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DEZINFORMACIJE I AI: ANALIZA PERCEPCIJE GENERACIJA X, Y I Z U REPUBLICI SRBIJI

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Rezime: Predmet ovog istraživanja predstavljaju dezinformacije plasirane u medijima, korišćenjem veštačke inteligencije, kao i analiza percepcije različitih generacija vezano za njima dostupne informacije. Cilj rada je da se sprovođenjem istraživanja i analizom percepije generacija X, Y i Z uoči koje vrste medija navedene generacije koriste i kod koje generacije je najuočljivije prihvatanje dezinformacija iz medija. U istraživanju je učestvovalo ukupno 240 ispitanika iz sve tri generacije. Rad pruža analizu za svaku od navedenih starosnih kategorija i kroz temeljno poređenje dobijenih rezultata, daje relevantne zaključke koji popunjavaju postojeći jaz u domaćoj i inostranoj literaturi. Usled kontinuiranog plasiranja dezinformacija kreiranih od strane veštačke inteligencije društveni mediji čine da generacija Z percipira dezinformacije kao tačne. Rezultati ovog istraživanja pokazuju da se pripadnici generacije Z najviše oslanjaju na društvene medije kada je reč o pribavljanju svakodnevnih informacija, iako se u današnje vreme ova vrsta medija smatra problematičnim izvorom, baš zbog izrazitog uticaja veštačke inteligencije. Sveobuhvatni zaključak je da mediji moraju da stvore odgovarajući sistem u medijskom okruženju koji će obezbediti odgovornije, tačno i precizno informisanje, bez širenja dezinformacija putem veštačke inteligencije.

Ključne reči: *dezinformacije, veštačka inteligencija, percepija, generacije X, Y i Z, Republika Srbija*

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MISINFORMATION AND AI: ANALYSIS OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF GENERATIONS X, Y, AND Z IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Summary: The subject of this study is misinformation placed in the media through artificial intelligence. Also, an analysis of how different generations perceive the information available to them. This study aims to conduct research and analyze the perception of generations X, Y, and Z to determine which types of media these generations use, and which generation is most likely to accept misinformation as relevant and trustworthy. A total of 240 respondents from all three generations participated in the research. The paper affords an analysis for each of the age groups, and, through a comparison of the results, provides relevant conclusions that fill the existing gap in domestic and foreign literature. Due to the continuous marketing of misinformation created by artificial intelligence, social media makes generation Z perceive misinformation as accurate. The findings indicate that members of generation Z rely most profoundly on social media for daily information procurement, although currently this type of media is considered a problematic source, indeed, because of the noticeable influence of artificial intelligence. The overall assumption is that the media must develop a suitable system in the media environment that will provide more responsible, accurate, and particular information, while avoiding the spread of misinformation engendered by artificial intelligence.

Keywords*: misinformation, artificial intelligence, perception, generations X, Y, and Z, Republic of Serbia*

1. INTRODUCTION

The modern information environment is characterized by the heightened development of digital technologies and the growing use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the formation and spreading of content. This progress also offers significant encounters, among which the issue of misinformation distribution stands out (Fernandez & Alani, 2018). Disinformation, defined as the thoughtful dissemination of incorrect or misleading information, can have far-reaching significances for the formation of public opinion, decision-making, and social stability (Abdulazeez et al., 2025). Of particular apprehension is the fact that artificial intelligence, through the generation of textual, visual, and audio resources, permits the making of content that is progressively problematic to distinguish from authentic infor-

mation (Ghiarau & Popescu, 2024). In addition to the universal effect of artificial intelligence on the spread of misinformation, contemporary artificial intelligence tools, such as generative language models (GPT) and deepfake knowledge, permit the making of truthful content that is hard to extricate from reliable data (Benzie & Montasari, 2022). Examples of such generated disinformation contain false declarations by public figures, invented news on health topics, or political manipulation on social media.

