

Generational marketing in 2022 and beyond

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Marketing today faces an unprecedented challenge. How to market to more generations than ever before? Older generations are living longer, and younger ones have more spending power earlier on. Each generation comes with a unique set of expectations from brands.



Knowing how to tailor your marketing to meet each generation's needs will be key to your success.

Instore or online?

Just before the pandemic, a poll found that 80% of consumers within each generation had recently shopped instore. Today, though, nearly half of all consumers plan to shop more online. It's a no-brainer that retailers should already be engaged in improving their online operations and ecommerce capabilities.

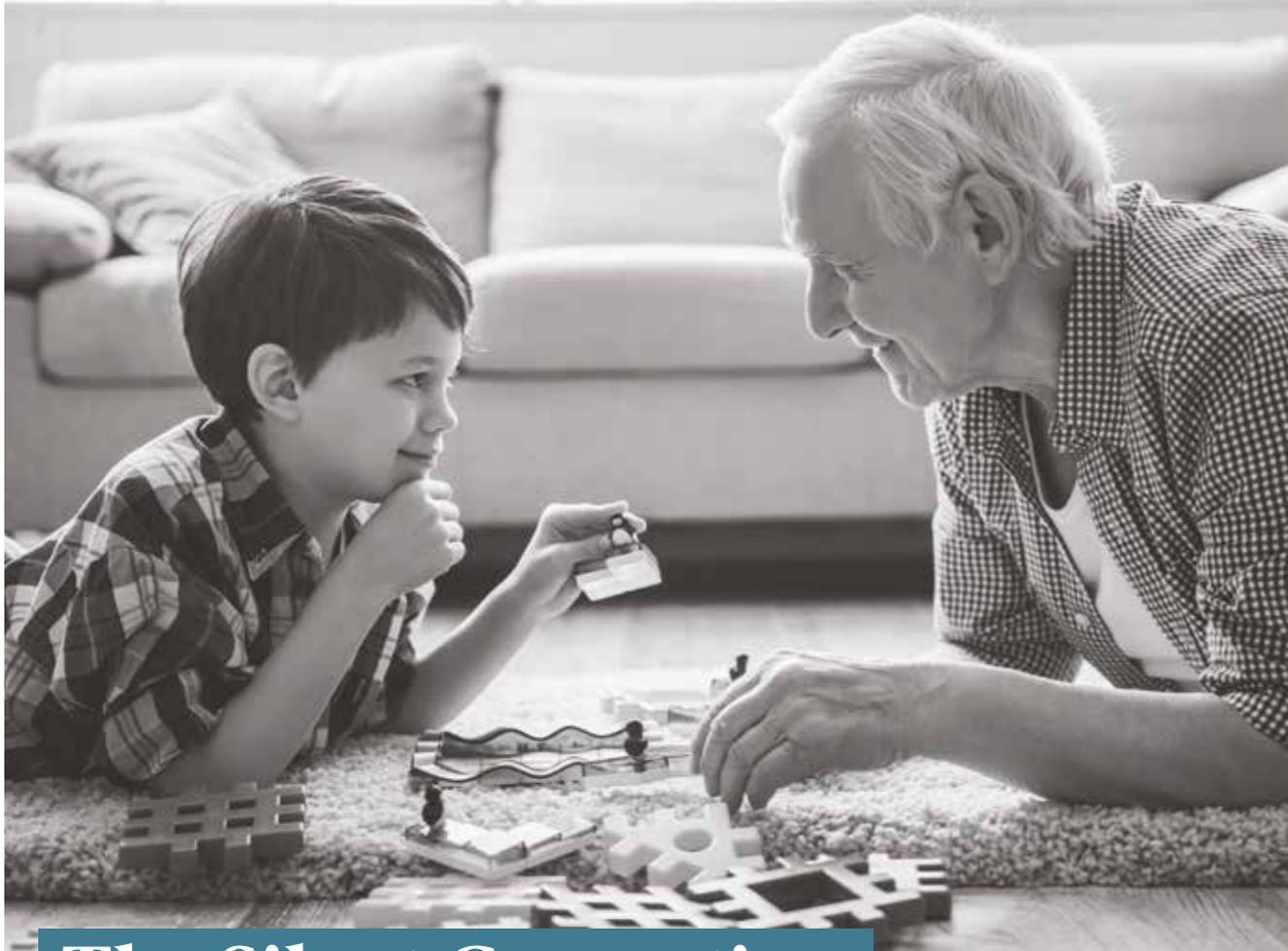


As expected, Gen Z and Millennials are driving the online shopping experience, with 60% preferring to shop online. It should be noted that Gen Z still enjoy the social aspect provided by instore shopping so as a generation it seems that they are unlikely to completely make the switch online. Older generations prefer shopping instore as it allows them to experience products before purchase and the returns process is seen as being easier.

Social ecommerce and 'shoppable posts' are on the rise, and with users reporting that these provide a seamless shopping experience they are only expected to become more popular.

It's predicted that by 2023 social ecommerce total revenue will have exceeded £696bn

For many products, regardless of whether they are purchased online or not, the internet is a key research tool for all generations, making the need for good digital marketing more important.



The Silent Generation

Born before 1946

Made up of almost exclusively retirees, those in this generation grew up during the turmoil and uncertainty of the depression of the 1930s and the Second World War, developing a 'work is a privilege' outlook. With 77% of UK businesses admitting they don't market to the Silent Generation, they have a lot of untapped spending power.

As incredibly selective spenders, earning their trust by providing high value products is key to gaining and keeping their custom. Focusing most of their spend on the health, tourism and leisure sectors, this generation want products and experiences that enhance and improve their lives.

