

The X–Y–Z–C Generations: from Registered Age to Behaviour

Posted by [Fabio Di Gaetano](#) | 22 October 2014

The simplifications that follow can be useful to this end (many points and recommendations are taken from the [excellent article by Veronica Gentili](#)).

The Baby Boomers: Date of Birth 1946-1964

This is the generation that shaped the world as we know it: the ‘on the road’ generation, the generation of cultural revolutions, pacifism and feminism, large meetings and rock music.

Characteristics:

- A strong drive towards work, career, and political and civil engagement.
- Independence.
- Very high levels of education.
- Being practical.
- Important economic resources.
- Positions of prestige.

The ‘X’ Generation: 1965-1980



This is the best one (I'm joking: it's mine). This is the generation of cartoons, amusement arcades, video games, the first computers, commercial television and the first handheld ICT objects (walkmans, mobile telephones).

Characteristics:

- Ambition.
- Self-reliance.
- Openness to dialogue and tolerance of differences.
- Flexibility.
- Working to live and not living to work.
- Ready to change jobs.
- A reasonable knowledge of computers.

The 'Y' Generation (Millennials): 1980-2000



These are children of the new technologies, those who are eternally connected, those who spend more time at home, those used to living in a liquid and precarious world characterised by the death of ideologies (this took place when the Berlin wall fell or they were just born or had not yet been born).

Characteristics:

- Receptive.
- Open.
- Not very interested in politics.
- Lazy.
- Attentive to their images and to glory.
- Tolerant.
- They leave home at a late age and do not cut the umbilical cord.

The Phrase 'Z Generation' Covers People Born after the Year 2000



These are the children of the Net, of tablets and of smartphones.

Characteristics:

- They are hyper-connected.
- They are multi-medial.
- They are autonomous.
- They seek rapidity more than accuracy.
- They are attentive to global problems.
- They are able to manage a constant flow of information.

Naturally, these generations by registered age can supply only clues. Levels of income, where people come from, and levels of education are factors that are equally important in understanding the age bands that we address.

Behaviour will be Increasingly Decisive

But there is more: thanks to the digitalisation that is underway, marketing is trying to concentrate increasingly on the behaviour of our potential customers (whether online or offline: one need only think, in fact, of services such as Google Now).

People with high levels of income and with a specific standard of living can have many more characteristics in common than people of the same age or the same geographical origins who have different incomes.

The same observation can be made about behaviour in relation to technology. I will always have etched in my memory a picture of agile people over sixty who in the aeroplane spent the whole return trip from New York using their iPads and smartphones!

Therefore, and rightly, in addition to abstract characteristics, it is increasingly interesting and vital to know how our potential customers act, deducing that from their behaviour on our digital platforms.

Brian Solis in his '[The End of Business as Usual](#)' helps us to outline three models of behaviour based upon levels of technological connection. Traditional behaviour: that of a person who feels the influence of traditional advertising whether online or offline. Those who belong to this category give a great deal of weight to word of mouth and to the advice of trusted people. Online, the sources that are considered reliable are websites and e-mail.

Digital behaviour: this is the behaviour of the person who lives online but still has a high view of the traditional media. His preferred source is Google and to assess the quality of a service or product he relies on the judgements of the communities. He shares with 'connected' behaviour the fact of using Facebook, Twitter and other social media.

Connected Behaviour or the Behaviour of the 'C' Generation



The compass of the ‘C’ generation is a smartphone or a tablet – a device that assures being connected twenty-four hours a day. Those people who belong to this category are very informed, use bar codes, buy according to price, and rely a great deal upon reviews. They make up the active part of the Web, the part that leaves tracks behind it, reviews and shares, publishes videos, and has blogs.

This is that part of the population that is most evolved in technological terms and is also very attentive to the technical details of user experiences (especially online): it expects to engage in transactions both with virtual shops and real shops paying by means of a mobile phone.

The ‘C’ generation is the generation that decides, and will increasingly decide, the fate of e-commerce and traditional commerce: the challenge for business over the next few years will be specifically to provide satisfying experiences to this category of ‘consumers’.