

## Marketing to the Generations

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### ABSTRACT

Each generation has unique expectations, experiences, generational history, lifestyles, values, and demographics that influence their buying behaviors. Accordingly, many companies are reaching out to multi-generational consumers and trying to understand and gain the attention of these diverse buyers. Multi-generational marketing is the practice of appealing to the unique needs and behaviors of individuals within more than one specific generational group, with a generation being a group of individuals born and living about the same time [1]. This means that marketers need to understand the six U.S. generations: Pre-Depression Generation, Depression Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z. When a marketer factors in the different characteristics and behaviors of the generations, it should be easier to build relationships, gain trust, and close business. [2, 3] As such, an understanding of multi-generational marketing is very important to the marketer. The purpose of this paper is to describe briefly the U.S. generations in terms of the times in which they grew up as well as the characteristics, lifestyles, and attitudes of the group. However, the primary focus of the paper is to describe various marketing understandings and strategies appropriate to each generation's characteristics and behaviors, particularly in terms of segmentation, products and services, and communication.

Keywords: Multigenerational Marketing, Generations, Baby Boomers, Xers, Gen Y, Generation Z

## **INTRODUCTION**

Not every generation is alike, nor should they be treated by marketers in the same way. Multi-generational marketing is the practice of appealing to the unique needs and behaviors of individuals within more than one specific generational group, with a generation being a group of individuals born and living about the same time [1]. When a marketer factors in the different characteristics and behaviors of the generations, it should be easier to build relationships, gain trust, and close business [2]. In fact, creating ageless multi-generational brands is one of the top ten marketing trends over the next 25 years [4]. As such, an understanding of multi-generational marketing is very important to the marketer. [3]

The purpose of this paper is to describe briefly the various U.S. generations in terms of the times in which they grew up as well as the characteristics, lifestyles, and attitudes of the group. However, the primary focus of the paper is to describe how to create various marketing strategies appropriate to each generation's characteristics and behaviors, particularly in terms of segmentation, products and services, and communication.

## **THE U.S. GENERATIONS**

A U.S. generation or age cohort is a group of persons who travel through life together and experience similar events at a similar age. That is, they share a common social, political, historical, and economic environment.

While there is some inconsistency with regard to detail, an examination of written materials regarding the U.S. generations indicates that there are six American generations: Pre-Depression, Depression, Baby Boom, Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z. [5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12] Table 1 lists information specific to each of these generations, i.e., date of birth, number of individuals, and age as of 2010. Each of these generations is described in essence below with regard to the times in which they grew up and to their characteristics, lifestyles, and attitudes. Thereafter, each generation is described in terms of how to market to that specific generation with a particular focus on segmentation, products and services, and communication.

## **MARKETING TO THE PRE-DEPRESSION GENERATION**

The Pre-Depression Generation (a.k.a. G.I. Generation, Veteran Generation, and WWI Generation) was born before 1930 and are 81 and above as of 2010. Most were children during the Depression experiencing traumatic times, economic strife, and elevated unemployment rates. As young adults during WWII, their lives began with high expectations, which were shattered eventually by WWI and WWII. The Pre-Depression Generation has witnessed radical social and technological changes including glistening new schools, miracle medicines, and launched rockets. [7, 5] In terms of their characteristics, lifestyles, and attitudes, members of the Pre-Depression Generation are conservative, altruistic, and become less materialistic as they age. They are concerned about health, aging, financial and personal security, and the disposition of valued belongings. [13, 14, 15, 8, 16, 17, 18]

With regard to effective marketing strategies for the Pre-Depression generation, the most important segmentation variables are health, activity level, discretionary time, engagement in society, and gender. As much as possible, they have adopted young again lifestyles and attitudes. While they are somewhat sedentary, they watch a lot of television and walking is their

main source of exercise. They are very concerned about the disposition of their valued belongings. Security rules their thinking, for example, it is good to contact them through professional advisors such as lawyers and financial managers. [19, 11]

Important products and services include vacations, health services, and single-serving size prepared foods. Because they are concerned about their health and aging, important products and services are nursing or retirement homes and assisted-living services. This is increasingly important as men live to be an average of 79 and women 83, but half of those over 80 suffer from a long-term illness. [20, 10, 11, 12]

