



## Do you speak Generation Z?

### ABSTRACT

*This research examines the contextualization of the discourse of the Generation Z. The identity of the generation is delineated based on definitions such as “digital natives”, “the most diverse generation so far” and “the overindulged and materialistic generation”. The contradictory elements of Gen Zers’ identity drew marketers’ attention, as the fluidity of their characteristics made the generation rather unapproachable to the advertising industry. Using the research question “How is the discourse of Generation Z established in business – oriented newspapers”, the study delves into how the characteristics of the generation are represented in financial media outlets. This research aims to reveal which are the subtle elements of the generational identity, and to re – contextualize it through a business perspective. It draws upon 177 newspaper articles from two business – oriented newspapers, The Wall Street Journal and the Financial Times. In order for the research to disclose the underlying elements of the articles, corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis were employed. The combined methodological strategy intends to address the contextualization of Generation Z by critically engaging to statistically significant textual elements. The use of those two methods aided the utilization of a relatively big corpus of articles. Therefore, the results are reflective of actual societal phenomena, as those methods can stress the social interdependences of the Generation Z. The data analysis resulted in the generational contextualization based on the discourses of materialism, technology and diversity, along with a discourse that defines social elements in the identity of the generation. The interdiscursivity of the three main discourses illustrated that the identity of Generation Z is re-contextualized under the weight of balancing between their hopes to adopt a diverse, caring and all – inclusive lifestyle in the empowering technological environment and the marketers’ inquires to harness their attributes by transforming their identity elements into commodities. The commodification of the identity of Generation Z allows its members to establish their consumerist identity, but this tactic leaves Gen Zers in a precarious state concerning their individuality.*

KEYWORDS: *Generation Z, materialism, diversity, social media, interdiscursivity*

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## 1. Introduction

*Paige Erickson*

Generation Z is "Too Young"  
You say I am too young  
Too young to be a feminist  
Too young to know my own sexuality  
Too young to be depressed  
Too young to hate  
Too young to protest  
Too young to be an activist  
Too young  
Too stupid  
Too naïve  
And you are right  
I am too young  
[.]

- Shypoet (2019)

"This paradox – the destructive and constructive interplay between subject and self – ensures the openness and variability of subjects and selves, but also their necessary failure as foundations"

- Gilles Deleuze

This free verse poem illustrates the attempt of the youngest generation of modernity to overcome the obstacles set by society, in order to establish its identity. The first line implies the reluctance of the older generations to take into account the unique and often radical characteristics of Generation Z (Gen Z). Burdened by the societal insufficiency to accept divergent perspectives, the young Gen Zer (member of Gen Z) concludes that he/she is stupid and naïve to implement major societal changes, as his/her age is presumably the biggest impediment to criticize and eventually, transform society.

In order to consider the notion of generation amongst other demographic segmentations, this research aims to identify how generational identity is established through common, yet subjective experiences. Gen Zers' date of birth, in the middle of the decade of 1990, occurred simultaneously with the introduction of the Internet in 1995. This occurrence helped Gen Zers become completely familiar with technology, known as digital natives. On the other hand, a critical factor that shaped the generation was the financial

crisis of 2008, which led to many socioeconomic changes. Those two major societal transformations led Gen Zers to be adapted to the current conditions. Because of the shift in society, generation adopted highly debatable characteristics, which shaped the generation's contrasting nature (Levi, 2019). Additionally, Gen Zers embrace diverse values.

This research aims to examine how the media industry establishes and articulates the identity of Gen Z based on the representation of the generation in business-oriented newspapers. The use of that specific type of media – outlets, as empirical evidence, establishes a causal relationship between the power of advertising to establish and legitimize identities and the perception of those “strategies” from the Gen Zers (Berger, 2018). Consequently, the identity of Gen Zers is produced through the following cyclical procedure: the market attempts to target Gen Z, which is characterized as relatively unreachable due to its uniqueness, while this tactic reinforces the stereotypical generational identity (Serazio, 2011). This interrelation suggests that the characteristics of the generation are commercialized due to Gen Zers' digital literacy (Turow, 2016). According to Gumpert and Cathcart (1985), the media can implement specific attributes and values to the generations. For that reason, the digital nativity of Gen Zers constitutes the wider media ecosystem, in which they belong, and is capable of shaping their identity. Moreover, Lazzarato (2014) observed that capitalism follows a specific pattern in order to transform modern social elements into commercial products, which applies to the contextualization of Gen Z.

### **1.1 Social and scientific relevance**

In 2020 Gen Z already counts already 1.2 billion “members”, which constitute 40% of the consumers worldwide (Agrawal, 2018). They are hyper-connected and the generation has bloomed in the era of mass – broadcasting (Serazio, 2011). This new media ecosystem blurs the lines between the commercial products and the social and cultural life, as advertising and product promotion become less conspicuous (Cohen, Comrov & Hoffner, 2015). Moreover, 53% of Gen Zers interact within networks in social media. They are more likely to search online for reviews, comments, or to ask the opinion of their followers in social media before buying a product. Due to their technological intimacy, Gen Zers pay attention to an online post for an average of 8 seconds, 4 seconds less than their predecessors; Millennials. For that reason, the market needs to find a way to engage this

generation, by adapting to its requirements. An element of utmost importance is the fact that Gen Zers, which are characterized as the most diverse generation so far, acquire the marketers to present authentic content, which is in compliance with their attributes.

The transformation that the generational characteristics implement in society portrays the societal significance of the addressed topic. The proper contextualization of Gen Z will allow their clear representation in the market (Zagato & Vecco, 2015). The duality of Gen Zers, which combines traditional and non – conforming attributes (Vander Linde & Weatherly, 2019), makes this generational cohort a challenge for the marketers. Gen Zers' identity incorporates traditional values, such as the intention to succeed in education, in the workplace, and to be independent, while simultaneously maintaining a liberal view towards gender, race, and sexuality, in order to ensure equal rights for everyone (Fry & Parker, 2018). Although Gen Zers want to obtain their identity, they do not want to be restricted by labels. As advertising targets mainly specific characteristics of each consumer group (Lynn, 2011), this fluidity in the identity of Gen Z makes it difficult for marketers to approach it. Since Gen Zers are still developing, their viewpoint is also evolving. Taking into consideration that many of them are (still) adolescents, the generation will be being re-contextualized continuously by imposing a re-evaluation of the marketers' strategies in order to be competitive and relevant.

The scientific significance of the discussed phenomenon is addressed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2001). They suggest that similar communicative practices can yield different results. Similarly, the establishment of Gen's Z identity through media is under question because media, as a means of communication, do not always lead to the same generational conceptualization. For example, Millennials, who are also highly adapted to the elements of technological evolution, do not have the same characteristics as members of Gen Z. On the contrary, a completely computer-mediated generation, like Gen Z, constitutes in fact the most apt example of the duality of the media. The generation is defined by the capacity of technology to disperse content through media (Silverstone, 1994). But at the same time, Gen Z can regulate the disseminated elements by transforming simultaneously the media field. This double articulation not only can explain how the identity of Gen Z is/can be shaped by the ongoing evolution of the Media but also how the mediated society's identity is constantly transforming due to this interaction.

Even though the market has started approaching Gen Z by attempting to interpret and adapt to the unique and often contradictory characteristics of the generation, scholars are not quite engaged in the generational contextualization. For instance, Hauw and Vos (2010) argue that generations have more similarities than differences and the examination of generational segmentation is a scholar exaggeration. While others, such as Myers and Sadaghianni (2010), suggested that generational segmentation is based on stereotypes concerning the identity of the members of each generation due to the lack of empirical evidence. For that reason, this research will attempt to fill that gap by exploring how the identity of Gen Z is established in the “consumerist avenues” (Serazio, 2011, p. 600) of a wider technological context. Moreover, in order to ground the research to a solid basis, the use of the appropriate dataset will motivate the formulation of empirical results, which will be reflective of the discussed theory.

## **1.2 Research question**

Therefore this thesis will attempt to answer the following research question: *“How is the discourse of Generation Z established in business-oriented newspapers”*. The analysis will be based on the RQ in order to illustrate whether Gen Z embraces diverse and progressive values, as well as materialistic principles in a wider technological context. The operationalization of the analysis will be based on the following concepts: materialism, technology, diversity, and political and educational dimension. Those concepts are the discourses that articulate the wider discourse of Gen Z. The transition from the notion of concepts to the notion of discourses takes place based on Fairclough’s observation that the discourse is the “active relation to society” (Fairclough, 1992, p.41). The used language in the newspaper articles will be the conspicuous element that links the discourses to the social processes (van Dijk, 1995). The utilization of the notion of discourses aims to establish a network around the discourse of Gen Z in order to take account of the social, cultural, and political phenomena that frame it (Fairclough, 2003; Bakhtin, 1986).

## **1.3 Synopsis of methodology**

As the issue of Gen Z is a multifactorial social topic, the research should not approach it solely from one theoretical viewpoint (Wodak & Meyer, 2002). Due to the close entity of the topic with Foucault’s theory concerning social – formative power relations, the



analysis will focus on how the “order of discourses” will reveal the manner that society is structured through diverse, complementary, and often conflicting discourses (Fairclough, 2003). For that reason, I will explore through critical discourse analysis how the discourse of Gen Z is established, legitimized, and keeps its power in society (2013). The first step towards the identification of the discourse of Gen Z is the contextualization of subjectivity in the contemporary social frame. Due to the abstractness of the term and the distorting power of media, which are a big part of modern society, I will investigate how the use of language in the specific context will operate subversively by going against the settled linguistic conventions (Fairclough, 2013). The created challenge will underline how the newspapers used those elements in order to contextualize the discourse of Gen Z.

Additionally, by utilizing the method of corpus linguistics, it is easier to explore how a social group is represented in a specific media outlet. The methodology is capable of screening patterns of the presence and the transformations of a specific social group not only across a large number of texts but also during the time continuum (Partington, 2014; Gabrielatos, et al., 2012; Baker, et al., 2008). Also, corpus linguistics can be utilized in order for the researcher to refer back to his/her theoretical framework. Thus, there is a high possibility for the identification of subtle characteristics and patterns of the societal discourse that is examined. The statistical frequency across the corpus can also be approached through a time - related perspective, and the durability of a specific pattern can reveal underlying contextual elements (Baker et al., 2008; Gabrielatos et al., 2012).

#### **1.4 Structure of the thesis**

As this research is academic, the research question needs to be answered by framing it, theoretically and methodologically, along with the presentation and the interpretation of the results. This subsection will refer briefly to the following chapters that will cover thoroughly the contextualization of Gen Z.

Chapter 2 addresses theoretically the phenomenon of the definition of Gen Z. The chapter is deductively structured, as it refers first to the theoretical background of the research. It discusses how the wider context of postmodernism influenced mediated society to construct specific identities. This subsection stresses how the identification of the social groups is closely connected to the commodification of values, based especially on the digital dimension of society. Also, it discusses how the elements of individuality and

subjectivity distort social identification. Finally, the theoretical background approaches the notion of intertextuality, which has a dual role in this research design. On the one hand, it contributes to the theoretical framing of the discourse of Gen Z and on the other hand, it functions as a methodological tool. The conceptual framework follows, where the concepts/ discourses in which the results will be based is discussed. The discourses are 4: “Materialism”, “Technology”, “Diversity” and “Politics and education”. They have been raised by multiple sources, which approach the identity of Gen Z. However, their importance lays on the fact that they substantialize the theoretical elements.

After the theoretical approach, it follows the chapter 3, which is the methodological approach of the research design. This chapter refers to the used methods, which are critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics. The rationale behind the use of those methods is described in the first subsection of this chapter. The combination of the methods is called corpus assisted discourse studies and aims to utilize the most positive characteristics of both methods by eliminating their pitfalls as much as possible. After that, the procedure of data collection is described. In this subsection, it is explained why I have chosen this dataset, along with the sampling criteria. Then, it is addressed how the methodological approach is linked with the conceptual framework. The operationalization section is very important, as it introduces how the analysis will be conducted, which is also included in the methodology chapter. Finally, the chapter addresses the credibility and the reliability of the research design along with some methodological limitations.

Following, there is chapter 4, which refers to the results. After conducting the analysis, in the results chapter the 4 discourses are presented in a detailed way. However, the first subsection refers to the collocations and the co-occurrences which constituted the analyzed data fragments. Accordingly, with the theoretical approach, the emerging discourses are aligned with the concepts of materialism, technology, and diversity, while the discourse of the political and educational dimension of Gen Zers was enhanced by discussing more aspects of the generational identity like sustainability, work, religion, patriotism. Due to the various aspects discussed in this discourse, it is named the discourse of social identity, as the included discourses concern the interrelations of the generation with specific societal elements.

Finally, the last chapter (chapter 5) discusses the findings in a wider context of interdiscursivity. The main findings are discussed and summarized to illustrate a solid

answer to the research question. The subsection “interdiscursivity as a social practice” addresses whether those discourses are connected and if the presented findings can establish the importance of the generation for the mediated society. After that, some theoretical and societal implications of the research are discussed. Finally, the limitations of the research are approached along with suggestions for further research.

## 2. Theoretical Literature and Conceptual Framework

### Chapter overview

This chapter addresses deductively the theoretical approach of the discourse of Gen Z. Namely, it comprises two subsections; the first one refers to the theoretical background of the research and the second refers to the conceptual framework of Gen Z. The first subsection will address the notion of postmodernism, in which the interrelation between society, culture, media and individuals is established. Postmodernism will play a key role in the conceptualization of Gen Z at a theoretical level. In that section, the reason why generational segmentation is a social construct will be justified and also, the importance of the generations to the modern mediated society will be clarified. Subsequently, in the second subsection the concepts that contextualize the identification of the Gen Zers will be discussed. Four different concepts derive from the conceptual framework and they are closely linked to the notions mentioned in the theoretical background. Those concepts (discourses in this specific research design) are materialism, technology, diversity, and politics and education concerning Gen Zers. Moreover, those characteristics are linked in this subsection with the power of advertising to structure identities. Finally, the last subsection of the chapter will conclude with a summarization of the discussed concepts. The theoretical concepts will be used as empirical lead towards the linkage of the addressed theory with the section of methodology.

### 2.1 Theoretical background:

#### *The social construction of identity in a postmodern background*

The trespassing of society from modernity to postmodernity is representative of how human and societal relations are formulated. Modernity signified by the grand – narratives, which led to absolute truth (Berger, 2018). On the other hand, postmodernity was based on personal narratives, which established the interdependency between individuals, modern societies and the sense of truth. The way people shape their behavior in postmodernity led to a legitimation crisis because people started questioning the

authority. On the contrary, society started embracing diversity, which was no longer based on cultural boundaries and scientific rationales but on people's personal perspective.

However, society linked this level of individuality with cultural consumerism (Berger, 2018). By consuming culture, people felt like they were completely free to choose in which society they want to live in. However, this societal shift led to a significant correlation between the meaning of culture and commodity. For that reason, postmodernism established a regime of cultural mutation (Joseph, 1996). The cultural mutation is defined as the commodification of creativity and culture (Zagato & Vecco, 2015). So, postmodernism is stigmatized by the "aestheticization of the economy and the economization of culture" (Zagato & Vecco, 2015, p. 381). Since art is not always obliged to produce a deeper meaning, which would shape people's behavior; it contributes to the sense of belonging in a group that enjoys the same form of art and creates a sense of self-awareness, and self-confidence. Mainstream media had already spotted that art can create cultural patterns, that's why they framed it commercially and industrially (Zagato & Vecco, 2015) by equating "high" art with mass culture. Most societies thrive when boundaries between groups are loose and high individuality levels occur.

According to the grid group theory, societies are delineated based on the following questions: "Who am I?" and "How do I have to behave?" (Berger, 2018). Namely, the issue of identity and the issue of behavior/lifestyle determine how an object will behave in a social construct. Back to the grid group theory, the categorization takes place based on two factors: Firstly, if the boundaries of a specific group are weak or hard to cross, and secondly, if the specific group has strict or lenient rules for an object to be integrated. Hence, four groups occur from this classification: the elitist/hierarchical (strict borders, many rules), the egalitarian (strict borders, few rules), the individualist (weak borders, few rules) and the fatalist (weak borders, many rules). The groups that dominate society are the elitists and the individualists. This domination is a result of the alignment of those lifestyles with the consumerist attitude, which constitutes a basic factor of contemporality. As mentioned above, postmodernism described the erosion of the boundaries between high and pop culture. Hence, the commodification of culture led to the loosening of the borders between elitists and individualists (Berger, 2018). This new society constituted the vehicle for the entry of late multinational capitalism (Jameson, 1982), as culture was already commercialized and people would definitely invest money on culture, as it constituted an

easy escape of everyday life. Due to the abundance of cultural products, everything lost its originality and became a copy of something else. Jameson defines this societal tendency as postmodern pastiche in which “the artists and writers of the present will no longer be able to invent new styles and worlds—they’ve already been invented; only a limited number of combinations are possible; the most unique ones have been thought of already.” (Jameson, 1982, p. 4).

### ***Intertextuality***

The implications of postmodernism in culture are interpreted in the theory of intertextuality (Berger, 2018). Intertextuality suggests that every form of culture is based on something already discussed. In that way, postmodernism expresses its objection towards originality, which was the most representative attribute of modernity (Berger, 2018; Jameson, 1982). The aforementioned pastiche of postmodernism articulates the intertextual theory by admitting that reality is replaced by its simulation, where the lack of textual originality leads to a deeper linkage between the different cultural elements (Berger, 2015). The cultural intertextuality is summarized in the transition from modernity and its hierarchical and elite approach of culture to the postmodern approach of culture, which eliminated the cultural classification of high- or low-quality art. In fact, intertextuality suggested that culture is fluid and its deeper meaning is produced by the accumulation of intertextual related bits of art (Berger, 2018).

On a societal level, intertextuality can interpret the interdependency of the societal phenomena in a more contextualized way (Berger, 2018). Intertextuality has a vague dimension, as the meaning is underlying and people need to delve, for example, into the social relations and phenomena in order to comprehend them (Berger, 2018; Bloome & Egan – Robertson, 1993). The implementation of intertextuality in society is recognized through the interactions it creates. However, the social significance of intertextuality derives from the very co-dependency which was mentioned above. The individual experiences are not quite substantial if they are not included in a larger societal frame (Berger, 2018). This societal frame is offered often by the cultural ideology, which constrains society and links the different elements together (Bloome & Egan – Robertson, 1993). For those reasons, intertextuality can be perceived as a useful tool that structures contemporary societies. However, the intertextual nature of contemporary society can be a

double-edged sword, as it can contribute to the enhancement of the cultural mutation, which is mentioned above (Zagato & Vecco, 2015).

Nevertheless, co-dependent meanings can cause confusion and disorientation to people. Especially when some cultural aspects are commodified, the confusion grows bigger. Zagato and Vecco (2015) observe that intertextuality blurs the lines between conscious and non-conscious societal behaviors, as people start going with the flow by consuming the culture commodities that are offered without any critical process. Consequently, culture is no longer a societal entity that reveals different aspects and possibilities of life, but it transforms into a vehicle that disseminates particular meanings to society. A point of great significance is that postmodernism actually describes a system in which societies cannot comprehend the changes that are implied to them. Thus, the commodification of culture becomes an outgrowth system of capitalism. Postmodernism described how society transformed from a “grand – narratives” driven place into a field of inquiries, which were established on “the articulation of answers to questions of context, identity, and language use” (Zienkowski, 2017, p. 2). Society according to postmodernism consists of the aforementioned aspects, which are introduced under the notion of “discourses”. In the discourses, one can question and understand adequately the tensions that structure society by analyzing how language and its semantical use are utilized (Zienkowski, 2017).

