

Between 'Y' and 'Z' is a new generation that will reshape customer service

By  Aki Kalliatakis

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They're here, a whole new generation of 'Teens' and 'Tweens', the 15- to 25-year-olds of today, making up around 24% of the population, who will change the face of retail shopping and already demand a high level of customer care. Mostly not yet salary earners, these young people nevertheless, through their parents, exert a massive influence on retail spend and their time is coming soon as the primary spenders themselves. Sixteen- to 34-year-olds in Africa today will contribute to over \$400 billion in total consumption growth in the next 10 years!



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Having always been in the 'Fishbowl', as it were, transparency will now be even more essential for retailers and they will need to learn a whole new language of communication to market themselves and their brands to appeal to this 'Generation Z'.

Born in the 1990s and raised in the 2000s, Generation Z differ to its predecessors, Generation 'Y' (or sometimes known as the 'Millennials') in many ways. They are the 'Multi screen' generation, having been raised on smartphones and 'I-pads' as opposed to the Millennials conventional cellphones and laptops.

Engaged with conversation

Far more involved in social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (much bigger than Facebook), this generation wants to be engaged with conversation, not with 'in your face' marketing and branding. Unlike the Millennials who are techno savvy, but also like to be served in the traditional way, Generation Z are the 'DIY' generation, as they have grown up with tablets instead of magazines and never known a world without Google, they will want a shopping experience that gives them more self-service options and more opportunities to do things themselves as opposed to engaging with shop staff.

This does not mean, however, that they do not want traditional customer care and in interviews and research conducted all over the world this age group has expressed that it wants to be heard and prefers retailers who want customer feedback. It likes to be engaged and made to feel welcomed and not just treated as paying customers.

The real differences are that they like to be engaged in the creation of customer-related and interactive content and want to have a customised, personalised experience. Money-wise, they are savers (a higher percentage would rather save than those who would spend) and, therefore, generally discerning buyers choosing quality brands over multiple selling brands.

Environmental issues

Aware of environmental issues and worried about employment in the future, this is a generation that needs to be approached with respect and serviced on their own terms.

They will be more inclined to spend their harder earned salary with organisations that are also concerned with bigger issues and not just making money, and want to be shown traditional customer service, but engaged with very differently. Talk with them, as opposed to talking to them, and let them be a part of their shopping experience, just as they have grown up to be a functional, creative part of all they have an interest in.

Believe it or not, this Generation Z, with their faces buried in screens even when sitting across the table from their friends and an average attention span of less than eight seconds, are a generation of thinkers, doers and spenders who will also demand customer service just as generation 'Y' did, but in a very different way!

ABOUT AKI KALLIATAKIS

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