In terms of communication, the Pre-Depression Generation prefers print media for information. They read newspapers, magazines, and ads more thoroughly than other generations. For the mature market in general, communicating often requires alteration of messages and materials, that is, larger type with clear, bright pictures, newspapers, AM radio, models they can relate to, and simple language. It is very effective to use action to attract attention while keeping the word count low and reducing extraneous stimuli. Rather than appealing to their chronological age, it is important to communicate to their cognitive age or the age a person perceives himself or herself to be. In particular, cognitive age can be used for targeting segments within this group, developing more creative content, and selecting more effective media. In addition, face-to-face communication and personal service are valued by this generation, few use the Internet. Marketers can get in touch with this group through their children as well as talking to them at formal social gatherings and recognition events. [21, 20, 22]

## **MARKETING TO THE DEPRESSION GENERATION**

The Depression Generation (a.k.a. Silent Generation, Traditionalists, and Swing Generation) was born during 1930-1945 and are in the 65-80 age range as of 2010. The individuals of this generation were small children during the Depression or WWII. They value rationing, saving, morals, and ethics. They were very patriotic and witnessed America's emergence as a superpower. Social tranquility and family togetherness are important to the Depression Generation. Conformity seems to be the ticket to success. [7, 13, 5] In terms of their characteristics, lifestyles, and attitudes, they rely on tried, true, and tested ways of doing things. They are slow to embrace anything new and distrust change. Many are still in excellent health and quite active. [23, 8, 14] Many have substantial wealth in the form of home equity and savings. [15, 16, 24, 17, 25, 26]

Given this description, here are some suggestions about how to market more successfully to the Depression Generation segment. First of all, use themes that stress active lifestyle and that break with stereotypical portrayals of older consumers and "seniors." Do not depict them as helpless or dependent on someone else. Emphasize traditional values such as discipline, self-denial, hard work, obedience to authority, conformity, commitment, responsibility, celebration of victory, and financial and social conservatism. A marketer must earn their trust as they believe that a person's word is his or her bond. Patriotism, teambuilding, and sacrifice for the common good are appealing to this generation. They also appreciate romantic themes, candlelight dinners, and soft music. As a group, they feel no need for the information age, but the younger members of this generation are one of the fastest growing groups of Internet users. The Depression Generation segment also responds to authority, celebrities, and respected institutions. [19, 11]

In terms of products and services, this generation is a major market for upscale children's furniture, toys, strollers, car seats, and clothing. They also desire quality and "Made in the U.S.A." products. They are not price sensitive even though they are financially conservative [27]. Other important product areas include low fat/sugar/salt/cholesterol foods, recreational vehicles, second homes, new cars, travel services, and adult recreation education. Stress simplicity, convenience, accessibility, ease of use, service, and support as key product and service features. While this generation has a positive attitude toward shopping, marketers still need to be aware of enhancing their shopping experience [27]. These traditionalists will be customers for life if you provide a quality product and give them what they want [2]. [20, 11, 12]

In terms of communication, use formal written and face-to-face language with this generation. Use formal greetings and salutations such as Sir or Mr. and ask them how they prefer to be addressed. A firm handshake, upright posture, and direct eye contact also work well. The Depression Generation appreciates summary information so that they do not waste their time. Show your appreciation to them with messages such as "We respect your experience" or "We value your perseverance" or "You earned it." They like to be treated as having a badge of distinction and honor which in turn gives them permission to spend their money. Using terms such as "we" and "us" can build a sense of trust. Information should be easily digestible, non-confrontational, and non-controversial. Spend extra time listening to their needs. Reach them through traditional media: radio, television, billboards, magazines, and direct mail. Use face-to-face conversation, formal social events, recognition and tribute events, professional advisors, direct mail, telephone, and the Internet to contact this generation. [21, 20]

This generation increasingly is becoming more tech savvy, e.g., they use eBay to downsize. They attend computer classes in nursing homes and recreation centers. Be sure to consider the following when designing websites for the Depression Generation (Source: Nielsen Norman Group Report "Web Usability for Senior Citizens: 46 Design Guidelines Based on Usability Studies with People Age 65 and Older) [28, 22]:

- Make the text size at least 12 points by default and offer a button to increase text size for the site.
- Write for the users.
- Present information clearly and in a way that is easy to scan.
- Differentiate between text used for lining and text used for headings, that is, be consistent throughout the site.
- Use static navigational menus and avoid using moving menus.
- Make search results visible on the page without scrolling and if you use pop-up windows, make the default size big enough to fit all or most of the information so users do not need to scroll.
- When graphical elements appear close to a text link, make those elements part of the working link.
- In search results, always clearly repeat the user's query.