### ***Governmentality, subjectivity and reflexivity***

Deleuze in 1953 suggested in his papers that the modern capitalistic world is dominated by a dual apparatus of subjectivity. As a basic element of the following analysis, the term of subjectivity should be established; Subjectivity can be defined by the manner that the subject becomes an identity pole, which either reacts actively to the influences of society or passively adopts particular social characteristics (Smith & Protevi, 2018). This duality yields two different perspectives: firstly, the subject’s individuality originates from the subject’s self – definition and self – awareness of the societal discourse. Thus, this process, eventually, produces the subject’s identity. On the other hand, the subject’s individuality transforms into dividuality. Through the interaction of the subject with society, identity formation is integrated into the patterns of society.

For example, Lacan stresses the way the subject processes its identity. Even though he approaches it from a psychoanalytic perspective, he makes valid points as he could comprehend that subjectivity is "filtered" through the subject's identity pole (Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2008). Lacan suggests that the duality of the subject affects it to perceive society falsely (Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2008). That's why he portrays the significance of the correct social contextualization of the subject. However, Lacan claims that media deteriorate the adequacy of a causal relationship between the subject and the appropriate context because the media outlets prefer to present consumer-oriented content by distorting often the reality. So, an interdependent relationship is established between the subject and the symbolic dimension of society, in order for the subject to pursue its interests and needs in society. In this way, the subject would and eventually will find its identity (Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2008).

The notion of pastiche, which was discussed above helps us contextualize the terms of subjectivity and governmentality. Frederic Jameson (1991), who introduced and embedded the meaning of pastiche in postmodernism, observes that in the contemporary era the object will dismiss its "personal style" under the domination of mass media. He also notes that the end of individualism, as it was known, would occur simultaneously with the end of modernity. As the meanings of uniqueness and originality would be deteriorated through processes such as intertextuality and mutation, mediated society would rise by utilizing subjectivity. Accordingly, Foucault introduced the term of governmentality, which is a process for the shape and establishment of particular attributes and values in society and it was influenced by Gramsci's theory about the domination of some social elements over others (Rose, O'Malley & Valverde, 2006). Moreover, along with Althusser's ideas about the capacity of the capitalistic system to disseminate particular ideologies in order to structure a sustainable social structure, Foucault tried to approach differently the way of how individuality is shaped (Rose, O'Malley & Valverde, 2006). He observed that society's values are shifting concerning three basic axes: technology, strategies, and programs. According to Foucault, we live in a programmed society, fueled by technology, which is unstructured to the level in which subjects think that they are free to choose, but in reality, there are powers that implement specific characteristics to them. This complex form of power relations is even more obvious in today's society, which is media-dominated (Berger, 2015; Rose, O'Malley & Valverde, 2006)). Media do not empower people to explore how



their identity is defined, as the forged society (pastiche) thrives. This situation does not allow the subjects to process critically the different societal phenomena and that makes subjects conveyors of a forged identity. As mentioned above, the cultural means are the most effective ones for the pursuit and modification of the levels of subjectivity and governmentality in a society.

Reflexivity represents the interaction between postmodernism, intertextuality, subjectivity and governmentality and its discourses (Zienkowski, 2017). The fluidity of those aspects can be articulated through reflexivity, as the discourses reflect any possible changes in the balance between those elements. As Zienkowski (2017, p. 3) observes; “discourse can bend back on discourse”. So reflexivity can be approached as a pragmatic perception of individuality, as it is the tool which self – monitors and self – assesses itself. The significance of the element of reflexivity draws exactly to that point because it highlights the importance of the interaction. As contemporary society is based on the interactivity of its elements, reflexivity is a useful tool for its interpretation.

### ***Identification of Generation Z***

Many scholars have tried to approach how generations are defined. Many of them are inclined to define the generational cohorts based on mutual historical experiences, rather than similar birth dates (Mannheim, 1952). Edmunds and Turner (2002) observe that the identification of the different generations is similar to the definition of cultural identity. The division of successive generational cycles is something diachronic in the history of humanity, as it is a useful tool for the examination of differences in similar demographic groups (Serazio, 2013). According to Pew Research Center (2015), even though it is difficult to set the exact boundaries for each generation, every generational group refers to people who are born in a 15 – 20 years span. However, how does the demographic approach identify particular social tensions? Since the demographic approach is not precise and it does not reflect what shapes and determines the characteristics of each generation, it is suggested that generations are social constructs, instead of biologically constructed (Bourdieu, 1993; Serazio, 2013).

The factors that determine the establishment of generational cohorts are three according to Pew Research Center; the life - cycle effects, the period effects, and the cohort effects. The life – cycle effects are summarized under the differences between the younger

or older members of society and how their approaches towards societal events differ in alignment with their age. An example of great significance is how younger people approach politics more reluctantly than older people. However, the study observes that as people get older, this phenomenon changes. For instance, the same happened with Baby Boomers, who are now at the peak of their engagement in politics. While they were younger, their voting rates were similar to Millennials' or adult Gen Zers' rates. The second factor that helps the establishment of generations is the period effect. The period effects are spotted when social transformations of major significance happen. The social changes concerning issues such as technology, economy, diversity, wars, national security etc. impact the entire population regardless of their age. The most apt example is how the terrorist attack of 9/11 changed American society forever by establishing widespread fundamentalist narratives in American society. Finally, the third process for the dissemination of generations is the cohort effects. The cohort effect is based on how a particular event influenced the forming processes of a generation, while other generations had already established their characteristics. However, there are some events that can be determined that would have an impact in many generations. For instance, technological evolution has affected Millennials and Gen Zers. Hence, those factors shed light on how societal events are decisive factors in the shaping of generation's beliefs, attitudes, and values (Berger, 2018).

## **2.2 Conceptual framework**

Therefore, a generation is constituted by people who were born in the same period and were exposed to the same social transformations (McCrindle, 2015). Simultaneously, the process for the articulation of the generational characteristics is ongoing as the members of the generation have different values and approaches in different periods of their lives (Burrus, 2016). Gen Z is widely known as the most communicative and connected generation, whose main values and attributes have been constructed due to their engagement to social media and technology in general (Bernstein, 2015). However, two critical factors for the formation of their identity played the financial crisis of 2008 and the significant technological evolution, which led to radical social changes. These major incidents and its consequences contributed to the Gen Zers' pluralistic point of view. Based on the theoretical approach of how identity is established in postmodern society, this subsection will focus on how Gen Z is conceptualized. The following subsections will

theoretically approach the characteristics of the generation by referring back to the research question.

### ***Materialism***

The dominant socio-economic system can explain a particular characteristic of Gen Z; materialism. As it is addressed above, social elements can shape the articulation of specific social discourses. Additionally, Lazzarato (2014), who approached the interactivity between capitalism and society, suggested that capitalism can structure societal identities in the same way that this financial model structures and dictates economic flows. Because members of Gen Z were raised during the financial crisis of 2008 and experienced the consequences of economic insecurity (Inglehart, 2014), they focused on the elimination of this trend by adopting a materialistic perspective (Singh, 2014).

Moreover, the recession of 2008 as a cohort effect can play a role in the establishment of Gen Z's identity. When the financial crisis broke through, Gen Zers were underage but the consequences of this economic upheaval were distinct several years later. According to Berger (2015), society imprints people in the first seven years of their lives and shapes their attitude. For instance, Gen Zers, while they were underage, watched their parents lose their jobs and face house evictions and huge debts. That's why they are seeking social and economic stability. According to Mannheim (1993), education is the most effective way to be independent. For that reason, Gen Z is the most educated generation.

Thus, materialism is a solid ground for the interpretation of modern society. As technology and media play a significant role in society, they also outline how the materialism of Gen Z is established. According to Guattari and Deleuze materialism can be re-established and adapted to new technological contexts (Parikka, 2014). In this specific case of Gen Z, the phenomenon of materialism grows exponentially due to the increasing circulation of products in social media. Through the interaction between users and products, a media ecosystem, which cultivates and eventually amplifies an increasing consuming trend, is produced (Parikka, 2014). As Gen Zers are considered the "digital natives" of society, it is crucial to research how their overexposure to social media can contribute to their materialistic tendencies.

In order for the marketers to approach the unique expectations and attributes of Gen Zers (Williams & Page, 2011), they need to take into account the generation's attributes (Noble & Schewe, 2003). Gen Z casts light on diverse values and it "requires" the establishment of a marketing segment that responds adequately to that (Babin & Harris, 2016). The marketers seem to be inclined to profit from the commodification of the values of the generation (Serazio, 2015; Stern, 2008). Through that process, there is an interaction between Gen Zers, who attempt to define themselves through life transitioning changes (Stern, 2008) and the marketers, who capitalize the transformations of the generations by channeling the identity characteristics of Gen Z in the digital branding industry (Herring, 2008). The advertising perspective outlines the generational identification, as it imitates the manner that society structures the social phenomena (Serazio, 2015). It justifies why Gen Zers are important for the marketers and, on the other hand, in this subsection, the capacity of the generation to have an impact in the advertising industry is portrayed.

### ***Technology***

Taking into consideration the fluidity of generations (Alanen, 2001), the identification of the most contemporary generation is an ongoing and negotiating process. Due to the extreme technological progress, the process of setting up the characteristics of Gen Z has deeply changed. The fact that information is so easily accessible and especially the fact that younger people upload deliberately their personal data has changed the way the identity is established (Palfrey & Gasser, 2010). Hence, Gen Zers as digital natives are more likely to shape their identity through their online profiles (Serazio, 2015). As their public profile becomes the "cornerstone" of their identity (Turow, 2016), a "peer - personality" with forged characteristics is created. Those characteristics resemble the original generational ones but they are in fact distorted due to the distraction of technological biases. So, one can say that Gen Zers' identity is highly defined by the digital era and those characteristics constitute the generations' characteristics and shape its members' behavior and attitudes accordingly.

It is observed by many scholars that the heavily mediated society uses advertising as an identification tool for the generational definition (Serazio, 2015). The mass society, where Gen Zers live in, is the same in which Millennials flourished and established their identity. In general, Millennials and Gen Zers seem to have many things in common. The

coherence between those generations is attributed to media and advertising (Serazio, 2015). Nevertheless, the critical point at which the generational notion between those digital generations was split was the fact that Gen Zers were born into digital technology, especially the younger members of the generation, while Millennials, eventually, got used to it. While technology became a habit of everyday life, Web 2.0 generated personalized content by exploring to what extent media can influence the characteristics of the formation (Stern, 2008).

When members of Gen Z started entering their late – adolescence, the potential exploitation of the digital space for commercial purposes raised questions. Sociologists have pointed out that generational identity cannot be spontaneous (Berger, 2015) and it is heavily dictated by social phenomena. The consequences of how Gen Z experience the mediated society will be defined by the media representations in their formative years (Aroldi et al., 2011). The period effect of media and technology can identify a “generational semantic” of Gen Z (Aroldi et al., 2011), (Colombo, 2011). The semantic is defined by how technology has not only an apt and tangible dimension but also a “symbolic” dimension (Silverstone, 1994). Taking into consideration the duality of media, one can easily observe how media constantly impact our everyday life by creating cultural traits that eventually structure the generational identities. Even though technological evolution was not restricted to the development of Web 2.0, technological inventions such as the refrigerator or the dishwasher didn’t have the same capacity to create identities. That happened due to the fact that those technological aspects had no semantic dimension and they could not communicate the audience’s transformations (Vittadini, Siibak, Reifova & Bilandzic, 2013).

An interesting approach is how Lazzarato used in his book “Signs and Machines” in 2014 the element of subjectivity to interpret Foucault’s theory of governmentality from a modern perspective. Specifically, governmentality is the comprehension of the used techniques and procedures for the direction and the implementation of particular human attitudes and attributes. On the one hand, the aforementioned distinctions in the formation of identity, as they are implicated by the concept of subjectivity, can be explained through the concept of governmentality (Rose, O’Malley & Valverde, 2006). Similarly, Gen Z can establish its characteristics by constructing a collective identity. However, this collective identity has not the capacity of shaping individuals’ wills. The wider

context, in which the collective identity of Gen Z can be structured is the advertising industry, as it is represented in social media, especially (Serazio, 2018).

### ***Diversity***

On the other hand, Millennials started transforming the definition of diversity and inclusivity by changing radically their traditional meaning (Smith & Turner, 2015). The transformation became more apparent in the members of Gen Z, as they distanced themselves more from the traditional approaches of diversity by trying to eliminate the boundaries that were established by Gen X and the Baby Boomers. The digital environment in which Gen Zers were raised and the connectivity capacities it offered provided the breeding ground for them to establish new values and meanings. The diverse nature of the generation embraced various people independently from their race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and ethnicity (Smith & Turner, 2015).

However, the spread of technology was just one of the factors that led Gen Zers to be the most diverse generation in history. As people are imprinted by societal behaviors in the first seven years of their lives (Berger, 2015, p.30), Gen Zers watched their parents embrace feminist attributes and, simultaneously, they observed the elimination of patriarchic stereotypes concerning the superior position of the male parent. Especially those who were born after 2000 and their parents are Millennials can embrace those attributes more effectively, as Millennials started observing this slow societal shift.

According to Pew Research Center (2019), Gen Zers will more likely know someone and, most importantly, will accept someone who is homosexual, has fluid sexuality or identifies as gender-neutral. Also, they will be more open and favorable regarding same-sex marriages than Gen Xs and Boomers. These outstanding diversity rates can be contributed to the awareness which was raised by LGBTQ movements and their hard efforts to establish homosexuality as something normal and common. Moreover, based on the same research of the Pew Research Center (2019), Gen Zers are the most racially diverse generation. Almost 53% of Gen Zers are non – Hispanic white, while the representation of Black and Asian people increased exponentially. In such a racially diverse proportion in the generation, its members are embracing immigrants in their countries, as they reflect the experiences of many of them.

### ***Politics and education***

A significant aspect of Gen Z's identity is how they constantly evaluate the society they live in. This generational trait is widely connected to their relationship with social media. Gen Zers assess socioeconomic conditions, products and services online all the time. The constant evaluation, eventually, contributes to the extension of the formative years of the generation by establishing an active interaction between them and society. This tendency of Gen Zers reveals the significance of the self – categorization in the comprehension of the generational phenomena. While the identification of individuals in groups can contribute to the enhancement of the sense of affiliation, certainty and safety, it may depersonalize the members of the groups (Sherman, Sherman, Percy, & Soderberg, 2013). Social identity theory aligns with generational identity theory. Simultaneously, the individual identifies particularly with the characteristics of the generation. Through that process, they set boundaries with society and eventually he/she creates social identity, which is based on generational, societal and personal motives simultaneously (Rossem, 2018). Hence, the creation of generational characteristics is a double loop process, constant interactivity between society and its members.

Regarding Gen Zers' political opinions, Pew Research Center (2018) conducted a survey, which revealed that Gen Zers are more liberal than the other generations. This political connotation may happen as they are thought to be the most educated generation so far and there is a correlation between education and liberalism (Berger, 2015). However, as it is mentioned above, Gen Zers are not quite engaged with the political dimension of society. Their age is definitely a reason that this phenomenon occurs, as it is already discussed above. Moreover, the fact that their identity is still under formation contributes to their low engagement.

Even though the political perception of the generation is not yet completed, the advertising channels examine how Gen Zers' political values can be integrated into their identity (Buckingham, 2008). The use of terms such as "democracy" and "liberation" (Serazio, 2015, p. 603) contextualizes how the digital branding utilizes the semantic dimension of those values in order to frame their commercial profiteering. Similarly, with the aforementioned characteristics of materialism and diversity, digital advertising is capable of establishing and articulating identities, since technology constitutes the fundamental and shaping element of the modern era (Johnson, 2006).

## **Chapter conclusion**

In this theoretical chapter, the aim was to articulate the phenomenon of Gen Z. The first subsection utilized the notion of postmodernism and other associated terms such as intertextuality and governmentality in order to frame theoretically the discourse of Gen Z. Moreover, in this subsection, a brief overview of the generational identification was presented of the generational identification. The following subsection portrayed how the generation is conceptualized and whether its concepts interact actively with the modern mediated society. Additionally, it illustrated how the marketers approach the characteristics of the generation. This subsection is of utmost significance, as it will be substantiated through the methodological approach in order to yield the results of the research. The addressed aspects of this section traverse the thesis, as they constitute the theoretical background of this research design.



### **3. Methodology**

#### **Chapter overview**

The methodological approach of the research will be described in this chapter. The goal of the chapter is to shed light on how business newspapers communicate the contextualization of Gen Z from a methodological approach. The first subsection of the chapter will focus on the justification of the methodology along with a short description of the research design. The second subsection will contain a thorough definition of the dataset and argumentation about the reasons why the particular units of data were collected. Then follows the third subsection, where the operationalization of the research design is described. Operationalization is defined as the discussion of the linkage between the theoretical concepts and the methodological tools used. The fourth subsection will explain how the research will be conducted. This explanation has a dual role because it aims not only to define the methodological procedure but also to clarify how the researcher guarantees the credibility and the transparency of the research design. Finally, the last subsection will approach the credibility and validity issues. In this subsection, some research limitations will be discussed

#### **3.1 Research design**

In order to cover thoroughly the multi-layered topic of Gen Z, the research design will be based on a combination of corpus linguistics methodology and critical discourse analysis. This research design will enable the equal representation between quantitative and qualitative elements, which will eventually allow the conduction of a detailed analysis (Wodak and Meyer, 2003). The method that combines both corpus linguistics methodology and critical discourse analysis is corpus – assisted discourse studies (CADS), in which corpus linguistics is simultaneously integrated into an analysis based on the discursive process. According to Hardt – Mautner (1995) this method eliminates the pitfalls and the limitations of the other two methods by providing an “alternative analytical procedure” (Castello, 2015, p.11), which “exploits” them in completely new ways (Vessey, 2013).

CADS as a methodological approach does not utilize the corpus solely as a methodological tool (Baker, 2006). On the contrary, the communicational language used is

utilized complementarily in order for the researcher to explore how the discourses are implemented and disseminated (Partington, 2013). Through the discursive analysis of the quantified data, the researcher can explore not only how the discourses are contextualized, but also the optimal method for an actual depiction of the researched phenomenon in society (Baker et al., 2008). This happens because CADS makes adequate use of interdiscursivity, which is depicted in the corpus along with the extra – corpus elements. Eventually, this approach will lead to an explanation of the evolution of the Gen Z social phenomenon by contextualizing the different factors that had an impact on it (Partington, 2013). For that reason, the power of CADS over societal phenomena can be used for the interpretation of multifactorial and interdependent social factors.

The use of CADS can be characterized as flexible, as it allows the constant switching between critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics (Luke & Watkins, 2002). Each method individually cannot delve to such a degree into the dataset. However, CADS accepts the adjustment of the analysis from the analysis of the societal practice to the analysis of the societal structure, and this contributes to a more analytical approach to the researched issue. The relevance of the method with the issue of Gen Z becomes obvious, as the research tries to explore how Gen Z utilizes some social procedures, in order to contextualize itself in society by establishing its generational identity. The method enhances the analytical capability of the research as the corpus – assisted approach can “reveal much about social class, power relations and conflicting ideologies, and the opposition that is constructed and embedded in socio-political language” (Castello, 2015, p.15).

Consequently, by manipulating the quantitative capacities of the corpus linguistics method and the empirical power of critical discourse analysis, their interaction will lead to a better and more contextualized interpretation of the linguistic phenomena (Cheng, 2010). Except for a theoretical approach to those methods, their implementation on the dataset will be described thoroughly.

### ***Corpus linguistics***

According to Vessey (2013) amongst other researchers such as Baker (2008), Partington (2013), and Gabrielatos (2018), corpus linguistics is the methodology that approaches the linguistics features in a functional way. The functionality of the method can

be explained through the manner that it reveals a deeper relationship between society and language as there are subtle linguistic elements in textual resources (Partington, 2013). Through the corpus linguistics method, there is a cyclical procedure between the dissemination of naturally occurring language (Stubbs, 1996) and the implementation of societal phenomena. Hence, the language used is capable of transforming society, but society is also transformed by the used language (Wodak et al, 2009). Namely, corpus linguistics allows researchers to explore how language arises from societal context and, simultaneously, how it establishes specific contexts (Fairclough, 1989). So, this allows the examination of a large number of concordances that appear in the texts (Gabrielatos, 2009).

