, they understand what the concrete and, at times, extreme impacts of external events on their lives might be. Let's take some examples. They have structured opinions, believe in practical causes and want to be part of **positive change**, both individually and through the communities they belong to. They grow up with much more awareness as regards the changes affecting our planet and, even before they are familiar with local and neighborhood issues.

Gen Zers, with vast amounts of information at their disposal, are more pragmatic and analytical about

their decisions than members of previous generations were (McKinsey & Company, 2018).

#### The collective dimension and social relations

The lack of distinction between real and digital has also profoundly influenced how Zoomers see **human relationships**. Having grown up at a time when Facebook was already an established reality, they are the children of the evolution of online relationships, which are increasingly turning from virtual to real, thus making social networks the tools for continuing the cultivation of relationships.

Unlike their predecessors, GenZers do not use their own online **image** as an optimistic version of the self, but wish to tell their story honestly through channels that for them are not distinct or separate from their offline ones. Here again, we notice a difference with their predecessors: while for Millennials the real and digital communities are separate, for Generation Z this distinction no longer exists. The sense of belonging cuts across channels and there is no distinction between real and virtual communities.

The possibility of surfing the net far and wide at any time multiplies the possibilities for Zoomers to get in touch with **different and very distant horizons and people**. 57% of teenagers today say they have met at least one new friend on the Internet.

Most of these relationships never lead to meeting in the real world: in fact, 77% of respondents confirm that they have never met in person a friend that they met online (Pew Research Center, 2015).

Zoomers fragment their own **personalities** according to the community with which they are interacting, adapting language, behaviour and content to the character they consider most appropriate for that particular digital space. The true personality of a GenZer is, then, to be found in the synthesis





of the multiple fragments of their online and offline essence.

The fluid, frenetic and collaborative dimension in which Generation Z is immersed can prevent today's young adults from forming solid and lasting personal relationships, at least in the traditional sense of the term. 15% of teenagers today prefer to interact with their friends online rather than offline (*Pew Research Center, 2015*). These digital relationships, of friendship but also of love, can encourage GenZers to expand their world, facilitating the opening of mindsets and horizons. The other side of this coin, however, is that of interacting socially in an online environment, one in which words, reactions, expressions, emotions and feelings are filtered by the medium, and are thus somehow acted out in a setting that is not necessarily easier than, but certainly different from, the real world. The difficulty for Zoomers is, then, to manage the transition from **unrealistic expectations** (which the digital creates around interpersonal relationships) to the skills required by the real world.

The same phenomenon of blurring the real and the digital leads to this generation being more often in contact with their parents than the pre-

vious ones, so much so that GenZers talk to their **parents on** average 1.5 times a day, involving and making them participants in their social lives.

Unlike their Millennial neighbours, Zoomers feel fully supported and protected by their loved ones, with whom they tend to establish relationships of mutual trust and cooperation (*AA.VV, 2018*). This results in a more traditional view of family and a stronger ambition to create stable family relationships.



So much so, in fact, that 74% of GenZers consider the family environment to be the most important in their lives and 58% of British teenagers say that their best friends are their parents (*Sparks & Honey, 2015*).

#### The individual dimension

The desire for community as well as the importance of **standing out individually** assert themselves in GenZers. In fact, compared to their Millennial neighbours, Zoomers have a more realistic and individualistic outlook because they are more focused on self-reliance and independence.

Zoomers are an ambitious generation that is not afraid to make mistakes, but also a generation which experiences failure as the way to success and individual improvement. Doing - and even making mistakes - is better than not acting and risking losing dynamism and drive towards personal goals. Unlike Millennials, GenZers have a very practical approach to making choices, from careers to managing money: they are autonomous, realistic and strive to change the system. Self-confident, success-oriented and convinced that commitment is a determining factor in achieving their goals, Zoomers accept a life in constant evolution, which requires them to be **dynamic** as regards their ambitions, choices and their ability to reinvent them-

The aspiration to change the world in their generation:



selves. They take for granted, for example, their ability to improve over time and promote upskilling, to retrain and stay abreast of market needs (79% recognize the importance of developing skills throughout life). For GenZers, dynamic change is not only accepted but desired: 67% have the ambition to lead a life of constant challenge and change, while for 77% the ability to seize new opportunities when they arise has a positive value for career development. An **appetite for risk** and the desire to challenge the status quo thus emerge as distinctive traits of this generation, nearly half (48%) of whom describe themselves as “risk-takers” (*Snapchat - Global Web Index, 2019*).

But what are Zoomers willing to take risks for? The main motivation to take action is the desire to make a real impact: 60% aspire to change the world, a goal shared by only 39% of Millennials (*Ravella, 2017*).

Propensity for dialogue

As mentioned earlier, the historical, social and economic context in which Generation Z was born and formed has had a profound impact on defining the beliefs and value system of its members.

More sensitive to social issues than their predecessors, better informed, more aware of the impact of individual choices on the system and therefore more responsible and capable of implementing virtuous behaviour, Zoomers are recognised as a **generation of activists**. From the environment to civil rights, they are capable of expressing their opinions forcefully, communicating them effectively and demonstrating their ability to reach a wide audience while keeping authentic the values to be expressed and the messages to be communicated.

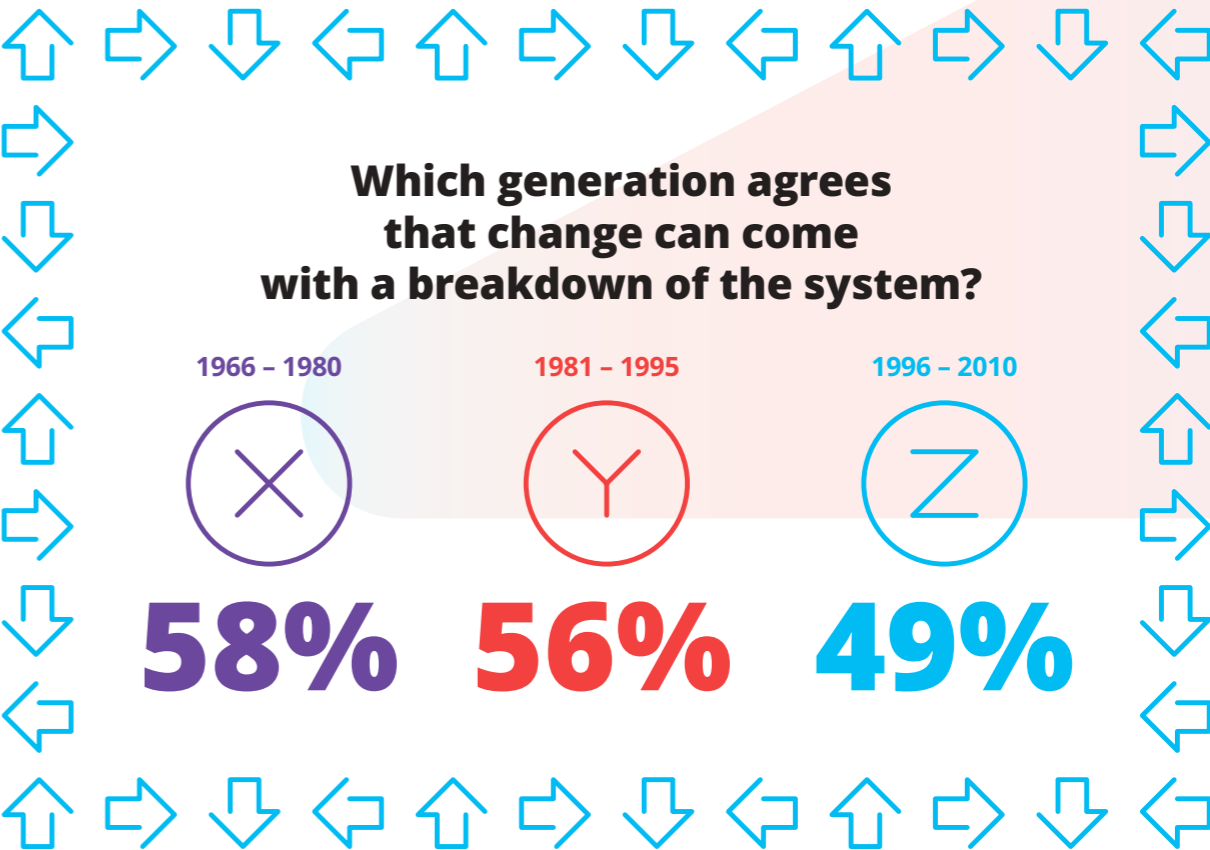
Generation Z approaches social causes with the same pragmatism adopted towards personal and

professional life choices. They believe in the importance of dialogue and accept the difference of opinion: while 56% of Millennials and 58% of Gen X believe that change can come about by a break with the system, only 49% of Zoomers are ready to believe this (*McKinsey & Company, 2019*). This propensity towards listening and dialogue stems from a deep respect for **diversity**. Growing up in a world where it is easier to come into contact with different languages and cultures (from school age), Zoomers are generally tolerant and open to dialogue, thanks in part to the emergence of English as the lingua franca of communication. For GenZers, normality is not a shared concept, but only an individual measure of who you are.

The awareness of the existence of an infinite variety of social, economic and racial backgrounds makes it impossible for members of Gen Z to judge each other pointedly. The need to give a de-

finition to everything therefore leaves room for uncertainty, for the freedom to simply be who one is, without the need for explanation (*Ravella, 2017*).

The goal of activism for Zoomers is not to make noise in order to create opposition, but to make their voices heard to explain themselves and open a channel of dialogue with those who think differently, so as to find common ground: 66% of GenZers agree with the idea of associating with someone who generally thinks differently if the goal is to engage in a shared cause (*McKinsey & Company, 2019*). Because of this, Generation Z is entering adult life with a liberal outlook, a greater sensitivity to emerging social issues, and an inclusive attitude that goes beyond mere tolerance and acknowledges everyone’s right to be recognised and respected for who they are (*Pew Research Center, 2020*).





**46%**  
of Gen Z say they are concerned about  
the possible consequences of *climate change*

Interest in social causes

Holding a firm belief that authenticity and openness to dialogue are the best vehicles for communication, Generation Z expects to interact with a context that follows this rule: the same spontaneity expressed individually is transferred to the political system, brands and the market as a whole, from which transparency and commitment are required, to be sure that through their actions they have a positive impact on society and the environment.

For Generation Z, **sustainability** and attention to the planet's equilibrium are top priorities. That is why Zoomers recognise the need to take care of the ecosystem and preserve it: not surprisingly, 46% say they are concerned about the possible consequences of climate change (*Sparks & Honey, 2015*). In this respect, Generation Z is no different from the Millennials. Taken together, the new generations are distinctly different from their predecessors: 56% of young people say they are willing to pay higher prices to ensure the protection of the environment, while only 20% of people over the age of 40 share this view (*Sparks & Honey, 2015*).

Recently, however, interest in climate change and environmental protection, while still a priority, has been overtaken by concerns about unemployment and health caused by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mental health, employment and income are, in fact, the first issues to which Zoomers turn their attention, following the impacts caused by the pandemic (Figure 1), (*OECD, 2020*).

A complex generation

Generation Z seems full of **contradictions**. Liberal but traditionalist, individualistic but attached to their communities, extremely pragmatic but eager to change the world. They have a hybrid identity shaped by their globalised habits, their ability to absorb different influences and their recognition of opinions, thoughts and beliefs that belong to worlds close to them, both physically and otherwise. The openness and availability of information, the speed of connection with the world and the numerous channels of communication allow Zoomers to navigate through the contradictions, experimenting with their own identity and image, disassembling, reassembling and shaping them according to the different contexts of use.

GenZers are still too young to be explained in an unambiguous way, but up to this point it seems clear that for this generation, born from a period of crisis and the smashing of certainties, the **freedom to experiment with their own identity**, sharing with their network and in continuous evolution, are absolute priorities to rebuild, be reborn, redefine and regenerate themselves by taking advantage of external stimuli without ever being overwhelmed.

Major issues  
for Zoomers  
resulting from  
the crisis  
of the pandemic

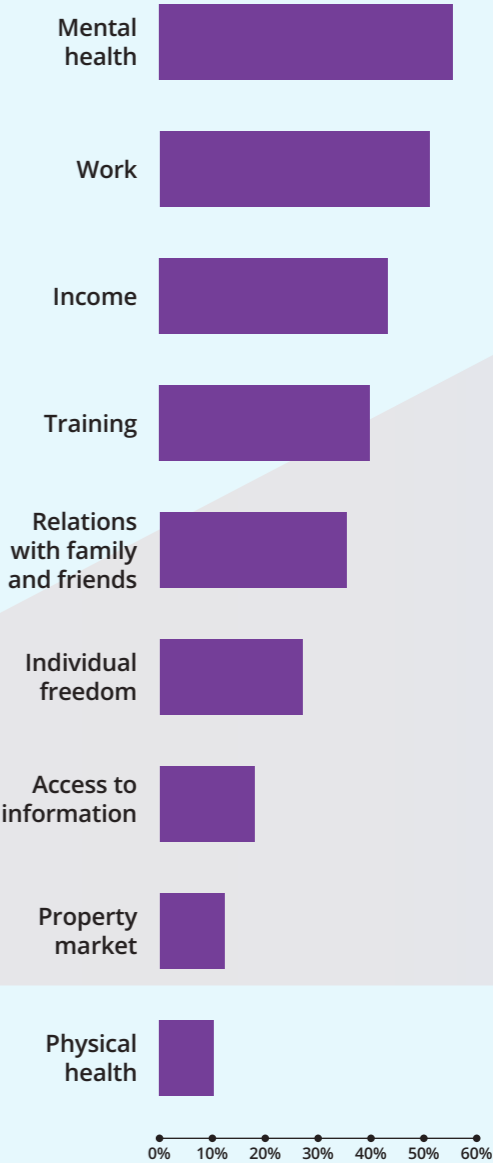
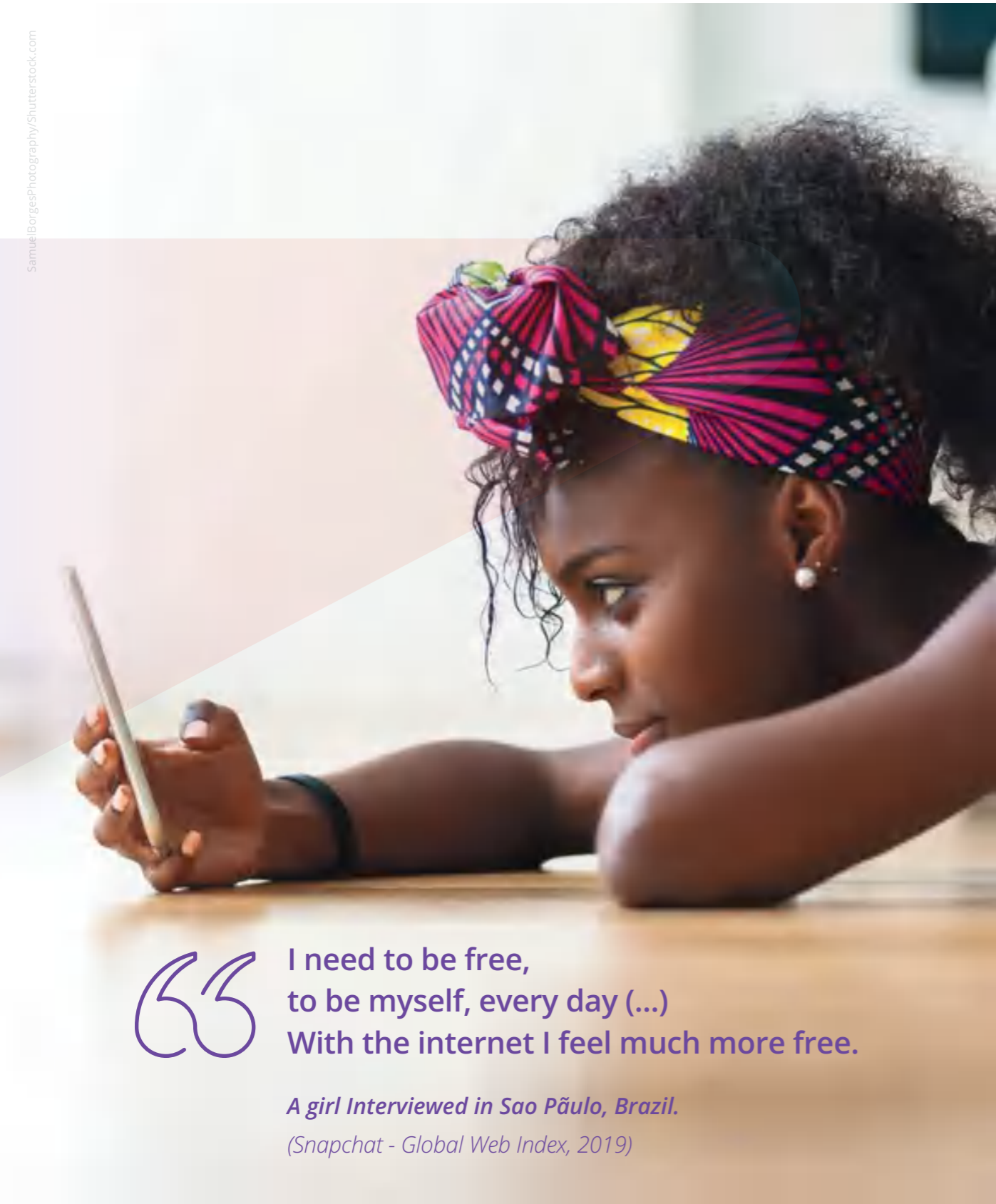