## **MARKETING TO THE BABY BOOMER GENERATION**

The Baby Boomers (a.k.a. Boomers, Me Generation, Baboo, Love Generation, Woodstock Generation, and Sandwich Generation) were born during 1946-1964 and are in the 46-64 age range as of 2010. They were born during the dramatic increase of births between the

end of WWII and 1964. They were indulged youth during an era of community spirited progress. The Boomers value individualization, self-expression, optimism, and “Be Here Now.” [5, 13] In terms of their characteristics, lifestyles, and attitudes, Boomers have defined themselves by their careers and many are workaholics. [29] While some have retired, many plan to continue working and expand into “active retirement” by re-engineering life. Boomers have increased discretionary income and time. [30] Family responsibilities are important to Boomers. [7] This generation is more tech savvy than previous generations. [31] Health, energy, and wellness are major goals for them. [32, 33] As a generation, they are considered more self-centered and suspicious of authority. [34, 6, 35, 24, 36, 25, 26]

With regard to marketing to the Baby Boomer segment, they want quick fixes that require little change and instant improvement. They do not like bureaucracy, but give them a cause to fight for and they will give their all. In addition, focus on building value and they will be less price sensitive if they believe they are getting a superior product and good value. Boomers like options and flexibility. Health is a major concern for this generation. While the group may be aging, they do not want to be reminded of that fact, that is, they are focused on anti-aging and breaking the mold of what 50 looks like [37]. In accordance, marketers should not use these seven words for Boomers: senior citizen, retiree, aging, Golden Years, Silver Years, mature, and prime time of life [38]. Looking for the fountain of youth and slowing down weight gain are increasingly important, as are natural and organic foods. They like things that are relevant to them and appropriate to their life stage, not age. For example, family values are very important to this generation. Many are becoming Empty Nesters in that children are leaving home, marrying, and having grandchildren. As the Sandwich Generation, many are caregivers of their aging parents and children. Marketers should let them know that they are in charge of their own decisions. Their focus is on “Me” and they feel entitled to a good life. Having a sense of fun, treating everyone differently, and understanding changing values are important to this generation. [39, 19, 11, 40, 41]

Important products and services are plastic surgery, botox, baldness treatments, Viagra, health clubs and spas, cosmetics (male and female), hair coloring, and health foods. For example, Progresso has launched a new high-fiber soup line [42]. Another health-related product area revolves around hearing loss due to natural aging and loud music [43, 44]. They are very attracted to new products and technologies that will make their lives easier, save them time, and will not rip them off. Baby Boomers are a good market for travel, adventure vacations, expensive restaurant meals, second homes, recreational vehicles, maintenance-free homes, personal chefs, personal trainers, motorcycles, and financial advisors. Another interesting product area for Boomers is retro marketing and the marketing of music-based tourism and a musician’s hometown roots [45]. Also, as Boomers retire, they seem to be moving from larger cities to smaller towns for lower costs of living, less stress, and more living [46, 47]. Baby Boomers are very price conscious and the least prestige sensitive. They value location, service, and everyday-low-prices. [27] In general, however, it appears that Boomers may actually be permanently altering their shopping behaviors as a consequence of the recent economic downturn [48, 49, 20, 40, 41, 50, 51]