In order to utilize adequately the methodology of corpus linguistics, it is crucial to focus on the collection of the appropriate dataset. So, the corpus, which is called the compilation of the textual resources, needs to be salient by reflecting the complex entities between linguistic approaches and society (Vessey, 2013). Due to the fact that the compilation of many texts (in this research: 177 newspaper articles) reduces the deeper meaning of the complexity of the aforementioned relationship between language and society (Koteyko, 2012), the researcher needs to prove the salience of his/her textual resources. Salience in corpus occurs when the texts are centered around a similar subject and they illustrate it by using the same language and/or the language is used in the same context (Gabrielatos & Duguid, 2014).

Moreover, in order for the researcher to create a contextually salient corpus, he/she needs to utilize some other tools which will dictate the sampling criteria. First of all, the researcher needs to guarantee that the corpus “bends back” in the real world, so it is reflective of the discourses that it represents (Zienkowski, 2017). The emerging reflexivity, which will be portrayed through the distinction between similarities and differences in the textual elements (Taylor et al., 2013,), will establish the interdiscursivity of the text. Interdiscursivity is a basic element of the discourse related methodologies as it establishes the wider context, where the findings are contextualized. Basically, the methodology derives from the manner with which the texts are enclosed in the same contexts. So, corpus linguistics uses the corpus as the vehicle for the examination and the articulation of different linguistic functions in a wider societal context.

The utilization of the corpus linguistics method can lead to the minimization of the

linguistic and semantic bias of the corpus, and, for that reason, it is used in this specific research design. This happens because the analysis draws on statistically explored linguistic functions. Through that, the linguistic analysis is grounded on a concrete foundation, and critical discourse analysis can be conducted more precisely. So, the operationalization of the method takes place based on the following three elements: keywords, collocations, and concordances. Those three tools yield results that can be qualitatively interpreted, as they enclose a semantic dimension (Castello, 2015).

Firstly, corpus linguistics tools reveal the keywords, which are the words that appear more frequently in the text. However, the use of this element alone will most likely mislead the analysis, as their frequency will derive from their statistical dominance, instead of their sizable effect (Brezina, 2018). The statistical dominance of some keywords occurs as the corpus linguistics applications identify mainly nouns and adjectives, without embedding the keywords in a wider context (Kilgarriff et al., 2014). In general, the statistical significance of frequency should be taken under consideration only as it relates to statistical probability (Gabrielatos & Duguid, 2014)

Hence, the examination of the collocations in the corpus follows. Collocation is “the habitual juxtaposition of a particular word with another word or words with a frequency greater than chance” (Margarita et al., 2015), and the collocation is constituted by the collocate and the node. In corpus linguistics, the more frequent collocations are weak as both the node and the collocate can accompany many other words. On the contrary, Partington (1998) observes that the “unusuality” of the juxtaposition of not “matching” words leads to a “clash” between the textual items. This condition often reveals strong patterns as they can underline a wide variety of concepts (Forchtner & Kølvråa, 2012), while the frequent collocations may be excluded (Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008)

Finally, concordance analysis should be conducted in order to eliminate the researchers’ or even the theory’s influence upon the results (Gabrielatos & Duguid, 2014). The concordance lines operate in the corpus and they are used in order to find patterns of collocations. The frequency of the co-occurrences has a semantic dimension (Partington, Taylor & Duguid, 2013), as the concordances reveal significant contextual elements (Gabrielatos et al., 2012). But the significance of the concordance as a methodological tool derives from its flexibility to be sorted, filtered, counted, and processed further to obtain the desired result (Kilgarriff et al., 2014).

### ***Critical discourse analysis***

The purpose of this research design is to describe the relationships between discursive practices and wider social and cultural structures (Fairclough, 1995). Critical discourse analysis has been chosen as the most appropriate methodological approach because it can go beyond a descriptive level of language by explaining and interpreting events and texts based on a wider social context (Fairclough, 1995). Attempting to approach the complex and multidisciplinary phenomenon of Gen Z, the research will focus on how the textual form of language can be representative of the underlying societal discourses. As Fairclough (1997) observes, critical discourse analysis cannot be interpreted through common sense, but it should approach the different layers of the researched topic by identifying multi-dimensional resources that lead to the clarification of the presented meanings.

The utilization of critical discourse analysis and the revelation of the subtle meanings of the discourses are approached as a social practice (Janks, 2016). This approach allows the researcher to interpret and explain the discourse by entering the analysis from multiple points (Fairclough, 2003). Critical discourse analysis can reveal completely novel and unexpected discourses (Fairclough, Mulderrig & Wodak, 1997). The way that patterns are spotted, legitimized, and, eventually, reproduced through language (van Dijk, 1995) creates a particular frame out of which the existence of any meaning is impossible (Hall, 1997). Simultaneously, the approach of the discourses utilizing their intertextual nature leads to a dialogical process (Bakhtin, 1986), which reveals their continuous transformations (Jorgensen & Philipps, 2012).

However, interdiscursivity, an even more analytical tool than intertextuality, needs to be utilized. Interdiscursivity refers to the linkage between the nodal discourses and the field of discursivity (Jorgensen & Philipps, 2012). According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985), the discourses are the “knots”, which lie in a wider network of meanings, the field of discursivity (Jorgensen & Philipps, 2012). The nodal points establish that network, and the discourses are centered around those particular nodes (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). This approach enables and establishes a mixture of discourses, which rest upon a specific context and exclude the interrelations with other elements that are out of this specific net. Eventually, nodal points filter the relationships between the discourses and articulate a

unified meaning (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2012). The discourse of Gen Z functions as the field of discursivity, and the characteristics that articulate it are the nodal points. Consequently, the nodal points of this research design are “materialism”, “technology”, and “diversity”. The conduction of the critical discourse analysis will reveal whether those nodes, actually, articulate the discourse of Gen Z.

The representation of society, as it is depicted in media outlets, plays a key role in the interpretation of the provided discourses (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Due to the abundance of textual resources in this field, such as printed and online articles, blogs, academic papers, books, etc., the range of interdiscursivity grows bigger, since the interpretation of a particular discourse needs to be grounded in more linguistic approaches (Machin & Mayr, 2012). The fluidity of language amplifies the essentiality of critical discourse analysis in modern society. Consequently, due to the nature of the research, which is based on the analysis of articles about the multifactorial issue of Gen Z and the power tensions around it, critical discourse analysis is capable of not only highlighting the power and causal relations between the different discourses that constitute the topic but also providing an in-depth explanation for the occurred changes (Jorgensen & Philipps, 2012). Subsequent to the conduction of corpus linguistics, the impelling power of language can be filtered through critical discourse analysis and, ergo, this method can lead to a more critical approach of society (van Dijk, 1995). Especially, when the topic concerns the different, yet related, perspectives for the contextualization of Gen Z, critical discourse analysis can simplify the components of this complex issue, and later, structure them again by outlining the interrelationships and interactions formed between them (Hampton, 1999).

### **3.2 Sampling and data collection**

The significance of the appropriate data collection and sampling has been addressed by Flick (2007). Sampling substantializes the theoretical assumptions into empirical results. The collection of heterogeneous pieces of data allows the researcher to delve into insights of the examined issue based on the comparison between the elements of the different resources. This research design is based on purposeful sampling with sampling criteria of inclusion described below.

As the borders between Gen Z and Millennials were rather vague, many

newspapers, online articles, blogs, and social media posts referred to Gen Z as post-millennial generation, iGeneration, or Generation C from customizations, along with cues such as Zoomers (a humoristic merge of the Z and Boomers). Since Gen Z is highly debated both as a demographic cohort and due to the unique characteristics of its members, there are many references to the issue in various media fields. For that reason, I have decided to retrieve my dataset from two prestigious business-oriented newspapers, *The Wall Street Journal* and the *Financial Times*, in order to guarantee the heterogeneity of the sample. Those two newspapers are major representatives of American and English society accordingly, but they have a global presence as well. Those two journalistic actors started using a query concerning generational distinctions and in 2015 they introduced the term “Generation Z” or “Gen Z”, in order to refer to the generational cohort that was born between 1995 and 2012. The significance of the dissemination of the term is constituted by the fact that Gen Z became distinct from other generations, and, most importantly, the generation became an active research - worthy societal phenomenon. Moreover, the specific newspapers were chosen because The Wall Street Journal represents a more conservative societal approach, while the Financial Times is aligned with more liberal stances. The different approaches of those two resources will possibly reveal different approaches towards the conceptualization of the characteristics of Gen Z (Hart, 2015). In this way, the contextualization of the topic will be covered by different perspectives, preserving the credibility of the analysis. Moreover, the locations where the newspapers are published played a significant role, as their difference can probably reveal variations in the contextualization of the discourse. Even though Europe and the United States of America supposedly have many common societal characteristics, there is a high probability that differences in how each of the two newspapers approaches the topic will be detected. Consequently, the common points and the differences that are detected in the sample will adequately reflect the relationships and tensions of Gen Z.

.The corpus of articles for the research design consists of 177 articles from the two newspapers, which are retrieved through Erasmus University Library and specifically through the use of the “Factiva”, a business and research tool, which collects data from various sources by using a query of keywords. The first inclusion criterion was the language, specifically English. Subsequently the query of the following terms was used: “Generation - Z”, “Gen Z”, “Zoomers”, and “Post - Millennials”. The use of these specific terms

constituted the second inclusion criterion. As a result, Factiva displayed only articles which referred to the phenomenon of Gen Z. Moreover, the search was restricted to articles from *The Wall Street Journal* and the *Financial Times*. Finally, the articles are dated from 2015 to 2020. The starting date of the chosen period is not random, as it was in 2015 that the term “Gen Z” first appeared in those newspapers, and in fact, the authors of the articles described a whole generation with this term. The significance of 2015 derives from the fact that Gen Zers started entering adulthood during that year, and, as a result, they started playing a more active societal role. Also, the fact that some of the articles used are written in 2020 will help to portray the continuity of the discourse of Gen Z. This particular time frame contributes to a thorough investigation of how Gen Z has transformed throughout the years, as the members of the generation are growing older.

While the newspapers published their first articles “timidly” in 2015, the publishing rate increased gradually. In 2018, only twenty-nine articles were published, but in 2019 that number tripled, with the two newspapers publishing a total of one hundred articles. Also, there was an imbalance between the number of articles published in each newspaper. The *Financial Times* published 71 articles in total, and in every individual year from 2015 to 2020 (except for 2018) they published fewer articles than the *Wall Street Journal*. The *Wall Street Journal* published 35 more articles for Gen Z than the *Financial Times*. This divergence in the number of articles can be interpreted by the fact that The *Wall Street Journal* has three editions: the printed, the online and the *Wall Street Journal Blogs*. Alternatively, the *Financial Times* circulate only in print and online.

Table 1  
*Appeared Articles concerning Generation Z per newspaper*

Year	Financial Times	Wall Street Journal	Total:
2015	1	7	8
2016	-	3	3
2017	7	15	22
2018	16	13	29
2019	43	57	100
2020	4 (until today)	11 (until today)	15
Total:	71	106	177



### 3.3 Operationalization

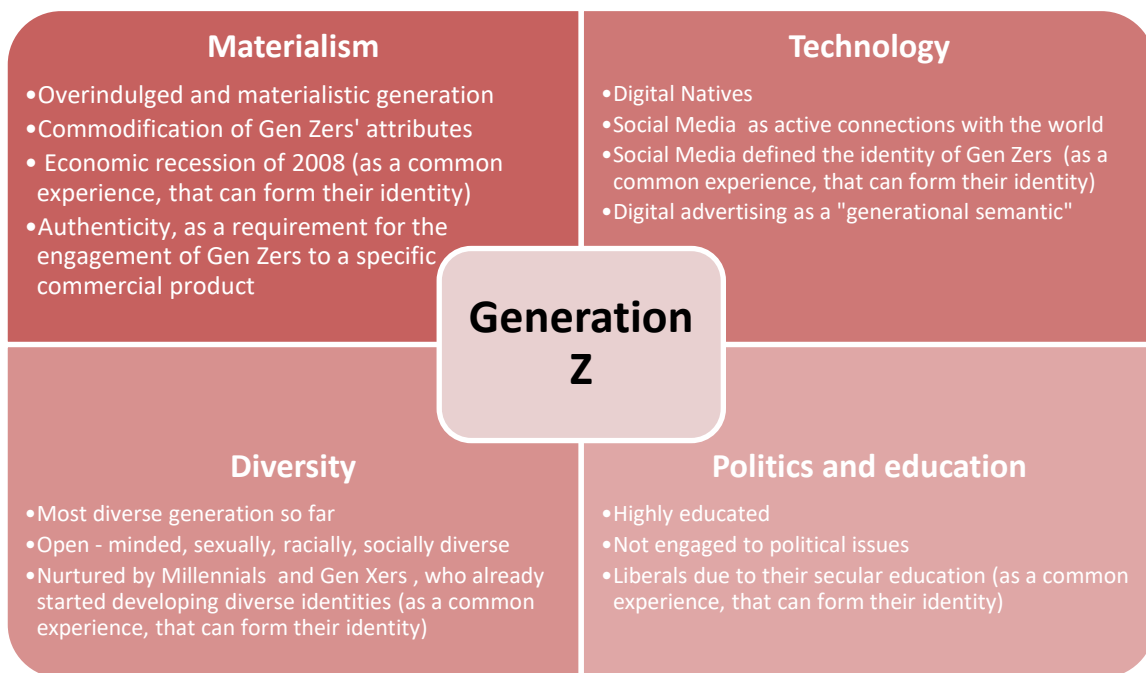


Figure 1: Operationalization of discourses

Since the methodological approach is required to reflect the research question, this subsection will focus on how the utilized tools reflect the conceptual framework. The characteristics of Gen Z are already contextualized in the theory section and refer to four different characteristics: "Materialism", "Technology", "Diversity" and "Politics and Education". Moreover, it is a matter of great significance to discuss how the nodal discourses that frame the researched discourse are outlined by the chosen method. The proper operationalization of the methodological tools will eventually reveal the real dimension of the examined discourses, which is the ultimate purpose of the research.

Taking into consideration the research question "How is the discourse of Generation Z established in business-oriented newspapers?" the operationalization of the discussed theoretical notions will aid the construction of measurable and valuable elements that subsequent to the analysis will, eventually, articulate the discourse of Gen Z. In the conceptual framework, it is argued that the materialistic dimension of Gen Z is influenced by the economic recession of 2008. The attributes that Gen Zers gained through this common experience, and the power of common experiences to form identities (Serazio, 2012) led to a different advertising approach of the generation by the marketers. Through critical discourse analysis, it will be revealed how this interrelationship functions and

whether the materialistic discourse, actually, structured Gen Z. Subsequently, the technological nature of the generation is addressed in the theory section. Taking into account that, Gen Zers have been characterized as the digital natives, the analysis will unveil the reasons why technology is quite a significant aspect of the generational identity. Moreover, the analysis of the corpus of the articles will disclose elements regarding the capacity of social media to form and establish identities, and specifically, how they established the identity of Gen Z. Moreover, the notion of diversity is highly debated, as it signifies a radical transformation of the modern society. Based on the theoretical approach and the looser boundaries between the different groups of people, along with the conceptual framing of the diversity of generation, the methodological proposition will address the articulation of this aspect of the generational identity. Finally, the political and educational dimensions of Gen Z are summarized in the fact that Gen Zers are highly educated but not quite engaged in politics, as it is discussed in the conceptual framework. However, the utilization of critical discourse analysis will probably reveal insights about those issues, which thoroughly cover this side of the Gen Z identity. All those notions will be contextualized in a wider context of how advertising confronts those characteristics and how advertising aids the dissemination of the generational identification features.

Even though, the notion of “variables” is used in quantitative research, the aforementioned operationalization provides to this research design measurable elements. Since the use of corpus linguistics will create a “fishing - net” (Jorgensen & Philipps, 2012) based on the most frequently used words, collocations , and concordances this method will clarify further in the results section how those discourses articulate the wider discourse of Gen Z. On the other hand, the use of critical discourse analysis will help me to observe whether those concepts relate back to their conceptual framework and whether there are different elements that need to be discovered (Hsieh, & Shannon, 2005).

### **3.4 Data analysis**

As it is already described in theory, the contextualization of Gen Z is a complex issue, as it is dominated by various social factors which have been established and disseminated in the modern mediated society (Hall, 1997; Berger, 2011). From the search, one file with aggregated data was retrieved. The form of the files is .txt. Each article consists of approximately 1,000 words, before the parsing and the removal of the stop

words. In order to start processing the data, firstly, the corpus of the sample articles, namely 177 articles, will be uploaded in ConText, a tool that processes textual elements. After their upload in ConText, the articles will be parsed and stemmed. The purpose of that input is to ensure that every unit of analysis has the same form. After that, through the same software, the stop words will be removed. Linking words, and in general, every word which does not enclose a meaning in the sentence is considered a stop word. Subsequently, stemming is conducted again in order to guarantee that the new collocations, which are created after the removal of the stop words, still have their original form.

After that, the scraped file will be uploaded to the SketchEngine application. The use of this application will allow the conduction of the corpus linguistic analysis, which will occur in three steps: first the keywords will be revealed, second the collocations, and in the end the concordance lines. After the process of each different unit of analysis, the concordance lines will be the most representative of the concepts included in the dataset, which is why they will be used in the critical discourse analysis.

In order to operationalize the three-step procedure of the production, form, and reception, I take into consideration the relationship between the textual elements and their interactivities with the social elements (Fairclough, 2003). After realizing that the contextualization of Gen Z goes beyond a simple communicational level and encompasses domination relationships as it is mentioned above, it is obvious that the conduction of the analysis will occur at a macro – level (van Dijk, 2011). The corpus linguistics analysis provided the research with the representative concordances of the analyzed dataset, so the next step is to describe how this line will be utilized in order to reveal the qualitative nature of the research.

The research design will be analyzed based on the heuristic framework of Oberhuber (2008), which describes how the discourses are disseminated and implemented. This cyclical framework is similar to Fairclough's (2001) model for critical discourse analysis and it is comprised by the following: Firstly, the establishment and the articulation of the discourse; secondly, its dissemination; and finally, the implementation of the discourse in the terms of the "real world".

The first step is the utilization of interdiscursivity, in order to explore how similar discourses are contextualized. For instance, in this step, the research will search how the

generation of the Millennials is contextualized along with the search of similarities and differences with Gen Z. This generational struggle will reveal what is dominant for the generational identification by underlining nodal discourses, which operate as entities between different discourses.

Subsequently, the step of dissemination will examine how the textual elements adhere to some social processes. Through that procedure, the discourse will be transformed, and eventually, it will be recontextualized by integrating it in a completely novel way to the social frame. However, Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) observe that the linguistic approaches of the discourses are not dictated by the societal resources because the author cannot restrict completely the external influences.

Finally, the implementation of the discourse encloses its materialization. Even though it is difficult to comprehend the implementation both at a theoretical and empirical level, the utilization of the notion of the nodal discourses as a methodological tool aids the research. As already mentioned, the nodal discourses create a communicational web, where the discourse can interact semiotically with society. But most importantly, the nodal discourses have a dual role; not only do they harness the social implementation of the discourses, but they also function as “filtering devices (...) selectively including or excluding discourses in the shift from one discursive field to another” (Fairclough 2005, p. 65).

### **3.5 Validity, reliability and limitations**

Even though the presence of validity and reliability in qualitative studies is not as ubiquitous as in the quantitative researches, it is crucial to ensure that the methodological approaches yield unbiased results. According to Silverman (2011), credibility in the research is preserved by certain criteria. Transparency is a matter of great significance, and it has to traverse the theoretical approach, the sampling criteria, the data collection, and, definitely, the analysis. Transparency can be achieved through “low - inference descriptors” (Silverman, 2011, p.365), namely the inclusion of pieces of data that are not modified and/or edited. For that reason, the corpus of articles utilized in this research design was sorted based on the newspaper that released the articles along with the year of publication, and it was uploaded in ConText as original pieces of data. At the same time, the conduction of pilot tests in ConText and Sketchengine ensure the validity of the results. This happens because the preliminary tests on that software yield results that are reflective

of the conceptual framework, and validity is defined by Silverman (2011) and Zienkowski (2011) as the reflexivity of the sample towards the social phenomena.

