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Multitasking of existence: The technologically mediated everyday life of the new digital generation

Abstract

From a qualitative research perspective, in this study we attempted to explore how young adults of the net generation get involved with ICTs and what types of meaning they attribute to ICT use. Eighteen to twenty-two year old adults in Greece constitute the first generation that were born and grew up in a digital environment. Our purpose was to explore how this generation express themselves and fulfil psychological needs while in cyberspace, in what ways and to what degree fulfilment is achieved, how authentic the expression of needs is, and to what type of emotional experience this whole process contributes. Are young adults able to distinguish the psychological significance of their ICTs use? We investigated these questions by asking participants to keep a diary for a period of five days about their patterns of ICTs use, the emotional needs covered by this use, the satisfaction they receive from it, and multitasking, and then to reflectively report on their personal findings. Thematic analysis of the findings and self-reports indicates that young adults don't seem to receive the psychological gratification they seek while using ICTs; this lack of fulfilment contributes in turn to extended multitasking practices, even when it comes to selected leisure activities. This mediated daily routine creates new forms of anxiety to young adults, who report to feel trapped in a permanently escaping reality that requires constant presence and participation.