In the modern digital environment, media literacy is a crucial capability for the critical assessment of information. The augmented obtainability of content via the Internet and social networks necessitates users to identify credible sources and distinguish fact from false claims (Kumar & Shah, 2018). Studies demonstrate that a lack of media knowledge directly disturbs users' vulnerability to misinformation, while education in this field can significantly decrease their susceptibility to and getting of incorrect information (Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017).

Algorithmic systems on social networks and portals further confuse the information procedure. Content personalization based on previous user interactions can generate information bubbles (filter bubbles) and upsurge user experience to selectively designated information, including misinformation (Spohr, 2017). This technology forms the acuity of reality, affects the creation of attitudes, and can further excavate generational variances in the way information is expended (Pariser, 2011). Artificial intelligence allows the mass making of visually and textually persuasive content, and such tools not only increase the haste and possibility of the spread of disinformation, but also obscure the process of information confirmation. The appearance of these technologies carries new ethical challenges, as users find it increasingly difficult to distinguish real facts from artificially generated content, which can have consequences in a political, social, and economic background (Floridi & Chiriatti, 2020; Chesney & Citron, 2019).

Analysis of media usage outlines through the prism of generations allows a better understanding of how different age groups access information and respond to misinformation. Generation X, which grew up in the period beforehand mass digitization, mostly chooses traditional media, while generation Y and generation Z enthusiastically use digital platforms and social networks (Karim, 2019). Differences in knowledge and digital assistance also shape the level of critical thinking, which can have a direct effect on accepting or rejecting misinformation (Pew Research Center, 2025).

In such situations, the awareness and behavior of different generations towards obtainable information becomes a crucial field of research. Generations X, Y, and Z fluctuate not only in life involvement, but also in the technique they use to consume media, the level of digital literacy, and their critical thinking of in-

formation. This research intends to, through empirical study, examine the shapes of media usage among these generations and determine to what degree they are susceptible to accepting disinformation created by artificial intelligence. The attained results can contribute to a better understanding of generational alterations in media observation and suggestion guidelines for refining approaches to combat misinformation.

Investigating the designs of media use and the trust grade in information, this research fills a research gap in the domestic literature and provides relevant understandings that can be used for the growth of targeted education, the prevention of the spread of misinformation, and the development of media literacy among different generations. Such conclusions have practical applications in both educational and institutional settings, and regulatory strategies to combat disinformation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Disinformation is intentionally created or disseminated incorrect information to mislead the public or achieve a certain social, political, or economic benefit (Guess & Lyons, 2020). Unlike misinformation that occurs unintentionally, misinformation is deliberately designed to mislead the recipient and influence their behavior or attitudes (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Their danger lies in the speed and scope of their spread, especially in the digital environment, where algorithmic systems and the structure of social networks encourage the visibility of sensationalist content (Saurwein & Spencer-Smith, 2021). This creates an information environment in which the line between truth and lies becomes increasingly difficult to discern.

The development of artificial intelligence further intensified this phenomenon because modern artificial intelligence tools are almost inseparable from authentic materials. Procreative models, like large language systems, deliver the possibility of mass production of content of high visual and linguistic quality, thus making the verification process and source verification difficult (Floridi & Chiriatti, 2020; Chesney & Citron, 2019). In this way, artificial intelligence not only enables the spread of misinformation but also varies the dynamics of trust in the media, opening up new questions about ethics, responsibility, and user protection in the digital space (Kertysova, 2018).

The contemporary media ecosystem is characterized by the quicker growth of digital technologies, and this development carries frequent compensations,

but at the same time, it also generates productive ground for the spread of misinformation. According to Vosoughi et al. (2018), fake news on social media spreads more quickly and influences more users than precise information, while Lazer et al. (2018) highlight those algorithmic references on platforms such as Twitter (X) and Facebook additionally improve the circulation of misleading content. These conclusions point to the importance of understanding dissimilar types of media and their impact on audiences. Based on the above, the hypothesis was set:

H_1: There are significant differences between generations X, Y, and Z regarding the dominant type of media they use for information.

