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## CHAPTER 5 GENERATION Y: A SIGNIFICANT GENERATION

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous two chapters concerned the *how* of this thesis in their coverage of marketing communication and information communication technology literature in the context of the *what* of postmodern society. In this chapter the *who* of the thesis, Generation Y, will be addressed.

Firstly, to clarify terminology, Generation Y is also known as *Millennials* as well as the *Net Generation*. This thesis will refer to them as Generation Y for the following reasons, a) the naming runs sequentially to the preceding generation, Generation X; b) the millennium (2000) generally marks the last of this generation's births and the term Millennial is considered to be more relevant to latter members of this cohort than earlier members; and c) whilst the Internet has grown and developed almost in tandem with this generation it is not the only defining influence on it.

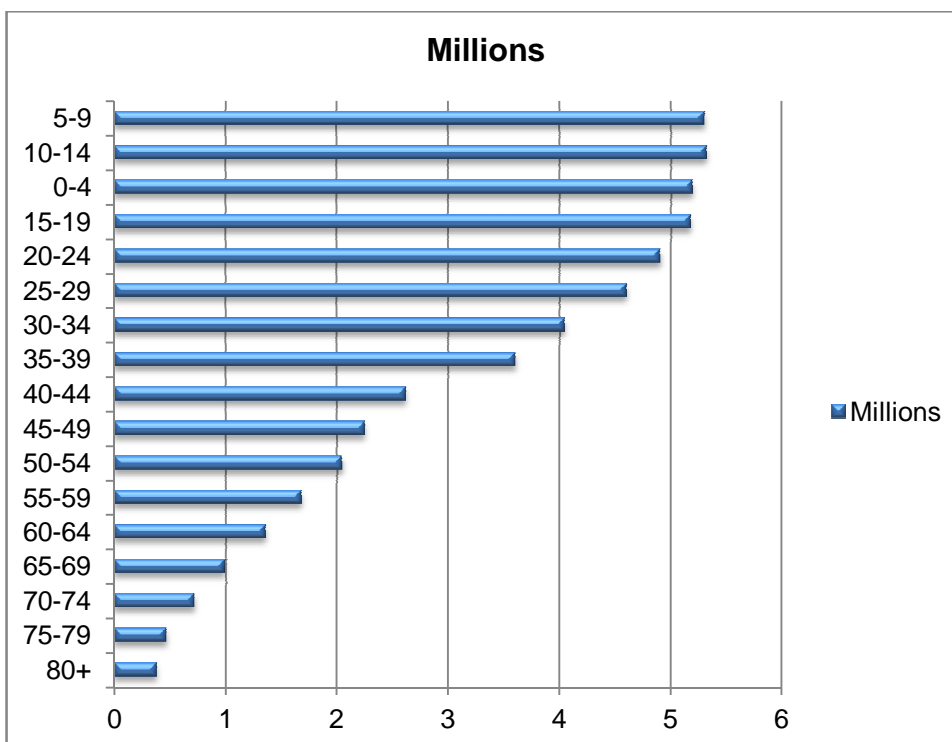
Generation Y, individuals born between 1978 to 2000 (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010:98; Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:xi), although start dates vary according to different sources, is unique from several perspectives in the context of this study:

- Firstly, Generation Y is conceivably the first generation born into a wholly postmodern society (Best & Kellner, 2003:76).
- Secondly, they are the first generation to have always lived in a digital world (Székely & Nagy, 2011:2187; Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:83). From birth they have been surrounded by digital products driven by technology developments: cell phones, the Internet, ipods, video and console gaming and television to mention a few digital media platforms, contributing towards their status as the most digital savvy generation to date (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:83). They seem to take this technology for granted, which is aligned with the idea that technology is only technology for people that were born before it was invented (Kay, n.d.).

- Thirdly, this generation represents upcoming economic generators and individuals or groups who will shape the society of the future (Best & Kellner, 2003:76; Székely & Nagy, 2011:2187).
- Fourthly, Generation Y is the largest population group when compared to other generations today. Potentially, based on the size of the group and through globalised networks linking individuals together, Generation Y has the capabilities to mobilise mass movements, if it were to act en masse, thus exerting global influence

Figure 5.1 shows the current population for South Africa. It demonstrates the high number of people under the age of 34, which indicates the significant size of Generation Y in South Africa.

**Figure 5.1: South African population statistics**



Source: Adapted from Statistics South Africa (2011:9).