Since it is not as easy to replicate the results in qualitative research as it is in quantitative research, reliability can be ensured through the triangulation of the methods. In this research, the complementary use of two different methods and the subsequent utilization of the advantages of those two methods establish a triangular strategy for the process of the results. Corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis establish a nuanced frame around the discourse of Gen Z by covering to a great degree the articulation of the generational identification. The use of two complementary methods guarantees that the results will be reliable, since they will be based on scientific elements instead of coincidences (Silverman, 2011).

The limitations of the research are summarized in the high probability of the occurrence of the confirmation biases. A usual phenomenon in qualitative research is that it can be restrained by the subjectivity of the researchers. Firstly, the similarity of the resources and the correlation in their meanings can lead to wrong argumentations. This effect is also amplified by the fact that it is easier to pay attention to patterns that confirm our beliefs than being quite focused on the data itself. However, the use of corpus linguistics, which is based on the statistical dominance of some elements over others (Gabrielatos, 2018), motivates a more unbiased interpretation of the results. After the summarization of the dataset, critical discourse analysis will take into account the statistical representation of the observed elements and it will delineate proportionally how the discourse of Gen Z is articulated.

### **Chapter conclusion**

This chapter portrays the methodological articulation of this research design. The purpose of the use of combined methodology is depicted in the first sub-section by referring to that combination as CADS (Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies). The following two sub-sections are devoted to the description of the methods used. The nomination of corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis is justified, as corpus linguistics helps summarize the data corpus, and, subsequently, critical discourse analysis aims at a critical engagement with the data. As a result, the transparency of data collection is preserved, as it is not only described thoroughly but also refers to the rationale behind the choice of the

specific units of data. Moreover, the rationale is illustrated in detail in the section of operationalization, as in this sub-section it is pointed out how the dataset relates back to the theoretical framework. Finally, the manner in which the dataset will be analyzed is described, along with a sub-section which refers to the reliability, the validity, and the limitations of the research.

## 4. Results

### Chapter overview

This chapter includes the presentation of the results. After the analysis of the data, this chapter will reveal how the discourse of Gen Z is represented in the *Financial Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*. The chapter contains six subsections. The first subsection describes how the collocations and co-occurrences function in the text, along with an exemplary analysis of the collocations of the “generation”. The following four subsections will be devoted to the analysis of the results for the appeared discourses, focusing on the contextualization of the following discourses: “*Materialism*”, “*Technology*”, “*Diversity*”, which derive directly from the theoretical approach, while the fourth discourse deviated from the theoretical framework as it included more elements. This discourse is established as the “*Social identity*” discourse and addresses aspects such as sustainability, education, and religion amongst the already discussed discourse of politics. Finally, the last section will summarize the findings of that chapter.

### 4.1 Collocations and co-occurrences

After running the “corpus statistics” command in ConText, the words are filtered based on the frequency of their occurrence. The keywords that appeared more frequently were “*company*” and “*brand*”, which have different functions in the corpus, as it is proven by their different modifiers. Modifiers are called the words that are adverbs or adjectives and provide additional information for the word they accompany. The total frequency of “*company*” and “*brand*” was 2,201 out of 200,000 words in total (company = 1,162 and brand 1,039). The following figure includes the 80 most frequent words, whose frequency range is between 1,162 and 283. When the word frequency is closer to zero, it is obvious that the semantic significance of the word shrinks. The keywords are in their lemma form, which means that they have been stemmed. Stemming is a significant step as it is crucial, that every word needs to be in the same form, independently from their position in the sentences. It is validated through that step, that the frequency of every word reflects exactly the times it is appeared in the corpus, independently from its form. However, frequency has no qualitative power, and its interpretation needs to be placed in a wider context. For instance, even though, the word “*work*” has a high frequency (n = 979), it

contrasts with the fact that the discourse of work appears in only four articles (see Appendix A). So, one can assume that “work” operates mainly as a verb, which is not highly significant in corpus linguistics.

Key - words of the corpus



Term. Color shows sum of Frequency. Size shows sum of Frequency. The marks are labeled by Term. The view is filtered on Term, which keeps 80 of 21.076 members.

Figure 2: Treemap of the most frequent occurred words

Subsequently of the spot of the keywords, it is crucial to define the collocations that occur in the corpus. The collocations frame the discursive representation of the generation in the articles. For the revelation of the collocations, the used corpus was not stemmed, in order to be able to yield complete sentences, instead of keywords. After the use of the SketchEngine, it was displayed that the keyword “generation” with frequency = 585, is mainly modified by words such as “technology”, “smartphone”, “diversity” and “customer”. Also, it collocates with verbs or adjectives that refer to “start”, “begin”, “understand” and “expect”. Moreover, the contextualization of the discourse of the Gen Zers’ requires comparisons with previous generations, that is why there are collocations with the words “Boomer”, “Millennials”, and “previous”. Finally, the adjectives that collocate mainly with the word generation are “liable” and “aware”. All those configurations around “generation” cover the different fields of discursivity, revealing underlying elements (Jorgensen & Philipps, 2002).



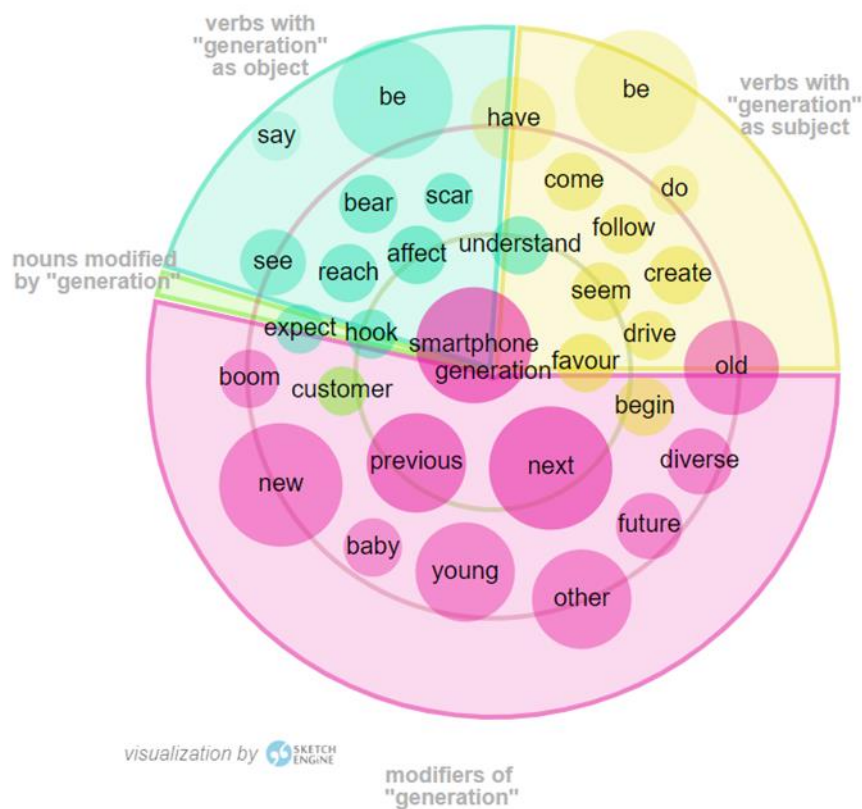


Figure 3: Collocations of "generation"

Consequently, the discursive power of the collocations derives from the frequency of the pairs in the corpus. Also, the keywords can have an individually higher frequency than the collocate, but the rareness of the collocate, often, characterizes its significance (Gabrielatos, 2008). For example, the collocation *"smartphone generation"* appears 14 times in the corpus, while the keyword *"smartphone"* appears 41 times and *"generation"* appears 245 times. The collocations, in general, are easier to yield data fragments, that include a meaning. For instance, *"smartphone generation"* is used in the title of the article *"Can luxury win over the smartphone generation"*. As it is already discussed in the theory chapter, the discourse of Gen Z will be contextualized, amongst others, between their digital and materialistic nature. So, the use of this collocate encloses the power tensions between those two discourses. That example portrays the reason, why the collocations have major semantic significance as they are capable of encompassing the discursive power. Finally, the prepositional collocations or the collocations with articles were not included in the analysis as they have not any semantic dimension (Blinder & Allen, 2015).

## 4.2 The discourse of materialism

Based on the conceptual framework, one of the discourses that frame Gen Z is their materialism. The discourse of materialism is adapted to a wider societal context (Parrika, 2014). Gen Zers experience a type of materialism, which is frequently collocated with the discourse of marketing, which is quite reflective of society (William & Page, 2011), and it can communicate and structure patterns that respond to societal needs. So, the articulation of the discourse of Gen Z is heavily based on how marketers approach the generation.

After conducting corpus linguistics in the dataset, it is revealed that out of the 177 examined articles, 39 refer to the materialism of the generation, while 35 utilize marketing, in order to contextualize Gen Z (see Appendix A). Those two discourses occur both individually and in combination with the highest frequency in the corpus of articles. Simultaneously, the most frequently occurring words are “*company*” and “*brand*”. Even though those terms are associated, in this corpus they function completely differently. The word “*company*” refers mostly to the discourse of materialism, whilst the word “*brand*” is correlated with the marketing discourse. Basically, the notion of “*brand*” refers to the linkage and the interactions between the product and the consumer (Sammut - Bonici, 2015). For that reason, the brands are capable of forming identities and values (Smilansky, 2017). On the other hand, the notion of “*company*” is a business term and refers mostly to more practical and technical aspects. It is safe to compare them as both terms have almost the same frequency of occurrence. However, this comparison does not show contrast, but it reveals how the terms and consequently, the discourses are complementary under the umbrella of consumerism.

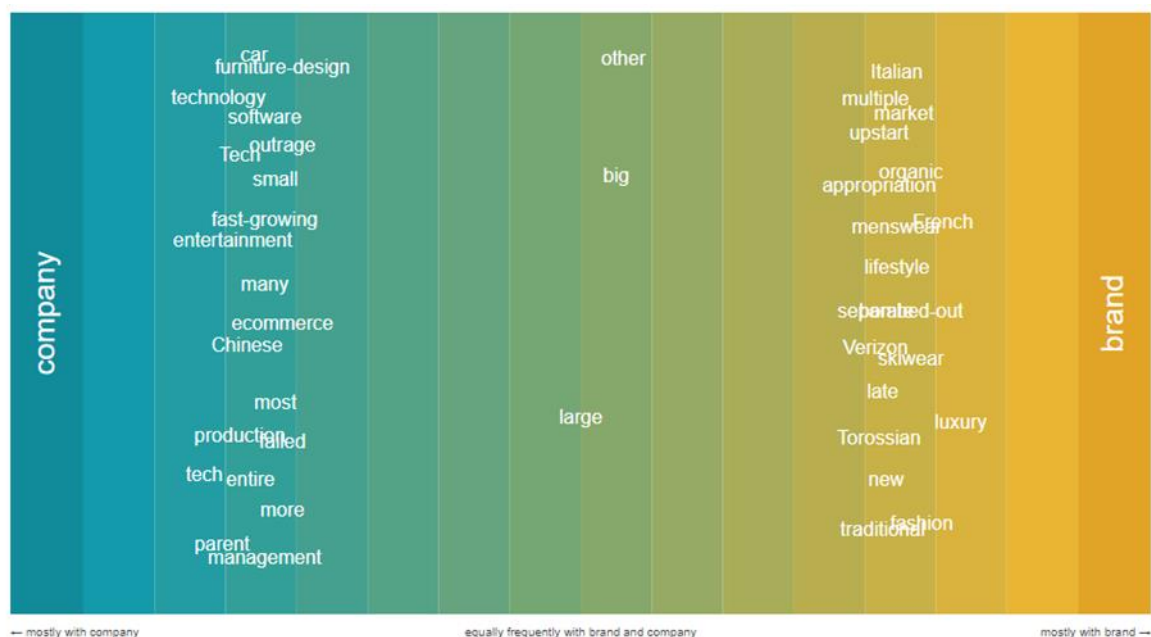
Taking into account the digital nature of the generation, “*digital*” is one of the main modifiers of “*marketing*”. For example, the following concordance: “*To meet that challenge, Foot Locker Inc. is focused on analyzing huge amounts of data, innovative digital marketing –and speed*” makes clear how the brands design their communication strategies in compliance with Gen Zers attributes. The generation prefers brands that represent their attributes, that’s why contemporary marketing is tailored exactly to the generation needs. Moreover, the keyword “*brand*” modifies but also, is modified by the term “*development*”.

This co-occurrence establishes the entity between society and marketing, as it is portrayed explicitly in this interdependent relationship.

Concerning the marketing discourse, Gen Z is contextualized around brands that are in compliance with their attributes. *“Savviness”* is one characteristic, which occurs frequently in the dataset, and it depicts the tendency of the generation to evaluate and review whether the *“brands”* are associated are aligned with their beliefs. Mainly technological, athletic and fashion brands try to build social narratives that will achieve the highest engagement. For example, technology brands: as Verizon, AwesomenessTV, athletic brands: NHL, ESPN, and luxury fashion brands: Chanel, Trussardi, Nordstrom, Zegna, Off – White, etc., promote commodities that are eligible with Gen Zers’ attributes. Verizon CEO sets straight how the big technological brands face Gen Zers: *“our company is going to go through a big transformation. We really need to work on creating an emotional connection with our customers -- current and future ones. Because as our industry gets more commoditized if we don't take that step, we won't be as successful”*. Similarly, athletic brands try to establish closer communication with their consumers by providing targeted messages to them. Finally, the fashion industry has already adopted Gen Zers attributes by providing for example luxury stores that *“Make their stores an experience. The high-end stores of tomorrow won't try to compete with online retailers on price or convenience. Instead, they'll do what many luxe shops are experimenting with now—turning themselves into destinations that customers go to visit instead of simply shop”*. Brands seem to introduce a holistic viewpoint towards Gen Z since they approach the generation by trying to establish common experiences, which eventually will form their collective identity (Serazio, 2012; Berger, 2018).

Therefore, materialism is established by successful marketing strategies. Materialism can be approached as an abstract societal term, but the materialistic attitude of the generation can be articulated through the analysis of the marketing discourse. Several articles refer to commodities that comply with Gen Zers’ identity. For example, Gen Zers prefer both luxury and hipster vintage items. This *“hybrid”* made the brands communicate the change by distributing their commodities to flea markets. So, it becomes apparent that Gen Zers have become the ultimate target group, which does not absorb and consume trends in an unsolicited way, albeit it creates the trends itself. Moreover, collocations such as *“luxury brand”*, *“luxury consumption”* and *“online flea market”* have a

high frequency in the corpus. This fact furtherly supports that Gen Zers have contrasting consumer attitudes, yet quite integrated into the same discourse. Consequently, the generation follows a cyclical procedure, where it dictates materialistic terms, and at the same time, it receives several triggers from the constant marketing transformation. The co-occurrences of the words “brand” and “company” suggest that materialism and marketing are nodal points, as they are closely associated with other characteristics of the generation such as technology, diversity, sustainability, and innovation. According to the following figure the common modifiers of the words “company” and “brand” as the main representatives of the materialistic and marketing discourses respectively hint that their combination implements a complete fishing - net (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2012), where Gen Z can be contextualized. “Company” is modified by words such as “technology”, “entertainment”, “management” and “Ecommerce”, while the word “brand” is modified by words such as “market”, “lifestyle”, “organic” and “luxury”.



visualization by  SKETCH ENGINE

Figure 4: Common modifiers of “brand” and “company”

As it is discussed above, the discourse of Gen Z has contradictory elements that comprise a new form of consumers. For example, the words “luxury” and “organic” are contradictory, as luxury is mainly associated with expensive leather bags, shoes, etc., while

the “*organic*” context includes commodities that comply with environmental protection attributes, which are far away from the use of leather in the fashion industry.

#### **4.3 The discourse of technology**

Amongst other “*experiences, financial insecurity, and historical events*” technology stigmatized Gen Z, as the “*tech effect*” traverses every aspect of their lifestyle (Berger, 2018). In this corpus 18 articles (see Appendix A) refer to technology and portray the changes that it imposed on music, entertainment, and big corporations in general. Companies employ technology in order to satisfy Gen Zers' needs not only to be online but also, to administrate many aspects of their lives through technological means. The distribution of music has changed dramatically. Gen Zers use platforms such as Youtube, and Spotify in order, to listen to music. They use Amazon to buy commodities. This transformation influenced the entertainment industry. The generation is “*obsessed*” with its “*screens*”, for that reason the entertainment changes and follows trends, which are nuanced in social media. For example, the show #FreeRayShawn is completely adapted to Gen Zers needs. It comprises of 10 - minutes episodes, which are available only in the mobile – phone version. This shift of the entertainment towards that kind of shows proves that Gen Z is capable of forming the trends by imposing their perspective in giant industries.

It is not feasible to write about technology without referring to social media. Nowadays, social media are the breeding ground for a majority of social trends (Potgieter, Adamovic & Mearns, 2012). Even, the business-oriented media – outlets, which are examined in this research, include articles such as “*How to be TikTok famous*” or “*Instagram, Gen-Z and the unfiltered truth about retouching*”, in order to orientate their readers towards this societal shift. Also, social media became major social actors, as everybody has the chance to cast his/her opinion. For example, two teenage twin sisters from Germany introduced through their Instagram account the music platform Musical.ly, a platform similar to Spotify. Musical.ly attracted public attention and as a result famous pop artists such as Bruno Mars and Katy Perry air podcasts there. The significance of social media derives from the power they give to their users. Although, it is not guaranteed that one will “*succeed*”, Gen Zers are content with that. That’s why they have endorsed the feature of social media in their identity. Even startups, which are associated mainly with

young people, do not try to make the Gen Zers distant from their phones *“Startups Hitch a Ride on Instagram. It's hard to pull people away from their social media accounts. Some upstart app developers don't even try”*.

Also, Gen Zers tend to seek help or support through social media. Their reliance on influencers and online communities are not restricted to everyday issues, but also, they search online for more specialized services. Online financial counseling is a very common practice according to the dataset. The financial insecurity, they feel, imposes them to seek a *“safe space”*, where they feel comfortable, and this place is often social media. The following fragment portrays this tendency explicitly: *“Chris Smith, enterprise social media executive at Bank of America, says the bank has research that suggests millennials and Gen Zers rely on influencers just as much as they do family and friends for advice.”* For that reason, big institutions occupy influencers, which will promote their products through social media. It is apparent from the various examples that social media are not only space, where Gen Zers spend their free time, but most importantly, social media are a useful tool that traverses the discourse of Gen Z.

The following figure depicts that the modifiers of *“media”* and *“technology”* correlate mainly in the word *“company”*. That correlation reveals that *“company”* establishes an entity between the previously discussed discourse and this one. Media are associated with the word *“mainstream”* along with a frequent term that collocates, mainly, with social media the word *“follow”*. The function of *“follow”* in social media lets the users connect by creating networks of friends and associates. On the other hand, *“technology”* collocates with more apt terms such as *“platform”*, *“system”*, *“auto”* and *“podcast”*. This figure points out that the term of media is enclosed in the wider context of technology.

