

My generation: A review of marketing strategies on different age groups

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As the famous pop group, the Who, sang “My generation”, referring to the wants and needs of their fans and popular culture in the mid-1960s, change was in the air. In the early 21st century an ever more complex world exists, and for today’s hotel marketing teams, online marketing approaches need to focus on specific target groups, and often the best way to do this is by age group. This paper focuses on the influences marketing strategies have on the different generations and how a specific generation can be influenced in order to gain more sales in the hotel sector. This article will illustrate that the Baby Boomer generation, born between 1946 and 1964, is a very diverse age group. Baby Boomers can be influenced with both traditional and online marketing strategies. Following on from Baby Boomers, there is a group categorised as Generation X. This generation is in an age group situated in the middle between the Baby Boomers and Generation Y; however, this paper will show that this age group shows a strong preference for online marketing, and consists of mainly digital natives, and social media and online marketing strategies are the best way to present hotel marketing campaigns to this particular age group.

Keywords: consumer choice, generations, hotels, marketing strategies

Introduction

If there’s one thing the next generation of hotel marketers, and even today’s marketers, need to know, it is that you cannot just be a marketer anymore. Times, strategies, purchasing behaviours and feasibilities are changing. Current marketing teams have to be more creative than ever and understand digital marketing, social media and new technologies, and how to combine one with the another (Kannan, Reinartz & Verhoef, 2016). The aim of this paper is to explore marketing techniques and their impact on different generational groups. The data for this paper was collected from a survey of members of a European Hospitality Association, henceforth referred to as “the respondents”. Existing research in the literature shows us that Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y often each need a completely different strategic approach for the marketing campaign to be successful.

The new dynamics of the twenty-first century has led to a new competitive environment in the field of hospitality businesses, especially hotels. This scenario is driving hotels to adopt new strategic marketing options and operational marketing processes. Part of this dynamic is the rise in online hotel bookings. Hotel marketing departments have to be far more creative, and understand digital marketing, social media and new technologies, and how to combine one with the other, and perhaps most importantly how to connect with hospitality consumers. This creates a difficult scenario for hotel marketing teams to profile. This profile is characterised by demographics such as a decrease in birth rates, the increase of average life expectancy, changes in the concept of family, growing urbanisation and the unique and simultaneous coexistence of four different generations (Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y).

These generations have distinctive sociocultural characteristics due to the structural differences that have shaped their lives. Millennials, also known as Generation Y, are the clients of the future, because “Millennials access digital media on [a] daily basis and have the ability to communicate with and purchase from suppliers anywhere in the world” (Mangold & Smith, 2012, p. 141). It is therefore vital for hotel marketing departments to acknowledge the importance of such groups, when designing marketing campaigns.

There is, of course, an element of care that needs to be exercised by researchers, because to generalise that certain marketing tools and campaigns aimed at certain age groups are the only successful campaigns for that age group is, of course, far too specific. However, this paper avoids this by clarifying that although different age groups may have preferences relating to marketing techniques, no one marketing type suits one particular age group. Moreover, this paper does show that there are marketing strategies that fit more comfortably with some age groups rather than others.

Marketing and customer needs

To clarify hotel marketing in whatever form is basically the management process through which services and rooms in hotels are promoted to the consumer. Within hotel marketing departments it is important to think about the business in terms of customer needs and their satisfaction. Marketing is a dynamic part of hotel business strategies and their target groups change yearly, monthly and even daily (Rowson, 2016). The hotel sector is a very dynamic sector and therefore, keeping up with the changing times to target their potential consumers, hotel companies need to understand how to apply their marketing strategy via consumer segmentation. Marketing can be divided into two distinct sections: traditional

marketing, and digital/online marketing. The content of online marketing is a lot like traditional marketing, only available online and aimed at specific target groups. Kotler (2014) suggests the aims of marketing campaigns are the same: focused on getting consumers to buy a product or service. On the contrary, Jones (2015) states that when both forms of marketing are compared, online marketing requires a higher level of analysis and the strategies are far more diverse than traditional marketing.