Figure 1: Challenging aspects post-COVID 19 for Gen Z  
Source: OECD, 2020



I need to be free,  
to be myself, every day (...)  
With the internet I feel much more free.

A girl Interviewed in Sao P ulo, Brazil.  
(Snapchat - Global Web Index, 2019)

2018

**The Massacre  
of Parkland  
and the voice  
of a generation**

**READ MORE**  
Ref. Case Study 1

On February 14, 2018, Nikolas Cruz was armed and walked into Parkland High School, Florida. He fired into the crowd, killing 17 people and injuring an equivalent number. In the days following the shooting, students at the school, frustrated by the lack of a strong reaction from the Republican Trump administration, organised initially on social media through the hashtag #NeverAgain, and later by forming March For Our Lives, a student pressure group in favour of limiting the sale and use of firearms. Noise from the Parkland student protest resonated round the world. In the autumn of 2018, the group actively participated in the U.S. election, campaigning against candidates receiving funds from the National Rifle Association (NRA) and succeeded in getting a state law in Florida passed which severely restricts gun use.

2020

**YouTubers use  
advertising revenue  
to raise money for  
Black Lives Matter  
organisations**

**READ MORE**  
Ref. Case Study 2

After the violent death of George Floyd, which sparked protests around the world, some YouTubers donated the public revenue generated by their videos to organisations supporting the Black Lives Matter movement. The first was Zoe Amira, a YouTuber from Chicago who, through a campaign of "ad-tivism" (as her action was defined) gave the possibility to all her "viewers" to contribute (even passively) by watching her video, gaining 7.5 million views and monetisation worth around \$21,000.

2020

**Kathmandu and the  
first solar-powered  
store**

**COMPANY**



**READ MORE**  
Ref. Case Study 3

In New Zealand, the brand retailer of outdoor apparel and equipment opened its first standalone solar-powered store, aiming to achieve the company's goal of zero environmental damage by 2025. Behind the offsetting of more than 124 tons of CO2 emissions is the company's desire to be on the side of the planet, getting closer to the younger generations who, entering the store, will be able to directly visualise the production of energy (and emissions saved) through a live feed on the point-of-sale monitor.

# Communicating styles and relationships with technology

## 2.

The **digital world** in which Generation Z is immersed is always connected. It conditions their way of communicating and establishing relationships. Zoomers know how to use technology like no-one else, but that is not all: they have internalised the logic of how it works, adapting and reinventing tech for the use they want to make of it. They are fully-aware users, who know both what and how to communicate in the jungle of channels at their disposal. They communicate constantly, carrying on multiple conversations, managing to remain always present and fragmenting their personalities, dedicating the most suitable part of themselves to the conversation and to the specific device. They are also aware that they spend too much time online, but admit that they could not do without it.

GenZers know the dangers of digital life and the importance of **privacy** in a world full of spotlights. And in order to cope with the chaos of the world and become its peaceful inhabitants, they have developed an unprecedented ability to distinguish between what may or may not be of value to them, and what could have an impact on their existence.

### The relationship with technology

As the emblem of digital natives, **technology** has become an extension of their bodies and fits perfectly into their daily routines. They use their smartphones as a point of access to a digital world that is no longer a tool “beyond” the analogue reality of everyday life but, rather, an integral part of a dimension that is more complex, extended and connected than ever before.

This has been especially noticeable during the COVID-19 pandemic, when staying connected and having the opportunity to express themselves has, for Zoomers, been as natural as moving their arm.

91% of teenagers today go to bed in the company of their smartphone, tablet, notebook or any other favourite gizmo, and 52% prefer to give their social



account name rather than their mobile number (MNI Targeted Media, 2020).

Watching his grandchildren record a video on TikTok and chat all day with their classmates, a Baby Boomer would easily draw the conclusion that his loved ones are hopelessly addicted to digital. And his conclusion would not be all that wrong. Digital addiction exists, and it is the dark side of an “**always connected**” life, as lived by GenZers. A British study states that 16% of today’s young adults show signs of “online addiction”, while in China the number of digital addicts is already being counted, and now exceeds 24 million (BBC, 2014).

What are the **effects** of a life that is always connected? There is as yet no exhaustive list, but some of the after-effects are starting to show. Psychologist Suzanne Lachmann, from her practice in New York, says “**digital stress**” is a symptom she is starting to see in her young patients. “Being constantly connected is cultivating a level of anxiety – you have to be accountable to someone or something that isn’t actually there in your space. If they don’t immediately respond, their world falls apart” she explains (Sparks & Honey, 2015).

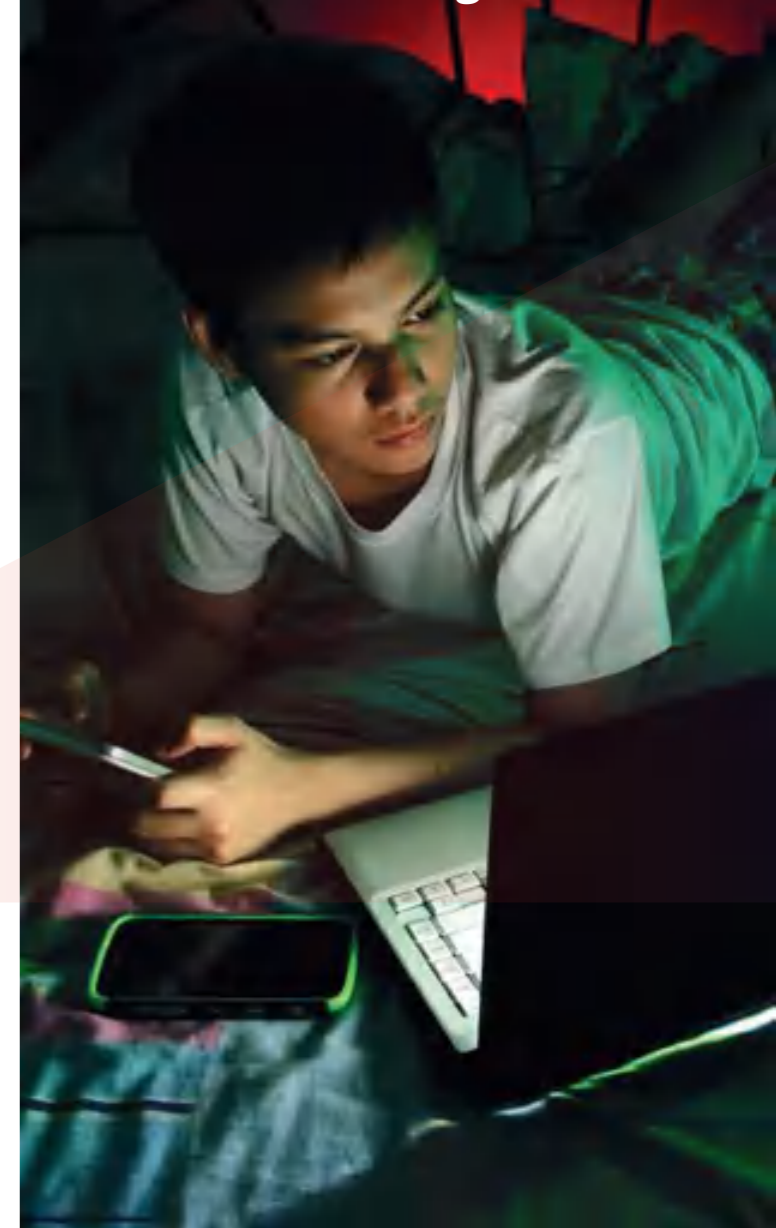
In addition to the anxiety to respond rapidly, it contributes to the **pressure** that the digital world exerts on a social level. The lives on the profiles of

our social contacts seem more and more perfect, and we are increasingly looking for that perfection throughout the day. Think of a young person who chooses what to eat based on which dish is most suitable for posting, or a vegan who brings his meal to a friend’s party to maintain the self-image they have now irretrievably created. This continuous pressure acts on young people at a deep level and can result in obsessive behaviours, problems that some companies are starting to worry about solving, as in the case of Swedish insurance company Länsförsäkringer, which launched a campaign in 2019 to address the impact of social media on adolescents’ **mental health**.

But continuous connection also brings mental health benefits: in recent years, the debate on wellbeing and mental health has been enriched by well-known voices, many of them belonging to Gen Z, who have decided to share with their followers the problems they face, helping to normalise the discussion around psychological and psychiatric problems, removing a taboo and helping people to break out of the isolation enforced by the disease. This is the case, for example, of US gymnast Simone Biles, who in August 2021 decided to withdraw from the team final during the Tokyo Olympics. It is also true of the Italian singer Madame, who in a video interview with Vice in March 2021 talked about her problems and insecurities as a young adult (see case study).

The effects of an ever-connected life, then, are not only psychological. “Text neck” refers to the deformation of the cervical spine caused by repeated and prolonged tilting of the head downwards while looking at our screens. Fourteen-year-olds diagnosed with text neck have been found to have a reduction in the curvature of their spinal column with consequent pain and stiffness, as well as migraines, with a level of aggravation usually associated with people several decades older. Prolonged exposure to WiFi and other electromagnetic waves is also causing effects for the first time, such as

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electromagnetic hypersensitivity (EHS), a form of allergy already recognised by the French Courts as a cause of disability. The common opinion is that this disorder is of psychosomatic origin: people are not allergic to WiFi, but simply convinced that they are. In any case, whether physical or mental, the problem exists. And as new disorders arise, WiFi-free zones tend to disappear.

#### The desire for privacy

If you believe, however, that Zoomers suffer all this passively, like zombies wandering around unconsciously with their heads tilted over their devices, you will have to think again. 59% of teens believe they spend too much time online (*Sparks & Honey, 2015*). This does not necessarily mean they plan to decrease the amount of time they spend on the Internet. They are simply aware of the way they act, and probably of the consequences as well. They certainly know technology better than anyone: GenZers are well **aware of** how a tweet or a clumsy message can ruin a career or cause scandal. They have internalised the lessons of their older brothers and are intent on keeping their onli-

ne lives sacred and secret. "Think before you do" is the mantra of Generation Z: 57% say they have not posted something for **privacy** reasons (*Gen-zup, 2021*). Among teenagers it is common to have a fake account on Instagram, the so-called "finsta-gram" or "finsta", to manage their online identity. These accounts are shared with a very select group of close friends and contain moments of real life, including unkempt hair and embarrassing scenes. It is a world that does not shine through on the real Instagram, 'rinsta', where the best version of themselves is shared with the rest of the world.

#### Don't call it attention deficit disorder

A common criticism of Generation Z is that of **attention deficit disorder**. Constantly distracted by texting, social media and notifications, you never know if they are listening and if they will remember what they responded to with a "Sure, I'll do it!". The truth is that in a world made up of infinite stimuli and options for choice and personalisation, GenZers have developed a great capacity for processing and **filtering information**, in order to concentrate on what really interests them. As stated



**47%**  
of adolescents  
affirm they are  
experts  
in something

above, 8 seconds is the amount of time they take to understand if a piece of content, in any format, is interesting or not for them. Therefore, the short attention capacity of Zoomers is not shallow, but is, instead, highly concentrated.

Generation Z is creating a **world of highly skilled experts**. The kid who loves cereal starts building cereal sculptures; the boy with a passion for sneakers becomes a sneakerhead. Digital technology has equipped them with the ability to find alternative means of entertainment and learning, resources and interests outside of what they are taught in the classroom, by their parents, peers or coaches, thus providing them with opportunities to specialise in what most resonates with them. Not surprisingly, 47% of teens today say they are experts at something (*Sparks & Honey, 2015*).

#### The use of social networks

Immersed in the digital dimension since birth, Zoomers are the people who spend the most **time on social networks**: at 2 hours and 55 minutes per day they surpass their Millennial predecessors (stopping at 2 hours and 38 minutes) (*World Economic Forum, 2019*). GenZers prefer Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok to Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter (Figures 2 and 3), social networks that they use in a fragmented way, adapting content, tone and purpose to each type of channel (71% of them say they are present on more than one platform).

To these must be added platforms derived from the world of gaming, Twitch and Discord, which have been expanding their user base in recent



years, as well as the spectrum of content due to massive use by Gen Z, especially during the months of the pandemic. Between March and April 2020, Twitch, a live stream platform owned by Amazon, grew from 3 billion to 5 billion hours of total views (*Gamespot, 2020*), while in December 2020 Discord exceeded 140 million active users (see case study). In both cases, these are platforms created for online gaming. Twitch allows gamers to record streams of their activities and share them with the relevant community, while Discord - more similar to Reddit - gathers gamers around invitation-only online communities. Created to bring gamers together, the platforms have quickly expanded in terms of content to become meeting places favoured by Gen Z. On Twitch, for example, the most viewed channel of 2020 was *Just Chatting*, followed by the various

channels related to online game titles (*Gamespot, 2020*). The simultaneous nature of the success is not accidental: the two platforms can, in fact, be integrated into each other, allowing users a flow of interaction that goes from the stream to the community. This new model of interaction - borrowed from the gaming world but then extended to other fields, such as music and concerts - has become the new paradigm. Brands and companies that want to get in touch with Zoomers must learn to understand this flow and invent new ways to become an active part of it.