Two of the largest influences to shape Generation Y are their parents and a digitally connected society (Shore, 2011; Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:6). The implications of these

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factors are perhaps not immediately obvious. However if one considers, for example, the fact that members of Generation Y are usually the leading technological authority within households (Székely & Nagy, 2011:2191; Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:150), this implies that in a technologically driven society they, as the designated household technological experts, act as filters for information entering the home. This role places them in a position of power in terms of their influence over decision-making and purchases within households and amongst other less technologically literate individuals that rely on Generation Y's technological astuteness. Thus as gatekeepers to information they choose what they prefer to share with others, which may or may not be biased towards their personal wants and needs. This is perhaps the reason behind findings in America citing that Generation Y influences the purchase of nearly 50% of vehicles and 90% of clothing (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:xviii). These points infer that Generation Y has become accustomed to getting what they want through their influence of others. This blurring of roles between traditional authority figures and youth is evidence of de-differentiation.

To effectively communicate with Generation Y it is important to understand who they are and what motivates them. This chapter addresses some of the key variances of Generation Y compared to preceding generations with relation to their levels of exposure to technology, their upbringings and their attitudes towards consumption in the era they live in. Through this discussion factors within these topics will emerge and will be reviewed, and suggestions will be offered in terms of how they can be leveraged from a marketing perspective, as indicated by sub-headings referring to marketing implications.

## **5.2 TECHNOLOGY: EFFECTS AND INFLUENCE ON 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SOCIETY**

Technology plays an increasingly more important role in current society than previous eras. Constructive applications of technology have contributed to more productivity in homes and workspaces, enhanced entertainment offerings, and have been responsible for generating a multitude of communication options. Continuous technological development is driven through positive feedback: as much as technology advances, consumers expect more, demanding greater speed, richer interactive content, multifunctional devices, and innovation in general.

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Communication technology has shortened the distance between consumers and marketers or product developers, particularly through its capabilities to facilitate real-time feedback and conversations between parties. Developers, in their bid to appease and maintain customers and drive commercial profits, comply with ongoing developments perpetuating the cycle of demand and supply (through this positive feedback). This is particularly true of the technology sector, in product development plans, where beta versions are released for testing and consumer feedback before final products are launched to the market. Popular profitable products are developed continually and developers release new versions or product upgrades (according to the Microsoft News Centre (2011) the company had launched at least nine *Windows* products between the period 1990 to 2010). As a result there is rapid turnover of technological products with many becoming obsolete more rapidly than previously experienced. Moore (1998:104) reflects on the exponential advancement of semiconductor capabilities remarking that in the 1970s semiconductors improved speed tenfold within ten years, however by the 1990s semiconductor development was magnified to the power of ten every three and half years.

Over time as digital media has evolved, especially the Internet, people's use of the medium has changed. From a content point of view, in its early days content on the Internet was analogous to written paper based media (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:98). Now content has become more visual and interactive, embracing technological properties inherent to the Internet.

**Drive innovation by taking advantage of a medium's inherent properties**

Similarly, mobile phones have unique properties which should be utilised to maximise the effects of their use as a medium. Properties to consider are that as technology convergence devices mobile phones possess multi-functional capabilities (voice, data, video, audio, Internet access, location based services), they are personal devices, are usually always on, typically within arm's length from their owners, and they allow real-time communication to take place (Marketing Mix, 2008:32; Székely & Nagy, 2011:2191).

Consumers too are co-developing in response to advancing technology, forming new skills to help them adapt and adopt in a world of technology (Székely & Nagy, 2011:2189; Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:97).

**Today's culture is not the same as yesterday's**

To understand how youth are using digital information communication technology fundamental revisions need to be made to the way people think culture is construed through conflicting forces, specifically tensions "between the public and the private, the subject and the object, and the human and the machine" (Samuels, 2008:219).

Samuels believes that through *automodernity*, a term he uses to describe a new cultural era that combines technological automation with an individual's autonomy, these polar opposites are being brought together. Consider for example that in order to manage the vast amount of information people are now exposed to they have learnt to outsource intellect by leveraging repositories of artificial intelligence (Taylor, 2010). Rather than mentally retaining information increasingly there is a tendency to digitally store or be aware of the electronic location of information and retrieve it as and when required. This process of automation resonates with Samuel's (2008) concept of automodernity.

