

## Media as a Generational Object: Investigating the Role of Media Consumption on Generational Identity

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### Introduction:

Generational object is a phenomenon related to the epistemic system of generations which differs from one generation to another due to rapid changes and fresh contacts of each generation to emerging phenomena. The introduction and expansion of mass and social media in the recent history of the country and how various social groups have dealt with it, along with the restrictions imposed on these technologies by the state, have been such that the emergence of the media has become a form of historical fact and remained in the memory of those generations. So, these facts can be considered as one of the most important events that, as Mannheim puts it as the "fresh contact" with new objects for generations in which periods were continually entering the cultural stream of society, and it can be claimed that each of these media are generational objects. Although Mannheim has spoken of socio-historical events as a generational object, he refuses to empirically identify them. Christopher Bollas frequently refers to instances of generational objects and considers generations to be a set of human beings that share generational objects. In his view, these objects are explainers of the individual's generation, and remembering them generates a sense of his generation in his mind. Bollas begins his essay by mentioning some of the famous authors' biographies and mentions Kim Newman's generational object as "television and later horror videos and movies". Therefore, he is one of the first who introduces the media as a generational object. In the sociology of media, recently, the concept of generation has been widely discussed, with some scholars discussing the approach of the media generation. For these researchers, generational identity formation is linked to media technologies at two levels: First, media experience in the years of identity formation through media consumption culture; second, representations made through media produced works help to define a particular generation's identity and sense of belonging to a particular generation. The purpose of the present study is to describe and explain the intergenerational differences in media use and to investigate whether media can be considered as an object for different generations. To this end, by the use of Mannheim and Bollas's theories, as well as the theory of use and gratification, and the theory of displacement and complementarity effects of media, it is explained whether there is a difference between generations in terms of media consumption.

### Material & Methods

The research method was survey based on a researcher-made questionnaire. The population of the study was all citizens of Rasht in the year 2017. Sampling method was stratified and 400 persons were selected as the sample size.

### Discussion of Results & Conclusions:

The findings showed that there is a significant difference between generations' media objects and increasing social media consumption caused differences in the thoughts and values of the younger generation with those of the previous generations. Each generation, focusing on their need for news or entertainment, uses the media they are interested in and

remember it as one of their generational objects. Since the media are the communicating mediators in a society, their use during the formative years of generational identity and through the generational fresh contact has made generations, especially the younger generations who are aware of the community around them, and by increasing generations' knowledge of other individuals and groups, they have been able to influence intergenerational interaction and intergenerational norms. It can therefore be acknowledged that generational media objects have created common elements in generations' memories. The media objects that were adopted and consumed during the 1980s in Iran, as part of the lived experiences of the Islamic Revolution and the imposed

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war generation and the interpretation of this generation's life and social life were the print press, especially the domestic newspaper and domestic radio. With the end of this decade and the end of the war, media such as domestic television and foreign satellites and video became the focus of attention by the next generation (middle-aged generation). Despite the opposition of the official community space to the use of foreign satellite and video media, these media continued to be used until the arrival of new media (Internet and virtual social networks, especially telegrams). They attracted the attention of the younger generation, and this fresh contact to the new media has witnessed many widespread changes in the generational mindset. For this reason, and with the increasing use of the media in the social life of different generations, along with other economic, social and cultural developments in the past decades, more research is needed to understand the generations and objects that shape their mentality and identity.

**Keywords:** Generation, Generational Object, Media Consumption, Fresh Contact, Mannheim.

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