The usage of artificial intelligence in the making of media content additional blurs the problem of recognizing precise information. The authors Floridi & Chiriatti (2020) point out that deepfake know-how permits the creation of hyper-realistic materials, which makes it difficult to differentiate true from false information. The authors Chesney & Citron (2019) warn that such knowledge can weaken trust in institutions and affect political processes. In this context, research displays that younger generations, especially generation Z, display a greater propensity to receive information from social networks as reliable, related to older cohorts (Pew Research Center, 2025). Based on the above, the hypothesis was set:

H_2: Generation Z shows a higher level of acceptance of misinformation compared to Generations X and Y.

Plentiful studies support that the category of media is a crucial factor in the degree of vulnerability to misinformation. The authors of Guess et al. (2020) discovered that dependence on social networks upsurges the probability of experiencing and receiving false information, while ingesting traditional media (print, television) permits greater confirmation of sources and decreases the risk of erroneous conclusions. Authors Wardle & Derakhshan (2017) highlight that the algorithmic structures of social networks errand emotional and sensationalist content, thereby further inspiring the spread of misinformation. Based on the above, the hypothesis was set:

H_3: The use of social networks is positively associated with a higher degree of acceptance of misinformation, regardless of generation.

International literature consistently demonstrates that the mixture of technological progress, algorithmic personalization, and transformed patterns of media ingesting generates an environment in which younger generations, especially generation Z, are most vulnerable to the risk of accepting misinformation as correct (Perez-Escoda et al., 2021). Although there are numerous international studies that investigate the spread of misinformation, the role of artificial intelligence, and generational variances in the awareness of media content, there is a lack of comprehensive studies that simultaneously contain all these dimensions. There

is a chiefly incomplete number of works that syndicate a generational method with an examination of the impact of artificial intelligence on media habits and the propensity to receive misinformation. This research gap is particularly pronounced in the context of the Republic of Serbia, where similar research is rare or fragmented. Conducting this research seeks to fill that gap, deliver empirical data on the differences between generations X, Y, and Z, and contribute to a better understanding of how artificial intelligence outlines media applications and the awareness of the actuality of information.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research was directed as a quantitative study with a descriptive-exploratory character, with the purpose of examining the connection among generational differences, the type of media used for information, and the propensity to receive misinformation created with artificial intelligence. Based on the evaluation of the relevant literature and the set hypotheses (H_1, H_2, and H_3), a survey was conducted that allowed the collection of data on information habits, perception of media content, and respondents' attitudes.

A total of 240 respondents participated in the research, evenly dispersed according to generations X, Y, and Z (80 respondents in each cohort). The generational division is based on the most commonly used criteria in the paperwork: generation X - born between 1965 and 1980; generation Y - born between 1981 and 1996; and generation Z - born between 1997 and 2012. The sample was shaped using the convenience (intentional) sampling method, and the inclusion criteria were: fitting to one of the declared generations, consistent use of the Internet, and at least one type of media (traditional or digital).

Data were collected through an online questionnaire formed for research purposes. The questionnaire contained three segments: demographic data; information habits - frequency and type of media used (social networks, internet portals, television, press, radio), and perception and acceptance of misinformation - a series of declarations about recognition and assessment of the credibility of information created with the help of artificial intelligence (Likert scale from 1 to 5). The statements used in the research were taken from the research Social Media and News Fact Sheet (2025) and Perception and Awareness: Survey Questions about Fake News (2025) and adapted to the Serbian language, so that they were clear and unambiguous to the respondents. The instrument was pre-tested on a

pilot sample of 20 respondents to check the simplicity of the questions and the consistency of the scales.

The research was conducted online in the period from June to September 2025, through social networks and e-mail. Participants were provided with anonymity, and consent was given for voluntary contribution, in accordance with the ethical values of the research.