Spending time with loved ones is undeniably important to them. Marketing that subtly touches on emotional and relatable themes of family and belonging will resonate with the Silent Generation.

Some in this audience are digitally savvy but most can only be reached through traditional media like TV, press and print.

Ofcom figures state that 60% of the Silent Generation get their news from newspapers

Messaging should be formal and straightforward, highlighting how what a brand offers is uncomplicated and takes away unnecessary hassle, freeing up time. The Silent Generation has very little patience and is reluctant to wade through masses of unimportant information.

It's important to include accessibility measures in your communications. Older generations are more likely to have visual impairments and that should be reflected by using large and easy to read fonts, by avoiding busy imagery and using appropriate colours.

Don't assume you automatically have the loyalty of the Silent Generation, especially those who have children and grandchildren who are willing to help them find good and reliable deals. If another brand answers their needs better, they will switch.



1946

Boomers

Born between 1947 and 1965

This generation has lived through great social change and some of the most pivotal moments in recent history, which has helped shape their opinions and values, giving them discerning tastes and making it tricky to influence them.

The pandemic has had a big change on how Boomers choose to access the internet. Mobile phone usage has more than doubled and overtaken PCs, laptops and tablets. Despite this, Boomers retain a healthy scepticism for the digital world and brands targeting them should use both traditional and digital marketing techniques.

80% of Boomers still prefer to watch traditional TV over streaming services and 98% of them listen to the radio at least once a month

While generally disapproving of social media and its societal impacts, they are willing to use it to connect with family and to get the news, with Facebook being their favoured platform.

This generation is a spending heavyweight due to its big population, higher income and large family sizes and prove this by spending the most per transaction.

1946



1965



When it comes to buying products online, they have caught up to younger generations – and have even overtaken them in browsing specifically. They have also experienced the biggest growth in gaming.