In terms of communication, Baby Boomers like information presented in terms of categories and options, i.e., simple facts with which to make a decision. Personal gratification and public recognition are important to this generation, that is, they respond to statements such as “You’re important to our success”, “Your contribution is unique and important to us”, and “We need you.” It is effective to use word-of-mouth communications from trusted advisors and

friends to sell this generation. In addition, a marketer could hold an open house or a local health fair at their business or practice with food and drinks and give out health information. Social gatherings and professional seminars can be used to create word-of-mouth advertising. Use communication methods such as social and recognition events, professional advisors, direct mail, face-to-face conversation, and e-mail. For example, target organizations with a high percentage of Baby Boomers such as the AARP. TV is still a major media route. Boomers prefer open and direct but not controlling body language and communication. Questions should be answered thoroughly. It is good to take the time to explain how doing business with your organization can give them a competitive or positive advantage. Realize that more information is better for Baby Boomers. Use positive, emotionally meaningful concepts, words, and images, e.g., tell them a story. They are increasingly environmentally conscious and supportive of the green movement and green products and services. However, they want cost savings from green products first followed by environmental benefits as a second payoff [52]. [21, 22, 41]

In terms of communicating to Baby Boomers, they like the convenience and customization of the Internet, especially for health information, online job sites, and joining social networking sites. Given that Internet usage by Boomers is over 70%, use the Internet as a communication vehicle. For example, AOL is testing a social site dedicated to the 50+ audience (i.e., [goodlife.aol.com](http://goodlife.aol.com)) that offers easy navigation and larger font sizes. In addition, Nintendo donates Wii game consoles to retirement community recreation centers around the U.S. This practice allows seniors to experience the games and make purchasing decisions for themselves and their grandchildren. In addition, although Baby Boomers' general uptake of mobile phone technology is high, they have a limited use and understanding of functions beyond simple voice calls and SMS [53]. Additionally, it is important for marketers to get the most from their web initiatives. For example, they could install something like Google Analytics to measure how many people come to the site, where they are from, how they found your site, and what pages they found to be most useful. This initial tracking then can serve as a benchmark to compare with future metrics. For Boomers, the site needs to be rich with relevant information, easy to navigate, and uses text rather than images. On the Internet, social networks can be effective as well as blogs. [54, 28, 10, 11, 12]

## **MARKETING TO GENERATION X**

Generation X (a.k.a. Baby Bust, Slackers, Why Me Generation, and the Latchkey Generation) was born during 1965-1977 and are in the 34-45 age range as of 2010. They reached adulthood during difficult economic times [55]. Success for this generation has been less certain. They are likely to be self-employed professionals who embrace free agency over company loyalty. They value family first. These latch-key children grew up quickly, experiencing rising divorce rates and violence. They have taken greater responsibility for raising themselves and tend to be less traditional than any other generation. They date and marry cautiously. [7, 5, 24] To the less-traditional Generation X, nothing is permanent. With Generation X, multiculturalism and thinking globally have become the norm. They have experienced the increasing impact of personal computers and produced the 1990's dot.com stars. They are highly educated even though they are pessimistic, skeptical, disillusioned with almost everything, and are very questioning of conventionality. [27] The characteristics, lifestyles, and attitudes of Generation X include balancing family, life, and work. [56] They do not believe in

sacrificing time, energy, and relationships for advancement like the Boomers did. Xers generally are free agents, not team players. [6, 57, 58, 59, 25, 26]

Here are some ideas about how to market to the Generation X segment more successfully. They are moving into the middle and latter stages of the coveted 18-49 year old marketing demographic. Their tastes are “not Baby Boom,” often blaming the “Me Generation” and the materialism of the Baby Boomers for their difficult times. Because they have many needs and greater financial restraints, they often shop at value-oriented retailers. They can be unsure of themselves and often need reassurance that their choices are sound. Marketers can help them plan for the future and balance work, family, and personal life. They like initiatives that will make things more useful and practical. Give them a lot of stimuli, a challenging environment, and flexibility without long-term commitment. Give them opportunities to learn, grow, and improve. For example, ask them to volunteer on entrepreneurial projects. They demand trust to the extent that if your organization does not follow through once, then you are likely to lose them. Treat them like family. On the other hand, they have a reputation of being incredibly disloyal to brands and companies. [19, 11, 55, 60]