Clearly then, it is important for a hotel marketing team to know how to develop and understand the consumer's mindset and how a marketing campaign can influence customers to purchase their products or services. Due to the fact that marketing campaigns have a direct impact on customer experience, loyalty and profitability, it is important to know the risks of a marketing campaign. The challenge for hotel marketing teams in today's competitive world is to understand what marketing campaigns will attract their consumers. How will potential customers react to marketing campaigns and how will this influence their behaviour regarding hotel booking activity? Marketing is about meeting the needs and providing benefits for consumers and companies alike (Kotler & Keller, 2005). Rowson (2016) suggests that developing a marketing mindset and culture within an organisation is the key to success. Furthermore, marketing benefits society by informing and educating customers about their products or services. However, marketing can also provide practical information to assist in making purchase decisions (Kannan, Reinartz, & Verhoef, 2016).

Purchase decisions

Although the internet is an important tool for searching and gathering information, it assists potential consumers to purchase hotel services online; however, customers still use different sales channels in their decision-making (Crnojevac et al., 2010). When consumers want to purchase a hotel room, the decision process is influenced by an array of factors (hotel star rating, room type, and location in the desired city). Often these factors are beyond the hotel marketer's control. Therefore, hotel marketing campaigns are an element in the process of connecting with the consumers that marketing departments can control, and the aim of the campaign is to influence the consumer (Rowson, 2016). Consumers are often influenced by culture, attitude, lifestyle and personal beliefs. Good marketing campaigns can change the perceptions of the consumer. For example, children are influenced by their parents, brothers and sisters; however, companies often target children and create what is sometimes known as "pester power". The child may not have the financial resources for the product or service, but the parents do. An example is McDonalds, where the child meal often comes with a small toy as part of the product offer. Theme parks aimed at children often market themselves to teenagers, but the parents purchase the tickets.

Marketing teams often use this approach to manipulate the parents with their marketing campaign and let them believe that this is a good product/service for their children, or the campaigns are directly aimed at the children to evoke pester power. Furthermore, people have perceived social status that will also impact on their buying behaviour. Hotel marketing departments attempt to target certain groups of consumers within society to the accommodation standards the consumer might expect. Alternatively, hotel marketers define their target

group and set a marketing campaign especially for this target market which will meet the standards of their perceived role in society.

Hotel marketing departments can better target their market if they know to which age category their consumers belong. All generations are influenced and affected differently by marketing. Currently, most hotel marketers see the 7 billion inhabitants of the world as divided into different groups based on the year they were born. Rowson (2016) suggests that people's personalities, norms and values are influenced according to when in history they were born. The generations we as marketers are currently dealing with and living with are the Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y (the so called Millennials). Every generation is considered to be different and clearly requires a different marketing approach. For a marketer it is important to know how marketing works and how to differentiate between the company's target markets. According to Walgrove (2015), companies are reaching out to multigenerational consumers and trying to understand and gain the attention of these diverse buyers. Via their marketing strategy, hotel companies try to channel their information to all the different generations.

Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers are considered to be anyone born between the years 1946 and 1964. In general, the literature shows us that this generation has a more sensitive and smarter mindset regarding marketing than the other generations. They value individualisation, optimism, and self-expression. Baby Boomers have defined themselves by their careers, and often material wealth. Despite the fact that they are the eldest in the workforce, this generation should not be approached as seniors. They want to be approached as relevant, young and useful (Rowson, 2016). Marketing teams should take three aspects or strategies into consideration when targeting this generation. The first thing to consider is that they do not want to be seen as senior, but need to be treated like as such in a non-visible manner. Campaigns should be written in appropriate language, but not as "senior language". Information presented in terms of categories and options are very effective for this generation. Websites with a lot of information and some pictures are a good way of getting the company message to this generation. A marketer should consider clear layouts and maybe a bigger font type in their campaign. Furthermore, Baby Boomers want to see the advantages of getting older, not feeling old (Collier, 2015).