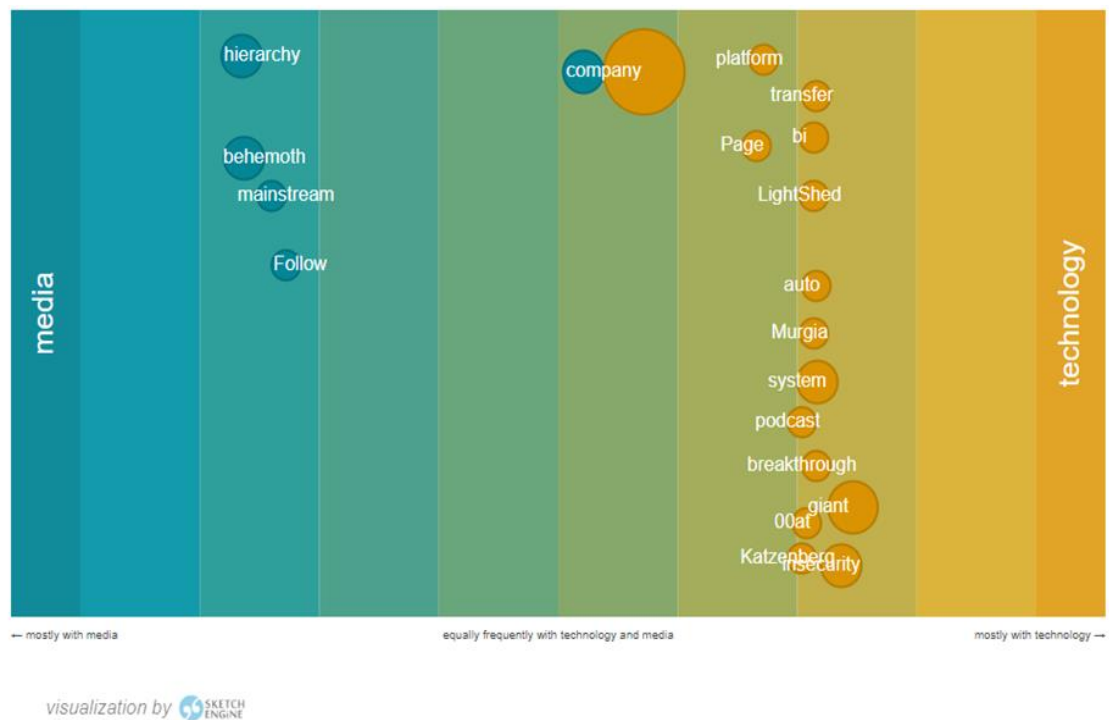


Figure 5: Common modifiers between “media” and “technology”

The figure, also, depicts a thought-provoking collocation between the words “technology” and “insecurity”. Even though technology is a “breakthrough” (also, illustrated in the figure), that transformed the societal structure, this collocation touches upon the caveats of this “breakthrough”. The insecurities that derive from technology usage are portrayed explicitly in the paragraphs below.

The integration of social media and technology in the identity of Gen Zers leads them to be “*completely the same online and in real life*”, for that reason, they think that the concerns about their overexposure online are “*overblown*”. However, a remarkable aspect is that even though, they are completely familiarized with social media, they feel anxious about their online privacy. For that reason, “*location*” collocates mainly with the word “*safe*”, while the co-occurrence of privacy is “*exploit*”. Online privacy is often undermined by data-mining companies, but also, Gen Zers are worried for individual people, who may take advantage of their online posts. From the dataset arises that they are mostly afraid to tag their location on Instagram posts, especially after the show “*You*” aired on Netflix. “*You*” addressed the story of a white male beyond any reasonable doubt, that stalked exhaustively random women on social media, and then, he tried to approach them by eliminating every prospective “*obstacle*”, even if those obstacles were real people (Berlanti & Gamble, 2018). This show raised awareness about the dangers of social media.

Moreover, its popularity revealed that Gen Zers take precautions about their online presence and they do not harvest solely the advantages of social media, but also, they take care about their pitfalls.

On the other hand, Gen Z has been characterized as the most depressed and anxious generation so far. The corpus does not cover thoroughly the mental issues of the generation with only three articles devoted to the issue (see appendix A). However, it gets obvious by the word's juxtapositions that Gen Zers try to identify themselves through the consolidation of their anxiety. Usual modifiers of the word are verbs such as "*suffer*" and "*ease*", but also, the verb "*paralyze*", which indicates how extensive are the mental issues for the Gen Zers. One of the main reasons for depression is financial instability, as Gen Z enters the workforce. Also, studies have shown that the heavy social media usage can cause depressive attitude or anxiety, as the users are influenced by the show-offs, that are associated with social media, especially with Instagram.

However, it is spotted that there is a shift in social media from the extreme show-offs to increasing awareness for mental issues. For example, The Wall Street Journal notes that "*Images of amazing vacations, flawless bodies and beautiful homes that once dominated social-media feeds are being replaced with snapshots of real life, with all its laundry piles and stretch marks. Celebrities and influencers are sharing more of their emotional baggage.*". The empowerment, which derives through that sort of social media use, embraces diversity and establishes a sense of community, which will be discussed below. Sadly, there is a backlash as the online communities are vulnerable to bullies, which take advantage of people's public comments.

#### **4.4 The discourse of diversity**

The corpus was scrutinized, in order to identify how the discourse of diversity in Gen Zers is legitimized. The discourse of diversity appears in 21 articles (see Appendix A) in the dataset and it is associated mainly, with the diversity in mass culture, the working place, the accommodation, and the education. Even though diversity is approached mainly around the equity between the genders or the races, the business perspective of the *Financial Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* can cast light on the contextualization of this discourse in less conspicuous fields. The articulation of the discourse starts with the use of the word "*more*" as a significant collocate of "*diversity*". The frequency of this juxtaposition



implies that many articles stress the gradual shift of society towards more diverse attributes (Smith & Turner, 2015).

Subsequently, diversity needs to be integrated into the discourse of Gen Zers. For that reason, the authors of the articles employ mass culture, such as music, sports, and series, along with highly trending topics for young adults, such as accommodation and work. Those issues are some of the matters of concern for young people, for that reason those topics can communicate more adequately new meanings. Especially, music and sport, as main representatives of mass culture, can amplify and transmit the narrative of diversity to Gen Zers. In the corpus, Ed Sheeran, Eminem, SuperBowl, the most popular athletic event in the USA, and Nike are utilized amongst other similar examples. As the financial power of those “actors” is indisputable, the research focuses on how this power is utilized for the transmission of diversity. Those artists are completely different, but Gen Zers are “*part Eminem and part Ed Sheeran*”. This statement underlines that Gen Zers are not suppressed by one genre of music and they are willing to explore completely different music. Simultaneously, Superbowl and Nike are caring to create a “*safe space*” for their consumers, by building a relationship of trust and respect between the brands and the consumers.

Also, series are embracing movements such as “Black Lives Matters” or LGBTQs by including characters that are Gen Zers and are supporters, or even they are representatives and members of those movements (black or gays, etc.). For example, the millennial shows such as *Girls*, where the characters seem unaware of the social changes and the embracing of new attributes, seem to be unable to portray this evolution. Even though, those shows had been aired a short time in the past, they cannot depict the diverse nature of the new generation. However, they create an interesting contrast between the ignorant Millennials and the diverse and aware “*Generation Z, the iGeneration. We’re racially diverse, sexually diverse, ultra-socially conscious, and hyper-sensitive*”.

Similarly, the criteria that have Gen Zers to find accommodation are slightly different from the ones that had the previous generations. In this article, it is portrayed explicitly how their need to address more diverse places make them move in less central areas “*why diversity, in an age of gentrification and soaring rents, may actually be found in the suburbs: (this is definitely true in my neck of the woods, where a number of African American friends have moved out of Brooklyn to Westchester*”. Diversity is not restricted in

the urban areas, yet more racially diverse people tend to move to suburban areas, which were previously dominated by the white economic elite. Also, *The Wall Street Journal* depicts the foundation of special accommodation units for people, who do not identify themselves based on the binary gender division (male/female). The construction of those houses helps gender non – conforming people to feel accepted and safe in their neighborhoods and houses, increasing exponentially “*diversity*” and “*safety*” for a bigger proportion of the population.

Another field, where the diverse shift is distinct, is the diversity in the working place. Diversity in the working place is established by the fair evaluation of the employees and constructive feedback. While the Gen Zers enter the workforce, this kind of leadership can enhance their diverse attributes as the impact of a healthy working environment can lead them to adopt this mindset in their everyday lives. *Financial times* host an article, where young employees express their dissatisfaction with the way the businesses insist on building only a financial relationship with their employees. The critical approach of the issue proves that Gen Zers want to face mainly diverse working places, where the work ethics comply with their opinions.

The dissemination of the discourse of diversity in society becomes apparent when Gen Zers, actually, act, in order to preserve it. The implementation of diversity, often, comprises protecting acts that aim to preserve the safe space of other people. The discussed article refers to the lawsuit that a professional ballerina filled against her ex-boyfriend, who circulated personal photos of her and other girls without their consent: “*“The suit also alleged that NYCB fostered a “fraternity-like atmosphere” that allows male employees to “disregard the law and violate the basic rights of women.” Other, “unknowing female victims”—fellow ballet dancers—are also mentioned in the lawsuit, unnamed.”*”. The fact that she spoke – up for what happened to her was on the one hand result of the most diverse society, where people can claim the rights of their bodies, but on the other hand, the lawsuit against a prestigious dance foundation contributed to an even more diverse and “*safe*” society. In general, Gen Zers are more aware than the previous generations because they confront many issues more in a more open-minded manner, but also, they are not afraid to interfere actively, in order to preserve a more diverse, safe, and inclusive society.

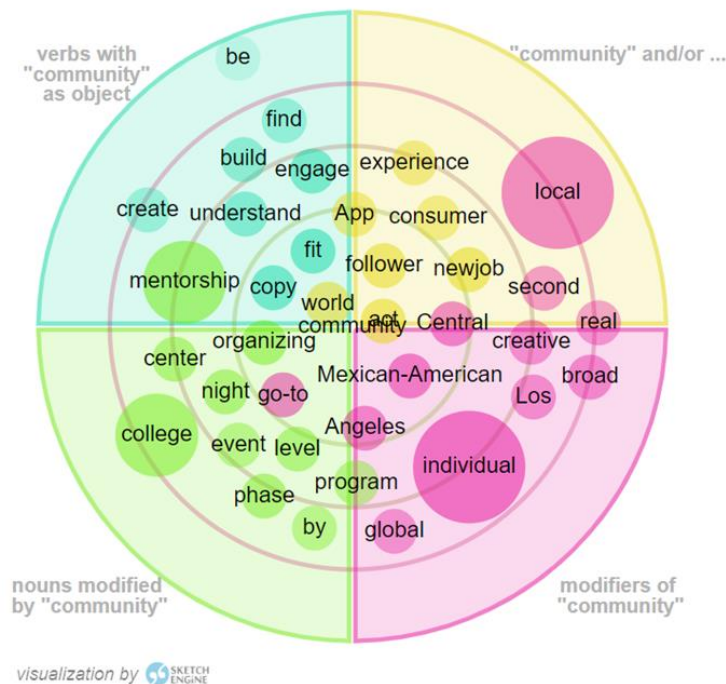


Figure 6: Collocations of “community”

The sense of community is quite important for the Gen Zers that is why they seek for that also, in their workspaces, online and in everyday life. That is outlined in figure 6, where the word “community” collocates with words that touch upon a variety of topics. It is observed that words such as “college”, “newjob”, and “mentorship” refer to the sense of community in the workplace or in the educational level. Also, the constant vigilance of the generation implements how they are willing to protect their community, ensuring that the established boundaries towards sexual orientation or gender-based inequalities will be eliminated. For that reason, verbs such as “engage”, “build” and, “understand” are apparent as highly frequent collocates of “community”.

#### 4.5 The discourse of social identity

The contextualization of the identity of the Gen Z is the desideratum of the research design. There is a variety of different discourses that refer to the generational identity, but also, there are 12 articles from the corpus that refer solely to the identity (see appendix A). The identity of Gen Zers goes beyond their racial or gender identity, and mainly focuses on how the discourse is articulated in comparison with other generations such as the Millennials. The distinction between the generation becomes apt through “major event or

social movements”, that occur simultaneously, with the dates of birth of the members of each generation. As it is previously discussed the events that defined Gen Zers' social position were the financial crisis of 2008 and most importantly the technological development. The same “experiences” make the Gen Zers act based upon particular patterns, which will be examined below.

Close analysis of the corpus revealed that the word “work” appears 189 times, while the word “education” appears only 24 (see appendix A). Even though the notion of work aids the articulation of other discourses, it is not a nodal discourse. The working conditions are illustrated by the fact that the collocation “gig economy” was the second most used collocation in the entire corpus. Gen Zers have to encounter short – term and often, underpaid positions, which mess with their anxiety and their independent tendencies. The financial insecurities, which they feel, make them more “happy with compensation than baby boomers”. Additionally, it is apparent in the following figure that “well - paying” collocates with work in a rather high frequency. Also, a highly occurring word is the “contract”, as Gen Zers want to ensure that they will get paid for their job. However, at the same time, they seem optimistic and ambitious and they are characterized as work “rookies”. Namely, they will ask for a promotion or a raise early enough.

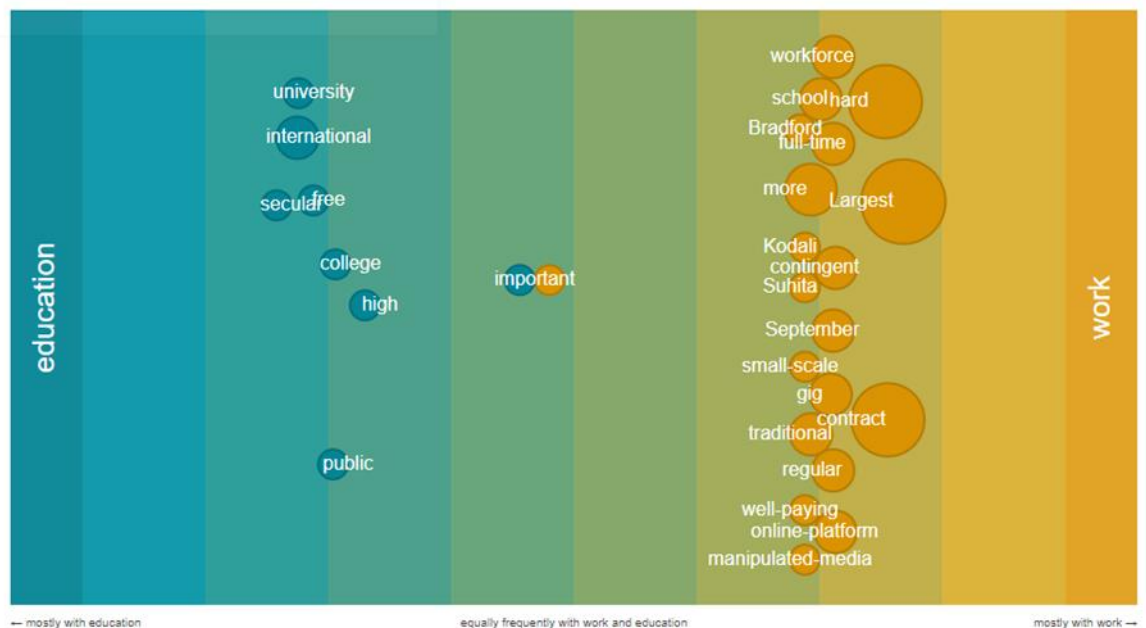


Figure 7: Common modifiers between work and education

At the same time, Gen Zers are thought to be according to Pew Research Center the most educated generation so far. The following figure visualizes that they think that education is more important than work. Many Gen Zers experience education as the “golden ticket” towards a financially stable lifestyle. Moreover, the generation can be defined through education, as education offers them a “secular” and more “open-minded” point of view. For that reason, Gen Zers are also willing to pay much tuition fees in order to get a high quality of education, but it is obvious from collocates such as “public” and “free”, that Gen Zers understand the value of free education, in order to preserve equal rights for everyone in their studies.

The discourse of sustainability has been detected as the main discourse in 3 articles (see Appendix A), and another 3 articles refer to sustainable aspects. As it is portrayed in the figure below; Sustainable is collocated mostly with words such as “development” and “funding”, by implying that it is a rising field of interest. Gen Z has embraced sustainability in nutrition, fashion, and in the wider context of the movement for climate change. Sustainability in the food industry can be interpreted in both ways; In the food itself, with the promotion of biological products, that do not harm the environment ( for instance the company Sweetgreens: *“The company, which says it sources all sustainable ingredients, wishes it were more effective at conveying its philosophy to customers and better suited to juggle demand from third-party delivery services and other channels”*) and with the configuration of environment-friendly packages, for example, *“Pizza Box Composting Gets College”* and *“The Latest Eco-Friendly Status Symbol? Water Bottles”*. The semantic significance of those headlines lies in the fact that those products enclose a specific business ethos, which is in compliance with Gen Zers' needs for sustainable and environmentally friendly commodities.

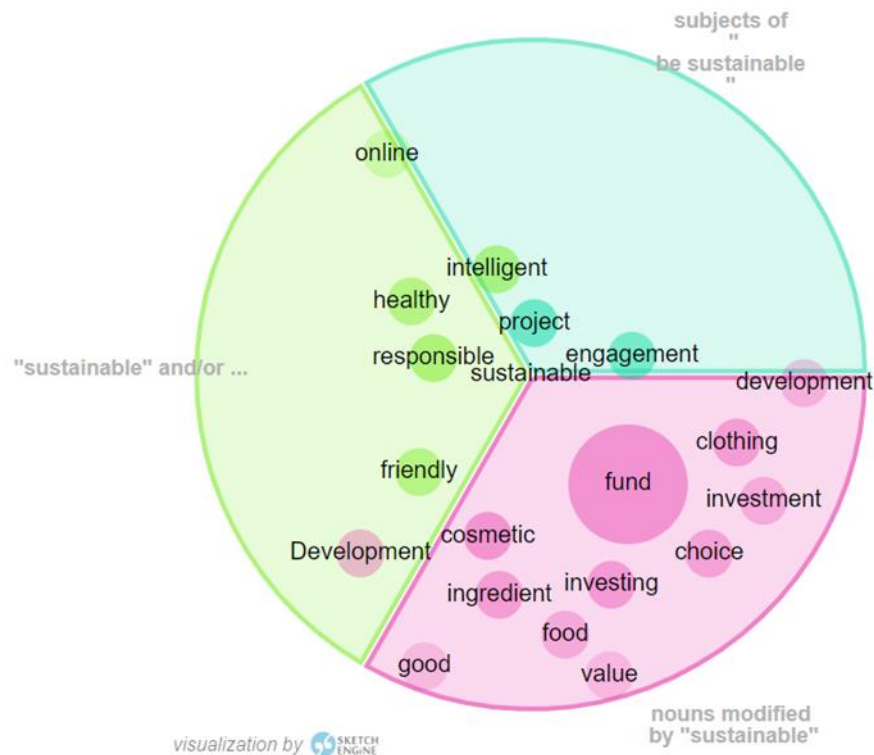


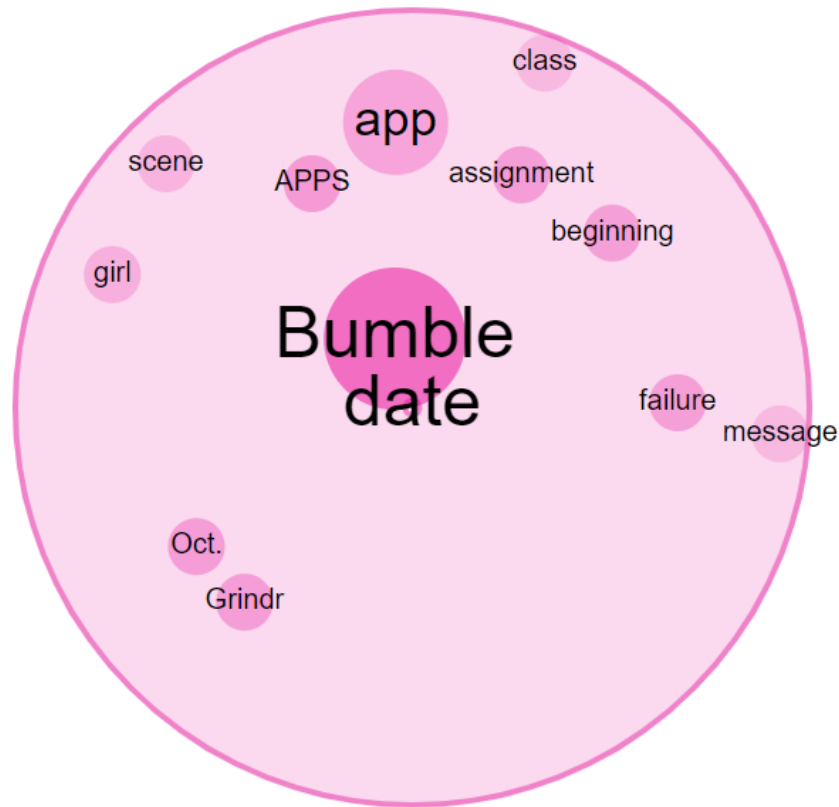
Figure 8: Collocations of “sustainable”

Simultaneously, the growing social movement for climate change and its representation of one of the most known Gen Zers, Greta Thunberg, signifies that Gen Zers are highly interested in the environmental aspects. Also, the engagement of the generation with environmental issues and their constant will to contribute to the changes towards the elimination of biodiversity and environmental pollution have gotten investors’ and marketers’ attention. That’s why “*sustainable funding*” is a frequent collocate. However, the investment in the environmental rescue is, also, funded by the Gen Zers and the Millennials (“*The reported preference of millennials and generation Z for sustainable investment comes as no surprise*”)

Regarding cultural aspects, social media contribute to the cultural mutation, which is discussed in the theoretical framework (Zagato & Vecco, 2015). As cultural mutation integrates every cultural aspect in the level of mass culture, a remarkable example from the dataset validates that Gen Zers live in a culturally mutated society. Four articles in the dataset refer to the rise of the popularity of astrology nowadays through the widespread of memes (see Appendix A). The articles that are dated since 2019 describe how the trend of astrology has been “*exploded*” due to social media. A journalist approached a girl, who did

astrological readings and she summarized how the field became so trending *“Social media has given astrologers who actually do the work a natural PR committee,” she tells me with a smile. “These meme people are providing access points for people who wouldn’t normally be into it. I’m all for the democratization of astrology.”*. As Gen Zers are open-minded and the field is expanding through social media it is easy to have access, and eventually, embrace the new astrology trend.