The multiplicity of social accounts also implies a multiplicity of simultaneous active conversations, to which GenZers feel they have to respond almost instantaneously, sometimes causing **anxiety and stress**.



Figure 2: Social networks and purposes of use  
Source: MNI Targeted Media, 2020

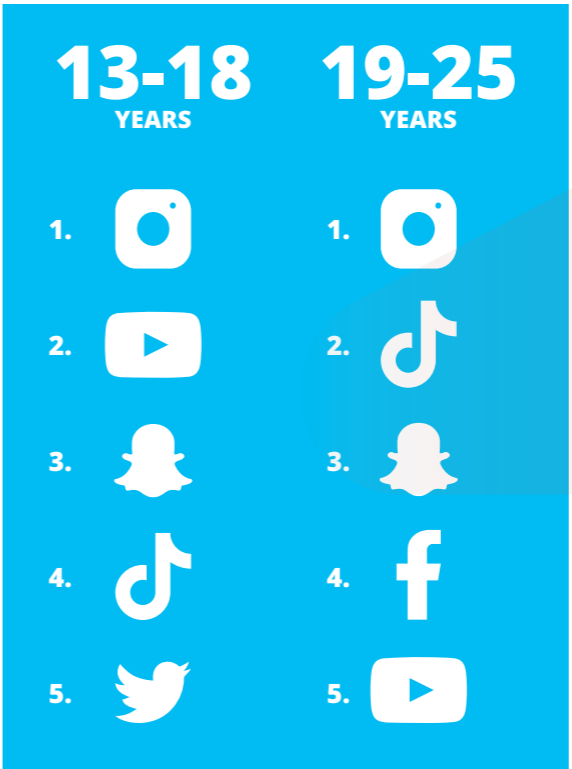


Figure 3: Social networks and preferences  
Source: MNI Targeted Media, 2020

Generation Z loves everything that is volatile, ephemeral and temporary. They communicate instantaneously with messages that self-destruct within 24 hours. They exist, they share, they appreciate, they love today with the awareness that tomorrow everything could be completely different. For example, 55% of teenagers do not like things that can stay online forever (*Sparks & Honey, 2015*), a propensity also due to a deep knowledge of the dynamics of networks and the consequences of their choices: sharing too much can only fatten the sharks of the web.

Their use of social networks is not only **conscious**, but also technically thorough. They know the platforms beyond their simple functions: they have made the principles and dynamics of their operation their own, adapting them to their needs. In recent months, those characterised by panic, social distancing and lockdown, have amplified and increased the use of social networks, which for Zoomers have become the only means of expressing themselves and keeping in touch with their friends and family.

Brainly, the world's most popular education platform, surveyed 1,700 GenZers, finding that nearly 60% watched more video content compared to pre-COVID times, with YouTube (40%) being the main source, followed by Netflix and Hulu at 24%. Interestingly, Facebook is no longer on the list, and is slowly losing its appeal to this generation, which spends most of its time on Instagram (59%), Snapchat (50.3%) and YouTube (42%) (*MNI Targeted Media, 2020*).

These are the three channels in which they express themselves, creating multiple identities and guiding narratives with specific purposes and audiences. This is where they create engagement, do business and make important decisions about what to buy.

In fact, social networks have become a **source of inspiration** for their purchasing behaviour. 40% of the new generation of consumers use them,

**40%**  
**of Generation Z use  
social networks  
during their own  
purchasing experience**



especially the more “visual” ones, during their shopping experience, to instantly access specific information (*MNI Targeted Media, 2020*). Social networks, on the other hand, offer an increasing number of functionalities to embed themselves in the **purchasing habits** of young people. An example of this is the hashtag #challengeplus inaugurated by TikTok, to allow adding an area called “discover”, where the products advertised in the “challenges” can be added, to be directly purchased with external links. An important role in their decision-making process is also played by influencers, whom they trust because they are normal, authentic people with similar tastes and interests.



2020  
**Living online  
group experiences**

COMPANY  
**FORTNITE**

READ MORE  
Ref. Case Study 4

GenZers are leaving the most popular social platforms and finding themselves in online venues that allow for unique experiences. This is the case of Fortnite, a gaming platform known for creating strategic partnerships with brands and artists dear to Gen Z. In April 2020, Fornite hosted five concerts by rapper Travis Scott, seen by over 27 million people.

2020  
**Micro-communities  
for “real” contact**

COMPANY  
**Discord**

READ MORE  
Ref. Case Study 5

As of December 2020, the gaming platform Discord had surpassed 140 million active users, 70% of whom report using the platform primarily for non-gaming purposes. People can sign up for the platform, but an invitation is required to connect with communities, known as “servers.” According to Chief Marketing Officer Tesa Aragonés, most Discord servers host fewer than 200 people, creating a feeling of intimacy and mimicking the way Gen Z wants to interact today: “You actually feel like you’re around real people.”

2021  
**Sharing  
is the solution**

READ MORE  
Ref. Case Study 6

“I think that through sharing your problems you can find a solution, a real cure,” Madame said in an interview with Vice in March 2021. The young singer has always talked about the problems she encountered during her adolescence. Bullying, toxic relationships, self-harm and depression: in her songs and interviews Madame opens up and tells her story, the way she goes through the negative phases of her life - even with the help of a psychologist - sharing it with others. For her, as for her peers, talking, telling, being honest and breaking the taboo of silence is the beginning of the cure and helps other people in the same situation to not feel alone and to heal in turn.

# Education and starting work

# 3.

Concerned by the instability of a world plagued by terrorist attacks and financial meltdowns, Zoomers have grown up with a determination to build their own economic base and establish themselves professionally, as and when they see fit.

**Education** continues to be perceived by Zoomers as being of central importance to their growth. What is changing, and what Gen Z teaches us, is that it is becoming possible to break out of existing linear patterns and create personalised ways to train and (powerfully) enter the world of work: 75% of teenagers say there are other ways to get a good education without going to college (*Sparks & Honey, 2015*): they can simply study at home or learn online. **Learning opportunities** are multiplying and young people are taking full advantage of the possibility to create the educational and professional pathway that best suits their needs. Educational institutions are starting to realise this and are involving students, as is happening at the University of Singapore, where students take an active part in the creation of the curriculum (see case study).



**75%**  
of Generation Z state  
that there are other ways  
of obtaining a good  
education without  
going to university

### The use of technology in education

Perfectly at ease in the digital world, the young people of Generation Z use 24-hour connectivity to gather as much information as possible in all areas of interest to them. Impatient and practical, if they don't know something, it takes them just a few seconds to discover it. They know how and where to look, and this makes them particularly demanding towards the world of education, knowledge and work.

**Easy and immediate access** to any kind of information is fostering the growth of young people who are aware of everything that surrounds them and who are able, if driven by strong motivation and passion, to deepen their study of a subject to the point of specialising in it and knowing every aspect.

The Gen Z training path has a completely new form, with technology playing a starring role as both a tool and a space for learning.

Zoomer students take an **active approach to learning** from the very first years of school: 51% say they learn by doing (e.g. working through examples) (Figure 4) (*Barnes & Noble, 2015*). Educators are well aware of this and have changed the structure and format of their lessons over time: blackboards and chalk, textbooks and hours of classroom explanations have given way to digital screens, interactive apps, recorded video lessons and classroom exercise sessions. And it could not be any other way: having grown up with YouTube, GenZers understand and learn faster when information, even the most complex, is explained through video format. In fact, 55% say YouTube has contributed to their education or personal development in the past 12 months (*Panopto, 2020*).

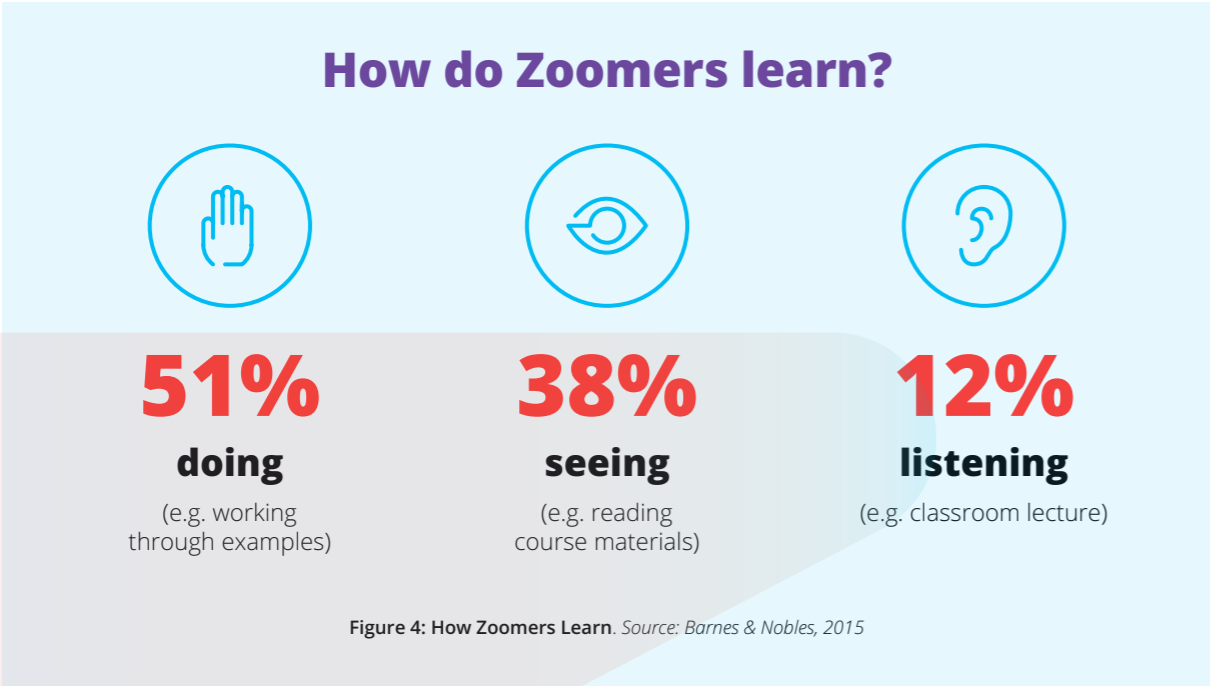
Technology is not only revolutionising the organisation of lessons and the way in which learning materials are used; it is also entering into the dy-



namics of **collaboration** among students: eight out of ten students prefer to study with friends, and 60% of Zoomers are happy to share their knowledge with others online, either in forums such as Reddit or by connecting with their friends around the world using Skype. (*Panopto, 2020*).

### Towards the world of work

While recognizing the importance of the educational pathway in order to be prepared when entering the world of business, Zoomers do not want to miss out on the opportunity to create their own road, their own path, which is not linear, and may be shorter,



longer, simpler or more complex: what matters is that it is **tailored to their needs and ambitions**. The digital world allows this, lending a big hand and putting itself at the service of Gen Z and its entrepreneurial spirit as it is already beginning to enter the world of work with greater **awareness**.

Let's forget the classic jobs that have involved kids from previous generations. With no fast food server's hat, movie usher's uniforms or leafleting on the street, Zoomers are entrepreneurs of themselves: we find them at work at their own desk, ready to put themselves out there with their skills and passions, with the aim of setting aside savings for the future.

In fact, they start working from a very young age: some sell clothes online, while others give piano lessons, but everyone chooses or creates a way to make money, preferring **self-employment** to **working as an employee** (Sparks & Honey, 2015).

With this goal in mind, 63% of GenZ kids would like universities to offer courses on how to set up or

run your own business and 70% are already in the job market as freelancers. This is supported by digital platforms, which offer multiple opportunities for self-promotion and building a customer base. And it is no longer a question of having a single job: 60% of Gen Z is completely aware of the possibilities that the freelance economy opens, with Zoomers stating that they will take differing career paths before the age of 30.

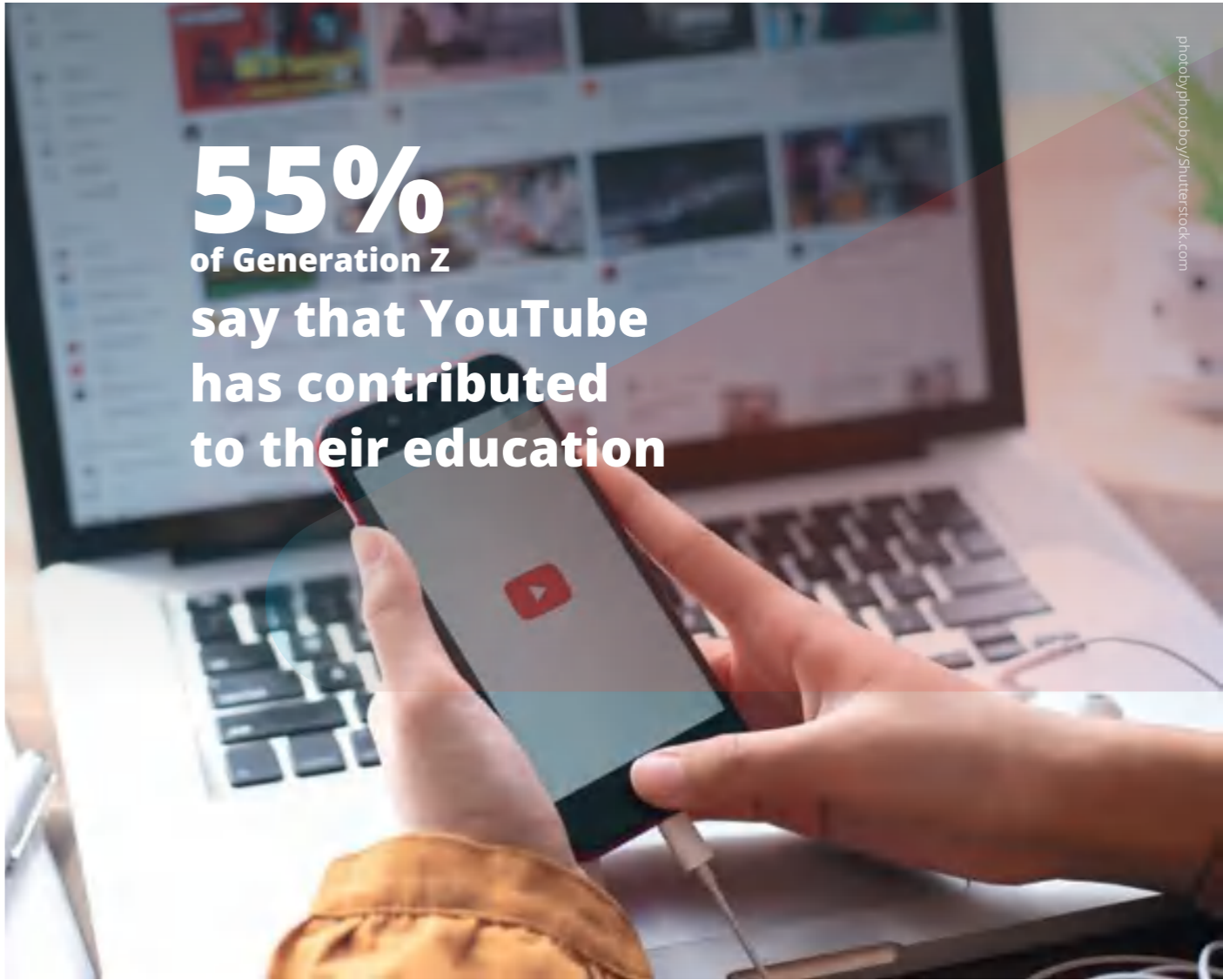
In addition, compared to previous generations, digital natives see the post-COVID workplace as another place to learn and continue their training. In fact, companies are creating further engagement and helping young talent grow by acquiring new skills. The company is the place where everything that in recent years has been learned from a distance can now be acquired working hands-on. Business is accompanying young people towards the world of work, transforming itself from the final destination of the training journey to a bridge that needs be crossed in order to complete the preparation necessary for new professionals.