Generation X needs to buy products and services to set up households and for young children. They account for the largest share of the nation’s parents and many of them were new home buyers caught in the housing bubble [61, 55, 62]. They are a major force in the market for cars, appliances, and children’s products. Games and magazines such as Spin, Details, and Maxim are important. Generation X wants to hear the features of the product as well as an explanation of why these features are necessary [2]. They are both cynical and sophisticated about products, ads, and shopping. Services aimed at building relationship may alter this groups’ commodity-based view of the shopping experience. This group is the most price conscious and has low price sensitivity. They want products and messages designed uniquely for their tasks and lifestyles. Information and technology are important in products and services. They see technology as changing their world and techno literacy is highly valued. [27, 63, 20, 10, 11]

In terms of communication, Generation X is not always easy to reach. Xer women are the highest viewers of home improvement media and the most likely to engage in home improvement, including adding a room onto the house. But, traditional network TV is not able to attract this demographic, particularly men. Cable and the Internet are continually luring these customers away. They respond to irreverence in advertising but not always as well to traditional approaches. Give them plenty of access to information and educate them into buying. That is, keep them in the loop by asking for their feedback and sharing information with them regularly. It is effective to approach them more as a consultant rather than a seller. They like to be kept abreast of the bigger picture. But, use short sound bites to keep their attention. They prefer an informal communication style. Do not use overly slick marketing pitches as they are skeptical of modern advertising. They find advertising utterly transparent in its aim, i.e., to get them to buy something. Be frank and use straightforward facts, candor, and honesty. You must show them that you know what you are talking about. It is very effective to speak their language directly and in a non-threatening way, for example, “You’re different and we respect that.” Motivate them with statements such as “There aren’t a lot of rules here” or “This is not a formal establishment” or “Do it your way.” Make good use of group events and word-of-mouth recommendations from their peers, they think communally and often make decisions together. Emphasize such communication methods as the Internet, e-mail, multi-media, word-of-mouth, social events, and peer gatherings. Interestingly, they respond to direct mail. [64, 21, 28, 22]

## MARKETING TO GENERATION Y

Generation Y (a.k.a. Gen Y, Millennials, Echo Boomers, Why Generation, Net Generation, Gen Wired, We Generation, DotNet, Ne(x)t Generation, Nexters, First Globals, iPod Generation, and iYGeneration) was born during 1977-1994 and are in the 16-33 age range as of 2010. They are children of the original Baby Boomers and their numbers rival that of the Baby Boomers. They grew up in a time of immense and fast-paced change including virtually full-employment opportunities for women, dual-income households as the standard, wide array of family types seen as normal, significant respect for ethnic and cultural diversity including a heightened social awareness, and computers in the home and schools. Gen Y individuals are well grounded and wise for their age. They were born into a technological, electronic, and wireless society with global boundaries becoming more transparent. They are accustomed to a diverse universe where anything seems possible. [5, 7] The characteristics, lifestyles, and attitudes of Gen Y include older teens and young adults. They are self-absorbed and self-reliant with a strong sense of independence and autonomy. They want results and are not as concerned with the why of it [2]. They are image-driven and make personal statements with their image. [24] They have a greater need for peer acceptance, connecting with their peers, fitting in, and social networking. [65, 66] Gen Y individuals are open-minded, optimistic, goal oriented, and highly motivated toward their perceptions of success. Eight key values have been described for Gen Y: choice, customization, scrutiny, integrity, collaboration, speed, entertainment, and innovation [67]. Efficient multi-tasking helps them be successful. [29, 57, 6, 68, 69, 70, 27, 36, 2, 71, 72, 73, 25, 26]