Second, according to Williams and Page (2011), family is usually very important to a Baby Boomer, due to the fact that they have seen a lot of changes in the world and their family is a stable factor in their lives. A third aspect which tends to be forgotten by hotel marketing teams, is online marketing for this generation. There is a prejudice in marketing teams (often much younger) about the Boomer generation, and that is that they have no or a small connection with technology and online life. However, the current literature tells us that Baby Boomers are more connected than ever before. They are using social media, search engines, smartphones and other digital devices to search for information.

It can be concluded then that nothing is less true than this prejudice, because Baby Boomers appear to love technology. They adapt more slowly to technology, but they experienced

technology changing over the years and saw how it made life easier. Furthermore, research conducted by Walgrove (2015) has shown that one-quarter of the Baby Boomers share content online and spend over 20 hours a week on social media. When setting up a marketing strategy, marketing teams sometimes have a tendency to forget to include the Baby Boomers when targeting their audience. For instance, when thinking about Facebook, most marketers use it as a way to market to the younger generations, however, Baby Boomers also prefer to use Facebook as their social media platform (Walgrove, 2015).

Generation X

Generation X is the generation often described as stuck in the middle, according to Fox (2014). It is hard to reflect on this generation where there is not a strong identity attached to the individuals born between 1965 and 1980. Generation X is often described as *falling between two stools*, namely the digital and the analogue generation, therefore marketing for this generation is considered difficult.

A study by Vavre (2015) has shown that Generation X is often only susceptible to a few factors within marketing. First of all, there are email campaigns. Email campaigns are considered old fashioned by Generation Y and quite new by the Baby Boomers generation. However, for Generation X, email is used for daily life and is the key place for hotel businesses to market their accommodation and services (Fox, 2014). Email is a tool that marketing teams tend to forget due to the fact that it is already a bit outdated. Nevertheless, Vavre (2015) from MoveableInk, an email marketing technology company, has proved that 66 per cent of business to business (B2B) marketers and 44 per cent of business to customer (B2C) marketers prove a clear return on investment from email marketing.

Research shows that people in the Generation X category have a tendency to check their email regularly, making them an ideal group to target with email advertising. There are, however, some distinct differences between males and females. According to Lancaster and Stillman (2002), high-end marketers should personalise their messages for male and female. Males are more likely to enjoy ads that are funny or have a unique creative style with a lot of images, whereas females are more likely to enjoy ads that have a "slice of life" and one predominant picture. In addition to the email marketing, research shows that TV marketing is not the best medium to attract this generation (Vavre, 2015). The internet is continually drawing this generation away from more traditional advertising methods. Research has shown that Generation X loves to be educated when buying a service (Vavre, 2015). The internet gives them the option to educate themselves about the hotel and the service they can expect. They look for information and read more about the accommodation and service they are about to buy. They do, however, respond to some traditional marketing methods like advertisements in newspapers and magazines. The reason for this is that this kind of advertisement appeals to their financial or intellectual situation and responsibility (Mangold & Smith, 2012). Clearly, appealing to the financial situation and responsibility of this generation is a good marketing strategy because the average Generation X has the highest income of all living generations. Therefore, appealing to the financial situation and responsibility

of Generation X can be seen as a suitable marketing strategy for this generation.

Furthermore, as far as Generation X is concerned, they grew-up in a time of increased divorce and family breakdowns. They needed to take a lot of responsibility, often at a young age, and are usually very responsible people. When trying to attract this group, hotel marketing teams can appeal to this attitude of the potential consumers and market themselves as a reliable and trustworthy provider of comfortable hotel rooms and pleasant services. For example, at the budget end of the hotel market, Premiere Inn sell themselves as pleasantly appointed rooms where they "guarantee a good night's sleep". The following quotation from Marriott Courtyard, "Discover business hotels from Courtyard by Marriott and experience a hotel designed with you in mind, offering spacious rooms, plush bedding and high-tech amenities", highlights the more upscale hotel offer aimed at Generation X. Generation X also like recommendations, and for this reason, word-of-mouth advertising could be a big influence for this generation. This target group especially values the recommendations of friends and family (Leboff, 2007).