"I want to be a doctor, a business person, an entrepreneur, and an engineer. Rightnow, I'm working at my parents' office to get a little money on the side. Sometimes it's boring, but that's how jobs are. I also have a job selling jewelry."

*Rachel, 12 years old, from Oakland.*

*(Sparks & Honey, 2015)*



How to attract **Generation Z?**

Creative, determined, flexible and hyper-connected both as students and professionals alike, Zoomers are demanding and approach the worlds of education and of work with clear ideas about what and how to learn and grow.

How then should **universities** and **companies** get ready to welcome GenZers in the best possible way and to make the most of their abilities?



**MOBILE  
FIRST**

Generation Z, also known as the App Generation, must be given the opportunity to do anything that is required via a smartphone. Wherever they are, they need access to all training materials via a mobile device (ideally in video format) and to all the systems and applications provided by the company.



**ROOM  
FOR  
CREATIVITY**

Zoomers' entrepreneurial spirit must not be blocked in any way by educational institutions or workplaces which are closed-minded or inflexible. Spaces and programmes must be provided to encourage new ideas and solutions and their implementation.



**HANDS ON**

Ardent supporters of learning by doing, the best way to train GenZers and support them in their upskilling journey is to offer them practical work sessions and challenge them with continuous exercises, contests and online and offline hackathons.

2020

**Free education  
at the service  
of the community**

COMPANY

**Fionn & Co.**

READ MORE  
Ref. Case Study 7

20-year-old Fionn Ferreria decided to tackle the problem of plastic waste when he noticed the plastic pollution on the beaches of Ireland. His prototype of a magnetic device to remove micro-plastics from water won the 2019 Google Science Prize. His start-up company Fionn & Co. LLC is now collaborating with the consulting firm Stress Engineering to test and refine the device.

2019

**The tailor-made  
training path**

COMPANY



READ MORE  
Ref. Case Study 8

Beginning in August 2019, students at the National University, Singapore have been allowed to design their own modules for the training courses. Groups of at least 10 students may submit a proposal and, subject to approval, invite experts in the field as a tutor or select courses from the edX online platform. The university aims to allow students greater freedom along the learning path and the ability to extend the range of topics by including those not currently offered by the university, such as Blockchain technology and climate change.

2020

**The profession  
of influencer  
and a platform  
to support it**

COMPANY



READ MORE  
Ref. Case Study 9

More and more young people are starting their entrepreneurship careers through social media but, as time goes by, the multiplication of channels and competition have made the management, outreach and engagement of followers more difficult. It is from these considerations that Etciiu sprang, an innovative platform technology that allows influencers to profile and manage their fan base, to offer paid services (personalised video and audio messages, video chat, access to premium content, freebies and event booking) and to communicate directly with their followers via the integrated messaging system. Etciiu, in a nutshell, is a tool for CRM and new services to increase influencer revenue streams.

# When they are customers: Customer Experience

4.

Young Zoomers think and discover in a global way. They are influenced in their preferences and opinions first by what's happening in the world and then by what's going on locally, so much so that they are used to raising expectations according to **global standards**, not necessarily those experienced at first hand, but simply which they see on the web.

The shopping experiences they value are those that involve them as an active part of a conversation: GenZers want to play a starring role in the dialogue, not simply be passive recipients of messages. This is a strategic consideration for brands who want to have a dialogue with Gen Z: those who are not able to create an engaging, fast-paced and effective conversation will probably not be heard.

As mentioned in previous chapters, **time** is, in this sense, a valuable asset. The effectiveness of a message must be immediate, especially for Generation Z who, in addition to spending about nine hours a week interacting with their own device, are able to select content and make immediate choices at an unprecedented speed. But what is this content? Zoomers do not have the time to be persuaded, (as did previous generations) by aspirational promises. Young GenZers navigate through content, products and especially services which allow them to create, reach a goal or fulfil an ambition. Today, whoever wants to reach Generation Z must know that nowadays the **product** in the market is recognised only as a part - a very important one, but a part nonetheless - of the entire **service**. And **communication** becomes the lever of creating and nurturing the relationship between company and Zoomer.

In a world where information travels very fast and is often overwhelming, details become the main differentiators between brands. They allow brands to create new connections and values when communicating with the public by expressing the quality of the service needed to excel.

The numbers speak for themselves: according to a study by IBM and the National Retail Federation, Generation Z corresponds to over 2 billion people worldwide, a number that in terms of expenditure translates into a value of 44 billion dollars (*IBM Institute for Business Value, 2018*). For this reason, **brand engagement strategies** must take into account the habits and behaviours of Gen Z.

Technology is certainly an important ally in this challenge, a strategic asset for connecting with users, although that is not its only use. Brands must ensure omnichannel and seamless experiences, with a series of key moments where digital interactions can result in physical interactions, to bring **memorable experiences** to life for Zoomers.

Mobile is a must, technology an added value and frictionless experience is imperative. GenZers want to inform themselves, compare products, buy with the best deals and be key players as consumers, with a simple click, whether in-store, using an app or on their browser, for various occasions and motivations for purchase or further study (Figure 5).

**Identity, transparency and sustainability as purchasing catalysts**

For Gen Z, consumption is closely tied to the creation of a **positive and ongoing relationship** with the brand. This link is confirmed by the ability to be influenced by companies that share their **values** and by which they feel most strongly represented. In fact, GenZers express who they are through products, and this is the main catalysing trait for purchasing choices. It should be noted, however, that even cases where a brand is totally representative of an identity and lifestyle, a young Zoomer may not necessarily be able to afford the products desired. In this case, their choice is based on options that ensure a good balance between quality and price, as they wait to save up to buy the desired item in the future.

A second fundamental element for the creation of a bond between brand and buyer is **transparency**: the messages communicated by brands are trusted by Zoomers to be the exact representation of the culture and values of whoever is providing a product. GenZers follow companies that are capable of delivering clear, compelling and effective messages that relate to their brand's identity. However, if the values conveyed through the promotion are not reflected in the organisation, Zoomers will be the first to point out inconsistencies and communication breakdowns.

Lastly, GenZers value **sustainability**, not only in Environmental terms but, more widely, throughout the entire production cycle. Hence, Zoomers' support for small companies and handmade, locally sourced production, as well as their preference for businesses that promote reuse and reject the concept of disposability.

**The shopping experience for Generation Z**

What do Zoomers expect to find when they shop?

An initial observation that must be made concerns the form of this experience: interactions no longer end at the moment of purchase, but turn, rather, into a **continuous flow** that has as a goal the generation and maintenance of loyalty, through interactions that continue over time with social networks, brand ambassadors, customer care and the prospect of future purchases.

As we have seen above, a crucial element for Zoomer's purchasing decisions is **price**: although awareness of quality and sustainability issues around products is very much in play, the possibility of purchasing with a reduction makes spending a primary factor: in a range of available products with a similar quality and price, the one with the lowest price wins, or, if equal, the one with the best reviews (Figure 6), (*Business Insider, 2019*).

**Shopping with Gen Z:  
Which technology  
do you usually use  
for your purchases?**

Never      Some of the time      Most of the time

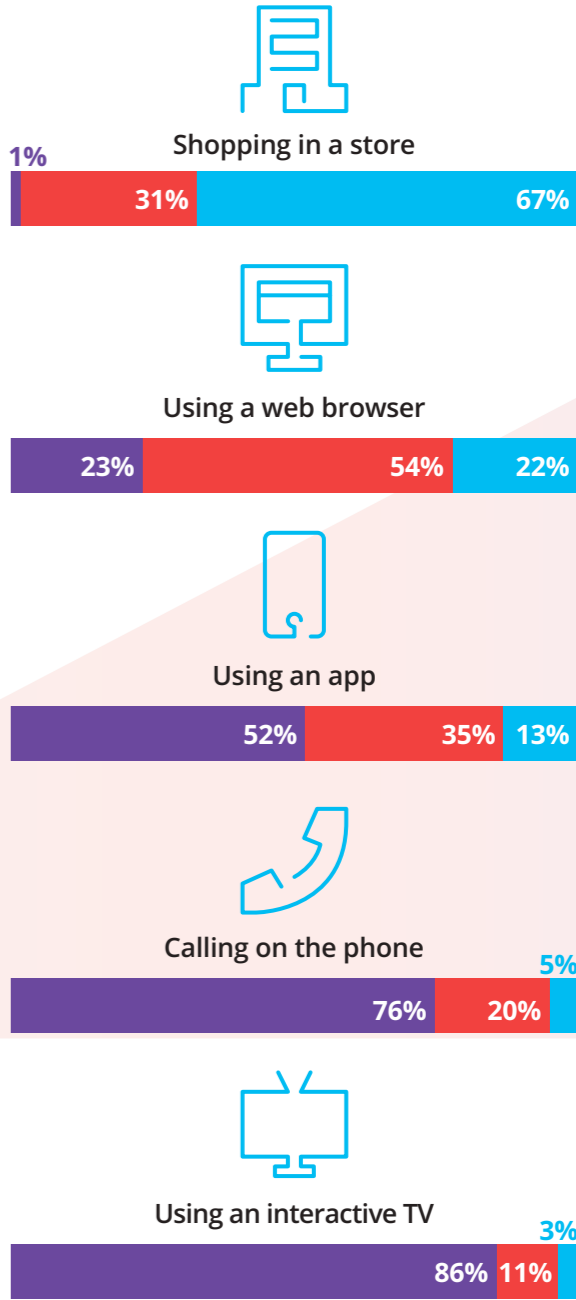


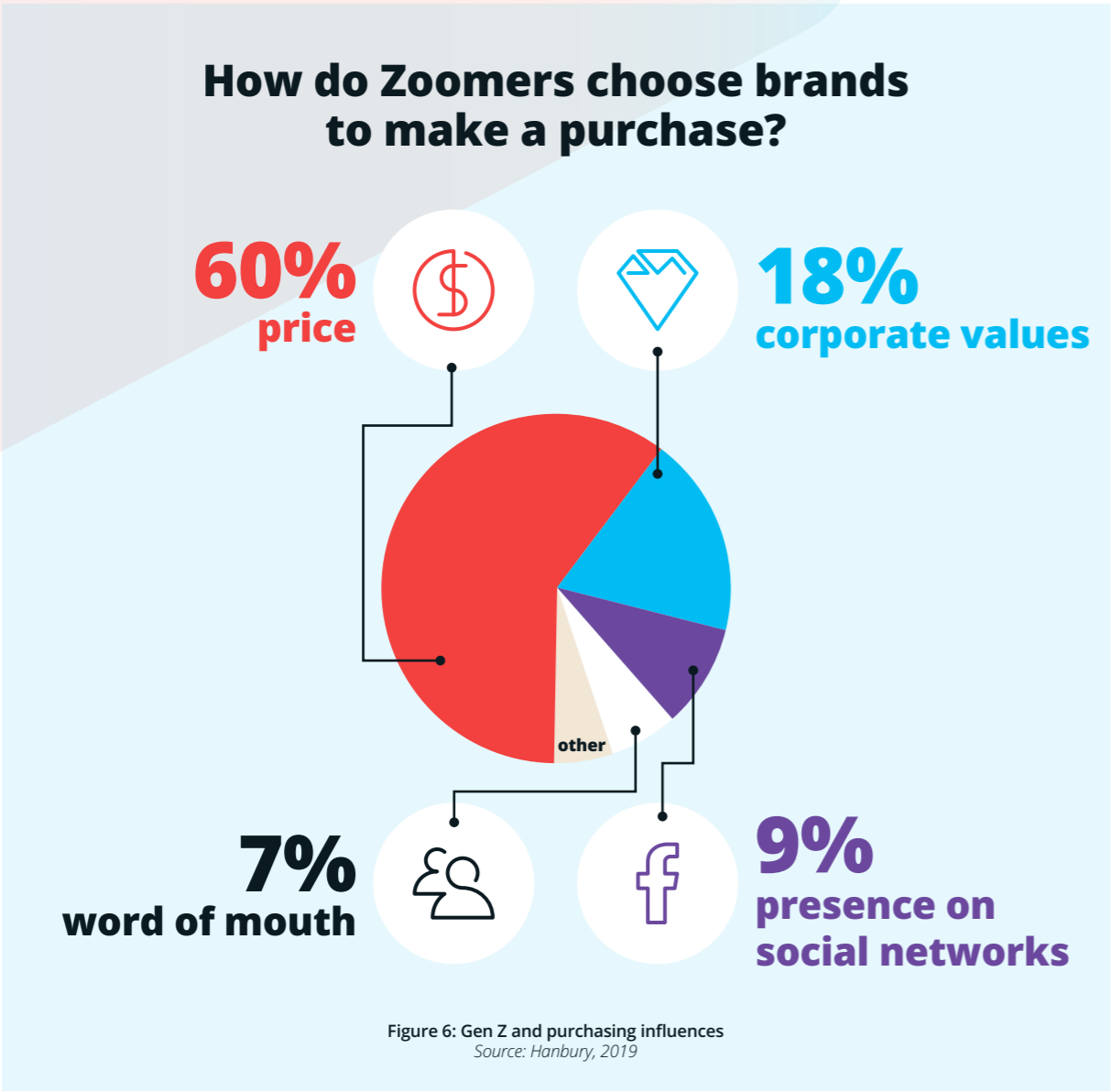
Figure 5: Gen Z and technology for making purchases  
Source: IBM Institute for Business Value, 2018

In this sense, therefore, **brand loyalty** in purchasing choices becomes a completely abstract concept for Gen Z, since young people are ideally loyal to brands that meet their needs in terms of quality, message, transparency and recognition of their identity, but which are often beyond their ability to actually purchase.

In reality, therefore, loyalty is expressed towards those who can best mix the aspirations and desires of Gen Z with a price point consistent with their ability to pay.

The risk of abandoning this dialogue with Generation Z consumers is, in fact, very great: if a request does not receive a quick response, or if a product is too expensive – or, even worse, does not meet the consumer’s needs, and if the available touchpoints are not effective during the interaction, the Zoomer customer will direct their attention to the competition.

This is a **frugal and demanding generation**, which has access to all the information it needs about products and companies and therefore prefers



to be practical, with the main focus on price and buying low-cost brands or pointing their wallets at more expensive but longer-lasting offers (*MNI Targeted Media*, 2020).