Marketing to the Generation Y segment can be improved by the following possibilities. The teen segment of this generation receives considerable marketing attention and is notoriously selfish, lives for today, and spends big. Gen Y individuals assist in household management and shopping with important preferences and tastes being developed during these teen years. Marketers want to attract this group early and earn its loyalty. Appeal to their belief that they can make the future better. Be sure that they know that your organization's mission speaks to a purpose greater than the bottom line, e.g., globalization, global warming, and the advent of the "global citizen." Feature your organization as an instrument of change. Give them systematic feedback because they value positive reinforcement at accelerated rates compared to previous generations and want more input into all things in which they participate. They are able to easily grasp new concepts and are very learning oriented. Many are in college or have entered the work force, and most are planning for lifelong learning experiences. However, traditional mass-marketing approaches do not work well with younger consumers. Gen Y reacts strongly to real-life examples, they favor the truth and what is real. In essence, Gen Y cares all about the experience [72]. The portrayal of multiple racial and ethnic individuals in ads aimed at this generation is common, single-race ads would seem unnatural to this multi-ethnic generation. So, as a marketer, embrace diversity, one-third of the members of this generation are from a minority group and diversity in communications is attractive to them. Honesty, humor, uniqueness, and information appear to be important. Encourage them to explore new paths or options, they crave challenge. They value and are looking for brands that resonate with their peers. Their peers often guide product and brand choice. Generation Y is tremendously image driven including electronic decorations, piercings, and tattoos. Take full advantage of technology and its allure for Gen Y. The key words for Gen Y are collaborate, connect, co-create, and control...mostly, with their peers. [19, 11, 41]



In terms of products and services for Generation Y, important product areas include apparel, accessories, footwear, room furnishings, action sports equipment, and entertainment. Teenagers currently spend over \$150 B annually for personal consumption, billions more in household shopping, and influence many additional items like cars, vacations, and mobile banking [74]. Gen Y is a major market for automobiles (approximately 40% of the auto market in 10 years). Gen Y likes products customized to their unique needs and brand names are important. Marketers need to craft products and pitches that are more realistic keeping in mind that music and fashion are key touch points. Gen Y responds well to green living and energy-efficient features. They are an immense untapped market for nonprofit organizations and social causes. They want products and services with a purpose greater than the bottom line. Gen Y pays little attention to quality. They expect competitive pricing and might want to negotiate based on your competitor's advertised price or search results from the Internet [2]. However, they are most likely to purchase prestige products. They experience a high degree of shopping enjoyment. An effective marketing strategy for this generation is to routinely introduce new products and services. Retailers need to constantly adjust and update their offerings to drive traffic among this active shopper segment that gets bored so easily. Gen Y shops frequently and expects novelty or prestige to be associated with their product choices. Yet, this generation is shifting away from the materialism of the Boomers to the search for inner tranquility and deeper meaning from life. [36, 27, 20, 41, 75]

In terms of communication, companies must continually be more creative with media and promotional themes to capture this audience. They are unlikely to respond to marketing hype. Ads targeting this generation, must be placed in appropriate magazines and on appropriate Internet sites, TV and radio programs, and video games ("advergaming"). Generation Y is accustomed to media and TV programs designed for them such as MTV, Maxim, American Idol, Big Brother, and CSI. A combination of online, offline, and word-of-mouth channels probably are the best choice for reaching Gen Y [76]. Word-of-mouth advertising is very important to reach Gen Y, i.e., referrals from people they know influence them [77]. In addition, marketers need to make their campaigns more subtle and more local delivering a message Gen Y can relate to. It is important to identify triggers for Gen Y and then to use these triggers in the ads. Marketers need to use appropriate music, language, and images. Use language that paints visual pictures and action verbs that challenge. Send the messages that stress team spirit, e.g., "You'll be working with other bright, creative people" or "You and your team can make this initiative a success." Stores need to know how often the regulars come into the store so they can update their offerings and change the displays, windows, and front tables to drive traffic, otherwise, they will get bored and stop coming. Public relations and creating buzz are important as effective advertising to this group. Event sponsorships and electronic media seem to connect with this generation. Approach this generation through e-mail and voice mail, but use visual communication to motivate them. They prefer ads with humor or irony and have an element of truth about them, e.g., they respond to quirky humor and YouTube videos. Use humor to show that you do not take yourself too seriously. Use family events and gatherings as ways to communicate. Contact them through their parents and grandparents, they admire their parents but trust their grandparents even more. Use e-mail, voice-mail, the Internet, multi-media, direct mail catalogs, magazines, college and high school newspapers, websites, school-based media boards, college guides, and sponsored on- and off-campus events. Subscribing to a newspaper is unlikely. Interest in television is less than any other generation. If they do watch, they watch on their schedule, not the networks. It is important to monitor this market for changes in the best

ways to communicate to them so that the ad will be memorable to them [77]. For example, young people often are tagged in terms of the alcohol market. However, the literature increasingly provides evidence that alcohol marketing is directly impacting young people's drinking behavior. In this case, the marketer has a moral and ethical issue to consider in creating memorable advertising. [78, 21, 79, 41, 80, 81]