Generation X tends to be a forgotten target group for marketing teams when developing social media marketing strategies. However, still significant majorities of Generation X consumers go online on social media daily (Fox, 2014). Furthermore, Fox (2014) suggests that Generation X is one of fastest growing target audiences using social media networks and online booking platforms. They see technology as changing their world and techno-literacy is highly valued by this target group.

Generation Y

It is probably easier to compare and contrast Generation X and Generation Y. Generation Y is concerned with a target group of people born between 1981 and 1995. Currently, 43 per cent of people in the workforce are from Generation Y. These individuals have come of age during a time of political revolution, digital innovation and economic recession (Taylor, 2014). Furthermore, according to Taylor (2014), these issues are all circumstances shaping the opinions, values and behaviour of Generation Y in radical ways. Digital and online marketing platforms are growing rapidly and if hotel companies are not using this technology in their organisations to interact with this target group, the impact of their marketing strategy will be lost on Generation Y purchasers. However, in contrast, according to Walgrove (2015), the focus of online marketing should be on the Baby Boomers due to the fact that they still have interest in the online world and are still a big target market. Nevertheless, according to Rowson (2016), all generations are building a relationship with technology, but it is apparent that Generation Y uses technology on a much broader scale.

Generation Y consumers use technology almost constantly and cannot imagine a day without it, and for this reason Generation Y is perhaps the most easy to target using online marketing strategies. In order to attract Generation Y to buy your accommodation or service, there are a few restrictions a hotel company should take into consideration when promoting and completing a new marketing campaign or strategy. According to different professionals in the field of marketing, there are a few ways in which Generation Y is consistently affected by marketing.

First of all, Generation Y value opinions from other persons. This could be from friends or people that wrote reviews on a website about a certain product or service. Turner-Wilson (2015) advised marketers to build a relationship with Generation Y consumers: make them brand loyal, and not try to oversell your service to this generation. When attracting this group in their early years, it will create brand loyalty. When appealing to their beliefs for the future, a hotel marketer can create brand loyalty. Not only via their beliefs, but this generation want to be a part of the world's future and in control of their own future. Furthermore, according to Fallon (2014), Generation Y likes products customised to their unique needs, and brand names are important to them.

Generation Y and Generation X spend roughly the same amount of time online. Their responses were strikingly similar:

- The largest proportion of both Generation Y and Generation X, about 23%, consume between five and ten hours online per week;
- Around 21% of both generations consume more than 20 hours of online time per week; and
- 18% of Generation X and about 15% of Generation Y consume at least five hours online time a week (Walgrove, 2015).

Age has long been, and will probably continue to be, one of the greatest indicators of a target groups' likes and interests. But beyond age, further consideration should be given to the years when the audience was born, as this can give insights into its unique generational micro-culture (Jones, 2015).

A study entitled "The generational content gap: How different age groups consume content" (Jones, 2015) found that Baby Boomers are most frequently using online platforms between 9 o'clock in the morning and noon. This is in contrast with Generation X and Y users, who are more active on online platforms between 8 o'clock in the evening and midnight or beyond. Hotel marketers need to realise that the Baby Boomers are still a major target market within the online marketing methods. Next to social media and the internet, they also still use the television as a major media route.

In terms of communication, Baby Boomers like information presented in a clear and traceable manner. Next to this, reputation is important to the Baby Boomers. According to Williams and Page (2008), the Boomers are motivated by title, position and prestige. Baby Boomers are loyal to hotel brands they know and if a hotel marketer wants to attract them from their trusted brand, the marketing message has to be clear and concise. Williams and Page (2008) suggest that the only reason the Baby Boomers would switch between their old brand and another brand is if the marketing campaign can convince them that a certain hotel accommodation or service has a greater value than the brand they are loyal to, and they will be less price sensitive. Baby Boomers are often forgotten when developing an online marketing campaign. Baby Boomers do not want to feel old, but they want to know the benefits of getting older. Furthermore, this is an important target group which is (often) forgotten within hotel online marketing and social media campaigns (Williams & Page, 2008).