**Omnichannel** is also a major factor in a company’s success. In the first interaction between user and brand, GenZers are looking for a company that communicates openly and clearly what the service on offer is: the values, mission and distinctive messages of its brand identity. From the company’s point of view, it is therefore necessary to be able to do two things: firstly, to have the presence (physical or digital) necessary to capture Zoomers’ attention and, secondly, know how to tell its story in a clear way.

The size of the brand matters little. Quite the contrary, in fact: since they are passionate about unique purchases that differentiate them from their peers, the members of Generation Z prefer **small, unknown retailers** to larger, better-known ones. With smaller brands, it is easier to find products at affordable prices and to have more direct contact with production, getting closer to the supply chain and ensuring more sustainable consumption.

The **speed** of movement between the different channels available to a brand is the second key element for Zoomer consumption experience. Moving between touchpoints allows them to have a clearer overview of existing options on the market, thus making a purchase more informed, based on the best value for money and quality, discounts and reviews (*IBM Institute for Business Value*, 2017) (Figure 7). These checks, if made before the purchase, decrease GenZers’ tendency to contact Customer Care later by almost 50%.

**Authenticity** is another key ingredient of Generation Z’s consumer experience. In this sense, what is important from the point of view of companies is to remember that when they buy things, young people are looking for a way to freely express their personality and identity.





From Zoomers’ perspective, therefore, communicating a product and an interaction based on aspiration is not effective.

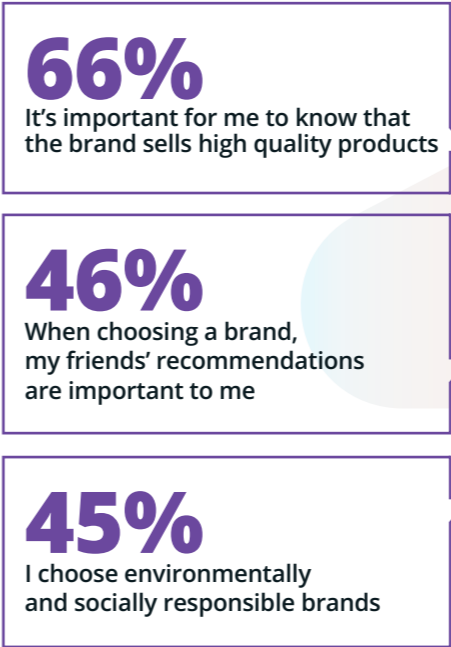
GenZers want **impactful** experiences, which must be understood both as a moment of personal growth as well as creating an expanded community benefit. When the experience of meeting between brand and user is physical, what Zoomers are looking for is an experience that is a tangible reflection of brand identity which people want to identify with (Figure 8). In this sense, retail spaces are strategically significant, because they allow you to combine the qualities and benefits of the analogue experience with the digital dynamics and interactions familiar to GenZers.

A fundamental element for the creation of impactful experiences is the work on **personalisation**. As seen in the study carried out for IBM in the USA (*IBM Institute for Business Value & National Retail Federation, 2018*), 64% of respondents appreciate discounts tailored to their individual needs, as well as the rewards made available from loyalty programmes. An example of this is personalised messages and discounts received on someone’s birthday, which 59% of respondents take advantage of.

Young Zoomers are **conscious consumers**: they know what they want, in what way they want it and which brands they want to build relationships with. To promote a shopping experience that is also a lasting dialogue, brands must know how to create strategies that meet GenZ consumers’ expectations both in terms of purchasing conditions (a good ratio of quality to price and a smooth CX) as well as in terms of aspirations: trust in the brand and complementarity of the values expressed with those acted upon.



Statements about purchasing which Zoomers agree with



Elements that influence the choice of a store for Zoomers

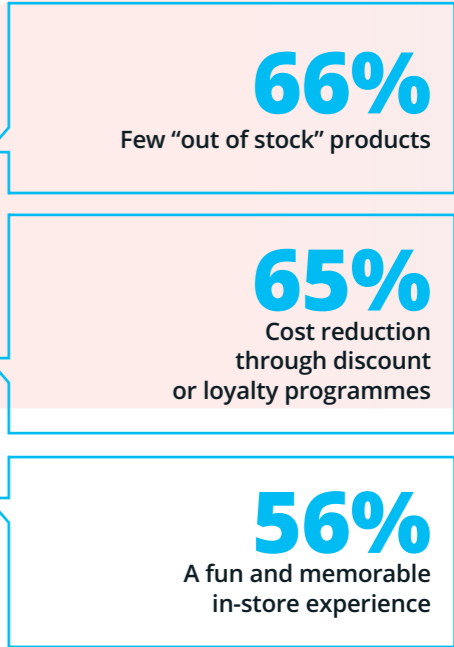


Figure 8: Main purchase motivators for Zoomers  
Source: IBM Institute for Business Value, 2017

Financial behaviour

Talking about the financial behaviour of Generation Z is not simple because a large part of this group has not yet achieved financial independence. The preliminary studies into their attitudes show a great **awareness** and ability to manage money and expenses (*IBM Institute for Business Value, 2017*) linked to a future projection of themselves that is the opposite of Millennials: Gen Z dreams of financial security, purchasing a house and gaining independence before the age of 30.

As seen above, the economic situation and the global events they have witnessed during their development has certainly contributed to generating in Zoomers the desire to save and for economic stability. Although still very young, they know how to shop while saving money; they are able to easily find information online regarding **optimal money management** and, above all, they are enterprising: part-time work or self-employment alongside studies are very frequent among GenZers (Figure 9). For these reasons, compared to previous generations, they are “people with a higher spending capacity and, thanks to the allowances bestowed by family members as well, they have an important economic availability from elementary school age onwards” (*Ravella, 2017*).

At the family level, of course, Zoomers do not play a role in purchasing decisions, although they can influence those decisions. Their great ability to process information allows them to play this role with success: directly or indirectly – through their ability to bring information to the nuclear family – it has been estimated that the **spending power** of GenZers is approximately \$44 billion (*Futurecast, 2018*). The expenses incurred in most of the cases do not happen in the first person, except in the case of online purchases, behaviour that in recent years has become representative of this generation.

How do you get the money you invest for your purchases?

59%

Pocket money

24%

Part-time work

22%

Gifts

22%

Online business

16%

Self-employment

9%

Full-time job

Figure 9: Types of financial resources  
Source: IBM Institute for Business Value, 2018

In economic matters, particular distinctions are made for their ability to adopt **innovative behaviours**: the introduction of new methods (from “light” accounts to peer-to-peer payments, matched by their growing **interest in finance**, stemming from the simplification brought about by fintech, innovative payment systems and fast accessibility with one click. This is also supported by a Morningstar survey (*Morningstar, 2021*), from which it emerges that 35% of them already consider themselves an investor and 53% would like to see finance classes made mandatory at school.

Everyone (100%) uses financial apps, but there is still some distrust of automated counselling (robo-advisors). In fact, 30% have met a financial advisor at least once and only 18% trust algorithms with their assets.



2020

# Genderless Clothing

COMPANY

CALVIN KLEIN | GUCCI

In early 2020, Calvin Klein launched an advertising campaign for underwear and genderless jeans, CK ONE and the fragrance CK EVERYONE, a vegan fragrance, made from natural ingredients and presented in packaging made from recycled materials.

The same attention to respect for gender identity in product terms was expressed by Gucci, with its Gucci MX initiative, which brings together on e-commerce all of its neutral designs by facilitating the search for products (clothing, shoes and accessories).

READ MORE  
Ref. Case Study 10

2019

# Second hand sneakers pop-up store

COMPANY

AMERICAN EAGLE

American Eagle, a clothing and accessories retailer based in the United States, has joined forces with resale brand Urban Necessities to open a dedicated pop-up store selling second-hand sneakers, meeting the demands of Generation Z's consumer aspirations: the passion for sneakers and sustainable second-hand purchases.

READ MORE  
Ref. Case Study 11

2020

# Fashion brands in live streaming

COMPANY

FRAME

To expand its e-commerce offering, in the midst of the COVID-19 lockdown, this clothing retailer launched a live streaming shopping service to give the opportunity to users to buy directly in the chat the products presented live by stylists and designers. The shopping experience took the form of a unique event, accessible from mobile.

READ MORE  
Ref. Case Study 12

2020

# Loyalty through gamification

COMPANY

dott

There are many companies that are proposing micro-mobility sharing by populating city streets with electric scooters. But from among them all, Dott stands out for their ability to use gamification in order to build customer loyalty and keep people coming back, often on two wheels. It does so with its Rewards programme, based on daily and weekly challenges and through which it is possible to earn points and access new offers or even rewards. It is a great way to build user loyalty by helping young people manage charges and encouraging the use of the service.

READ MORE  
Ref. Case Study 13

2020

# A bank at the service of the community

COMPANY

flowe

Within just under two months of launching in 2020, Flowe, the digital bank of the Mediolanum group, achieved more than 23,000 downloads of its app and planted 4,500 trees. But what does it mean? Flowe is a B-Corp, which means it also has a social goal, that of educating the new generations in the principles of sustainability, financial responsibility and entrepreneurial spirit. Through the use of the online account and the linked debit card app, users - especially those belonging to Gen Z - participate in socially-oriented challenges. When you request a card, for example, Flowe plants a tree in Guatemala in return. The company has been able to intelligently integrate with Zoomers', creating a successful product among young people.

READ MORE  
Ref. Case Study 14

# When they are employees: Employee Experience

5.

In the labour market, Gen Z are the latest thing: they are entering or are about to enter this world for the first time, facing difficult choices and wondering about the future of their career. Attracting them and trying to be appealing in their eyes is one of the most critical challenges in the field of human resources, which tries to approach young talents by activating their interest with **recruitment initiatives**. The starting point for making these considerations, consistent with the theoretical perspective that is termed “generational”, is that it is possible to find similarities in the way that people from the the same age range see the world and derive meaning from their own experiences, brought together by the same historical period, the same stimuli and by similar values.

Looking at the generations active in the world today, five groups can be identified, who share the same spaces, the same professions and the same working methods:

- SG

Silent Generation  
(Veterans)

1925-1945
- BB

Baby Boomers

1946-1965
- X

Generation X

1966-1980
- Y

Generation Y  
(Millennial)

1981-1995
- Z

Generation Z

1996-2010

Among them are numerous **generational differences** including personality traits, attitudes and behaviours (Table 1). “For example, it is accepted that veterans were raised with the values of fidelity and loyalty, are dutiful and evince a strong spirit of service; Baby Boomers, born in a period marked by increasing economic prosperity, focus

primarily on stability and sacrifice in the employment relationship; while those belonging to Generation X are characterised by a stronger push towards individualism that causes people to put their own self-interest before that of the organisation, favouring autonomy and independence and recognising the value of work-life balance” (Calvario, 2018). Then there are the Millennials, who now make up about 50% of the workforce, known for placing more importance on work-life balance and the need to travel and see the world than on a career; a generation defined in a famous 2013 Time magazine cover as “lazy, shallow and narcissistic” who, believe themselves to be special in spite of strong insecurity, and who think everything is owed to them. Generation Z, on the other hand, is a **new territory** to be explored from a business standpoint.

Expectations, values and ambitions

It will be clearer when the Zoomers have passed their first years of work experience, but we can say with certainty that this is a generation influenced by the privileged relationship with **technologies**: born in the digital age, GenZers communicate and relate to others using emerging modes of interaction and socialisation.

Studies by Bascha, from times that still lack enough material on GenZers as professionals, outlined the Zoomer profile by depicting them as self-sufficient workers, looking for transparency and flexibility in their work relations. Zoomers are professionals conscious of freedom of action and ethics. They are a new generation that even at work wants to be informed, listened to, and involved (Calvario, 2018).

More recent studies show instead how GenZers, unlike their Millennial neighbours, are more **pragmatic** and more willing to make sacrifices to gain success: they want to achieve practical goals, are oriented towards entrepreneurship and believe

Employee Experience: comparing four generations

	SG	BB	X	Y	Z
Mantra	Work hard	Work hard	Work as hard as you need to	Think before you do	Work dynamically
Attitudes towards rules and corporate hierarchy	They rank authority as one of their core values and prize top-down management	They find it uncomfortable to interface and initiate dialogues with their bosses, despite their respect and devotion to their superiors	They interact well with their superiors and are not impressed by titles and labels	They believe that respect has to be earned	They need their managers to trust them
Work-life balance	They sacrifice their personal lives for work	They sacrifice their personal lives for work	Work-life balance is a value	Work-life balance is a value	Work-life balance is a value
Supervision and feedback	Feedback is experienced as an insult	Feedback is experienced as an insult	Feedback must be continuous	Feedback must be continuous and immediate	Feedback must be continuous and immediate
Training methods	Discussion groups, learning on the job, feedback and peer interaction, live classroom lectures, individual coaching	Discussion groups, learning on the job, feedback and peer interaction, live classroom lectures, individual coaching	Discussion groups, assessment, individual coaching, feedback and peer interaction	Assessment, creative formulas, individual coaching, feedback and peer interaction	Assessment, creative formulas, individual coaching, feedback and peer interaction
Loyalty	They try to remain loyal to their organisation throughout their working life	They appreciate loyalty and commitment, would stay with the same organisation throughout their working life	They are more loyal to people than the organisation	They remain faithful and focused when dedicated to a project, cause or idea.	They remain faithful and focused when dedicated to a project, cause or idea.
Aspects perceived as successful	Willingness to learn new skills, respect for people, respect for deadlines, precision	Organisational skills, willingness to learn new skills, respect for people, use of computers, respect for deadlines	Clarity and synthesis, respect for deadlines, willingness to learn new skills, respect for people	Clarity and synthesis, respect for deadlines, willingness to learn new skills, sociability and empathy	Smart solutions, willingness to learn new skills, sociability and empathy
Areas of competence development	Team building, IT training, updating areas of expertise	Leadership, IT training, updating areas of expertise	Leadership, IT training, updating areas of expertise	Decision making and problem solving	Decision making and problem solving
Leadership	Reliable, listeners, credible	Reliable, listeners, credible	Reliable, listeners, credible	Reliable, listeners, devotees	Reliable s and listeners

Table 1: Generational differences in the workplace regarding values and attitudes. Cugin, 2019; Perilus, 2020

more in their own abilities. They are true supporters of the “make” culture committed to the creation of something lasting, not having simply a source of income.

According to research by Bva Doxa (Figure 10), conducted with the help of FourStars, on 1500 in-

terns from different generations, only 16 percent of Millennials say they would be willing to work under a temporary contract, even for a long period, while Generation Z seems to be more inclined to compromise (21%). For Generation Y, however, work-life balance is the number one priority in evaluating a job (for 58% of the respondents) followed closely by the ambition to establish a career (55%), these items are reversed for Generation Z: 61% prioritise the opportunity of developing a career over work-life balance (44%).







In general, however, in a context perceived as increasingly complex, **job security** appears in first place: both generations are looking for stability (95%), landing a job in a great company (82%), a job that offers high pay (80%) and the ability to work close to home (76%), (Querzè, 2020).

