

The **WIFI** generation



The youth of today on the mobile Internet

Instant access to a world without walls



Liesbeth Hop & Bamber Delver



Publisher: Media Literacy Network
Authors: Liesbeth Hop & Bamber Delver
Translation: Patrick Timms, www.easytranslation.nl
Information and ordering from: www.medialiteracynetwork.org
ISBN:
See also: www.wifigeneration.org

Contact information:
Liesbeth Hop
liesbeth.hop@medialiteracynetwork.org
hop.liesbeth@gmail.com
Telephone: +31 6 435 879 54
Bamber Delver
bamber.delver@medialiteracynetwork.org
delver.bamber@gmail.com
Telephone: +31 6 254 400 50

The **WIFI** generation



The youth of today on the mobile Internet

Instant access to a world without walls



Liesbeth Hop & Bamber Delver

The decline of adult supervision

It is the authors' view that all children and young people have the right to our guidance and supervision, and yet this is exactly what they have lost. The five principal rights of children (upbringing, education, safety, respect and youth itself) are, after all, the basic values that have formed the cornerstone of our attitude to living and working for many years. If we as adults do not open our eyes to the lightning-fast revolution of the mobile Internet, or if we fail to anticipate the future of the WiFi Generation, then these rights are liable to fall by the wayside.

We are tasked with the responsibility of supporting and guiding our children and young people so that they may develop into active, responsible and critical producers and consumers of media. But how do we achieve this in the context of an entire generation that is able to determine for themselves what they see, hear and read – essentially their entire approach to the media as a whole – if they can do this without our knowledge? The time has come to acknowledge the rapid increase in the media's influence over our children and take swift action. We must dedicate ourselves, both at home and at school, to producing a generation of future adults who are 'mediawise', as they are entitled to be. This means providing them with the knowledge, skills and mentality to stay afloat in a world swimming with media. Indeed, in the context of the WiFi Generation, the media is their world! They are literally connected, day and night, to the media and to each other; there is no opportunity to pause and consider in this whirlwind of sounds and pictures.

The right to be mediawise

For parents, teachers, corporations and the government

Aside from parents and teachers, this book is also intended for anyone working in the media industry, commercial organisations or the government. Its purpose is to be the first step towards understanding and guiding and the WiFi Generation, starting with providing an insight into its origins and key characteristics. We have dedicated an entire chapter to the themes encountered by this generation in their use of the media. We then explain how to identify the influence exerted by the media and the consequences it can entail for our children's lives, and finish with practical tips for parents,

educators, media producers, corporations and civil servants as to how we can best guide and supervise the WiFi Generation.

Youth support

It is our view that youth support workers and related professions share in the upbringing of the WiFi Generation as well. Our advice to parents is equally applicable to foster parents or anyone else looking after children and young people as part of a youth support programme. While foster parents could previously bring up their children in a new environment without much in the way of external influence, in the modern age this is no longer the case. The use of technology such as mobile phones, PlayStation Portables, texting, online chatting and etc. makes it much easier for children to live a good proportion of their lives beyond the confines of their home environment. Any organisation or centre associated with young people, such as youth centres, can also make good use of the advice, information and training that we offer.

Understanding and supporting the WiFi Generation

We invite you to contribute to our support of the WiFi Generation by informing yourselves and your colleagues of the challenges that this revolution brings! Reading this book is a good start, but a start is all it is. You can help us by taking action, by talking and discussing these issues with your local friends and acquaintances, presenting your own views and vision on the matter. Devise inspiring activities to stimulate your colleagues to form their own vision and develop policies to match. We will be glad to assist you with this – feel free to contact us if you need any help!



Bamber Delver & Liesbeth Hop

The WiFi Generation is on the rise

'The advent of the mobile Internet means the demise of adult supervision; we must raise our children differently.'