Another cultural aspect that has been changed largely, is the field of dating. Dating constitutes a cultural phenomenon as it reflects many patterns that are integrated into the identity of Gen Zers. The corpus linguistics revealed that 3 articles refer to how the Gen Zers date and pursue their significant others (see Appendix A). The analysis of the collocations (figure 9) proved that there is frequent co-occurrence of dating with words such as *“online”, “app”* and, *“failure”*. Amongst the other fields, in which the youngest generation transformed, dating was not excluded. As it is portrayed in the articles Gen Zers often *“fail”* to communicate with other people on a dating basis. For that reason, they seek online applications, in which people can communicate with each other. It is not a surprise that the word dating collocates with the *“Bumble”* and the *“Grindr”*, famous dating apps. Even though, in the previous years, online dating and the online seek of sex or love partners was a taboo and it sounded strange, nowadays online dating constitutes a basic element for the identity of Gen Zers. This indicates the implementation and the dissemination of radical social changes that were imposed by Gen Zers.



visualization by  SKETCH ENGINE

Figure 9: Collocations of “date”

Although religion is not discussed widely in the corpus, the distance of the Gen Zers from religion is quite remarkable, as it is the first generation that isn’t engaged to religion at all. The two articles that discuss the issue originate from *The Wall Street Journal* (see Appendix A), probably due to its conservative-leaning. Based on a survey, the members of Gen Z are way less religious than the young people of twenty years ago. Moreover, the co-occurrence of religion with patriotism is quite reflective of how people find religion and nation as complementary terms (Figure 10). The article “*Where did all the faith go*” assumes that Gen Z is not close to religions due to their critical approach towards the social injustices, along with the great impact of social media on their lifestyles. The progressive mindset of the generation rejects the element of “*faith*” by “*rationalizing*” their free will and independence.



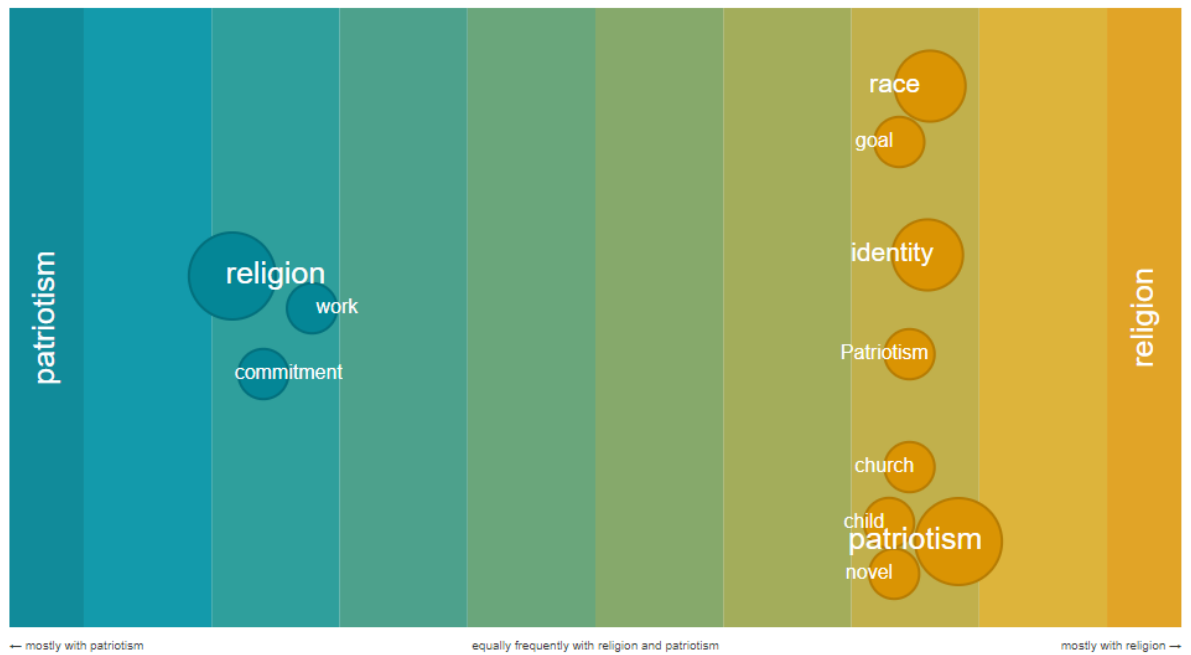


Figure 10: Common modifiers between patriotism and religion

At the same time, Gen Z is not associated widely with the political field, and probably this is attributed to their young age. In the corpus of articles, it is discussed in 5 articles, which are solely from *The Wall Street Journal* (see Appendix A). The conservative nature of the newspaper creates biases in linguistic approaches. For example, the author mocks the leftish association of Bernie Sanders saying that: *“The impulse driving Sen. Bernie Sanders’s popularity among a sector of young voters isn’t a longing for the days of Stalin”*. Regarding the identity of Gen Z, it is depicted in the newspaper that the secular and liberal education they received, lead the generation away from the political field. In general, the unclarity and the biased argumentation of the topic cannot help the proper discourse contextualization of the Gen Z for that aspect.

### Chapter conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter addresses the contextualization of the discourse of Gen Z, based on the analyzed dataset. This chapter constitutes a linkage between the conceptual framework, the methodology, and the corpus of articles. On the one hand, the conceptual framework is validated, since the discourses of materialism, technology, and diversity are of utmost significance in the corpus of articles. The vast majority of the articles refers to those three discourses, which are integrated into the generational identity.

Consequently, the contextualization of the discourse of Gen Z is based on the field of discursivity, which is established by those three discourses. The dataset revealed that the discourse of marketing aids the articulation of the materialism discourse, as it stresses the interactions between the generation and the advertising industry. In the conceptual framework, it is discussed widely how the market can impose transformations in the generational identity, so the results substantialize the theoretically addressed elements. Following, the discourse of technology refers to how social media traverse the identity of Gen Zers. The diversity discourse is associated with the discourse of the sense of community, as there is a causal relationship between them. The diverse and inclusive society constitutes the breeding ground for the dissemination of the sense of community amongst the youngest members of society. Finally, the discourse that refers to the social identity of Gen Zers has not been approached theoretically. This discourse emerged after the conduction of the analysis, as it illustrated other aspects of the generational identity. The elements of sustainability, dating, work, education, religion, and political dimension may have low statistical significance, but they portray in a more complete way the contextualization of Gen Zers.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The modern society legitimizes and naturalizes the discourse of Gen Z by not only grounding it in different societal aspects but also re-contextualizing those aspects from a new perspective. The examination of this interdependent relationship can reveal social asymmetries. This research concerns the establishment of the discourse of Gen Z and its contextualization through a business perspective, as it occurs from the data used. Even though the research of generational identity is widespread, most of the studies focus on the Millennial generation. However, few pieces of research cast light on the contextualization of Gen Z, and none of them articulates the discourse based on articles from business newspapers. For that reason, this research tries to fill that gap by relating back to its research question: *“How the discourse of Generation Z is established in business-oriented newspapers”*.

The research question, as the main core of the research, traverses the thesis as a whole. The introductory section stressed the societal and scientific relevance of the topic by describing clearly how the generational segment of Gen Z, as a concept, is significant for the marketers. Moreover, in order to illustrate the significance of the topic, it is crucial to point out the continuity of the issue as a societal phenomenon. The introduction contributed to the research design because it laid the foundation for its further investigation.

Nevertheless, the thorough examination of an issue requires its theoretical framing. Hence, the chapter that followed the introduction was the theory. In this chapter, the theoretical approach concerning Gen Z was discussed. The theoretical framework approached the issue of postmodernism, and amplified its characteristics, which concerned the mediated society. The wider context of postmodernism delineated the tensions that are created in the terms of the mediated society by establishing the narratives concerning the semantic dimension of technology. At the same time, postmodernism framed definitions such as cultural mutation, which explain how the business perspective plays a significant role in the structure of social and cultural elements. Subsequently, the concept of intertextuality was discussed. The importance of intertextuality, as a notion, derives from the fact that it can explain how the societal phenomena can be interpreted beyond

their conspicuous level and produce completely new meanings. After the establishment of the theoretical framework, it was crucial to link those relatively abstract terms to the discourse of Gen Z. The operationalization of the discourse included the contextualization of the generational identity based on general characteristics of Gen Z, as it was discussed by other scholars, the materialism of the generation, their diverse nature, and, finally, their political perspective. Those characteristics functioned as the entity between theory and the examined discourses, which derive mainly from this section.

Subsequently, the appropriate methodological approach is of utmost significance, as the proper methodology is capable of substantializing the already discussed theory. The methods of corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis were nominated in order to methodologically outline the research. Due to the big amount of the collected data, namely 177 articles and in total 210,000 words, it was decided to use the corpus linguistics method so as to summarize the articles based on their most important components. The collocations and the co-occurrences that were yielded were analyzed through critical discourse analysis. Every unit of data was analyzed in compliance with the discussed theory. The articles were also sorted based on the main discourse they were referring to. The combination of the methods communicated a two-dimensional analysis. On the first level, corpus linguistics sorted and counted numerically the occurrences of the data pieces, after which critical discourse analysis interpreted them beyond a prominent level. Consequently, the yielded results claimed their significance through both statistical and discursive dominance.

The theoretical and methodological approaches structure a field of discursivity whose “boundaries” determine the main tiers which the results were based on. After conducting corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis, the emerged discourses helped in the contextualization of the discourse of Gen Z. The utilization of interdiscursivity yielded four main discourses (materialism, technology, diversity, and social identity), which enclosed other aspects, such as marketing, social media, sense of community, dating and sustainability. The statistical dominance of the discourses of materialism and diversity proves that the generation is contextualized, mainly based on this dipole. However, the other discourses illustrate other aspects of their identity. The way in which the discourse of Gen Z is articulated in modern society is discussed thoroughly in the results section. Later in this chapter, it will be portrayed how the discourse is implemented and disseminated in

society. The textual sources and the analysis present the underlying meanings that are enclosed, while the following section will show how the results can be utilized in order to discuss their social implications

## **5.1 Main findings**

This research seeks to explore how Gen Z is established, articulated, and disseminated in modern society. In order to approach this multifactorial issue, the research took into consideration the uniqueness of the characteristics of the generation. Those characteristics were dictated by the significant mutual societal events, which Gen Zers experienced. Since, the generational identification is a wide field of research, this study established as its focal point the generational identification through a business perspective. For that reason, the dataset consisted of articles retrieved from *The Wall Street Journal* and the *Financial Times*, which validate that the issue of Gen Z is examined based on its business dimension.

After conducting corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis, the research concluded that the discourse of Gen Z is articulated by the following: the contemporary mediated society establishes a dipole of the materialistic, yet quite diverse nature of the generation. By analyzing the materialistic discourse, as a main “ingredient” of the discourse of Gen Z, it became apparent that there are contradictions, even in the discourse on an individual level. The modalities which were employed in the articles and referred to this discourse revealed that the generation seeks luxury items, but simultaneously, it embraces more hipster and organic products. At the same time, Gen Zers seem to associate with diverse attributes, which encompass diversity in the following fields: race (color), gender, physical and mental disabilities, and sexual orientation. This open-minded perspective also associates with Gen Zers’ tendency towards sustainability and the enhancement of the sense of community, as it is described in the results sections. Finally, the dataset reveals that Gen Zers do not identify with the notions of politics, religion, and nation. In this section, it will be discussed further whether those characteristics are in alignment with the discussed theory, and how the discourse of Gen Z is recontextualized based on the arguments provided both by the theoretical framework and the results.

### ***Interdiscursivity as social practice***

From the dataset it emerges that technology, materialism, and diversity function as the nodal points of the research, which reveals subtle identity elements for the generation. For the further legitimization of the discourse of Gen Z, the researcher needs to take into account that the discourses can be linked and create larger units (Jorgensen & Philipps, 2002). The discourses that contribute to the revelation and the enhancement of the other discourses are called nodal discourses, as they become the breeding ground for the discursive process (Fairclough, 1998), and they recontextualize the discourse based on the interconnected nodes. Through that process, the boundaries of the discourses are set by illustrating them as totalities (Jorgensen & Philipps, 2002)

Specifically, many of the articles do not refer solely to one discourse. Instead, many articles of the corpus are traversed by more discourses. Particularly, the vast majority of the articles (101 out of 177 articles) refers and contributes to the articulation of one or more discourses concerning the Gen Z issue. For example, many articles describe the diversity as a characteristic of the generation, but in the meantime, the business perspective is used as an anchor (Aroldi et al., 2011), so the article contributes to the contextualization of the materialism discourse as well.

However, materialism and diversity are quite broad discourses. The methodological approach led to the clarification, and eventually, the recontextualization of the discourse of Gen Z through the materialistic discourse. From the results section, it became apparent that the youngest generation of the modern era has often contradictory, yet complementary characteristics. The discursive dominance of materialism constitutes only one aspect of their identity. Under the umbrella of materialism, the critical discourse analysis revealed that the savvy nature of the generation imposed changes in the way that the brands communicate their products (Berger, 2015). Contradictory with the generation of Millennials, who were satisfied with the conventional marketing strategies (Serazio, 2013), Gen Zers can dictate the adaptation of advertising in their characteristics, as the corporations try to structure a solid customer base of the most-wanted generational cohort.

The shift in the marketing industry is defined by the way that the corporations started launching campaigns far from the traditional advertising method. They occupied social media and influencers, who are mainly responsible for the advertising of their

products. For example, Instagram incorporated this trend and gave to business accounts the opportunity to embrace the commercial needs of Gen Zers by providing tools, such as the “swipe up” in the Instagram stories and in-app purchases. According to studies, 80% of Gen Zers shop online in “visually appealing online websites”. So, the generational characteristics acquired commercial value, as they became the vehicles that the advertisers used in order to attract Gen Zer consumers (Parrika, 2012).

While the young consumers have access to the marketplace through their mobile phones, tablets, and laptops, and they find commercial items that respond more than adequately to their needs and requirements, they start buying things that have semantic dimension. Since diversity characterizes the generation, Gen Zers seek brands that respect their moral and ethical values (Smith & Turner, 2015). Under the pressure of the Gen Zers’ requirements, the brands encompass initiatives that respond to the social consciousness of the generation. The brands employ social responsibility strategies both in their internal and external culture (Sherman, Sherman, Percy, & Soderberg, 2013). Except for the social awareness attributes of the generation, their sustainable learning is also a characteristic that is adopted by the corporations in order to capture the generation’s attention. Through the commodification of those values, Gen Zers are more likely to engage with those particular brands.

Simultaneously, this shift in the business field has an impact on generational identity. Hence, through that shift, the generation itself can claim their characteristics further. The constant interaction between the corporations and Gen Zers stresses the generational identity. Through that cyclical procedure, materialism, diversity, and the businesses interact and co-produce a completely new frame of the discourse. Consequently, Gen Z is recontextualized, not only by increasing the materialistic and diverse tendencies of the generation, but also by inciting the corporations to adopt a more socially responsible profile.

Nevertheless, Gen Zers are active social actors, so they can also be perceived as political objects. Their political dimension derives from the fact that they have established a “regime”, where they can create trends based on the participation and the “virality” of their community (Shifman, 2014). The marketing shift, which was described above, is an apt example of the political power of the generation. For that reason, the generation is recontextualized through their political dimension, but also, the political discourse is

recontextualized in a new fashion by combining social segments, which are completely relevant to the identity of the generation.

Hence, the identity of Gen Z is articulated based on an ideological duality, which is aligned with the attempt of the generation to identify itself in an era of transitions and profound changes (Silver, 1996). This ideological duality is reflected both in the theoretical approach of subjectivity and the above discussed notion of interdiscursivity. Since subjectivity addresses the capability of the subject to filter its interactions with society in order to either influence or be influenced from it (Smith & Protevi, 2018), subjectivity constitutes the entity between Gen Z, consumerism, and capitalism (Bradshaw & Zwick, 2015).

On the one hand, the notion of sustainable and ethical consumption complies with Gen Zers' belief that they can imply social and/or economic change (Schwarzkopf, 2011). Through that argument, the need of the subject for individuality, responsibility, and sovereignty (Lazzarato, 2008) justifies how the capitalistic system integrates diversity and sustainability as its own characteristics (Shamir, 2008). Due to the capacity of the common experiences to establish and form identity characteristics, the commodification of experiences plays a significant role in the contextualization of Gen Z. As it is discussed above, the commodification of the values of the generation by several brands was apparent in many articles in the dataset. Thus, the consumerist identity of the generation is grounded on how the individuals interact with society in wider cultural contexts (Carrington et al., 2012), which reflect the generations attributes in an ideological level.

On the other hand, capitalism attempts to satisfy to the largest possible degree the consumers' desires (de Graaf et al., 2014). As Gen Z exposes significant social issues, which are already discussed above, capitalism needs to be adapted to the new conditions. The case of the non-compliance of capitalism with the social changes leads to the weakening of the system (Gilbert, 2014). For that reason, the notion of cultural capitalism can frame the discourse of Gen Z. According to Jeremy Rifkin (2000), cultural capitalism is the response of the capitalist system to the shift towards a more sustainable and diverse society, but simultaneously to the desire of people to buy experiences (Žižek, 2014). The commodification of experiences leads to the easier establishment of a collective identity and also to the enhancement of the sense of community. Therefore, this ideological framing of Gen Z functions contrary to the previous ideological contextualization.



Consequently, the re-contextualization of the discourse of Gen Z and the subsequent dissemination of the discourse in society is based on how the generation balances between its diverse and morally established boundaries and the reformation of capitalism in order to satisfy those requirements. Through that procedure, diversity and the responsibility in consumerism function as a leverage to the materialistic dimension of the generation, and, simultaneously, “the underlying capitalist structure predicates and benefits from it” (Carrington et al., 2014, p.13). Hence, Gen Z is re – contextualized based on the balance between those intentions for a diverse, all – inclusive, sustainable lifestyle and the contradictory power of capitalism to perpetuate a condition of lavish and excessive consumption.