There are also authors who have been writing about this generation for years, such as Teresa Bridges and Dan Schawbel. Bridges, a writer for FastCompany, argues that Zoomers prefer a work environment that promotes mentoring, learning, and initiatives for professional growth, and, furthermore, that they consider learning on the job and learning by doing important, counterbalancing traditional academic education. GenZers therefore have a strong preference for learning that is specific, individual, tailor-made and delivered through small and continuous bursts based on podcasts, short videos and brief written explanations (Calvario, 2018).

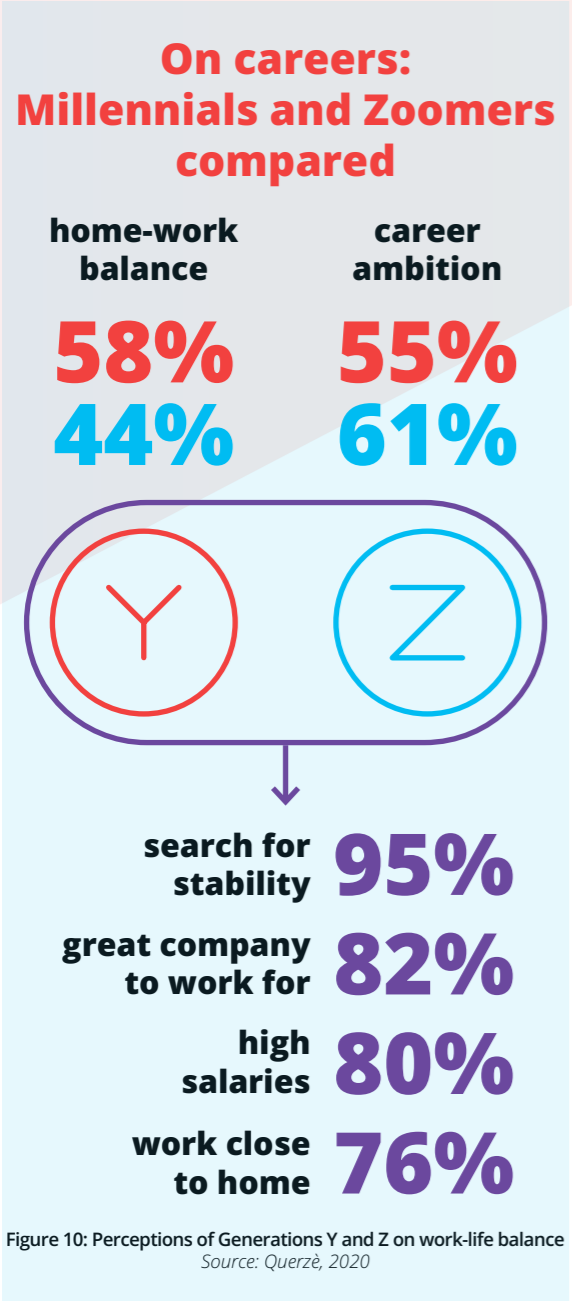
Dan Schawbel, a New York Times writer, argues that employees of this new generation, in addition to preferring face-to-face contact with colleagues, want to play a leading role in discussions at work: they want managers to listen to their ideas and take them into consideration. Their **ideal workplace** is a setting where employees are rewarded for their ideas in the work environment and for the contribution they make, not in relation to seniority or even gender or background.

**Corporate social responsibility** is becoming a crucial factor, a necessary tool of business. According to GenZers, the social objective concerns the brand, in a broader sense, as well as the organisation, ensuring inclusiveness and the absence of gender-based discrimination, as well as adequate salaries and benefits.

So, to sum up, in order to attract, retain and motivate Generation Z, a company should:

-  Create a solid career path that includes job rotation programmes and ongoing training
-  Create robust learning and development processes, which can expand and strengthen employees'skills
-  Ensure flexibility in managing individuals, paying attention to work-life balance
-  Invest in your brand image
-  Create a performance evaluation programme tied to individual benefits
-  Increase the fit of new recruits with the corporate culture

(Calvario, 2018)



### Candidate experience processes

Given the importance that studies of previous generations have had in the organisational field, developing the theme of the relationship between Generation Z and companies is central and of the utmost importance. Although there are no shared guidelines yet to assess with certainty the effective-

ness of initiatives in order to attract Zoomers, it is possible to understand which levers can help companies make themselves attractive for tomorrow's workers as they start their first jobs.

With regard to **acquisition** and "tests to be passed", recruiters will increasingly evaluate mental and interpersonal (as well as technical) skills. In fact,

we are talking about cognitive skills (communication and critical thinking) to be recognised through interviews based on technical and behavioral knowledge, to see the candidates in action, under stress and interacting with different people, so as to judge their creative and interpersonal skills. Working in pairs, for example, is one of the most effective ways to understand how candidates bring out the best in other people.

In terms of **personal development**, however, the desire for growth and an aptitude for a multi-disciplinary approach can be expressed by taking advantage of internal mobility (job switching) or by assigning cross-functional or inter-team projects to enrich their experience, without being forced to jump from one company to another. What Gen-Zers expect is informal development based on job rotation, tacit knowledge (i.e. not contained in any textbook or manual), sharing of experiences and on-the-job tests (e.g. their first speech, first presentation, and first feedback), and demonstrating their own skills in a personal and professional evolutionary process.

**Joining the organisation**, then, involves all those rules relating to corporate culture and the typical expectations of their generation.

As discussed at length in the preceding paragraphs, being a Zoomer brings with it a number of considerations regarding the demand for transparency, dialogue, and equity, but above all flexibility: the fit with the company culture, in fact, becomes essential for these new recruits who, according to research conducted by Hays, are attracted (67%) by organisations limiting the use of overtime, and who provide a better work-life balance (Hays, 2017).

What can we do, then, to listen to this new generation that by 2030 will account for 75% of the world's workforce? (Calvario, 2018).

At a strategic level we can say that it will always be more important to consider their needs for:



- **Being listened to**, building fluid conversations through open dynamics, mechanisms of transparent decision-making, and moments of sharing that can meet their expectation to be considered and to feel part of the decision-making process.
- **Learning in the field**, thus encouraging inter-generational knowledge sharing as well as sharing past experience, so as to inform Zoomers in a practical and immediate way.
- **Building personalised paths**, providing concrete opportunities based on what candidates consider interesting, centered on their goals and unique when compared to the choices of peers.
- **Gaining experience in different fields**. 60% of teenagers imagine having hybrid careers before the age of 30.



- **Building relationships**, entrusting career opportunities to one's ability to navigate a network: this presents a new way of working, netweaving, where collaboration is large-scale and built through a circle of contacts from where, thanks to digital technologies that intensi-

fy connections, it is possible to enter and exit according to current professional needs, following several jobs at once and turning on and off relevant communication channels in each circumstance (*Sparks & Honey, 2015*).



2019

**Leaders and Gen Z work together to achieve digital transformation**

Adobe worked together with Zoomers and several leading companies to build a digital workplace and to imagine the future of work. The idea was to reflect on the way that both Zoomers and CIOs can work together to create an innovative company environment which attracts young talent and colleagues with the technologies most important to them.

COMPANY 

**READ MORE**  
Ref. Case Study 15

2019

**Virgin Hotels & Gen Z: personalisation for new entries**

For one of its most recent hotel openings, Virgin decided to go through the process of recruiting Zoomers from the point of view of customisation, a subject of great interest to an entire generation. With a programme that includes a new application method, candidates can fill out a compatibility test with Virgin Hotels and understand the best match with the location and brand values, and then proceed with "speed dating" interviews in which the candidates, meeting three different interviewers for three minutes each, are selected conclusively. This approach to personalisation not only applies to the recruitment process: once the candidate is hired, they have access to a range of personalised training activities and mentoring to improve their competences and share their skills.

COMPANY 

**READ MORE**  
Ref. Case Study 16

2019

**LGBTQ skills training**

Gen Z are known for their commitment to gender equality and inclusion. Thus, themes such as those relating to LGBTQ issues become relevant and are also of interest to them when they search for a job. To facilitate this, companies like Argo Collective are creating comprehensive methodologies for dealing with inclusion and awareness of the LGBTQ community in the world of work, such as: training of internal sponsors, Inclusive marketing campaigns and inclusive benefits.

COMPANY 

**READ MORE**  
Ref. Case Study 17

# Generation Z, the pandemic and the new normal

6.

### Current context

The pandemic that began in early 2020 is an extremely significant event for Generation Z. Measures to contain COVID-19 and repeated lockdowns have meant for Gen Z the loss of significant experience from the point of view of identity and, from the economic perspective, young adults have been forced to face the possibility of an economic downturn at a **key moment**: just as they are about to enter the world of work.

According to research by the Foundation for European Progressive Studies, Generation Z is the most pessimistic about the **consequences of the pandemic**: 70% of respondents say they feel discouraged in the face of the situation both by its economic as well as its mental effects (*FEPS - Foundation for European Progressive Studies, 2020*). Although Gen Z is the least at risk from COVID-19, the price it has paid during the two-year period 2020-2021 is very high: according to Eurofund research (*Eurofund, 2021*), 64% of young people are

at risk of depression, caused by the feeling of being at a standstill and a lack of vision for the future that have both accompanied the months of lockdown. The American Psychological Association points out that for those in the prime of their careers the pandemic has brought about a strong sense of anxiety and stress. Seven out of ten 18-23 year olds said they experienced common symptoms of depression, mental exhaustion, lack of concentration, loneliness and general unhappiness during the pandemic.

This is quite a high number, if accompanied by the higher stress level (6.1/10) compared to other generations. It is most probably due to the perceived uncertainty regarding the future and planning upcoming goals, caused by fears capable of generating anxiety and stress. To put this in perspective, Millennials centered on a level of stress that was 5.6/10, while Generation X recorded 5.2/10 (*American Psychological Association, 2020*).

With numbers like these, then, it follows that organisations should take seriously the issue of the

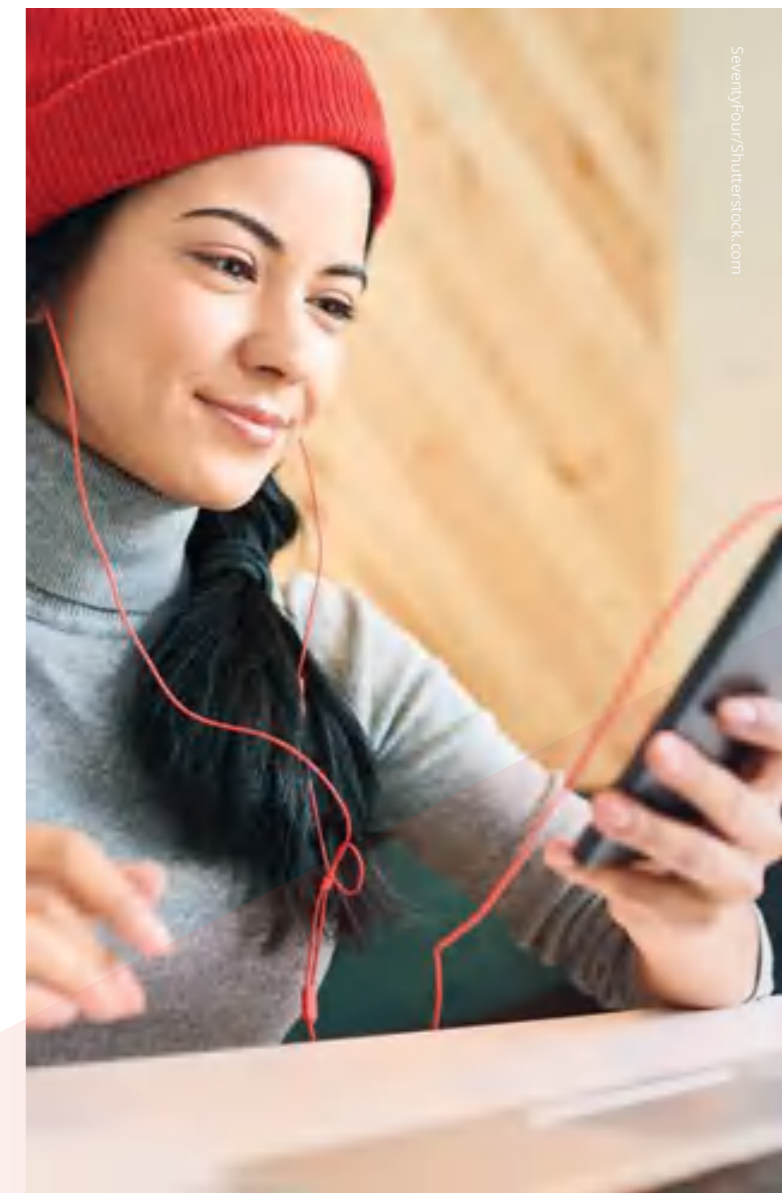
well-being of its employees and that **mental health** should be considered a priority in the coming years. To do this, leaders must start supporting their staff by creating a culture where it is necessary to recognise stress and make it part of the conversation with employees, so as to encourage their people to be transparent about their needs.

Research by the Guardian highlighted how in Europe, Gen Z, forgotten by the political establishment, is at **risk of radicalisation**: the decrease in confidence in institutions (*Eurofund, 2021*) combined with an economic outlook that is not encouraging, will make the start of independent living very difficult. The risk, in this sense, is that extremist political forces can intercept this discontent, riding the wave and disturbing the democratic structure by taking advantage of the consensus of a struggling generation.

### Perception as customers

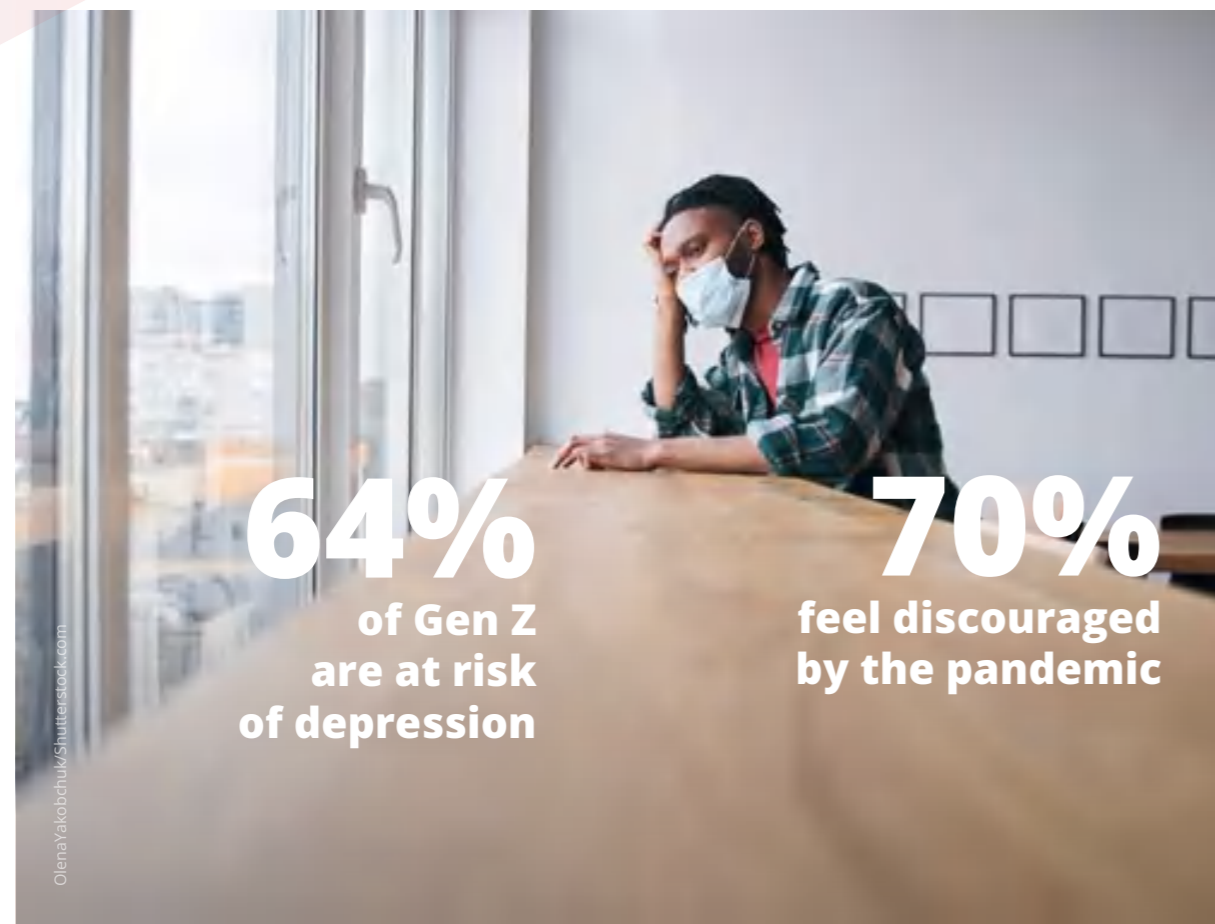
The reforming spirit of GenZers in the face of the pandemic is evident in their behaviour as consumers. The main effect of the pandemic has been to highlight even more the salient traits and innovative features of their purchasing habits. **Big savers and supporters of small businesses** in difficulty, young people prefer brands that know how to combine profit with a broader purpose, making a positive impact on society. While Millennials are inspired by the ideal of a simpler and more sustainable life, and they willingly adopt spending behaviours that put this ideal into practice, for Zoomers the priority is to save for **future economic security**.