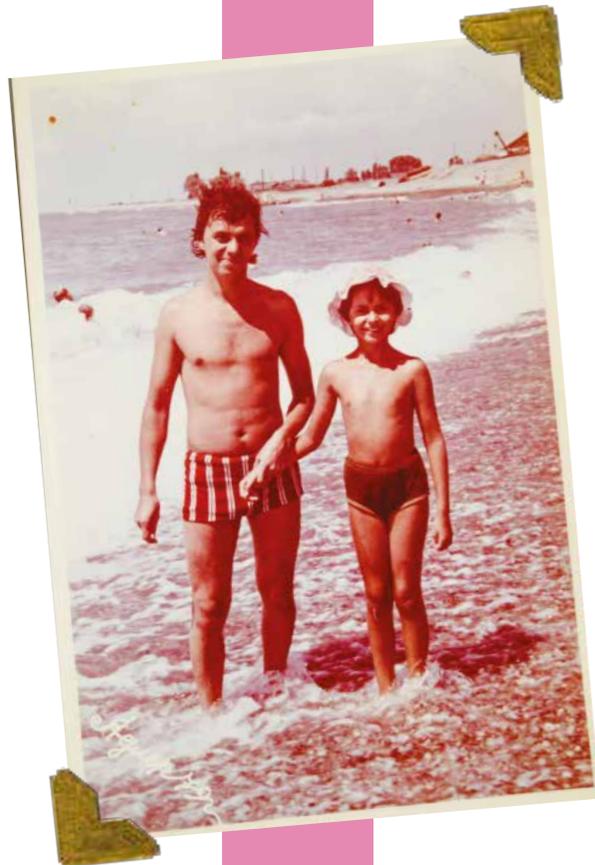
Nearly a quarter of Baby Boomers have downloaded a free-to-play video game in the last year

Despite being an ageing generation, every Boomer will be over 65 years old by 2030, and many are intending to continue working past traditional retirement age. This means that their spending power won't slow down significantly for another decade.

Boomers don't prioritise brands that champion innovation or ones that are perceived as being smart or cool. Instead, they want reliability and authenticity. They've recently been found to be the greenest generation as they try to avoid single-use plastics and are buying fewer clothes.

Look to the more traditional forms of media when talking to Boomers as TV, radio and print remain the highest among this audience for levels of trust, alongside word of mouth.

1966



Generation X

Born between 1966 and 1980

Sandwiched between two much larger generations (Boomers and Millennials), Gen X is often overlooked in marketing. On average, only Boomers spend more, but Gen X is a spending juggernaut and as this generation continues in their careers their spending power will only increase.

Due to later in life birth rates and longer life expectancies for Boomers and the Silent Generation, Gen X are the first generation to have to care for both their children and their parents at the same time.

With an average of 22.6 hours spent providing care they have been left short of time, funds and freedom

During the pandemic nostalgia has become a driving force for Gen X consumers. Disney+'s library of older fan favourite properties has seen an increase in its Gen X as they try to remind themselves (and their children) of simpler times. For a generation that describes itself as traditional, provoking nostalgia appears to be an effective tool in unlocking their spending power.

Members of this cohort are avid social media users, spending nearly two hours a day on different social media platforms. They use it to search for company information, aid in their buying decisions and connect with friends and family.

1980

Facebook and YouTube are their platforms of choice, but WhatsApp and Instagram usage is on the rise

When shopping online the major drivers to purchase fall under two categories: convenience and savings. Free delivery, easy returns and simple checkout processes are very important to this audience, and they won't spend on brands that haven't streamlined these processes.

Gen X doesn't appreciate being bombarded with ads. They prefer to do their own research and connect with brands via social media or email, on their own terms.

Compared to the other generations, Gen X are far more likely to pay attention to a brand's reputation. You'll keep their attention if they know and respect your brand. Posting often on social media will build a brand's authority and reputation in their eyes.

A third of Gen X rely on word-of-mouth recommendations when discovering new brands and 40% will use customer reviews for research. High-quality products and rewards are top when it comes to brand advocacy for this generation.