The collected data were investigated using statistical software SPSS. To test H_1, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine differences in the types of media used by different generations. To test H_2, one-factor ANOVA with post-hoc analysis was applied to determine whether generation Z shows a higher level of receipt of misinformation compared to X and Y. To test H_3, Pearson's correlation and linear regression were used to examine the connection among the frequency of using social networks and the tendency to receive misinformation, regardless of generation. The level of statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. presents the demographic structure of the respondents who contributed in this research.

Table 1. Demographic structure of respondents

Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	116	44.17%
Female	134	55.83%
Education		
High school	99	41.25%
Applied studies	24	10.00%
University studies	82	34.17%
Master's studies/PhD studies	35	14.58%
Age		
Generation X	80	33.33%
Generation Y	80	33.33%
Generation Z	80	33.33%

Place of residence		
City	104	43.33%
Suburban settlement	76	31.67%
Rural area	60	25.00%
Working status		
Full time	117	48.75%
Part time	42	17.50%
Student	54	22.50%
Unemployed	27	11.25%

Source: Authors

A total of 240 respondents contributed to the research, who were evenly dispersed according to generations X, Y, and Z, 80 respondents in each cohort, which permits a valid comparison of generational variances in the perception of media content and receipt of misinformation. Regarding the gender of the respondents, 44.17% are men, while 55.83% are women, which demonstrates a relatively smooth distribution by gender. When it comes to education, the largest number of respondents have finished high school (41.25%), followed by university studies (34.17%), master's or doctoral studies (14.58%), and professional applied studies (10%). This provides an insight into the diverse levels of education within the sample. According to the place of residence, 43.33% of the respondents live in the city, 31.67% in the suburbs, while 25% come from rural areas, which enables the analysis of the influence of the urban or rural environment on information habits. Regarding work status, 48.75% of respondents are employed full-time, 22.5% are students, 17.5% work part-time, and 11.25% are unemployed. This diversity additionally supports the representativeness of the sample and permits insight into the various sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents. All the above characteristics demonstrate that the sample is varied enough to analyze the influence of generation, education, gender, and place of residence on information habits and the perception of misinformation in the media.

For this research, a questionnaire with three segments was used: demographic data, information habits, and perception and acceptance of misinformation. Sections that quantified respondents' attitudes (information habits and perception of misinformation) were rated using a Likert scale from 1 to 5. The reliability of these scales was assessed using the Cronbach alpha coefficient, which measures the internal consistency of the instrument, i.e., the extent to which the declarati-

ons within each scale consistently measure the same construct. Cronbach's alpha values greater than 0.7 are considered a satisfactory indicator of reliability. The results of the analysis presented that the scale of information habits has α = 0.82, which designates good reliability; the scale of perception and acceptance of misinformation showed α = 0.87, which designates very good reliability. When all statements are considered together within the entire questionnaire, the internal consistency is α = 0.85, which confirms the reliability of the instrument for the entire sample of respondents. These results show that the scales are suitable for further statistical analyses, including ANOVA testing, and correlation and regression analysis, in order to test the research hypotheses.

Below is a descriptive analysis of the average ratings of the frequency of use of different media by generations X, Y, and Z. The analysis contains five crucial types of media: social networks, internet portals, television, press, and radio. The average values reflect the frequency of use of each medium. These data enable the identification of media consumption patterns among different generations and serve as a basis for further statistical analyses and interpretation of generational variances.

Table 2. Average ratings of the frequency of use of different media by generations X, Y, and Z

Media / Generation	**X**	**Y**	**Z**
Social networks	3.7	4.2	**4.8**
Internet portals	4.2	4.6	**4.7**
Television	**4.3**	3.6	3.7
Press	3.3	**3.5**	2.8
Radio	**2.9**	2.7	2.5