Concern for economic security is not unfounded: according to an analysis by Credit Suisse, Gen Z can expect an average return on its investments that will be much lower than that of Millennials: only 2% compared to 5% for previous generations (*Business Insider, 2021*). The need for saving and at-



tention to how money is spent represents an interesting cluster of innovation for Gen Z.

According to Forbes, for example, the pandemic has increased use of **peer-to-peer payments** and financing through installments (*Forbes, 2021*). While, according to a study by Logica, during the months of the pandemic, 15% to 25% of Zoomers have adopted a new buy now/pay in instalments model offered by the main players in the market (e.g. Paypal) and by the most strategic e-commer-



**64%**  
of Gen Z  
are at risk  
of depression

**70%**  
feel discouraged  
by the pandemic



ce companies (e.g. Asos) (Logic, 2020). These payments have featured heavily in the form of media consumption, via subscriptions and individual purchases, to combat social isolation (Global Web Index, 2020), (Figure 11).

Perception as employees

Generation Z has had to deal with the pandemic at a sensitive time in their educational experience. While the youngest Zoomers have lived with distance learning and the resulting loss of contact with peers, the older segment has faced the pandemic as it enters the **job market**.

Through their experiences, GenZers have modified the traditional patterns of education and starting work, introducing new behaviours, new modes of expression and **new paradigms of learning**.

As seen above, in the work environment, Zoomers bring with them an innovative skill set, new ways of learning, and a sense of motivation which has different roots from those of generations that preceded them. These new dynamics require, on the part of employers, a capacity for innovation to attract and retain young talent. The pandemic has further highlighted this need: few GenZers are as familiar with office work as traditionally understood. Most of them started **working remotely**, with no way of meeting their colleagues face-to face and being in the physical workplace. The current circumstances, therefore, require employers to know how to transform work experience to meet the **needs of new employees**, in order to avoid loss of motivation and interest, as well as detachment from daily work practice and lack of developing team spirit.

In this sense, a phase of the employee experience that has become crucial over the past year and a half is **onboarding**. During this period, a new hire has the opportunity to get to grips for the first time with the reality of the corporate culture and behaviour that together compose the experience

What media have Zoomers started or continued to use the during the pandemic?

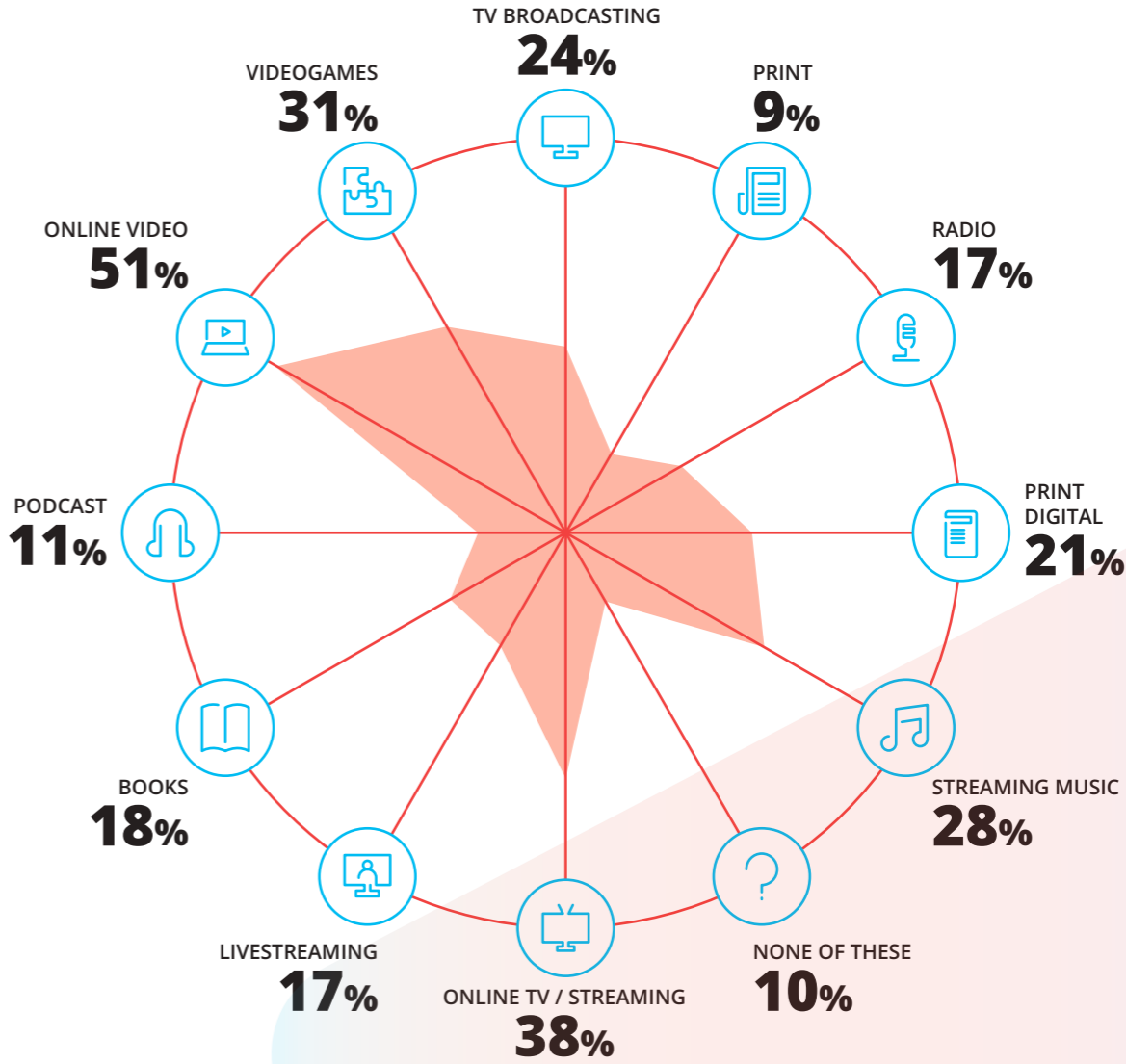


Figure 11: Media Use in the COVID-19 Era  
Source: Global Web Index, 2020

of working in a company. In addition to this, during the early days after being hired, people come into contact with the organisation's way of working by understanding the business model, getting to know the customers and starting the process of alignment with the corporate mission. Where the onboarding process is not

overseen, poorly structured or non-existent, there no way to achieve this dynamic alignment and therefore learning and connecting with the company is adversely affected.

If onboarding is ineffective, the **match** is not made **between the new employee and the company**,



with consequences ranging from disenchantment to resignation - in both cases with unfavorable financial consequences for the company. With Generation Z, knowing how to respond to this challenge is particularly important: according to the World Economic Forum, the possibility of learning and career advancement is the first driver in the choice of employment for Zoomers (Rubanovic, 2021) (Figure 12). Creating this **enduring link** with the organisation is therefore essential because it allows GenZers to feel that their expectations are somehow being heard and responded to.

The challenge that the pandemic poses to companies is to translate traditional onboarding paths into a **virtual experience** that preserves connection points between new hires and the company, and which is able to enhance and not isolate young talents, who must be able to fit into a corporate dynamic at a distance, without having physical access to the workplace and contact with colleagues and superiors. To meet this challenge, companies must know how to find solutions in **two strategic areas**, which together contribute to the success of an experience of remote onboarding. Firstly, it is necessary for companies to find valid alternatives to **meeting** opportunities and **live engagement** (both possible before the pandemic). In April 2021, the Harvard Business Review published a case study of the virtual internship experience at Intel US. As pointed out by the authors: "In a remote work setting, it's especially important to create an interactive environment that encourages teamwork among the interns and their managers, despite the physical barriers. Ensure that each intern has a designated full-time employee to guide him or her through the program and provide virtual touchpoints to discuss the intern's workload as well as their professional development and goals." (Rivera, 2021).

Creating moments of encounter and building virtual connections between people is indispensable

in order to not make new recruits feel isolated and alone in their new work activities, but above all to encourage a dynamic of learning by doing, which according to the World Economic Forum is the one through which most Zoomers learn (World Economic Forum, 2021).

A second strategic lever for the success of the onboarding experience during the pandemic has been technology.

### What technologies/ tools do Generation Z employees prefer to use for corporate training?



Figure 12: Company training and technologies in use  
Source: Rubanovic, 2021

As seen above, Gen Z is the first truly digital native generation. Fast and familiar with online contact, Zoomers are comfortable with technology, towards which they have very high expectations: a successful employee experience cannot be achieved with outdated tools and cannot afford to speak a language that is different from GenZers' own, if companies want to keep their attention and, consequently, their interest. Zoomers' ease of dialogue with **technology** is a strategic lever of the employee experience because it constitutes an effective communication channel: it allows companies to reach their target audience (in this case young people who have been hired) in an environment that is already familiar to them.

Especially in the context of corporate training, introducing similar interaction and gamification logistics to that which GenZers experience in social media represents an effectiveness factor: research by the World Economic Forum highlights how using apps and online training is the preferred mode of learning by Generation Z in the workplace, chosen respectively by 62% and 48% of respondents (World Economic Forum, 2021). Also from the company point of view, therefore, faced with the pandemic, Generation Z is setting itself up with an innovative and pioneering spirit: this is the first digital generation, the first to grow up with no memory of a time before the Internet and with a truly global and connected outlook, the first to require companies to change their ways of engagement and interaction towards a more fluid and open model.

How Zoomers will respond to this crisis, which hit them at a crucial point in their development, is destined to leave a lasting impression.

# Gen Z at work: a survey by OpenKnowledge

7.

Starting to become familiar with the reality of work experience is indispensable when we address more concretely the issues of employee experience in relation to Gen Z, which, as we discovered in previous chapters, express new characteristics and desires which differ from those of past generations. For this reason, the research work on Generation Z that we have been pursuing has been carried out by means of a **quantitative survey** conducted during the course of 2020. This survey analyses the relationship between the new generations and the labour market.

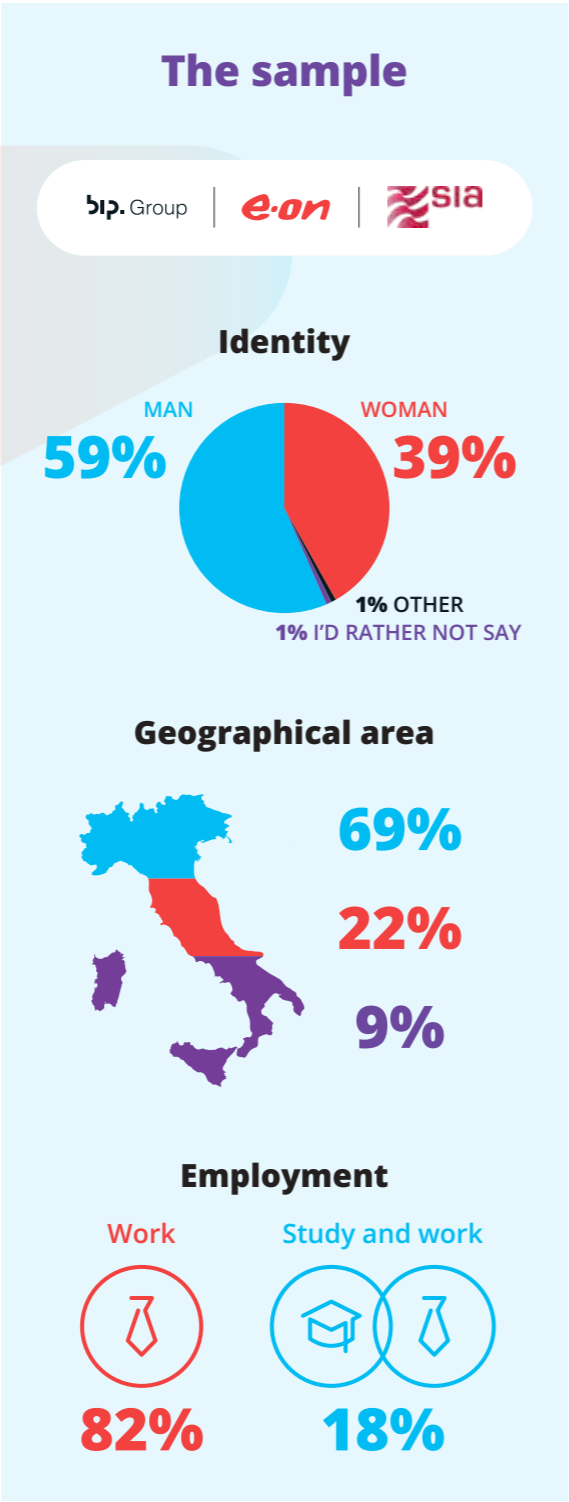
265 people participated in the survey. From these, the valid sample for our research includes a pool of 193 participants, all aged between 20 to 26, and already in employment having their first taste of work. This aspect - having already joined a company - was considered fundamental to the aims of the investigation.

The questions put to the participants were designed to **investigate the aspirations of Gen Z in relation to their occupation**, aligned with actual experience and individual perceptions with respect to some key moments of the employee experience, in particular recruiting and training.