Millennials

Born between 1981 and 1996

Millennials, the largest generational cohort, are just hitting their peak spending years and their per capita spending will increase by over 10% over the next decade. However, Millennials are in debt and this debt is slowly increasing as they get older.

Dubbed the 'Recessionals', this generation is the most set back by the economic crises that occurred during their earning years. But brands shouldn't be discouraged by Millennial hardships as they have proven that they have the necessary mindset and past experiences to recover from financial shock.

As the first generation to properly embrace digital, Millennials are the most likely to prefer online over instore shopping

1981

They are the generation full of impulse buyers and prefer to pay subscription fees over outright ownership of products, spurred on by their need to experience while avoiding the responsibilities of ownership. The decline in Millennial brand loyalty has been hastened by the pandemic, with now only a third buying repeatedly from the same brands.

Millennials still mainly discover and research brands via search engines, but the use of social media for these is slowly improving.

The most common purchase driver for Millennials is 'free delivery'

To appeal to this image-conscious generation, your brand needs to demonstrate how it can help to enhance a Millennial's own personal brand. In other words, prove that your beliefs and values match theirs, make them feel special along every step of the purchase journey and show how you'll help them stand out from the crowd.

90% of Millennials say that authenticity is important to them when deciding what brands to support, and 73% are willing to pay more for sustainable goods.

Earning Millennial loyalty will be rewarding, as they are the generation most likely to advocate a brand to family and friends.



1996

1997

Generation Z

Born between 1997 and 2012

The oldest of this cohort are only now on the cusp of turning 25 and, having come of age in the information era, they are often dubbed 'digital natives'.

While many are only now entering the workforce and most are still a few years off, their spending power cannot be ignored. There may be fewer people spending in this generation, but the active buyers are spending more money per year through more transactions than any other generation and their spending is only predicted to increase.

Gen Z will increase their per capita spending by more than 70% over the next five years

Gen Z are very information-savvy. They know the content they like and how to find it. With the rise of streaming services which allow them to not only watch what they want, when they want, but to binge watch it all in one go, the use of TV as a marketing tool is not effective in reaching Gen Z.

Digital options like social media are a sure-fire way to go. 60% of Gen Z say that an advertisement on social media has influenced their purchase decision during the pandemic, compared to 25% of the older generations.



2012



86% of Gen Z prefer to see marketing content where a person or influencer discuss a product, compared to 36% of Millennials

Though they are generally thought of as spending too much time on social media and on their phones, they are the generation most concerned with the amount of time spent online. What with Gen Z having an attention span of around eight seconds, brands that are using digital marketing strategies should focus on grabbing their attention quickly, with aesthetically pleasing imagery and colours before they switch of their devices.

Only 15% of Gen Z say they feel represented by the advertising they see

Gen Z gravitate to short-form video and interactive content, so it is important for brands to use platforms like Instagram, YouTube and TikTok and use the in platform features perfect for bite-sized video content (eg Instagram Stories).

While tapping into the gaming market may not be a new way to advertise brands, the pandemic has triggered a new wave of such activity. 'Battle Royale'-style games like 'Fortnite' have attracted millions of players and spawned thousands of live streaming events which can be leveraged as advertising platforms.

Gen Z are on the front line in tackling key issues and they want brands to show how they are contributing to social change and environmental awareness.

They are an important generation to understand and get on your side. They are the generation that currently determines what is 'in' which could have huge benefits or repercussions on brands.



How Gen Z influences the older generations

Not only is Gen Z increasing their own spending power, they continue to have huge influence on the spending patterns of their parents and grandparents' generations.

More than 80% of parents say that their Gen Z children have influenced household spending

Gen Z influences the uptake of social media in their older relatives – Boomers and Gen Xers with kids are more likely to use Facebook and Instagram than those without. Additionally, parents of Gen Z kids are more likely to shop online.

Even though Gen Z can influence where the spending occurs it's still mum and dad holding the purse strings – so cross-channel, multigenerational marketing with messages that appeal to each group is key.