Generation Y has demonstrated higher aptitudes to process information at high-speed, particularly visual data, when compared to preceding generations (Székely & Nagy, 2011:2188; Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:9). This skill may be attributed to a dominance of visually orientated media such as video games, television, the Internet, print, out of home and mobile phones. For example, if a website takes more than a few seconds to download this generation will move on to another page (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:23). Negative outcomes of this trend are that Generation Y experience content fatigue more quickly than other generations, and may appear to have shorter-attention spans, although it has been suggested that this is an outcome of their ability to process information more quickly (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:9). Generation Y has also become adept serial multi-taskers (Samuels, 2008:220; Székely & Nagy, 2011:2188) which may or may not be symptomatic of reduced concentration spans. However, this skill possibly makes them better equipped to cope with multiple demands at a frenetic pace. Samuels (2008:220) perceives multi-tasking behaviour with digital media, as a way of leveraging the media to virtually combine different aspects of a person's needs in the same space. This is a positive perspective of multitasking aligning with the concept of automodernity. Youth use media technologies to increase their control over situations that can be managed through these technologies (Samuels, 2008:220).

Immersion with automated technologies may isolate the user from their sense of social and cultural awareness in the public sphere. Samuels (2008:229) points out that although youth have the opportunity to contribute to their social databanks by easily accessing information through technology, technology may be contributing to an antisocial movement, because in the virtual realm individuals can control access and responses to content. They do not have this type of control in the physical world and over social encounters in the public sphere. The aspect of control, was one of the reasons that youth find gaming compelling, because they live in a world where they have limited control of their environment (Pitout, 2001:517; Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:52). Really simple syndicated (RSS) feeds are another form of automated control that aggregates and supplies specific content requested to a user. However, if the user only relies on automated feeds, they risk self-determined myopia, because they are denying themselves access to new experiences.

Importantly, relatively easy access to free information means that today's consumers are more informed (Samuels, 2008:226; Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:9). A consequence of democratized information is flatter hierarchies (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:10).

### **5.2.1 Connecting to anyone anywhere**

Earlier it was recorded that a significant influence on Generation Y is a digitally connected society. Technology has enabled them to connect to like-minded groups irrespective of geography, be they interest groups, like gaming, or social network sites such as *Facebook* (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:10). This grouping may derive from effects of the modernism movement (uniform identity), which has led to a more fragmented society that celebrates individuality in postmodern society. Under postmodernism conditions individuals are free to experience differences; they are not obliged to conform to one particular mode. These experiences are often sought through the formation of communities, and it is only through the establishment of a community that these experiences can be realised, because it is through participation that individuals achieve meaning (Firat & Dholakia, 2006:131). To make up for lack of community in the physical domain people have the opportunity to form

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and participate in groups that share common interests via virtual networks to find meaning and belonging (Firat & Dholakia, 2006:131; Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:50).

Social connectivity has inspired teamwork and dependence upon members of particular groups (Székely & Nagy, 2011:2188. Group operating is evident in the physical space too. Generation Y likes doing things together and often as mixed gender groups. Teen dating for example has morphed from couples to group dating (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:141). Generation Y has learnt to converse and operate in groups, simultaneously broadcasting to multiple members within their networks, sharing their news, uploading content and other interactions. The collaborative features of Web 2.0 offer conducive platforms for creating and sharing content (Székely & Nagy, 2011:2187). Generation Y is seemingly more confident than other generations, evidenced by the volume of self-published content they post online, which ranges from trivial to significant (Lenhart, 2010; Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:12). The fact that access to social networks is not restricted to personal computers but also accessible through mobile phones facilitates ease of use, allowing networkers to tap in and out of this environment as they chose, unconstrained by access platforms.

People's digital social networks have expanded beyond immediate personal networks. They now have the ability to virtually befriend or follow people they would otherwise not normally have contact with, like people they admire or have an interest in such as celebrities, politicians or sporting personalities. These personalities of interest often function as influencers on people who have chosen to befriend or follow them, which is possibly an indication of implementation of two-step flow hypothesis.

**Marketing implication: Leveraging social media connections**

Marketers that recognise specific consumer behaviours will be in a position to adapt their communication content and approach to suit their target audiences. The above discussion indicates social networks are a preferred point of contact amongst Generation Y and suggests when communicating with this segment marketers would benefit from using communication that are less text heavy and more visual and also serving stimulating bite sized content to capture Generation Y's attention and at the same time not hamper download speeds.



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### 5.2.2 The need for speed

The speed and immediacy demanded by Generation Y in the digital space has also spilled over into their expectations of the physical realm. Generation Y's demand for innovative technology was highlighted previously, and the same trend is apparent in other sectors associated with Generation Y. This is driving faster turnover of their consumption of products, wardrobes and entertainment to mention a few examples as they constantly strive for newness. Older generations tend to be more cautious about products promising newness, tending to favour reliability over innovation.

#### **New is better**

Generation Y, on the other hand, who are used to development in their high turnover world, want newness; they perceive new to be better and improved (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:180).

