

Understanding the consumers of tomorrow - X, Y and Z

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X and Y, commonly known as chromosomes, determine the sex of a child. But for marketers, X and Y are consumers.

The best educated of the two groups, and of course I include myself in this category, is Generation X. Born mid-60's to mid-70s, we came of age in the 80s, when electronic music made us dance away the arguments of divorced parents who gave us the key-to-the-door for afternoons alone at home, or with some of the most undesirables in the neighbourhood.



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Generation Y - also known as the Millennials - picks up from the mid-70s to the mid-90s: and who knew 'X'-ers could breed such sophisticated and techno-wise children? This group became the marketer's delight. Able to spot a brand at 200 paces, although not particularly brand loyal, they were attuned to name-dropping, embracing huge amounts of aspirational products and certainly even created a number of product trends. They studied hard, partied just as hard, but when they settled down Generation Y matured to have children - the Z Generation - that have completely changed the way marketers think, plan, strategise and go to market.

Generation Z will be coming of age between this year and 2020. With complete information technology savviness, they have

never known a life without the internet and social media platforms that allow them to access heaps of data. It may be that parents have overindulged this precocious band of rebels, yet we must watch with admiration as they promote their feelings, their distastes and loves all over the airwaves, with thumbs spastically banging out two- or more, conversations composed entirely of over-punctuated and under constructed sentences!

Generation Z exhibit a sense of social justice, philanthropy, maturity and environmental understanding yet because they prefer texting, conversation and vocabulary is dying. Add to this the intense need for instant and constant feedback in short and abbreviated bursts of information, marketers have a challenge.

Immune to most traditional marketing methods and sales pitches, Generation Z would rather listen to friends and circles of 'influencers', and is the hardest target market to reach. No longer can marketers take time to do months of qualitative research; old techniques don't allow brands to see what is trending. By the time trends are established, Generation Z has already moved on to the next great thing. Facebook is a prime example, it is currently losing a large percentage of their under-18 users to Instagram!

The attention span of Generation Z on YouTube is around two minutes. Instagram just 6-15 seconds. Makes for cheaper production of content for marketing a brand but only if the production caters to mobile phone parameters, simply because the cellphone is the teen tool of choice.

So what's the answer? We marketers discover daily, largely through trial and error, and of course our highly-educated adaptable intelligence, that cross-platform visuals, video and mobile promotions that don't promote the brand per se, but rather an event associated to a brand, is the only way to reach 'this holy grail for brands'. Today that is. Tomorrow is another day!

ABOUT HELEN MCINTEE

Helen McIntee, well-known and respected African marketing personality, is qualified with BA, MBA and CPM degrees, is a published author - including academic textbooks and publication articles - and a lecturer and keynote speaker. She is also the President of the African Marketing Confederation (AMC) and a director of the Institute of Marketing Management.

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