The average age of children active on the Internet is dropping year by year; a six-year-old with a Facebook profile is no longer out of the ordinary. One quarter of six to eight-year-olds are have been given a mobile phone by their parents. Interestingly, however, it is the youth of today who are the most concerned about their online privacy being respected. It is they who have made the most attempts to remove sensitive information from where it does not belong, while succeeding merely half the time. It is also most often young people who have reported negative experiences resulting from harmful or incorrect information about themselves on the Internet. But this is only the beginning; Bamber Delver and Liesbeth Hop, both global opinion leaders in the realm of youth and media on behalf of the Media Literacy Network, are heralding the advent of the newest revolution. And it's just around the corner.

Whom does the WiFi Generation consist of?

"The WiFi Generation encompasses any child or young person who is permanently online through a smartphone or mobile games console. The youth of today are no longer tied to a particular computer at home or in the classroom; they can use their own mobile equipment, such as iPhones or PlayStation Portables, to go online whenever and wherever they wish. The technical possibilities are out there already – the fast-food chain McDonald's is rapidly rolling out mobile Internet access to all its branches; the coffee chain Starbucks has already done so, as have many other catering establishments. Free wireless Internet access was made available in many cities last summer. The WiFi Generation decides for itself where and how they will go online."

So after the 'digital generation' comes another one. What are the differences?

"We have talked extensively with the young people of the WiFi Generation in preparation for writing this book, as well as their parents and teachers, the



police and many others. We very quickly came to the realisation that this newest technological revolution, that of the mobile Internet, combined with the fact that children are often the first to make active use of these new tools, has consequences that their parents and teachers are not at all prepared for. Those involved in bringing up the modern child still believe that they can be the gatekeepers to their media world. Advice like 'keep the computer in the living room' or 'supervise your children while they chat' is no longer applicable today. With a smartphone, children can roam online beyond their parents' or teachers' sphere of influence, relying on themselves and their peer group for their development in this area. We believe it is very important that those with responsibility for children realise this without delay. We are heralding a revolutionary transformation in our society; the rise of the mobile Internet will force parents and teachers to fundamentally alter the way in which they associate with the youth of today."

With a smartphone, children can roam online beyond their parents' or teachers' sphere of influence, relying on themselves and their peer group



One of your key points is that the youth should not be overestimated. The book says that children have a right to their upbringing and it is time for their parents to take positive action.

"It is very important that we allow kids to be kids. We should not underestimate the amount of work to be done on what we call their 'safety net' in society. It is



The passive 'couch potato' kids are gone, and the WiFi Generation has taken their place, but the new youth still has the same right to an upbringing



assumed in many countries that a child's technical development will go hand in hand with their social and emotional skills. We should see our children for what they are, and allow them to be so; they are children, with an unripened and vulnerable view of the world. Children should be granted their youth, but as parents and teachers we have work to do to support them in this. Because the WiFi Generation is independent and can access whatever content they wish, away from home or school, we must give them the knowledge they need to learn how to handle this whirlwind of information responsibly. We can no longer constrain or forbid them, as we no longer have control over what they can view. The passive 'couch potato' kids are gone, and the WiFi Generation has taken their place, but the new youth still has the same right to an upbringing. This modern upbringing must involve teaching them to be mediawise – the key concept in our opinion."

'Mediawise' has become a buzzword over the past year.

What exactly does it mean?

"We always like to use the Dutch Council for Culture's definition as a starting point. It was, after all, this Council that introduced the term in 2005, and we find that their version of its meaning remains the most sound, including its use in the context of anticipating the revolution of the mobile Internet. In order to become mediawise, a person must learn 'how to actively, responsibly and critically respond to a fundamentally media-oriented world'. This means it is not about trying to shield or protect children from the negative influences out there, but instead teaching them how to handle the media. We support this view completely; we cannot simply take away all these new devices or the entire Internet, nor do we as authors wish to try and take place of parents or teachers. What we do want is to provide those involved in bringing up a child with the knowledge they need to make this generation mediawise."