Online booking platforms

With the enormous amount of information potentially available to travellers, the internet has become an important platform for information exchanges between the consumer

and suppliers, for example, hotel booking platforms such as Booking.com and hotel websites themselves (Starkov & Safer, 2010; Werthner & Klein, 1999). The internet has changed the hotel service users' behaviour (Mills & Law, 2004). The search process is now longer than it has ever been, people are searching an average of 22 hotel websites before making a booking. Popular booking platforms such as Booking.com and Trivago.com can compare hotel prices worldwide. In 2016, the worldwide market volume for online hotel bookings alone was estimated to exceed US\$100 billion, with package holidays and vacation rentals such as AirBnB adding another \$75 billion in annual revenues (Hotelmkt.com, 2016 {Not in reference list}).

Hotel industry executives and managers have received much evidence that social media influences guests' booking behaviour (Michopoulou & Moisa, 2016). However, managing online reputation, content strategy, and social media platforms for customer service and support, marketing, reaching international audiences and using social media as a booking channel, are just a few drivers leading hotel businesses to embrace social media (Intel, 2016). For example, Holiday Inn Express and Hyatt piloted using Facebook Messenger to communicate with guests, while Best Western International, Accor and Marriott International adopted TripAdvisor Instant Booking. Loews Hotels and resorts in the United States have been using Twitter to make reservations, and in 2015, the Hilton-owned brand, Conrad Hotels and Resorts, started offering bookings via Instagram (Intel, 2016). Nonetheless, engaging social media as a marketing tool and booking channel has become a major element of a hotel's marketing and booking strategies (Constantinides, 2014). Furthermore, this means that all generations are potentially seeing hotel marketing messages across a variety of different channels, and using an array of booking channels.

All-important timing

Moving on to another aspect which needs to be taken into consideration, according to Taylor (2014), is promotion or campaign timing. It is important to know when to advertise your product or service. Generation Y is very engaged with products and services that fit a period or time of the year. Traditional marketing does not influence this generation. They need real-life examples and they care about experience, and online marketing can offer them these essentials.

In addition, if you want the attention of a Generation Y consumer, a hotel marketing campaign needs to be creative, striking and new. Generation Y does not respond to marketing hype and is always searching for new and interesting campaigns. For instance, the music band U2 introduced a whole new kind of marketing to the music industry. U2 made a deal with iTunes in order to promote their next album where everyone with an iPhone got the songs from the album "Songs of Innocence" on their iPhone and could listen to them for a limited number of times for free. However, after this time period was used, the customer had to buy the song. This marketing campaign was unknown before this. It was creative, innovative and very successful. Therefore, it can be said that for hospitality organisations to stay interesting for this generation, a hotel marketer should stay focused on the target group's beliefs and needs and routinely introduce new approaches to accommodation and services. Clearly then, every generation

requires a different way of marketing to attract them to the product or service.

To summarise at this point then: when developing a marketing campaign and strategy, different aspects need to be taken into consideration by marketers. The customers' wants and needs are of major importance when completing a marketing campaign. In addition, before promoting a marketing campaign, an analysis of the campaign is important in order to create a clear vision of the accommodation and service on offer. In addition, it is of great importance to know how to develop a marketing mindset and how a marketing campaign can influence consumers. Lastly, the generational differences are important to include in a marketing campaign. Despite all of the factors which influence a marketing campaign and strategy, the aim of the hotel marketing department still stays the same: selling accommodation and services to the customer.

Research approach

The research design chosen for this research is the quantitative method, and the sample was drawn from a European hospitality association. The association has 350 members in Europe. The survey instrument was sent out via the website "Survey Monkey" in order to generate the highest number of respondents, and to get the best quality results the survey needed at least 50 responses. The survey instrument included 10 questions, and these ranged from affirmative and negative responses to a Likert scale of 1 to 5.

The sample for this survey was 100 members of a European hospitality association. It was impossible to interview all the members in the population because of time restraints and therefore we stratified a selection of 100 potential respondents. It is important to look for a relationship between the affinity with the kind of marketing and the generations, therefore all different generations were asked to complete the survey.

In order to apply the research instrument, the survey program "Survey Monkey" was used. The sampling methods used were non-probability sampling and probability sampling, because the target group for the survey only included members of the hospitality association (Verhoeven, 2011). Due to the fact that we wanted an equal division between the generations, a

stratification of age groups was used and respondent groups were selected based on the age of the respondent.

