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Is Gen Z starting to reject new technologies?

According to a survey from the Pew Research Center published in 2023, “72% of U.S. teens say they often or sometimes feel peaceful when they don’t have their smartphone.” Screens can be a significant challenge for current and future generations.



While new technologies can make our lives easier, some argue that we have become overly reliant on them. Although Gen Z may be the generation most dependent on social media, computers, and phones, some seem dismayed by the intense and even abusive use of new technologies. Gen Z is often portrayed as those born between the late 1990s and early 2010s. This means that these individuals were born and raised alongside the development and commercialization of smartphones. It is notable that the first smartphone ever launched was the IBM Simon in 1994.

So why would some of them start rejecting something that appeared in their time, something that was and still is revolutionary?

It is true that on social media platforms like TikTok, we see trends highlighting simplicity. These trends often express how fed up the new generations are with phone addiction, mainly through montages showing how people entertained themselves before and after the advent of new technologies, suggesting that *"life was better before."* It is clear that with the advent of smartphones and social media, we have in some ways lost the sense of getting together, talking, and just being curious about each other's lives. This is perhaps what some young Gen Zers blame new technology for; it creates a barrier between us. They feel nostalgic about life before new technologies.

More than just creating montages on TikTok, a few years ago, a challenge appeared on social media called *"The 24-Hour No Phone Challenge."* This challenge involves spending an entire day without a phone or any screens. This challenge became even more popular during the 2020 lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the confinement, many people around the world realized the beauty of our environment and felt a need to reconnect with nature. After a few weeks of being cooped up at home, scrolling through TikTok and watching TV all day, people started to grow tired and bored of their phones. At this point, the challenge took on an unexpected dimension; many celebrities began participating and filming themselves to encourage their followers to do the same. Among the celebrities who took part in this challenge are YouTubers AlishaMarie, Emma Chamberlain, and Elliana, among others.

Nowadays, we live in a world that is changing and evolving faster every day, with the media often over-informing and being extremely negative about the future that awaits new generations like Gen Z. Some experts even delve deeper into the impact of this over-information. One of them, Dr. Jane Smith, a psychologist specializing in health psychology, notes that *"the constant bombardment of information and social comparison on social media platforms can lead to anxiety and depression among young users."* This is one of the main reasons why this generation is increasingly rejecting new technologies, associating them with the toxicity and negativity that come from social media and their phones. *"This great step backwards is an awareness that the influence of new technologies on humans has gone too far, I think. GenZ feels a need for authenticity, and also for appeasement. I hope that the next generations will not be blinded by all this, that they will make the right decisions for themselves and society as a whole."* Said a mother of a Genzer while we were conducting the interviews.

Some people, institutions, and even states are beginning to take steps to counter this addiction to smartphones, social networks, and even AI. For example, a few days ago, Eton College in Berkshire, England, reviewed its policy and is set to provide its pupils with *"brick phones"* that can only send and receive texts and calls. This decision was made to *"balance the benefits and challenges that technology brings to schools."* England

is not the only European country to implement such measures. In France, the "Rassemblement National" party, which won an unexpected number of votes in the recent legislative elections, has promised a "*Big Bang of authority, from the start of the 2024 school year,*" including a "*ban on mobile phones in secondary schools,*" according to the party's leader Jordan Bardella. And it is not the only party in France to propose such measures; they all believe that the misuse of mobile phones at school, especially in the classroom, should not be acceptable in an educational environment.

On a more positive note, it is encouraging that Gen Z is slowly starting to recognize the negative effects that can come from the intensive use of new technologies, from their phones to AI. It is important to remember that while we have new technologies and information at our fingertips, we must be careful about how we use these networks and AI in our everyday lives.