

Shoe Retailing TODAY

NSRA.ORG

July/August 2021



How to Tailor Your Marketing TO EACH GENERATION

Cost of Goods Sold vs.
Cost of Goods Purchased p. 4

NextGen Family Business Succession:
Comfort One Shoes p. 8

Maintaining a Leadership EDGE
in Turbulent Times p. 16

Know Your Audience: How to Tailor Your Marketing to Each Generation

ALLIE JEKA

The more you understand about your target audience, the better you'll be able to craft marketing efforts that make an impact and trigger desired behaviors. One way to categorize members of your target audience is by generation. There are five main generations that are currently active in the market: Gen Z, Millennials, Generation X, Baby Boomers and Traditionalists.

Each generation is a group of people born within a certain timeframe who are experiencing similar life stages and who have been shaped by particular events and trends. Every generation also has at least one generation-defining moment. According to generations expert Jason Dorsey, a generation defining moment must occur at a formative time in the generation's lifecycle, and create a pow-

lives of Gen Z more than any others – and this will shape their attitudes and behaviors for years to come.

Generations respond differently to various types of marketing platforms and messaging. Understanding what motivates each group will help you develop marketing that best resonates with those who compose your target audience.

Gen Z 1996 to TBD* *Generation Defining Moment:* *COVID-19*

**Note: The generation-defining years in this article are based on research from the Center for Generational Kinetics. The cutoff years for each generation may differ slightly (usually giving or taking about 3 years) depending on the source, as generations*



Allie Jeka

the smartphone – which they use for social networking, online shopping and watching videos.

When marketing to Gen Z, you'll want to ensure you can reach them on their phones. Their most-used social media source is YouTube, and they are also very active on Instagram, SnapChat and TikTok. Text messaging and app push notifications will also get your brand in front of this group.

Word of mouth is a key factor for driving Gen Z to new brands. According to research by The Center for Generational Kinetics, the most common way this group learns about a new brand is from family and friends (followed by YouTube ads). Online ratings and reviews make this generation confident to buy – so if they're in your target audience, you'll want to make sure you're always working on collecting up-to-date, positive reviews on your most popular platforms. 56% of Gen Zers are more likely to try a product if their favorite online influencer recommends it. Influencer

Each generation is a group of people born within a certain timeframe who are experiencing similar life stages and who have been shaped by particular events and trends. Every generation also has at least one generation-defining moment.

erful, unforgettable emotional impact. This event will forever shape the lives of the generation. It is especially critical to understand the importance of generation defining moments right now, because Gen Z is currently living through theirs – COVID-19. While the pandemic has greatly affected all generations, research shows that it has upended the

are defined by similar patterns of thought and behavior as well as generation-defining moments, and not exactly concrete years.

Gen Z is the most diverse generation in United States history. They grew up with technology and they don't remember a time before the Internet. Their preferred communication device is

continued on page 14

partnerships with local Instagram or TikTok influencers are a great way to get your brand trusted by the Gen Z group. Most people in this generation prefer to see real people over celebrities in their ads – which you can use to your advantage by finding local influencers or models to help promote your products.

Gen Zers are practiced multitaskers, and their attention span is only 8 seconds (on decline from millennials, whose attention spans reach 12 seconds, according to *Forbes*). This means when you reach them with your marketing materials, you'll only have a few precious seconds to capture their attention. If you're marketing to Gen Z, you'll want to make sure you're communicating clearly, visually, and that the key point of your messaging is immediately apparent. Show a friend your website home page and give them only 8 seconds to look at it. Then, ask them what they remember. You'll want to make sure you're making the right first impression, and fast.

Finally, you'll want to ensure you're providing an easy and seamless digital shopping experience for your Gen Z customers. They prioritize online shopping that makes it easy to find what they want, check out and pay, and return a product if they don't like it (The Center for Generational Kinetics). Make your return policy easy to find and clear on your website to help instill confidence in this group.