The book contains a number of practical tips, for the education sector as well.

The meaning of safe use of the Internet, for example, has changed completely since it became mobile. But how?

"Let's take an example of how the world has changed dramatically.

Luckily we have been able to teach our children how to chat online in a

The WiFi generation



healthy and sociable manner over the past few years. With the advent of the mobile Internet, however, they can do it on their iPhones without their parents' knowledge, supervision or counsel. The free and very popular iPhone app 'eBuddy' allows children to access a variety of chat facilities, such as MSN and Google Talk. Mobile Internet-connected devices force children to make the choices about their online activities themselves, individually and autonomously. This includes whom they chat to, or how they deal with cyber-bullying and abuse, including whether they are tempted to partake in it themselves. Another example is that children are becoming more and more easily reachable through their mobile phones; mobile chat rooms can display where each chatter is located. This can be handy for their parents and friends, but what about the less desirable characters they may come into contact with, who can see this information as well? Commercial influences have taken on a radically different form as well; they are no longer the same old advertisements that we as adults remember. No, commerce can now reach children in ways their parents cannot detect, being ever-present in the games they play on their mobile devices. Sometimes the 'game' may be an advertisement in itself. There was also something that came up during an interview we had with a young girl with a grudge against one of her classmates. She can use her new smartphone to make hurtful videos and instantly upload them to YouTube; cyber-bullying is evolving too."

What is the most important advice you would give to the parents and teachers of the WiFi Generation?

"Make teaching them to be mediawise part of your agenda. Take the youth seriously and see them as the experts. Anticipate future changes. Decide how to cope, but do it together. Learn both about and from the WiFi Generation. Do not be naïve enough to think that your previous methods of upbringing and education are still tenable today. And above all, we would ask the education sector to open its eyes to these revolutionary developments in society and to allow our children to be mediawise, as they have a right to be. And finally... don't forget to enjoy all the clever new technology on the way!"

The WiFi generation

Mobile Internet-connected devices force children to make the choices about their online activities themselves, individually and autonomously



Do not be naïve enough to think that your previous methods of upbringing and education are still tenable today



The **WiFi** generation

The youth of today on the mobile Internet

Instant access to a world without walls

The **WiFi** Generation is on the rise. Children and young people who are permanently online through super-modern smartphones and games consoles – from iPhones to PlayStation Portables. Don't be fooled into thinking a phone is just a phone for young people any more; no, these devices offer the **WiFi** Generation unhindered access to the mobile Internet with all its opportunities, anywhere and at any time. And this is happening out of our sight, unsupervised and in total privacy.



The goal of authors Bamber Delver and Liesbeth Hop is to raise our awareness of this revolution, because it's coming now, and it's coming fast. It will have drastic consequences, not only for the way we bring up and educate our children, but also for the

way that businesses and even entire countries are run. In the authors' view, we won't know what hit us if we don't embrace this new uprising!

This book will introduce you to the 10 key characteristics of the **WiFi** Generation. There are interviews to read with the young people themselves, as well as their parents and the professionals involved in their upbringing. It provides a valuable insight into the methods of parenting, educating and governing this generation that are no longer viable in this new age of technology. It offers a glimpse of the future, in which even the youngest of our society can play and live in a three-dimensional media cloud. Naturally the book also includes a wide range of practical tips for parenting, educating and supervising the **WiFi** Generation. We can no longer constrain or forbid them; we who were once taught to be streetwise must now teach our children to be mediawise.

The **WiFi** Generation is intended for any professional involved with the youth of today. Parents, educators, librarians, youth support teams, Police officers, civil servants, corporations and those involved in creating and distributing all forms of media. The book was written by Liesbeth Hop and Bamber Delver on behalf of the Media Literacy Network; they are global opinion leaders in the realm of youth and media.

www.medialiteracynetwork.org

www.wifigeneration.org

medialiteracy
network  .org