Table 2  
*Transitions between the nodal discourses*

Nodal discourse	Field of discursivity	Argument	Articles in the <i>Financial Times</i>	Articles in <i>The Wall Street Journal</i>
(For more details see Appendix B)				
Materialism	Marketing	The savvy nature of the generation imposed changes in the way that the brands communicate their products. Marketers occupied social media and influencers, in order to shift away from traditional marketing techniques, which are not applicable to Gen Zers.	2,3,4, 39, 57, 60, 64, 66	1, 6, 9, 17, 21, 43, 48, 51, 53, 63, 88, 92, 94
	Social Media	Gen Zers find the products they want to consume in mobile phones, tablets and laptops.	8, 41, 49, 58	3, 11, 15, 21, 27, 38, 41, 52, 54, 70, 71, 73, 77, 79, 81, 103, 104, 106
	Technology	Gen Zers buy products, which have semantic dimension. The commodification of Gen Zers’ identity elements, make them more likely to engage with specific brands, which embrace those values.	19, 20, 21,23,28	16, 17, 25, 90, 91
Diversity	Materialism	The corporations adopt a more socially responsible profile.	5, 13, 65, 69	3, 24, 25, 33, 44, 74
	Marketing	Gen Zers create trends based on the participation and the virality of their community.	12, 28, 40, 51, 65	21, 22, 29, 33, 39, 45, 52, 56, 76, 104
Business		Cultural capitalism is the response of the capitalist	14, 28, 34, 49, 68	7, 39, 44, 45, 55, 56
Politics			32, 46, 63	24, 26, 71
			46	23, 26, 33, 35, 42, 57, 58, 59, 68, 77, 81

Capitalism	system to the shift towards a more sustainable and diverse society.		
	Desire of Gen Zers to buy experiences.	22	12, 40, 44, 45, 49, 59, 66, 67, 70, 82, 105
Gen Z is re – contextualized based on the balance between those intentions for a diverse, all – inclusive, sustainable lifestyle and the contradictory power of capitalism to perpetuate a condition of lavish and excessive consumption.		16, 30, 37, 42, 49	21, 30, 31, 33, 35, 39, 44, 47, 61, 62, 65, 77, 84, 86, 95, 97

## 5.2 Discussion of the theoretical framework

The theory section (chapter 2) discusses the contextualization of the generation in a two-step deductive procedure. It is called deductive because a wider framework of postmodernism was established, and subsequently, followed the discussion of specific elements that theoretically articulate the discourse of Gen Z. Postmodernism is a wide context in which the social change that was implemented by Gen Zers can be explained adequately. According to Zaggato and Vecco (2015), culture in the postmodern context is commodified by the mainstream media, which applies to the case of Gen Z. As it is derived from the analysis, many characteristics of the generation are commodified in order for the marketers to attract the youngest members of society. Technology played a significant role in the cultural mutation (Jameson, 1991) and the commodification of the values as identity tools. Berger (for Michel Foucault, 2014) points out that social transformation is articulated based on a specific technological context, which establishes an imposter frame concerning a freedom of choice, but in fact, this frame is completely structured and leading.

Taking into consideration the discourses of materialism and diversity, it is observed that the generation interacts with the marketers in order to contextualize its identity. The capacity of intertextuality concerning the social transformation through the interaction between the different social elements is also discussed theoretically (Zienkowski, 2017; Bloome, Egan & Robertson, 2017). Comparing these theoretical assumptions with the results, it is easy to justify the reason why the discourses of materialism, marketing, technology, and diversity comprise, in fact, different aspects of the same issue. Using theory as the discursive vehicle, as it is introduced in chapter 2, it is easy to comprehend that the articulation of the discourse relates back to the discussed theoretical assumptions. Moreover, many articles refer to those discourses by disseminating the way in which both

society and Gen Zers interact in order to adapt to the new conditions. For instance, both *Financial Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* included articles that portray the generation as an inclusive and diverse one, but those articles expanded the boundaries of the discourse in order to depict how those characteristics are incorporated into the wider materialistic or technological context.

On the other hand, the discourse of education (Mannheim, 1993) establishes the distance of Gen Zers from political, religious, and patriotic attributes. In the articles, it is discussed that the secular education that the generation receives creates a frame of people that approach those traditional values more critically. This argument diverges from the theoretical assumptions, as in the theory it was portrayed that Gen Zers are distant from politics, religion, and nation due to their age (Berger, 2015). However, it is of utmost significance that the “ideology” of the generation cannot be grounded on the traditional definition of “ideology”. The conduction of critical discourse analysis revealed that the dominant ideologies as the intertextual chain of the discourse of Gen Z were materialism and diversity. The incompatibility of the articulation of the discourse of Gen Z with the articulation of discourses such as politics, religion, and nation leads, eventually, to the dissociation of deep political, religious, and patriotic perspectives. Secular education can be perceived as a factor that led to this deterioration, but in any case, it was not the “critical hit” that isolated Gen Zers from this kind of perspective.

### **5.3 Social implications**

The implementation of critical discourse analysis as it is established by Fairclough (2003) allows the researcher to delve into the interrelations between the lexical choices of the author and the wider social context that dictated those choices. Specifically, the balance between the lexical and contextual elements analyzed through critical discourse analysis reveals tensions, dominations, inequalities, and power relations in the societal web. According to van Dijk (2012), this methodological approach is capable of pinpointing three basic dimensions that are necessary for the interpretation of the data: the discursive dimension, the cognitive dimension, and the societal one. Hence, those dimensions structure a three-layered frame. The first step is to establish theoretically how the discourse is contextualized in society. Secondly, it is necessary to explore how different social actors react to a particular discourse. Finally, the research needs to state how the

discourse is transmitted and implemented in a wider context.

Although the discourse Gen Z is not contextualized around an ideology with the political or economic dimension of the term, in fact, the generation attempts to be contextualized through the identification of the dominant ideology that traverses it. By theoretically approaching the identification process of Gen Z, it is stated that the “ideology” of the Gen Zers is quite diverse, yet materialistic. Fairclough (2003) observes that through critical discourse analysis the ideological dominance is negotiated, and it is structured around the possible absence or presence of textual evidence in the dataset (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Most likely, this negotiation will reveal if this progressive ideological approach of the generation will be conspicuous in the articles of the Financial Times and The Wall Street Journal.

The transdisciplinary nature of the qualitative method needs to utilize various fields. For that reason, the theory section refers not only to social conditions but also to economic, psychoanalytic, demographic, and gender-related aspects. The connection of the sub-discourses - if I can call them so - under an umbrella of interdiscursivity stresses how the discourse of Gen Z is continuous and it relates back to other textual resources or discourses (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Interdiscursivity can identify significant elements through critical discourse analysis, which is why it is crucial to be taken under consideration in every step of the analysis. Moreover, the existence of the intertextual element in the theoretical framework, as a more theoretical approach of interdiscursivity, is a key factor to the interpretation of Gen Z because it traverses the interdependence and the interactions of the social phenomena.

#### **5.4 Limitations**

This research design has some limitations, which will be discussed below. Even though this research took into consideration the business perspective of particular business newspapers, this fact also comprises one of the limitations of the study. The examination of the social phenomenon requires taking into account different perspectives, which cover the issue adequately. As the society cannot be defined only by its business dimension, similarly the discourse of Gen Z cannot be contextualized entirely based on its entity with the brands. However, due to the close interconnection between the aforementioned social elements, the research touched upon some significant social aspects.

Due to the use of only business newspapers, another limitation emerges. *The Wall Street Journal* and the *Financial Times* cannot approach in depth the characteristics of the diverse Gen Z, since they are published in the US and the UK, respectively, and they are aimed mainly at relatively affluent white people. For that reason, they cannot adequately portray the way in which, for example, a black Gen Zer from a marginalized suburb interacts with his/her environment. In an era when the societies become increasingly more diverse in several fields, the underrepresentation of multifarious social groups in media often yields insufficient results. So, this research can be perceived as West-centered, and it does not include cultural aspects from non-Western regions, like Asia and Africa.

Moreover, the given time and the word count limits contributed to restrictions in the length of the text and eventually limited the content somehow. As the generational identification is a significant research issue of modern society, the wider generational issue was narrowed down to include only Gen Zers. Nevertheless, the limitations on time and word count did not give the opportunity to the researcher to explore all possible interpretations regarding the contextualization of the generation.

Finally, the fact that I was born in 1995 can possibly be perceived as a bias factor amongst others. Based on the generational divide which was used, I am not a Gen Zer but a Millennial. However, the blurred boundaries between the generations contribute to perceiving the issue in a possible subjective fashion. In order to preserve the objectivity in the research as much as possible, I have tried to eliminate the personal influence and focus solely on the interpretation of the data.

### **5.5 Suggestions for future research and strengths**

This subsection will refer to some future research suggestions. Taking into account the aforementioned limitation regarding the business perspective, future research could be conducted by using a more diverse dataset. For instance, the research should also include broadsheet newspapers, which are not limited by their business nature, along with some tabloids. Additionally, it can include media outlets from many different countries. Through that approach, the discourse will be contextualized based on articles which portray different cultural perspectives.

Moreover, the dataset could be expanded more by using posts from online news and entertainment platforms, such as BuzzFeed, which are quite popular amongst Gen Zers.

Another appropriate divergence in the data collection for further research would be the analysis of Instagram posts of some brands, with which Gen Zers are engaged. As Instagram is the most used social medium by this generation, their representation there would definitely yield interesting results.

In order to cover the issue of underrepresentation of Gen Zers who do not comply with the basic perception of the cisgender, straight, white Gen Zer, future research could transcend it by conducting interviews or surveys in a non-random sample. This sample would be comprised of quite a diverse bunch of people who would blend many different characteristics in their identity. This methodological approach could prove whether the theoretical approaches also apply to people who have heterogeneous social characteristics.

As it is discussed in the theory section, the mutual experiences are capable of forming the identity of a generation (Berger, 2018). The recent Coronavirus pandemic and the prospective financial crisis which will probably follow are the kind of societal events which can completely disseminate a new dimension in an already existing condition. Hence, future research on the implications of the pandemic on the identity of Gen Zers would be fruitful, as there is a high probability of many divergences in their current status.

Finally, a transformation in the research question could introduce a comparative study between Gen Z and other generations. A remarkable research design would be the comparison between all the generations of the 20th century. This modular study would portray how society transformed throughout the previous century and how those changes were implemented in the next generations.

To sum up, the contextualization of Gen Z is a multifactorial and complex issue, which is quite reflective of society. The marketers' wish to harness the generation's spending power stressed the social relevance of the issue. The decision to focus only on business-oriented articles delineated the characteristics of the Gen Zers, as they are perceived by the market. In order to substantiate this research design to solid ground, the researcher tried to encompass a wider social context.

This research contributed to the contextualization of the discourse of Gen Z, by filling a gap in the already existing academic papers. As the business dimension of society, in its capitalistic form, grows exponentially and traverses many other societal aspects, this thesis will manifest the way how the discourse of the youngest generation is articulated. Even a reader who is not academically inclined can understand how this controversial issue

is interpreted. The use of articles from quite popular newspapers made the discussed topic more approachable and apt for many readers. Furthermore, by delving into discourses such as diversity, sustainability, and sense of community, the research yielded promising results concerning the way in which young people perceive society. While Gen Zers face many financial issues, as it is discussed in the materialism discourse, or confront mental issues, it is a matter of utmost significance that they treasure the well-being of other people. Finally, Gen Zers demonstrated with their attitude that even though technology has a negative connotation for many people, it can be used to enhance the community feelings and communicate major social changes, which would not occur in any other manner.

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## Appendix A:

Table 1  
*Nature of the approached discourses*

Discourse:	Financial Times	Wall Street Journal	Total
Materialism	26	13	39
Marketing	14	22	36
Diversity	10	12	21
Technology	3	15	18
Identity	1	11	12
Social Media	4	7	11
Culture	3	7	10
Politics	-	5	5
Work	2	3	6
Education	3	1	4
Sustainability	2	2	3
Sense of community	-	3	3
Dating	1	2	3
Mental issues	-	3	3
Religion	-	2	2
Total:	71	106	177

## Appendix B:

Table 1

*Classification of articles based on the discourse they approach in Financial Times*

Nr.	Title	Year	Basic discourse	Secondary discourse (If applicable)	Nodal discourse based on CDA
1	Monday interview: Andy Palmer, Aston Martin CEO	2015	Technology	-	No
2	Can you spot the company which has sharing as part of its business model?	2017	Materialism	-	Yes
3	Prada bedevilled by its sluggish shift online; Consumer: Luxury goods	2017	Materialism	Marketing	Yes
4	New York Fashion Week 2017: your need-to-know guide	2017	Materialism	Marketing	No
5	Woke it: how fashion co-opted the conscience	2017	Diversity	-	Yes
6	Gen Z turn to their wrists, not just their pockets, for the time	2017	Materialism	-	No
7	Video kills the serious media star	2017	Social Media	-	No
8	Instagram, Gen-Z and the unfiltered truth about retouching	2017	Technology	-	Yes
9	Hedi Slimane returns to fashion joining the house of Céline	2018	Materialism	-	No
10	Daily briefing: Gun debate, Putin's 'invincible' missile,	2018	Materialism	-	No

	bike-sharing punctured				
11	Gucci aims to step into the shoes of luxury leader Louis Vuitton	2018	Materialism	-	No
12	Goodbye Girls: is TV done with the millennial?	2018	Diversity	Marketing	Yes
13	Nike picks a side in America's culture wars	2018	Diversity	Materialism	Yes
14	Organic tampons escalate battle in feminine care	2018	Diversity	Sustainability	Yes
15	London remains graduate choice for financial services careers	2018	Education	Materialism	No
16	It's time to stop talking about millennials	2018	Identity	-	Yes
17	Diamonds rock for millennials and Generation Z	2018	Materialism	-	No
18	De Beers spotlights millennials' sway	2018	Materialism	-	No
19	Can luxury win over the smartphone generation?	2018	Materialism	Technology	Yes
20	Trade war casts cloud over youngsters' hot gadgets	2018	Materialism	Technology	Yes
21	Millennials' favourite gadgets dragged into trade war	2018	Materialism	Technology	Yes
22	Young shoppers love real stores full of real stuff	2018	Materialism	Technology	Yes
23	The tech effect	2018	Social Media	-	Yes
24	Could 'Love Island' bring us closer to our children?	2018	Social media	-	No
25	Fifty people who shaped the decade	2019	All discourses (Materialism, Technology, Social Media, Sustainability,	-	Yes

			Diversity, Work, Education)		
26	Adrian Cheng: striving to fulfil customers' needs	2019	Materialism	-	No
27	Ralph Lauren North America sales decline amid fewer discounts	2019	Materialism	-	No
28	Recycling chic at Ermenegildo Zegna Couture and techy times at Emporio Armani — Milan men's SS20 kicks off	2019	Materialism	Technology	Yes
29	Boomers are OK when it comes to credit	2019	Materialism	Financial issues	No
30	Free pass Credit gap gives millennials fresh beef with boomers	2019	Materialism	Financial issues	Yes
31	Farfetch buys Off-White owner in streetwear push	2019	Materialism	-	No
32	Amazon/Spotify: oldies but goodies	2019	Materialism	Marketing	Yes
33	China and new generation shake old order	2019	Materialism	Technology	No
34	Andrea Illy: adapting a family business to a multinational world	2019	Materialism	Sustainability	No
35	Star power: the strange rebirth of astrology	2019	Cultural mutation	-	No
36	The age of Aquarius - again 'We have lost ritual and rites of passage ... Astrology reconnects us to the natural cycles that we've grown apart from'	2019	Cultural mutation	-	No
37	OK boomer, who's up for a generational showdown?	2019	Diversity	Identity	Yes

38	Annual performance reviews do a disservice to workers and firms	2019	Diversity	Work	Yes
39	'thank u, next': how dating apps are transforming relationships	2019	Diversity	Materialism	Yes
40	Coming to a catwalk near you: fashion goes off the main circuit	2019	Diversity	Materialism	Yes
41	'Job-hopping millennials' are no worse than their elders	2019	Diversity	Work	Yes
42	Modern monetary theory poses a serious threat to Gen Z	2019	Diversity	Awareness	Yes
43	Ivory towers: the rise of luxury student lodgings	2019	Education	Materialism	No
44	Enrol with the high rollers	2019	Education	Materialism	No
45	FirstFT: Today's top stories	2019	Identity	-	Yes
46	'Intrapreneurs' are the people driving corporate change	2019	Innovation	Technology	Yes
47	Trussardi hires fashion industry veteran Maela Mandelli as chief	2019	Materialism	-	No
48	FirstFT: Today's top stories	2019	Materialism	-	No
49	How much heat does it take to burn a brand?	2019	Materialism	Social Media	Yes
50	Spinning out of control	2019	Materialism	-	No
51	Why JD Sports might meet its match in the US	2019	Materialism	-	No
52	US expansion for JD Sports looks like a tough match	2019	Materialism	-	No
53	Chanel goes up on the roof	2019	Materialism	-	No

	for Paris show				
54	Chanel: Minis, movies and metallics	2019	Materialism	-	No
55	A selection of the FT's biggest stories and best reads every Friday	2019	Materialism	-	No
56	British Land proves a harder sell than £236m-worth of shop space	2019	Materialism	-	No
57	Brightest generation	2019	Materialism	Education	Yes
58	Tailoring masculinity for changing tastes	2019	Materialism	Diversity	No
59	Take me to your T-shirts: the rise of the extreme pop-up	2019	Materialism	-	No
60	Hi it's Burberry, wanna chat?	2019	Materialism	Technology	Yes
61	Instant gratification	2019	Materialism	Technology	No
62	Nikkei staff writers	2019	Materialism	Identity	Yes
63	FirstFT: Today's top stories	2019	Political perspective	-	Yes
64	Big fight showcases knockout power of the 'YouTubers'	2019	Social Media	-	Yes
65	Rely on money managers to fix the world? Pah!	2019	Sustainability	Independence	Yes
66	How to become TikTok famous	2019	Technology	Social Media	Yes
67	What if you're not chosen for a 'hi-po' programme?	2019	Work	Mental issues	No
68	Can climate fiction deliver home truths?	2020	Sustainability	-	Yes
69	While protests continue in Paris, designers reappraise modern masculinity	2020	Diversity	Materialism	Yes

70	Work in the 2020s: 5 essential skills to succeed	2020	Flexibility	-	No
71	Picture perfect: Why Moschino's Jeremy Scott loves Picasso	2020	Sustainability	Materialism	No

Table 2

*Classification of articles based on the discourse they approach in The Wall Street Journal*

Nr.	Title	Year	Basic discourse	Secondary discourse (If applicable)	Nodal discourse (Based on CDA)
1	CMO Today: The TV Ad Market's New Hope; Here's your morning roundup of the biggest marketing, advertising and media industry news and happenings.	2015	Materialism	Marketing	Yes
2	7 Things Goldman Says Investors Should Be Thinking About	2015	Materialism	-	No
3	AwesomenessTV to Launch Wildness, a Youth Marketing Research Firm; Digital programmer says its knowledge of 12- to 24-year-olds' media habits is a huge asset	2015	Diversity	Creativity	Yes
4	He Saved Sailors' Lives, Countless Others; Dr. Charles H. Read Jr., a flight surgeon aboard the HMS Nabob in World War II, went on to make invaluable medical contributions during	2015	Identity	-	No

peacetime.