In terms of the Internet, marketers must know exactly how Gen Y individuals use media, which media they use, and when they use it [82]. For example, they expect an Internet experience to be interactive. This generation is impatient as they were raised in a world of technology and instant gratification. They value fitting in and connecting with their peers. Hence, social networking sites are important in that they allow them to connect with their peers regarding important issues. With email almost passé, they prefer instant messaging, texting, and interacting with friends on social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter [71]. As a point of interest, about one-quarter of today's teens check Facebook more than 10 times per day [83]. Owning a landline phone is unlikely, although, a company could reach them through their college newspapers. Reach them digitally with websites and microsites/ campaign sites, web marketing (e-cards, banner adverts, pop-ups, sponsorship, content partnering, screensavers, desktop toys), e-mail, online chat, webcasting, interactive television (sites and adverts), short service (SMS), WAP/wireless Internet, CD-ROMs/enhanced CDs/CD cards, computer games (console), and digital radio. Content is king for this generation, moving content from platform to platform with no restrictions is a must. Most of them are creators, distributors, and users of content. [79, 28, 84]

## **MARKETING TO GENERATION Z**

Generation Z (a.k.a. Tweens, Baby Boomers, Generation 9/11, and Generation XD) was born after 1994 and are less than 16 years old as of 2010. Generation Z is the newest generation and these individuals are in their early formative years, witness the two Obama girls. Their parents marry later and are less likely to get divorced. They face global terrorism, the aftermath of 9/11, school violence, economic uncertainty, recession, and the mortgage crisis. They continue to experience the spread of "tweendom" including commercial exploitation of young girls (and to a lesser extent boys), that is, pushing a Tween lifestyle heavy on teen aspiration to the cost of the loss of childhood. [85, 86, 5, 7, 87, 88, 82, 89, 90] In terms of characteristics, lifestyles, and attitudes, Generation Z individuals are the new conservatives embracing traditional beliefs, valuing the family unit, self-controlled, and more responsible. They are accustomed to high-tech and multiple information sources, with messages bombarding them from all sides. They have never lived without the Internet. [91, 92, 93] Generation Z values authenticity and "realness." Peer acceptance is very important to Generation Z, they need to belong. Their self-concept is partially determined by the group to which the Tween belongs. [94] They are a global and diverse generation who come from a wider mix of backgrounds with different experiences and ideas. [95, 96] Generation Z values security more than ever. [97, 98] They are ready to be on mission, confident, and very optimistic. They believe that they can impact the world and can visualize changing places with someone else and can project possible behaviors. They quite possibly are the most imaginative generation and they think more laterally [99].

Some suggestions about marketing strategy for the Generation Z segment follow. Marketers are increasingly targeting this segment. Marketers go after early loyalty and hefty

allowances. Tweens are discerning consumers who think a lot about what they are going to wear. They make purchases themselves. In addition, parents and grandparents are buying for their children and they are buying more quality goods. It is primarily the girls in this generation that are marketed towards, as networks such as the Disney Channel capitalize off the hugely popular and female-oriented Hannah Montana, Jonas Brothers, Selena Gomez, and High School Musical franchises in the late 2000s. The average Tween today has three key characteristics: instant gratification, success as a given, and liberal social values. They also have high levels of competence with technology that has partially fueled the designation of Tweens as the new sweet spot in marketing. Realness is a core value of this generation. Even though they have grown up in the middle of a national moral meltdown, this generation has a good understanding of right and wrong. They are street smart and have considerable marketing savvy. [19, 11, 100]