The data

The survey was conducted using "Survey Monkey" and 77 clean and usable responses were received from the respondents (51% male; 49% female). A age control category was used on the survey as can be seen from Figure 1. The literature suggests age ranges from 1946 to 1964 are Baby Boomers, 1965 to 1980 Generation X, 1981 to 1995 Generation Y, and from 1996 onwards the so-called Millennials. Unfortunately, the survey did not attract any respondents from this latter group. This is interesting data in itself in that the Millennial generation (1996 onwards) are very social media savvy, are digital natives and maybe "Survey Monkey" as an email attachment has already become "old tech" to them. However, care must be taken with this last statement because, although it is an interesting point in this survey, there is no data to support this point, only what the academic literature suggests might be the case.

The survey respondents were given choices about what is most important when they buy hotel accommodation or services. Three options were given: the reputation; lasting value; and opinion of others. The survey respondents were asked to rank these in order, and Figure 2 shows the three different options

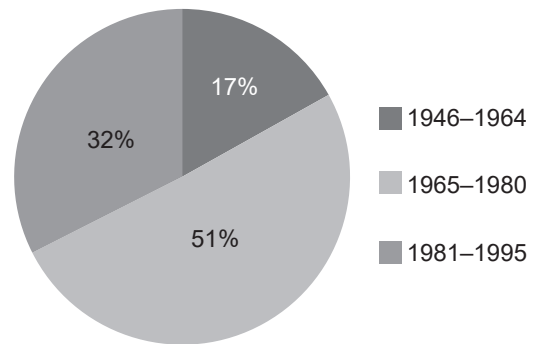


Figure 1: Respondent age category

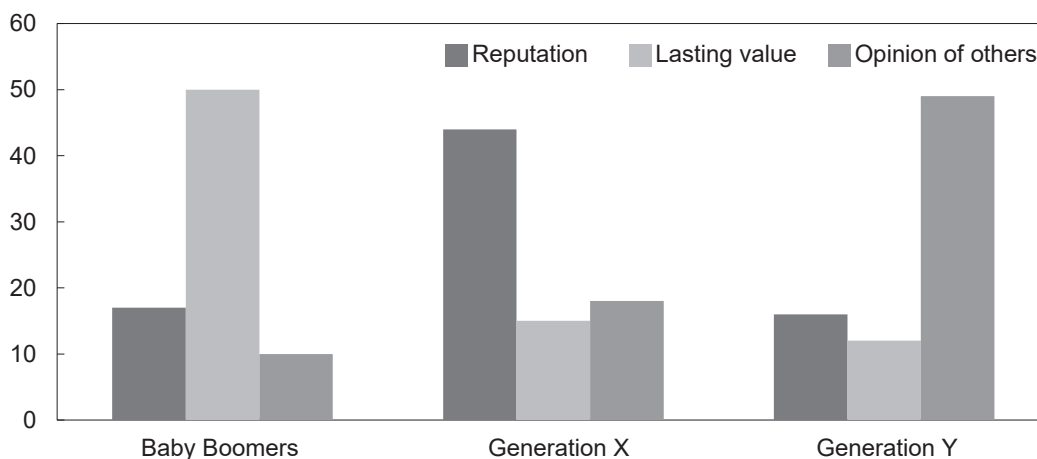


Figure 2: Importance aspects when purchasing hotel services or accommodation

in order of preference by affirmative selection, 1 = Baby Boomers, 2 = Generation X, and 3 = Generation Y. The lasting value of a product was selected in the affirmative 50 times by the Baby Boomers; the opinion of others was selected in the affirmative 49 times by Generation Y; and reputation was selected in the affirmative 44 times by Generation X.

The most selected second option, *opinion of others*, sits comfortably with the literature that suggests that Generation Y consumers value the opinion of others most highly when purchasing hotel services or accommodation.