5	Media: CMO Today	2015	Media	-	No
6	The NFL Team That Is Solving Millennials; The 49ers are changing how they operate to cater to the iPhone generation	2015	Identity	-	Yes
7	Pizza Box Composting Gets College Try; Campus arms race to go green nets creative efforts to deal with the greasy containers	2015	Sustainability	Education	Yes
8	PwC Survey: Holiday Spending to Rise 10%	2016	Materialism	-	No
9	Can You Buy a Car With Just an App?	2016	Social Media	Materialism	Yes
10	Publishers Flock to New Instagram Stories; Media brands, including many Snapchat Discover partners, are seeing solid early traffic	2016	Social Media	-	No
11	C-Suite Strategies (A Special Report) --- A New Strategy for an Old Company: Diego Scotti, chief marketing officer of Verizon, discusses transforming -- and sometimes even scrapping -- a brand name	2017	Materialism	Marketing	Yes
12	At Luxury Stores, It Isn't Shopping, It's an Experience; Urban specialty shops aim to counter the internet by turning themselves into destinations offering discoveries, dining options	2017	Materialism	-	Yes



	and human connections				
13	Liquor Makers Need to Sober Up to the Decline in Teenage Drinking; Big liquor is betting on the U.S. even as alcohol consumption among under-21s is plummeting	2017	Materialism	-	No
14	Verizon, a Century-Old Company, Sets Its Sights on Millennials; Diego Scotti, chief marketing officer, on transforming—and sometimes even scrapping—a brand name	2017	Materialism	Marketing	No
15	CMO Today: ESPN Layoffs Hit On-Air Talent; Here's your morning roundup of the biggest marketing, advertising and media industry news and happenings.	2017	Materialism	-	Yes
16	The NHL's Goal: Get Younger Fans; Marketing chief Heidi Browning says technology is the key, allowing targeted messages and offerings	2017	Materialism	Technology	Yes
17	Snap Falls Hard on Wider Loss --- Stock plummets 17% in after-hours trading; deficit swells in wake of Facebook pressure	2017	Materialism	Social media	Yes,
18	How Reese Witherspoon Is Changing Hollywood for Women; With projects ranging from her HBO series 'Big Little Lies' to her production franchise to her growing lifestyle brand, Witherspoon has become a	2017	Diversity	-	No

	force in female storytelling				
19	The Choreographer Who Fearlessly Taps Into His Inner Weirdo; Ryan Heffington is the hidden hand that ties together the Netflix series 'The OA,' the crime thriller 'Baby Driver' and	2017	Diversity	-	No
20	Workarounds	2017	Work	Diversity	Yes
21	Move Over, Millennials: Generation Z Enters the Workforce; A survey shows members of the latest cohort value diversity, technology and giving back to their communities	2017	Sense of community	Identity	Yes
22	A Self-Made Star Shows One Way to Crack the Gen Z Code; Advertisers and entertainment companies, aiming to capture a fragmented teen audience that likes 'authentic' stars, find a guide in YouTube celebrity Liza Koshy	2017	Creativity	Social Media	No
23	CMO Today: NewFronts Kick Off With Live-Streaming Deals and Gen Z Pitches; Here's your morning roundup of the biggest marketing, advertising and media industry news and happenings.	2017	Technology	Social Media	Yes
24	Corporate Jets, Security Teams and Big Pay: What Does Your CEO Make? Heard on the Street podcast: Digging into proxy filings and what GenZ	2017	Technology	Work	Yes

	thinks is cool				
25	Ask Not for Whom the Doorbell Tolls. They Won't Answer It.	2017	Technology	Identity	Yes
26	The Social Media Platform That Has Gen Z Obsessed; Musical.ly has captured the attention of the millions of teens who post videos on the platform—and now its influence is rippling through the music industry	2017	Technology	Creativity	Yes
27	The Deduction Cap Reduces An Intergenerational Theft; Repealing the cap is pretty much a well-disguised sucker punch to future generations.	2018	Materialism	Identity	Yes
28	Target's Answer to Discounters Is an Even Cheaper Store Brand; Retailer to add line of \$1 consumer staples as it joins the battle for price-conscious shoppers	2018	Materialism	-	No
29	What if Obama Voters Remember How Lousy the Obama Era Was? The left worries that young people and minorities don't hate Trump enough.	2018	Diversity	Politics	Yes
30	Don't Trust Anyone Over 21; America's young generation has had it up to here with millennials.	2018	Identity	Diversity	Yes
31	Ready, Set, Strive -- Gen Z Is Coming --- Battle-scarred, they are sober, driven by money and	2018	Identity	Diversity	Yes

	socially awkward; a 1930s throwback				
32	Who's Watching Digital Video? A Diverse, Expanding Audience, IAB Says; Online advertising trade organization touts video viewership ahead of NewFronts next week	2018	Marketing	Technology	Yes
33	Retailers Stalk the Elusive Millennial Shopper; To court millennials and Gen Z shoppers, Barneys, Nordstrom and other big stores are taking a page from younger, hipper counterparts like Dover Street Market.	2018	Materialism	Marketing	Yes
34	Tooth-Brushing Tips and Less Screen Time: The Rise of Children's Podcasts; Audio producers are hooking the next generation of listeners—and their parents—with programs like 'Chompers,' a twice-daily, two-minute show that promotes dental hygiene	2018	Materialism	Marketing	No
35	College Kids Not Endorsing Socialism, But They're Open to It; A new survey asks Gen Z about capitalism and its flaws.	2018	Politics	Identity	Yes
36	Stopping the Socialist Resurgence; Republicans need to fight the wild ideas of the Democratic Party's left wing.	2018	Politics	-	No
37	Professional Videogamers Get Their Own Stadiums;	2018	Technology	Creativity	No

	<p>This month, Arlington, Texas, will start construction on a 100,000-square-foot arena for live videogaming competitions—what is set to be the largest in a growing number of venues dedicated to esports</p>				
38	<p>Meet the 9-Year-Old Telling You What to Wear; Marketers are tapping ever-younger influencers, such as 9-year-old fashionista Dear Giana, to reach the diverse, digitally savvy members of Generation Z</p>	2018	Social Media	Diversity	Yes
39	<p>On Second Thought, Traditional Retailers Make Room for Used Clothes; Venerable names like Macy's, J.C. Penney and Stage Stores embrace thrifting in push to jump-start sales and lure younger, environmentally conscious shoppers</p>	2019	Materialism	Marketing	Yes
40	<p>Doritos Bets Consumers Will Recognize the Brand in Its Logo-Free Ad; The Pepsi-owned brand is hoping its new, name-free ad campaign will resonate with an increasingly ad-averse Gen Z consumer</p>	2019	Materialism	Marketing	Yes
41	<p>The Generational Divide in Holiday Shopping; As Black Friday's hold on the season has loosened, shopping patterns diverge by age.</p>	2019	Materialism	Identity	Yes

42	Smaller Loaves of Bread Are on the Rise; Bakers cook up new options to suit small households and millennials who don't want to waste food	2019	Materialism	-	Yes
43	Foot Locker's Game Plan to Win Over Sneakerheads; The company says the key is using vast amount of data and being fast on its feet	2019	Materialism	-	Yes
44	The Latest Eco-Friendly Status Symbol? Water Bottles; As more people lug around reusable water bottles, these sippable containers—from upscale labels like Supreme and Prada—have become envy-inducing accessories	2019	Materialism	Sustainability	Yes
45	Sweetgreen, Pointing to Its Own Past, Hatches New Model; The company says it's so much more than salad—and wants to change the way it serves up both food and new ideas, its three founders say. Inside their "Sweetgreen 3.0" project	2019	Creativity	Sustainability	Yes
46	The Crooner Making Gen Z Love Songs; Part Eminem, part...Ed Sheeran? How the diffident pop-rapper Rex Orange County is all heart	2019	Creativity	Cultural mutation	No
47	Americans Have Shifted Dramatically on What Values Matter Most; Patriotism, religion and having children rate lower among younger	2019	Criticism	Identity	Yes

	generations than they did two decades ago, WSJ/NBC News survey finds				
48	Will Olivia Wilde's 'Booksmart' Become Gen Z's 'Breakfast Club'? The high school comedy aims to follow in the footsteps of 'American Graffiti,' 'Clueless' and 'Superbad' while taking teen tropes in new directions	2019	Cultural mutation	Identity	Yes
49	Dating 101, for the Romantically Challenged Gen Z; Educators say the current generation of college students is uniquely bad at dating. One professor is taking matters into her own hands.	2019	Dating	Identity	Yes
50	EXCHANGE --- Keywords: Rise of the Online-Only Relationship --- For Gen Z, it's not so unusual to have a significant other you've never met in person	2019	Dating	Technology	No
51	TikTok's Videos Are Goofy. Its Strategy to Dominate Social Media Is Serious. China's first big hit in the U.S. uses an advanced algorithm to personalize its video-sharing app, and parent Bytedance's enormous ad spending on Snap, Facebook and Instagram aims to hook their users	2019	Digital security/Technology	Social Media	Yes
52	The O.C.' Creator Josh Schwartz Still Speaks Fluent Teenager; The man who gave us Gossip Girl is back	2019	Cultural mutation	Identity	Yes

	with Nancy Drew and Looking For Alaska, two new shows for the high school crowd he knows so well.				
53	A Nigerian Pop Star Finds Success in the U.S., On His Own Terms; Burna Boy's blend of African pop, hip-hop, reggae and Jamaican dancehall music is drawing a growing U.S. audience—and the attention of megastars like Beyoncé	2019	Diversity	Cultural mutation	Yes
54	The Year Genre-Bending Artists Took Over Pop Music; With genre-blurring acts like Lil Nas X, Billie Eilish and Lizzo on the rise, old categories are losing their meaning	2019	Diversity	Cultural mutation	Yes
55	For Ballet's Foremost #MeToo Accuser, a Second Act; A one-time elite student at the School of American Ballet, Alexandra Waterbury—plaintiff in New York City Ballet's ongoing sexual misconduct lawsuit—sets her sights on an Ivy League degree and a modeling career. Still, she warns future ballerinas of dance's perils	2019	Diversity	Sense of community	Yes
56	For Those Who Don't Identify as Male or Female, Growing Acceptance—and Accommodation; More states, firms join shift toward recognizing gender-nonconforming Americans	2019	Diversity	Identity	Yes



57	Coming to a catwalk near you	2019	Diversity	Materialism	Yes
58	Ed Sheeran Is On Track for the No. 1 Concert Tour of All Time. Here's How. The English singer-songwriter is close to breaking U2's record for the highest-grossing tour despite shunning nearly every money-making trend in the concert business	2019	Diversity	Creativity	Yes
59	Consumers Say Brands Shouldn't Bring Politics to the Super Bowl; Marketers seem set to give viewers their safe space	2019	Diversity	Materialism	Yes
60	Like a Boss: A College Course for First-Time Managers; Wharton's 'How to Be the Boss' teaches the gritty realities of managing; how to handle a note found in the trash	2019	Education	Diversity	No
61	The Office Rookies Who Ask for the World; Young workers are likely to ask for a promotion after just one year—here's how they should handle the big request, and how bosses should handle them	2019	Work	Identity	Yes
62	Playing Catch-Up in the Game of Life.' Millennials Approach Middle Age in Crisis; New data show they're in worse financial shape than every preceding living generation and may never recover	2019	Financial attitude	Materialism	Yes

63	Social Media Can't Afford to Forget Mom and Dad; Generation Z has significant influence over household expenses, but it may not be enough to dominate social-media spend	2019	Financial attitude	Identity	Yes
64	Outsourcing Has Upended the Labor Market—but Not Exactly as Expected; Contract work has become a key part of companies' labor strategy in recent years. For workers, it means less job security.	2019	Work	-	Yes
65	Z' Is for the Post-Millennial Generation; The trend in naming age cohorts is just to use letters. Now we've reached the end of the alphabet. What's next?	2019	Identity	-	Yes
66	At What Age Do You Meet Your Best Friend? The 20s, typically a time of important first experiences, are prime years for meeting your closest lifelong confidantes, researchers say	2019	Identity	Sense of community	Yes
67	REVIEW --- Word on the Street: An Age Cohort Hits the End of the Alphabet	2019	Identity	-	Yes
68	How HBO's Gen Z Drama "Euphoria" Streetcast Its Lovable Drug Dealer; In his first acting gig, 21-year-old Angus Cloud plays character Fezco, unlikely hero of HBO's youngest-skewing drama. How he	2019	Identity	Social Media	Yes

	grabbed the part				
69	EXCHANGE --- Driving? The Kids Are Over It --- In a challenge for Detroit, teens put off getting their licenses and buying cars	2019	Independence	-	No
70	At the Spelling Bee, a New Word Is M-O-N-E-Y; Elite spellers now can pay to get a spot in the national event. For this generation of zealous competitors, it just means another chance to shine.	2019	Independence	Materialism	Yes
71	Why Ralph Lauren Served Up Fashion With Coffee; The brand, aiming for a younger customer, staged a relaxed, accessible fashion show—with almost everything for sale right after	2019	Materialism	Marketing	Yes
72	The Shockingly Large Business Behind the Iconic Smiley Face; The trademarked smiley face symbol makes for a significant licensing business, one that is particularly successful as of late	2019	Materialism	Marketing	No
73	The Closet Chronicles: How I Buy and Sell \$1,000 of Clothing a Month; Grailed, a marketplace for men's clothing, has radically changed how our reporter thinks of his wardrobe	2019	Materialism	Creativity	Yes
74	EXCHANGE --- Generation Depop --- Young entrepreneurs are flipping	2019	Materialism	Innovation	Yes

	clothes for profit, tapping Gen Z's penchant for vintage gear				
75	EXCHANGE --- My Circular Closet: \$1,000 of Designer Duds In and Out Every Month	2019	Materialism	Creativity	No
76	Younger Workers Report Biggest Gains in Happiness With Pay; Millennials, Gen Z employees say they're more content with compensation than baby boomers	2019	Materialism	Work	Yes
77	Overtime, Gen Z Sports Oasis, Looks to Raise \$40 Million; The three-year old startup started as a distributor for high school basketball highlights	2019	Materialism	Innovation	Yes
78	Soggy Fries vs. Sagging Profits: Restaurants Face Delivery Dilemma; Dining chains question whether apps like UberEats and DoorDash make economic sense as consumers demand at-home options	2019	Materialism	Materialism	No
79	C-Suite Strategies (A Special Report) --- Fast on Its Feet: Foot Locker uses vast amounts of data to attract sneakerheads	2019	Materialism	-	Yes
80	Loud 'Sopranos' Shirts: Better Left on Reruns; As the iconic HBO show celebrates its 20th anniversary, we look at one of its most controversial style legacies: the garish,	2019	Materialism	-	No

	printed button-up shirt				
81	Fashion's New Strategy: Weird People Out and Watch Your Clothes Go Viral; Extreme garments with the potential to be shared on social media have become a new kind of currency for fashion brands	2019	Materialism	Marketing	Yes
82	How 'Stranger Things' Whipped Up '80s Fever; 'Stranger Things,' returning to Netflix July 4, has stoked '80s nostalgia even among viewers born long after the decade of scrunchies and shopping malls	2019	Marketing	-	Yes
83	EXCHANGE --- Class of 2019 -- Work & Family: The Most Anxious Generation Goes to Work	2019	Mental issues	Work	No
84	The Most Anxious Generation Goes to Work; New college graduates report higher levels of anxiety. How managers can help them steer past fear and improve work performance—and how young workers can work to calm their anxiety and be more effective.	2019	Mental issues	Identity	Yes
85	Is Adam Schiff Satisfied with NBC News? Two years after telling the network he had 'more than circumstantial evidence' he still hasn't produced it.	2019	Politics	-	No
86	Where Did All the Faith Go? Students discuss causes of religion's decline	2019	Religion	Identity	Yes

	among young people, including social justice, social media and secular schools.				
	This App Helps You Hook Up with Random (Business) Partners; A video-only networking app marries LinkedIn's scope for making professional connections with Tinder's ease of rejecting unappealing ones. Here's our critique				
87	LinkedIn's scope for making professional connections with Tinder's ease of rejecting unappealing ones. Here's our critique	2019	Social media	Cultural mutation	No
	EXCHANGE --- Keywords: Tech Survival Tips From 'Gen Z' --- They've been online their whole lives. Now, these young adults describe how they navigate our tech-obsessed world.				
88	EXCHANGE --- Keywords: Tech Survival Tips From 'Gen Z' --- They've been online their whole lives. Now, these young adults describe how they navigate our tech-obsessed world.	2019	Technology	Identity	Yes
	Gamers Prepare to Play Music-Festival Stage; Metarama will feature pro gamer Ninja and artist Marshmello, who performed live inside 'Fortnite'				
89	Gamers Prepare to Play Music-Festival Stage; Metarama will feature pro gamer Ninja and artist Marshmello, who performed live inside 'Fortnite'	2019	Technology	-	No
	Coming Soon to a Small Screen Near You: Short Cuts; The entertainment industry is spending heavily to reach a generation glued to their phones, with shows no longer than the typical Uber ride				
90	Coming Soon to a Small Screen Near You: Short Cuts; The entertainment industry is spending heavily to reach a generation glued to their phones, with shows no longer than the typical Uber ride	2019	Technology	Marketing	Yes
	Sadfishing, Predators and Bullies: The Hazards of Being 'Real' on Social Media; As influencers share more about anxiety and depression online, teens are following suit—and				
91	Sadfishing, Predators and Bullies: The Hazards of Being 'Real' on Social Media; As influencers share more about anxiety and depression online, teens are following suit—and	2019	Technology	Mental issues	Yes

	becoming targets				
92	EXCHANGE --- Technology: Startups Hitch a Ride on Instagram --- It's hard to pull people away from their social-media accounts. Some upstart app developers don't even try.	2019	Technology	Identity	No
93	VC Daily: SEC Rejects NYSE Direct Listing Proposal; Startup Emerges After Five Quiet Years; VC Firm Goes Abroad; Big Data for Weightlifting	2019	Technology	-	No
94	Résumés Are Starting to Look Like Instagram—and Sometimes Even Tinder; Employers see surge in Gen Z CVs containing photos and illustrations; 'there's a freaking bitmoji'	2019	Technology	Creativity	Yes
95	REVIEW --- Word on the Street: A Defining Generation Becomes a Label for Irrelevance	2019	Identity	-	Yes
96	The End of Retirement; The conventional wisdom— save enough to retire at age 65—won't work for the generation starting their careers today, writes columnist John D. Stoll.	2020	Financial issues	-	No
97	Vol. 33, No. 1: Generations	2020	Identity	-	Yes
98	'Why We Can't Sleep' Review: Uncertain at a Certain Age; Women may have once felt a shiver of mortality at 40, but rarely were they also anguished by that unwritten novel or	2020	Independence	-	No

	unstarted business.				
	Men, Meet Your Next Suit. It's Lime Green. Fashion shows in Milan and Paris this month were rife with tantalizing tailoring. Yet the question remains, will shoppers—especially young shoppers—swap sweats for suits?	2020	Materialism	-	No
99					
100	Younger Workers Feel Lonely at the Office; Older workers are less likely to say they feel alienated by co-workers or emotionally distant from colleagues, according to a survey	2020	Mental issues	Work	No
101	The Agony of the Democrats	2020	Politics	-	No
102	Bernie, Boomers and Earnest Young Socialists; Even if "it's the economy, stupid," culture and education are key parts of the collectivist appeal.	2020	Politics	Doubt	No
103	A Network Tries to Mash Up TV Style and YouTube's Youth; Hoping they bring along their millions of fans, Brat TV puts social media stars in more traditional scripted series; split up in real life, together on screen	2020	Social media	-	Yes
104	The Financial Gurus Millennials Listen To; The generation is more comfortable getting advice on social media than at established institutions. Meet the new influencers.	2020	Technology	Social Media	Yes



105	Missing 'Friends' on Netflix? Find a DVD Player. The '90s hit won't reappear on HBO Max until May. In the meantime, fans unearth old tech and hack European feeds	2020	Technology	Cultural Mutation	Yes
106	Will 5G Reinvent Working From Home? Millions of tech-savvy Americans want the freedom to work from the couch. Will the anticipated '5G Revolution' help them realize that dream—or is it mostly hype? Plus: A hopeful tool kit of 5G gear and toil-at-home hacks	2020	Technology	Independence	Yes

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