

COLUMNS

Disloyal and distracted: How to market to Gen Z

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Although Generation Z still sounds young it represents people born after 1996 it will **account for 40 percent of consumers by 2020**.

The members of Generation Z are the first to grow up as true digital natives, even more so than millennials, who can still remember a time when the Internet was scarce.

The oldest of Generation Z was just 11 years old when the first iPhone launched, so it is likely that their first phone ever was a smartphone. A flip phone to Generation Z is like a landline to millennials.

Mobile usage has been growing like crazy for years, and with Generation Z, we are only going to continue seeing that usage skyrocket. Because of this, marketing on mobile will continue to be the best way to reach them.

There are some characteristics to keep in mind while thinking about how to market to the next generation of consumers.

To be fair, these traits that we are seeing in Generation Z are permeating other generations, too, but they are just more heightened with the first mobile-first set.

Here is what to keep in mind as you market to the world's next set of consumers.

Shrinking attention span for ads

Generation Z's metabolism for processing information is faster than any of its predecessors'.

"Generation Z takes in information instantaneously," said Hannah Payne, an 18-year-old University of California Los Angeles student and lifestyle blogger, to *The New York Times*, "and loses interest just as fast."

While many might call this the "eight-second attention span," Altitude's design strategist Jeremy Finch refers to this as the "eight-second filter" in *Fast Company*.

Members of Generation Z spend about eight seconds assessing whether or not something is worth their time.

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"They've grown up in a world where their options are limitless, but their time is not," writes Mr. Finch.

"As such, Gen Z have adapted to quickly sorting through and assessing enormous amounts of information. Once something has demonstrated attention-worthiness, Gen Z can become intensely committed and focused," he said.

To advertise to them without losing them, ads need to be short, punchy and funny.

Millennial Branding managing partner Dan Schwabel said in *The New York Times* that advertisers need to communicate their message in just five words. What is most important is having a message that is engaging, quick and easily digestible.

Unattached

With the rise of Snapchat, we can tell Gen Z is not even attached to their photos or texts, much less brands.

Adweek writes, "Gen Z is a more realistic, serious group than the idealistic millennials. They are constantly finding new solutions as old ones become, well, old."

Because of this, flawless user experience is also more important than ever.

"NRF [National Retail Federation] has found that 60 percent of [Gen Z] will likely move on to the next app or Web site if they experience any sort of glitch or inconvenience," reports *Fashionista*.

This means having a native application, not just a mobile Web site. Mobile Web sites are prone to being buggy and crashing, and Generation Z has even less patience for that than everyone else.

Beyond having a mobile app that works well, you also need your app to have a simple and easy-to-navigate design that thinks through all of their needs.

Things such as logging in and checking out should be as simple as scanning your fingerprint. Broken links from social sources (due to lack of deep-linking) will not fly.

Game developer studio FunDay Factory writes, "[I]f your interface isn't catering to [Generation Z's] every need, you're going to lose them."

Still like to shop IRL

Generation Z grew up in a digital world, but the allure of trying things on at the mall has not quite worn off yet.

Ninety-eight percent of Generation Z still prefers to shop in a physical store, according to the *NRF*.

If the fun of shopping at a mall is not wearing off for this generation that has grown up digital first, bricks and mortar might be more likely to hang around than we thought. This is great news for retail, because consumers **are still more likely** to spend more and convert more when shopping in-store.

Because of this, apps will need to have strategies in place to drive in-store traffic. You can find strategies for that in [my previous article](#) for *Luxury Daily*.

Cautious about sharing personal information

Gen Z is more cautious about their personal information. They do not like to enter their debit or credit card information into apps, but are comfortable with Venmo.

"When it comes to online transactions, Gen Z respondents were more concerned than millennials about their privacy and security when paying with credit and debit cards online, 63 percent versus 58 percent," reports *CBS News*. "Gen Z had fewer qualms about entering similar information on mobile pay apps like Venmo."

Integrating seamless options such as Apple Pay will be more important than ever to keep shopping cart abandonment rates in check.

IT IS SHOCKING that many sectors still **lagged behind on mobile**, unsure of whether it was just a fad or worth the investment.

With Generation Z, we see that mobile is not going anywhere.

If you keep these traits in mind while formulating marketing strategies for the next few years, you will stay ahead of any issues that often come as a new generation of consumers emerges.

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