Together with the contribution of the **Bip Group** and partner companies such as **SIA** and **E.ON**, interested in exploring the issue among their own people, the survey collected a series of **insights related to the Zoomer experience in companies**. To achieve this, an online questionnaire was created and supported by the Survey Monkey digital platform, which was used to process the research results. Specifically, the survey looked at:

- Expectations and types of pathways to joining the company
- How to prepare for entry into the world of work and match the study pathways addressed and the jobs required by the market
- Satisfaction of objectives achieved
- The readiness of companies to welcome new recruits into their organisations

- The feelings and thoughts that young people have towards the current situation and the future.



**Aspirations**

The portrait that emerges of GenZers is that of a **pragmatic generation**, who have imagined their course of studies and have evaluated employment opportunities. The majority of people who participated in the survey, in fact, state that they are doing **work that is consistent with the training they have received** and only 24% of respondents do a job with little or no (3%) alignment with what they studied. Zoomers' practicality also manifests itself in relation to aspirations: even if most of them say that the work they do has little alignment (31%) or none at all (28%) with the job they dreamed of doing, 61% of GenZ workers consider the world of work **in line with what they imagined**. The positive perception is supported both by the grounds on which they constructed these expectations (i.e. through the detailed search for information), as well as by the appreciation of the working environment, which they felt was welcoming and positive.



When I applied, I researched the work environment and company culture. For this reason, I had a pretty good time in line with expectations that I had made.

*Survey participant "GenZ and the world of work" (OpenKnowledge, 2020).*

**Entering the world of work**

How do Zoomers approach recruitment and selection for a job? The survey shows that young people continue to prefer **more traditional selection methods**, such as an individual interview (either face-to-face - 8.11 / or online - 6.82), a challenge (5.28) and a practical exercise (4.92). In general, they prefer **individual selection processes** as opposed to group ones (4.54), (Figure 13).



Figure 13: Format preferences and tools for the selection of candidates  
Source: OpenKnowledge, 2021

The least appreciated modes are those that do not involve direct interaction with the recruiter: at the bottom of the list is the gamified experience (3.72) and the video interview (3.23). And what about once the selection process starts? The survey makes it possible to identify, in relation to behaviour and perceptions regarding the selection phase, onboarding and entry into the company, **three different profiles**: the stressed, the easy-going and the satisfied.

The stressed

This group represents **40% of the people involved in the investigation**. For them, entering the world of work has been a stressful process, although everything worked out. For the most part, the main source of stress has been due to the **pandemic**: it has not only made it more difficult to find work - the moment of selection is perceived by them as moderately simple (5.2/10) - but, with remote working, orientation is perceived as problematic, and leads to a sense of isolation and lack of integration. This is also influenced by the **gap felt between the academic world and that of work**: the stressed people feel unprepared for the dynamics of this context.

*“Totally different from academia/school. Many things are learned by doing/at work... so I thought I didn’t understand anything and was incompetent. It was frustrating working from home and starting a new (and first) role while smart working.”\**

However, on-boarding is perceived as fairly structured (6.7/10) and, equally, fluid (6.4/10). In general, the perceived stress was worth it and the final result was satisfactory. The experience of entry into work is in line with expectations for those who had sought information beforehand. Those who did not have a precise idea were not satisfied (Figure 14).



The easy-going

The easy-going make up **44% of the respondents**. Their entry into the world of work took place through a **streamlined route**, which did not present too much trouble. Two main factors contributed to make the experience enjoyable:

- The **speed of getting the job**, which happened, perhaps through facilitated university channels or, in any case, at the same time as the termination of studies
- The **working environment**. The work team and the induction process greatly influenced their perception.

*“Ever since high school I’ve had clear ideas and mapped out a path to achieve my goals in the long run. There’s still a long way to go... so far I can say I haven’t met any insurmountable difficulties. That doesn’t mean that it was simple... but so far it’s as if all the effort has been amply rewarded, so I don’t feel it anymore.”\**

The assessment of the entry process is in line with the degree of satisfaction with the expectations expressed: the **selection process is considered engaging** (6.7/10) and **fairly simple** (4.2/10). Overall, for the easy-going people the experience is in line with their expectations (2.9/5). For those who do not share this evaluation, the reason lies in different expectations regarding the degree of responsibility, timing and customer relations. In some cases, however, the expectations have even been exceeded.

*“I expected much more intense work rhythms and much more rigid internal structures.”\**

\*GenZ and the World of Work Survey Participants (OpenKnowledge, 2020).

The satisfied

For **16% of the people involved**, entering the world of work was **easy and immediate**, which is why they are identified as the satisfied.

This perception of ease of entry into the world of work has been influenced, for most of the respondents, by the **speed** with which they were able to find employment. Next, we find **personal skills** and, only as a last resort, **the working environment and the coaching team**.

*“I got a job right away and before graduation.”\**

The satisfied started their career with some **precise expectations**, the result of active research. In some cases, the relevance of work to their training has contributed to a **positive approach** towards the world of work, while for others, the process of on-boarding has been much appreciated, which satisfied people judge as structured and organi-

sed (7.6/10). The satisfied have a more positive view of the entry process in general compared to the others: selection is considered to be engaging (7.2/10) and simple (4.3/10) and the entry process, as a whole, is judged to be very much in line with expectations (3,2/5).

*“I knew very well what to expect and as a result, my expectations have been met and sometimes even exceeded.”\**



The three profiles compared

		The stressed	The easy-going	The satisfied
Selection	ENGAGEMENT	♥♥♥♥♥	♥♥♥♥♥	♥♥♥♥♥
	SIMPLICITY	♥♥♥♥♥	♥♥♥♥♥	♥♥♥♥♥
Onboarding	STRUCTURE	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆
	FLUIDITY	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆
Entry procedure		Despite the difficulties, their expectations can be considered fulfilled	Their experience is quite in line with their expectations	Their experience is the one most in line with their expectations

Figure 14: Assessment of entry into employment for the three profiles  
Source: OpenKnowledge, 2021



Growth and the future

Once they join the company, how do GenZers see their **professional future**? Most of the respondents - 53% - expect to stay in the same company but not to keep the same role - only 7% expect to play the same role. 23%, on the other hand, are unable to make a forecast, although the perspective is only two years. Only 4%, on the other hand, expect to keep the current role but to change companies. Young people, therefore, hope to grow, to widen their knowledge and expand their skills and continue on a practical career path. In terms of the employee experience, it is essential to support this desire with training courses which are up to the task, and which can respond to the expectations of the

young talent pool in the company. In this sense, the results of the survey offer an interesting perspective: for the Zoomers, the prevailing way to learn and grow in the organisation is through **team dynamics** (43%), followed by teaching imparted by more senior figures (37%). Training is experienced as an integral part of the growth path: for only 14% is it a good idea to leave it to time for them to mature, while 6% prefer to move ahead individually with their own capabilities (Figure 15). Outside the corporate environment, young people are looking for stimuli and sources to bring them up to speed which can be consulted quickly: websites and web pages, online courses and video are the preferred resources (Figure 16).

What is your way of growing and learning in the company?

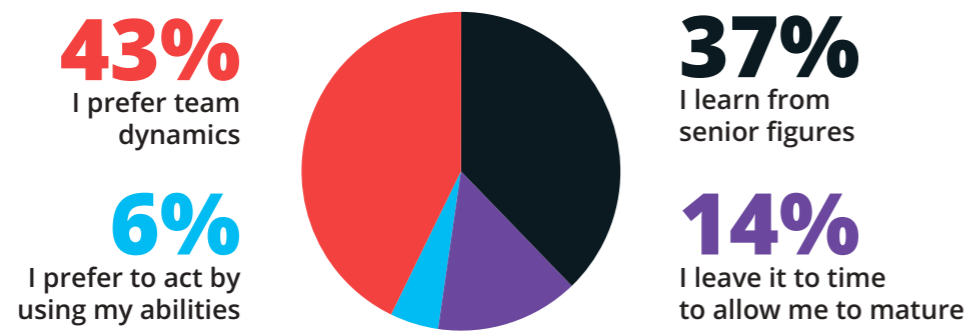
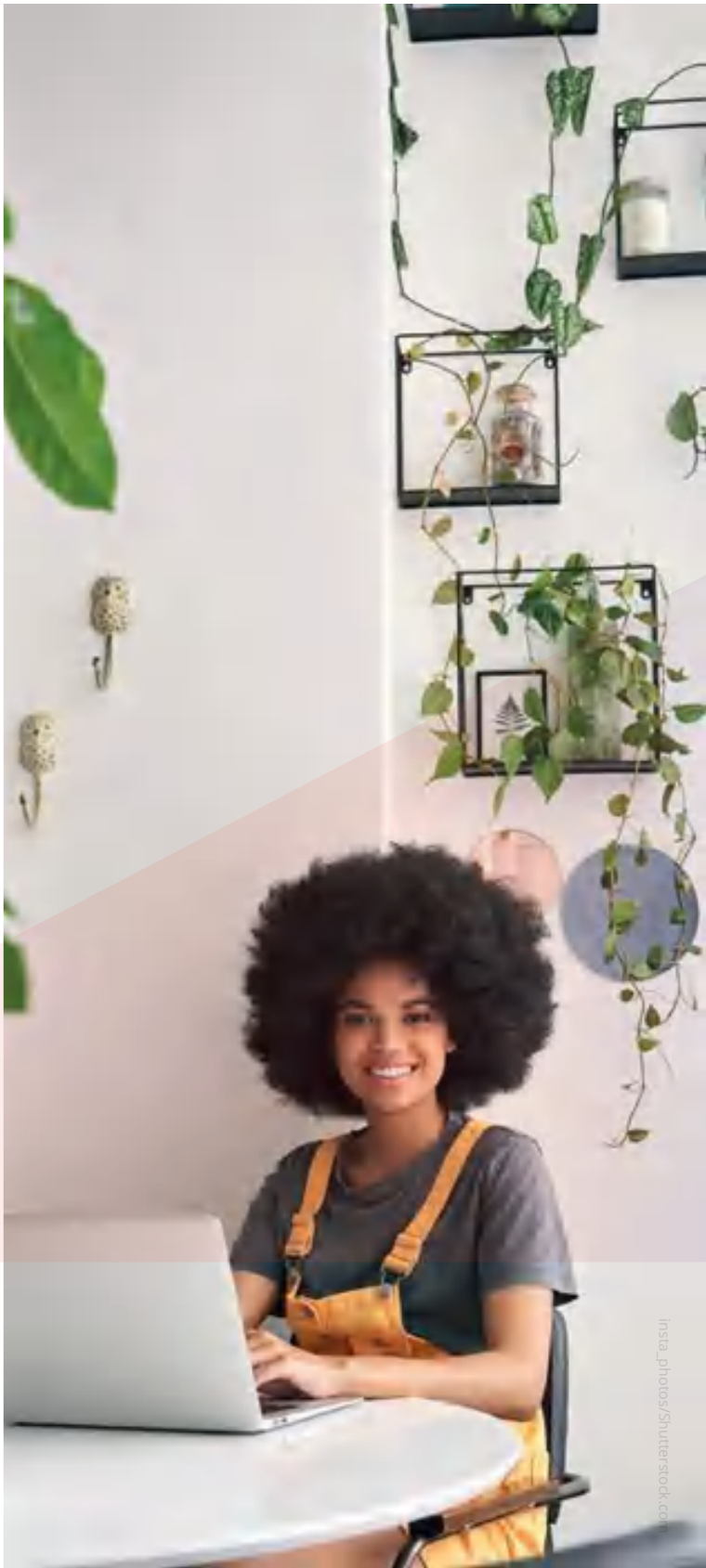


Figure 15: Training elements for the growth path of Zoomers  
Source: OpenKnowledge, 2021

What do you do to get up to speed beyond corporate training?



Figure 16: Preferences (1 to 3) of format and media for non-corporate training  
Source: OpenKnowledge, 2021



## Conclusions

Although the path of entry into a company is judged by some to be exhausting, overall, the participants are satisfied with the process.

Certainly, the experience of the pandemic has significantly influenced the entry process into the world of work. The difficult historical period linked to COVID-19 has caused stress for the participants, both in the search and selection process and in their orientation in the company, making the transition from the academic world to the workplace disorienting.

***"Inclusion through Smart Working has not been simple. You feel a little lonely and you never feel fully part of a team (at first). Not meeting colleagues physically also makes it hard to relate to each other."***\*

\*Gen-Z and the World of Work Survey Participants (OpenKnowledge, 2020).

In fact, initiatives that promote contact between companies and universities are appreciated, and in the selection process, GenZers want detailed information on the company structure, growth paths, roles and responsibilities.

***"The linear and structured process further convinced me to take the job."***\*

At this stage of the entry experience, too, people prefer to participate individually: despite the fact that the team is considered as the best source of professional growth. For interviews, the individual approach carries more weight, mainly because they prefer direct interaction with the recruiter. For those who perceive the entry into the world of work without too much trouble, the difference lies not only in the process itself, but also the environment found in the company, the working context and the relationship with colleagues.

***"I was fortunate enough to join a team that has really welcomed me, with patience and kindness"***



# About openknowledge



**Here we must run as fast as we can, just to stay in place. And if you wish to go anywhere you must run twice as fast as that.**

*Lewis Carroll*

OpenKnowledge is a consulting company founded in 2008 from the union of multidisciplinary competences and from the intuition that a reflection on the development of organisations was necessary, in the light of the then-emerging social collaboration paradigm.

Since its foundation, OpenKnowledge has distinguished itself as an authoritative interlocutor on Collaboration issues and Digital Transformation, thus contributing to the dissemination of innovative approaches and a new organisational culture.

With this objective, the Social Business Forum was conceived and launched: an annual event with an international scope, which hosted, in each edition, over 1000 participants and countless speakers from all over the world, who exchanged ideas on a wide range of frontier topics, from the Social Business Manifesto to the Platform Age, from Organizational Wellness to Experience Obsession. The thought leadership of OpenKnowledge has expressed itself over the years through the contributions of its people, in copious publishing: there are numerous books, articles and blog posts by enthusiastic Oknowers from all generations, experts in different disciplines.

In 2015 OpenKnowledge became part of the Bip Group, starting a path of integration and growth, which has

led to it becoming a Centre of Excellence with over 100 professionals, organized in 4 practices: Culture Design, People Development & Growth, People Engagement & Caring, Future of Work: Acceleration & Adoption.

All projects are supported by the cross-cutting skills of experience design, communication, supervised creativity and content production, overseen and developed by OpenKnowledge thanks to a fifth area: the Experience, Communication & Creativity Lab.

The combination of these multidisciplinary skills enables transformation projects to be undertaken with a systemic vision and end-to-end development, from the strategic design phases to those of execution and roll-out, accompanying customers as real change partners.

To meet today's challenges, OpenKnowledge supports organisations by guiding their path to growth with a Human-Centric approach. The organisation's actions are developed in 3 main areas:

- **Evolve & Change**, enabling the company to create value in uncertain and evolving contexts, with contributions on Culture and Behaviour, Places, and New Ways of Working.
- **Unlearn & Learn**, creating a culture of Continuous Learning and experimentation to improve skills in the organisation by facilitating the adoption of new tools.
- **Communicate & Engage**, facilitating understanding of the needs of all stakeholders, to improve Employee Engagement & Caring, Corporate & Social Communication and Employer Branding.

It is only by embracing this systemic change that we can envision resilient, curious and empathetic companies.

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