Media habits and brand discovery



For most generations, search engines are the main source of brand discovery, with Gen Z, Millennials and Gen X preferring Google as a search engine and Boomers and Silents using Yahoo! and Bing.

Social media as an advertising channel is more important among younger generations

Gen Z and Millennials discover products through vlogs and blogs, and while both come across influencers and celebrities promoting brands on the socials, Gen Z are more likely to then check out the brand. Brands should keep an eye on their online reviews. Millennials and Gen X view them as more reliable and trustworthy than recommendations and reviews from their own friends and family.

Social media usage

Percentage of Internet users that have an account within each generation,

	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers
Facebook	74	88	77	78
YouTube	86	87	85	67
Facebook Messenger	54	79	56	n/a
Instagram	78	76	57	32
WhatsApp	69	76	61	63
Twitter	52	74	42	26
LinkedIn	26	47	29	13
Snapchat	39	43	18	n/a
Pinterest	33	41	28	n/a
TikTok	58	39	25	n/a

Gen Z and Millennials are the most likely to follow and engage with a brand on social media.

Older generations predominately use social for personal use only and don't associate it with communicating with businesses, but that is likely to change as they become more comfortable in this realm.



Content engagement

A good image can capture the attention of all the generations on social media, but video content is where many are turning to, with consumers relying more and more on marketing videos from brands. Every day consumers watch product demos, video reviews and unboxings to learn about products before purchase.

Video can help boost consumer trust in a brand because video is seen as more authentic than a heavily edited product shot

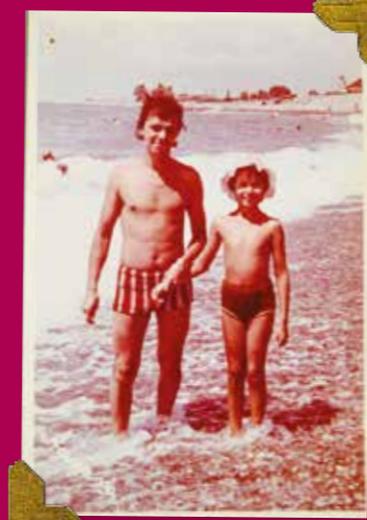
While younger generations may have a shorter attention span, once you've caught their attention, they are willing to spend more time engaging with your brand. Longer-form video content is more likely to hold their interest compared with older generations.



The Silent Generation



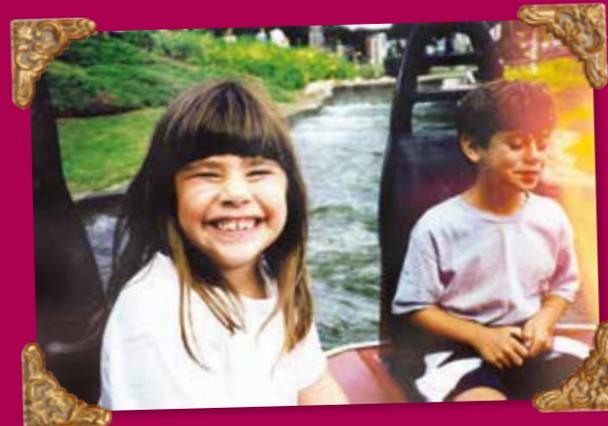
Boomers



Gen X



Millenials



Gen Z



Conclusion

When deciding what marketing techniques to employ you need to understand the generation you are targeting.

Despite differences in preference the key commonality for generational marketing is digital adoption

All generations have either embraced digital or are starting to embrace it and understanding how they use the digital landscape is getting more important. Be aware of what social media platforms they use and why, what their expectations from brands and businesses are and then tailor strategies that will appeal to each generation.

If you're keen to keep your brand working smart and turn these insights into something powerful, get in touch with RBH by contacting joe@rbh.co.uk



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