Millennials **1977 to 1995** **Generation Defining Moment: 9/11**

Millennials are the best-educated group of young adults in U.S. history. A quarter of this group are parents. They're go-getters – more than half of this group wants to start a business or have already started one. Like Gen Z, Millennials are frequent smartphone users, but their most-used social platforms are Facebook and Instagram.



Millennials are not impulse buyers. This group likes to research before they offering special discounts or thanking them for their business. This group loves

Generations respond differently to various types of marketing platforms and messaging. Understanding what motivates each group will help you develop marketing that best resonates with those who compose your target audience.

buy. If you're tailoring your messaging to them, be sure you have accurate product descriptions and brand information available on your website.

Millennials value experiences over things. When marketing to them, instead of focusing on the qualities of a pair of shoes, choose imagery and messaging centered around the experience they can have while wearing the shoes. Where would they wear them? What activities would they do in them? This messaging is more likely to resonate with this generation.

Social media does play a role in helping millennials make purchasing decisions, and this generation is 62% more likely to become a customer if a brand interacts with them personally on social media, according to author and marketer Neil Patel. To reach this group, create engaging content and ask questions, both of which will encourage millennials to comment and interact with your brand. When millennials leave comments on your social posts, be sure to respond. Reach out to your most active customers personally on this platform,

creating their own content, so engage them with a social contest in which they post a photo of them wearing your shoes. Incentives motivate this group to engage on social media – 63% are more likely to check into a business on social channels if they would receive a coupon or discount in return (Yahoo).

Gen X **1965 to 1976** **Generation Defining Moments:** **Fall of the Berlin Wall, Challenger** **Disaster, Watergate**

Gen Xers are often referred to as the bridge between millennials and Baby Boomers. Many are currently juggling child care, homeownership and reaching the peak of their careers. This group grew up without online shopping experiences. While they have fully embraced online shopping, they still enjoy brick and mortar.

Popular social media platforms for this group are Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Pinterest. Email marketing is also successful with Gen X, but 68% of this

generation will also use coupons they receive by mail (WordStream). Reach out via email and mail with personal offers tailored to customer interests for the most success. Of all the generations, Gen X has the highest brand loyalty. Make them happy and they're likely to come back as repeat customers.

Baby Boomers

1946 to 1964

Generation Defining Moments: Cuban Missile Crisis, Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam War, Woodstock

Baby Boomers grew up during the American dream, post World War II era and experienced the rise of television. This group makes up a large percentage of the workforce and some members are retired or nearing retirement.

Boomers spend 27 hours online per week, and their preferred device is desktop. Finding ways to connect the in-store and digital experiences will resonate with this group, so be sure to develop marketing efforts that extend

in both your physical and digital spaces.

Boomers use social media to socialize with friends and share engaging content, so it's not surprising Facebook is their most-used platform. This group can also be reached on LinkedIn, but they do not use Twitter and Instagram as much as the other generations. Boomers are more likely to share content, especially video, than any other generation. Get your messaging in front of this group with clear, easily-digestible, slower-paced video content and ask them to share with friends.

Traditionalists

1945 and before

Generation Defining Moments: Great Depression, Korean War, Cold War

Traditionalists lived through the Great Depression, so they emphasize order and security. Although they can be cautious, they are the healthiest and most educated generation of elders of all time (*Forbes*).

This group prefers to consume print

media and they consider newspapers the most-trusted source, however, they can also be reached through email and informative websites. They are more likely to use a computer than a smartphone.

Traditionalists prioritize family, so appeal to them by using family images including a family member in the Traditionalist age range. When providing information, be sure to clearly summarize key points in a way that educates and alleviates concerns. Tell Traditionalists how your products will benefit them and reassure them about their purchasing decisions. Use loyalty plans and coupons to secure their return business.

One of the best ways to connect with this group is face-to-face. When they're in your store, spend time listening to their needs and show them how you can help. Building trust will result in a long-lasting, loyal customer relationship. ■

Allie Jeka is a Milwaukee-based digital marketer and social media strategist. She can be reached at alliejeka@gmail.com.