The respondents were asked which opinions they valued most when purchasing hotel services or accommodation. Figure 3 illustrates that the *opinion of friends* is most frequently selected (45%) by all generational consumer groups. Overall the groups were split the same, with 34% saying that other opinions did not matter in the decision-making process. When the data is fully extrapolated and cross-tabulated with the different age categories of the sample, the respondents in the age category 1946–1964 (Baby Boomers) stated to not be influenced by others. Interestingly, both the following age categories from 1965–1980 (Generation X) and 1981–1995 (Generation Y) both stated that they value the opinion of friends the most. The data, although limited in size, does suggest that hospitality marketing teams need to think clearly about the reputation of the brand and personal recommendations as part of the marketing strategy.

Respondents were asked about where they searched for information about a hotel (Figure 4). Google was the most

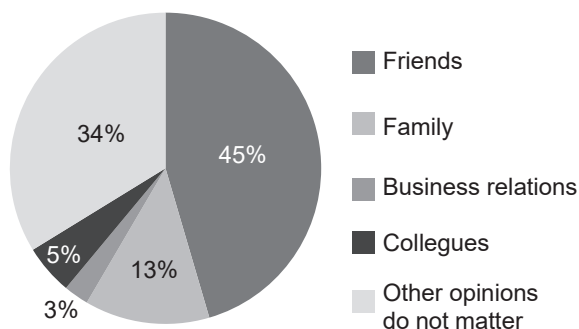


Figure 3: Opinion value

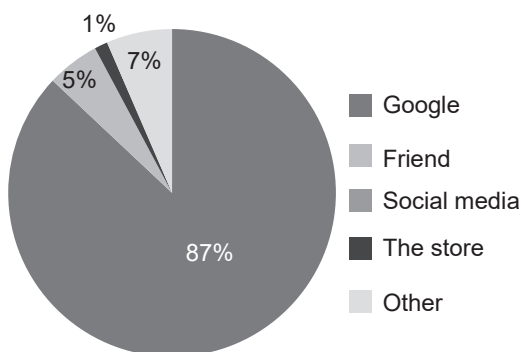


Figure 4: Where do you search for information if you want to know more about a hotel service?

popular means used and 87% of the respondents said that they first searched on Google for information.

To understand this data better it was decided to extrapolate the gender division, and more females (Affirmative responses: $n = 36$, compared to males $n = 31$) said that they used social media and in this instance Google to research information about products and services (Figure 5).

We asked about which was the respondents preferred type of marketing, either traditional or online marketing, or which was most likely to influence them and result in a purchase. All the respondents showed a high affinity with online marketing (Table 1).

Table 1 shows that of all the respondents that filled out the survey questionnaire, 84% stated that they have an average or higher affinity with online marketing. Earlier studies suggest that 71% of respondents have an average or lower affinity with traditional marketing techniques. There is only a slight difference between male and female respondents when it comes to the affinity they have with online and traditional marketing methods.

The data shows that for all groups there is a strong affinity to online marketing and that the majority of the respondents felt more influenced by online marketing campaigns than more traditional marketing campaigns. The major differences between the generations were that there was a tendency for Generation X and Generation Y to be more influenced by online marketing campaigns, whereas the Baby Boomers had a tendency to be more influenced by traditional marketing campaigns. However, the data collected in this project is far too limited to make such generalisations, but does relate to the literature review that suggests a similar outcome.

Conclusion

To conclude then, this paper (developed from a student project) draws conclusions from the project data that attempts to identify the preferred marketing approach and the influence that marketing campaigns have on individual generational groups. The data shows that Baby Boomers have a tendency to prefer more traditional marketing methods, while Generation X and Generation Y consumers have a tendency to prefer online marketing strategies.

The data shows that every generation is typified by certain characteristics, have their own ways of making buying decisions and were influenced by different factors. The Baby Boomers are mostly searching on Google for information, and attach a lot of value to the reputation of the service. Despite the fact that family is seen as of major importance to them, this does not influence their opinion when making a purchasing decision. It can be concluded from a marketing point of view that the Baby Boomers are independent and not influenced by the opinions of others. Generation X respondents

Table 1: What is your affinity with different types of marketing strategies?