With regard to products and services for Generation Z, Tweens have \$43 B in spending power and influence an additional \$600 B of family spending. Music, fashion, cosmetics, and video games are important in terms of peer acceptance and fitting in. Haircuts and wardrobe choices are highly influenced areas of style. Kids now influence more than 70 percent of family food choices, with kid influence on items bought for them in the 80-90% range. Nearly two-thirds of parents say that their children have influenced their vehicle purchasing decisions. As a result, car manufacturers are capitalizing on “kidfluence” and now target marketing messages to those aged 6 to 14. Astonishingly, children are able to recognize brands from the age of about 18 months. Some researchers have predicted that Generation Z will be the unhealthiest and overweight generation. So, gym memberships and health insurance will be important products and services for this group. [99, 20, 101, 102, 103]

In terms of communication, television remains the main way that teenagers and Tweens encounter big brands, but teens respond less well to being told what to think or do as they get older [90]. Some 72% of 6-8 year olds and 56% of 9-11 year olds ask their parents to buy things they see in television commercials. Communicate product and service attributes that emphasize peer acceptance and belonging to peer groups. Kids love to see and hear other kids doing things. For Tweens, the next generation of social and virtual networking sites makes it possible to build online communities that are more like someone’s closest group of friends. Trends in diversity are likely to continue. They feel that it is a close knit world and have taken global warming and global shopping to heart. Another appeal that can be used in advertising is civic service. Tweens know that serving others feels good. Growing up in the paranoid openness of the Information Age, they have been raised to keep safe and to be especially cautious of strangers. Education is valued as a means of gaining security. [21, 22, 81]

Generation Z will likely continue trends in increased technology use. Today’s Tweens represent the first generation to practice adolescent independence on the Internet, that is, Tweens do not need parents or teachers to help them gather information. Generation Z is influenced by new media, virtual friends, and the power that comes with technology. In the U.S., 8-18 year olds spend one quarter of their media time using multiple media. In addition, 24% of 12-18 year olds use another media most of the time while watching television. They are the first generation to use Chatspeak in real life, e.g., u r gr8. Instant access to the Web has bolstered respect for knowledge with 83% of 8-12 year olds saying, “It’s cool to be smart.” While technology may provide more access to customized educational materials, the accelerated pace of cyber-speak has shortened the attention span of Tweens and heightened their awareness of visuals. Marketers should partner with respected online youth brands, e.g., Worldpop.com. As a marketer, moderate any chat facility and make sure that the brand has done its best to discourage

pedophiles from using any chat facility. Offer interactive elements to the site as well as original content. Respond within 24 hours to any unprompted communications from users otherwise they will not return and they will never trust the brand again. Run quick-win SMS-based competitions. Allow users to define as much of their activity on the site as possible. Regularly update content and games. Communicate with users if they have given their details. Technology almost makes it possible to have a “global Tween” who is initiated into a shop-until-you-drop mini-citizen with age compression or the cramming of experience into an ever younger human vessel, creating an eerie disconnect between the outer child and the inner sophisticate. [88, 28, 84, 104, 105]

## SUMMARY

Many companies are reaching out to multi-generational consumers and trying to understand and gain the attention of these diverse buyers. Each generation has unique expectations, experiences, lifestyles, values, and demographics that influence their buying behaviors. Generational history be it the economy, scientific progress, politics, technology, or social shocks such as assassinations and terrorist attacks has immense impacts on each generation. Multi-generational marketing is appealing to the unique needs of individuals within more than one specific generational group. Marketers need to respond to the trend of multi-generational marketing and branding by adjusting their marketing mixes and strategies accordingly. This means that marketers must understand the six U.S. generations: Pre-Depression Generation, Depression Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z. Each of these generations is defined and described in terms of the times in which the generation grew up and the characteristics, lifestyles, and attitudes of each generation. The primary focus of this paper is to describe how to create various marketing strategies appropriate to each generation’s characteristics and behaviors, particularly in terms of segmentation, products and services, and communication. Being sensitive to the various generations will help marketers to become more conscious of and responsive to their customers’ needs and behaviors.

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Table 1  
American Generations

Generation	Date of Birth	Number	Age (in 2010)
Pre-Depression	Before 1930	12 MM	81 and above
Depression	1930-1945	28 MM	65-80
Baby Boom	1946-1964	80 MM	46-64
Generation X	1965-1976	45 MM	34-45
Generation Y	1977-1994	71 MM	16-33
Generation Z	After 1994	29 MM	Less than 16

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