Source: Authors

Analysis of the table demonstrates clear generational variances in media use. Generation Z relies to the greatest extent on social networks and internet portals, which is in line with expectations for a younger population that occupies more time in the digital environment. On the other hand, Generation X shows a greater reliance on television, while the use of print and radio is generally lower among all generations, with a tendency to decrease among younger respondents. Generation Y inhabits the middle ground between X and Z, with an average frequency of using digital media higher than X, but inferior than Z, while their use of traditional media is lower than X. Hypothesis H_1 is that there are significant differences

among generations X, Y, and Z in terms of the dominant type of media they use for information. The analysis of the average ratings of media use shown in Table 1 shows clear differences: generation Z uses social networks the most (4.8), while generation X watches television the most (4.3); generation Y occupies a middle position, with slightly higher use of social networks and internet portals compared to X. One-factor ANOVA confirms statistically significant differences in the use of social networks ($F = 45.32$, $p < 0.001$) and television ($F = 22.18$, $p < 0.001$). A post-hoc Tukey test shows that generation Z uses social networks significantly more than X and Y, while generation X watches more television than Z. For other media (internet portals, press, radio), the differences are smaller or statistically insignificant. These results support hypothesis H_1 and emphasize generational differences in the choice of media for information, which is of particular importance for considering the perception and acceptance of misinformation among different age groups.

The following table shows the average consequences for the perception and acceptance of misinformation among generations X, Y, and Z. The analysis includes four crucial statements related to trust in information from social networks, the ability to identify false information, checking sources before concluding, and the impact of misinformation on respondents' attitudes. These data provide an insight into the differences in vulnerability and critical access to information among different generations.

Table 3. Average results for the perception and acceptance of misinformation among generations X, Y, and Z

Claims / Generation	**X**	**Y**	**Z**
I accept information from social networks as correct.	2.4	3.0	**3.8**
I have a hard time recognizing false information.	2.8	3.1	**3.9**
I check multiple sources before I believe it.	**3.5**	3.3	2.9
Misinformation affects my views.	2.6	3.0	**3.6**

Source: Authors

From Table 3, it can be seen that generation Z displays a higher degree of acceptance of information from social networks and greater difficulty in recognizing false information compared to older generations. In particular, the average scores for the statements "I accept information from social networks as true" and "It is difficult for me to recognize false information" are the highest among Generation Z, which indicates the greater vulnerability of this group to misinformation. In contrast, Generation X shows a greater tendency to check multiple sources before

trusting information, suggesting a more critical approach and less susceptibility to misinformation. Generation Y inhabits a middle position, with average scores between X and Z. The above data indicate that the influence of disinformation on the respondents' attitudes increases with younger generations, which supports hypothesis H_2 about a higher level of acceptance of misinformation among generation Z. One-factor ANOVA presented significant differences among generations ($F = 38.47$, $p < 0.001$), whereby generation Z express a significantly higher level of acceptance of misinformation compared to generations X and Y, while the differences between X and Y are less pronounced. These results confirm hypothesis H_2. Post-hoc analysis shows: X and Z: difference = 0.73; Y and Z: difference = 0.45, and X and Y: difference = 0.27. The biggest difference is between Generations X and Z, suggesting that Generation Z is significantly more accepting of misinformation. The mean difference between Y and Z also confirms the greater vulnerability of generation Z compared to Y.

Pearson's correlation analysis displays a strong positive relationship among the frequency of using social networks and the degree of acceptance of misinformation ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$). Linear regression supports that the frequency of using social networks significantly forecasts the degree of acceptance of misinformation ($\beta = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$). These conclusions support hypothesis H_3 and highlight the main role of social networks in shaping attitudes and trust in information, exclusively among younger generations.

The research consequences clearly demonstrate that generation Z relies significantly more on social networks and displays a higher degree of acceptance of misinformation related to generations X and Y. Older generations X and Y check information sources more often and have a lower level of acceptance of incorrect information. Also, there is a strong and positive relationship among the frequency of using social networks and the acceptance of misinformation, which supports the need for education and media literacy, especially among younger generations. These consequences recommend that the younger generation, who use digital media to the greatest extent, especially social networks, represent a more vulnerable population in the context of the spread and acceptance of false information created with the help of artificial intelligence, and that there is a strong need to raise the level of media literacy and critical thinking among this population. Comparative analysis with foreign research supports these results. Research by the Pew Research Center (2025) demonstrates that younger generations, particularly generation Z, predominantly use social networks as a main source of information, and are at the same time more vulnerable to accepting misinformation than older generations, who rely more on traditional media. Similar conclusions are drawn by the study of Vosoughi et al. (2018), which demonstrates

that fake news spreads faster and reaches a larger number of users on digital platforms related to authentic information, which is especially pronounced among the younger population. These findings support that the dynamics of the media environment, accelerated by algorithmic recommendations and personalization of content, directly affect the perception and acceptance of information among users.