Answer option	None	Little	Average	Above average	High
Online marketing	1	11	25	24	16
Traditional marketing	1	22	32	18	3

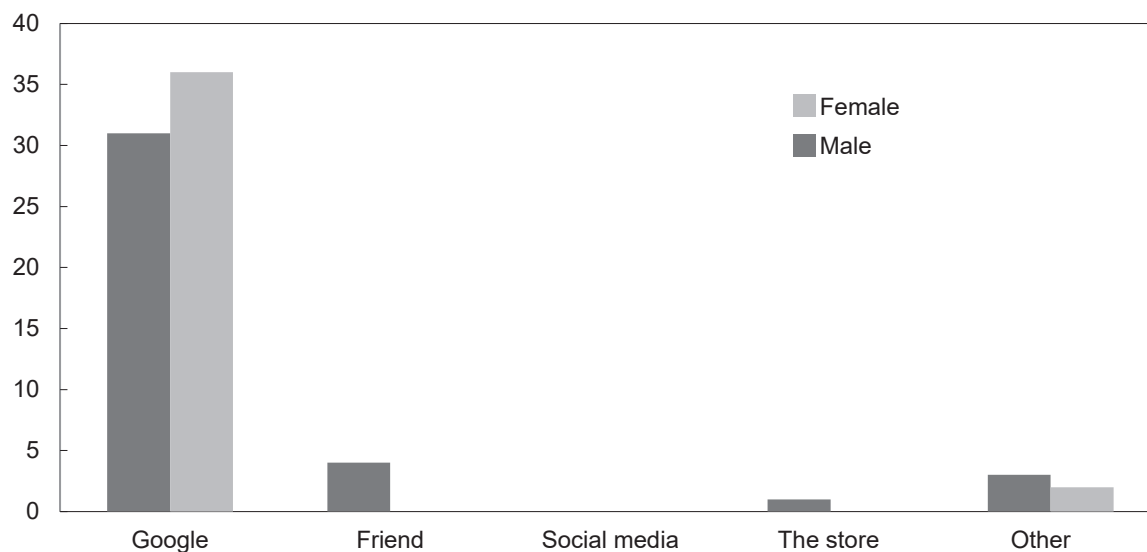


Figure 5: Gender division

carried out research on the internet for information about hotel accommodation or services. This makes sense and fits comfortably with the literature due to the fact that this generational group likes to be educated when buying a service. Hotel marketing campaigns can influence the buying decision process of Generation X purchasers if they believe that the hotel brand has a good reputation for service. Generation Y consumers identify the reputation of the hotel brand as most important to them. Furthermore, it is important for Generation Y consumers when making purchases to think what others might think about a certain service that they purchase. To some degree they care most about what their friends think about a certain hotel brand or service.

Generation X is the generation stuck in the middle. The Generation X group is still triggered by a lot of different factors in the marketing process. Email marketing, television and educational online marketing are probably the ways to reach out to this particular generation. Generation X purchasers have affinity with traditional as well as online marketing techniques.

The data sits comfortably with much of the literature, suggesting that although there are differences in the marketing techniques that consumers might prefer, the use of online marketing is growing at a rapid rate and is being used by all consumer groups; where some groups like Baby Boomers find it new and exciting, Generation X relates to this online marketing method. However, they do relate back to more traditional advertising methods as well. Generation Y see being online as the main channel for connection with the world, so that they tend to see online marketing and purchasing as the norm.

Limitations of the research

During the development of the research we found some limitations which affected it. One of the limitations was gaining access to all of the resources. Due to the fact that the research was a university student project, the first author did not have unlimited time to conduct the research. Furthermore, the author did discover some limitations within the research as

well. Even though the results gathered from the questionnaire were in line with most of the literature, one of the major limitations was the sample size.

If the research were to be conducted again, we would use a larger respondent sample because with a larger sample we would be able to get more responses and this should lead to richer data, perhaps informing us much better. Finally, the questionnaire could have been extended in order to get more information and have more interfaces to discuss. For instance, there are a lot of different email marketing strategies: how do these strategies relate to the different generations, and how do the generations respond to those strategies?

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