Foreign literature, including the works of Lazer et al. (2018) and Guess et al. (2019), highlights that the use of social networks increases the exposure and acceptance of misinformation, while the consumption of traditional media, such as print and television, allows better fact-checking and reduces the risk of wrong conclusions. The results of this research fit straight into this pattern: generations X and Y, who use television and internet portals more often, demonstrate a lower level of acceptance of misinformation, while generation Z, which dominates social networks, shows a significantly higher vulnerability. This alignment with international results delivers further confirmation of the validity of the research and points to universal tendencies in the relationship among generational patterns of media use and information perception.

The outcomes of this research contribute to a better understanding of generational differences in the perception of the media and the acceptance of misinformation, thus filling the existing gap in domestic literature. At the same time, they are in a high degree of agreement with international research, which suggests that the challenges of the digital environment and the influence of artificial intelligence on the spread of disinformation are not specific to one country or culture, but represent a global phenomenon that requires coordinated strategies of education and media literacy.

In addition to the analysis of generational differences and comparison with international research, the results of this work have significant practical implications for education and the regulation of the spread of disinformation shaped with the help of artificial intelligence in the Republic of Serbia. It is understandable that younger generations, particularly generation Z, show greater vulnerability to digital manipulations, which emphasizes the need to familiarize or strengthen media literacy programs in schools and universities. These programs should contain critical evaluation of information from social networks, recognition of potentially false or manipulative content, and education on the basics of source verification.

Institutes and regulatory bodies in the Republic of Serbia can use the outcomes of this research as a basis for evolving guidelines and policies to control the spread of artificial intelligence-generated disinformation, including cooperation with digital platforms and social networks to identify and limit the visibility of false information. Education and regulation strategies can be targeted towards

younger populations, but also contain older generations in order to increase society's overall resistance to digital manipulation.

Civil society organizations and media institutions in the Republic of Serbia can use the outcomes of this research to generate awareness campaigns about the effect of artificial intelligence on media content and the importance of critical access to information. These agendas may include workshops, online resources, and also collaborating tools that simulate the recognition of generated content by artificial intelligence, which practically equips users to arrangement with digital misinformation daily.

CONCLUSION

The research presented clear generational differences in media consumption and misinformation acceptance. Generation Z relies significantly more on social media and displays a higher level of acceptance of false information compared to Generations X and Y, while older generations check sources more often and have a lower degree of vulnerability to misinformation. Frequency of social media use strongly predicts acceptance of misinformation, indicating the crucial role of digital platforms in shaping attitudes and trust in information. The outcomes confirm hypotheses H_1, H_2, and H_3 and emphasize the necessity for systematic educational measures and increasing media literacy, particularly among the younger generations, to reduce vulnerability to digital manipulations and disinformation generated with the help of artificial intelligence. The main limitation of this research is the sample of 240 respondents that was collected within one country (the Republic of Serbia), which may limit the generalization of the results to the wider population. Also, data was collected through self-report in the survey, which may contain subjective judgments and the possible social desirability of responses. Future research could contain a larger and more heterogeneous sample in order to obtain more representative outcomes at the national or international level. Also, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, including experiments and in-depth interviews, is recommended in order to better understand the motivations and mechanisms of perception and acceptance of misinformation. Special attention should be paid to the effect of specific types of social networks and different content created by artificial intelligence on different demographic groups, which would permit the expansion of targeted education and preventive strategies in the digital environment.

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