#### **Marketing implication: Marketing at hyper-speed**

The key takeouts, from a marketing perspective, are to regularly supply Generation Y with new information about products and position products as new commodities rather than product upgrades. Furthermore, in the same way that this generation expects innovation from products it is anticipated they have the same innovative expectations of marketing communication directed at them.

### 5.2.3 I share, you share, we all share

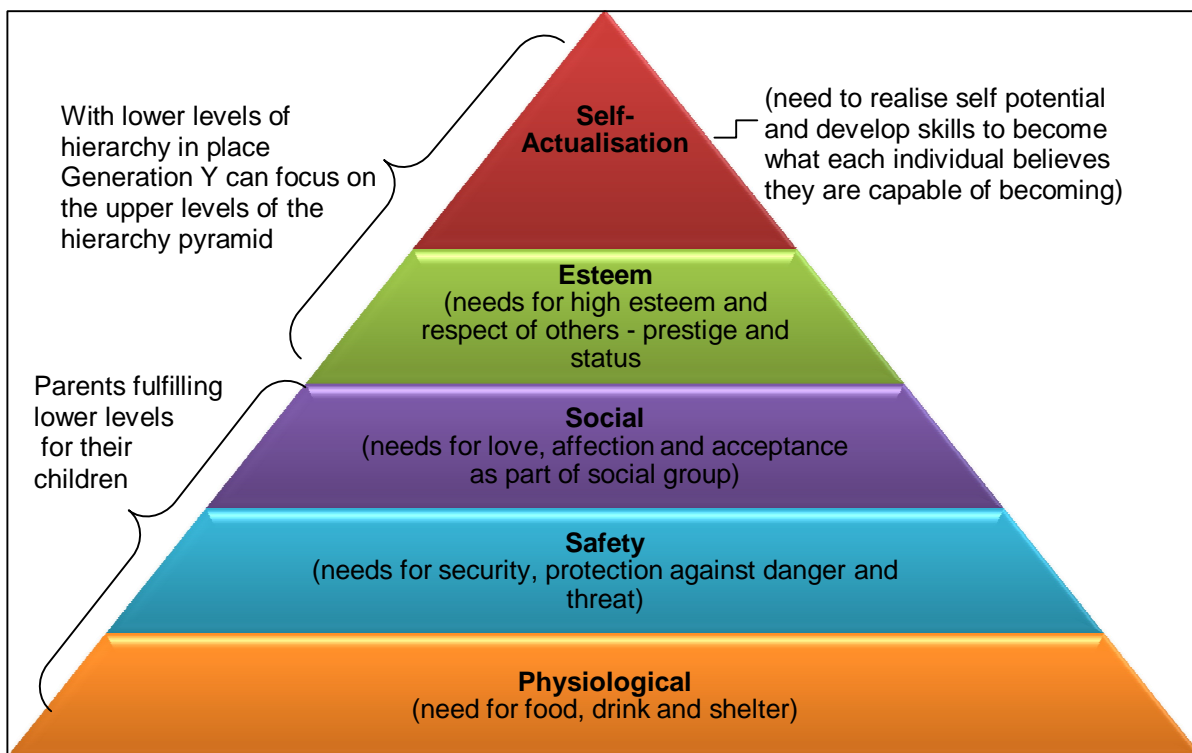
Peer-to-peer downloading of movies, music and games is a common practice amongst youth. Although strictly speaking these activities are not legal, but are practiced nonetheless. Youth do not perceive this form of collaboration of circulating content amongst their peers as a criminal act. They do not consider that the livelihoods of the artists that generate this material is at stake, and without the artists producing the content new content would cease to be generated. The current practice of free downloads is clearly not sustainable for the entertainment industries (Székely & Nagy, 2011:2187), and a more agreeable model is needed to meet the needs of all stakeholders concerned.



### 5.3 RAISING GENERATION Y

The introduction to this chapter mentioned that one of the contributing factors to Generation Y's differences is the influence of their parents. Generation Y receive considerable support and nurturing from their parents. Shore (2011) remarks that the structure of families has changed to be more democratic and less hierarchical, with parents assuming more of a friendship role, becoming *peer-ents*. Generation Y are taking longer to leave the home than previous generations and some leave only to return to the family home when they encounter difficulties (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:101). In applying the concept of Maslow's hierarchy of needs for human motivation to the relationship between parents and their Generation Y offspring (refer to Figure 5.2), it is apparent that parents provide a safety net for this generation fulfilling the fundamental lower levels of the hierarchy structure. Parents provide for their children's physiological needs giving shelter and nourishment; their safety needs for security and protection and, contribute towards their social needs for love, affection and acceptance within a social group.

**Figure 5.2: Maslow's hierarchy of needs applied to the relationship between Generation Y and their parents**



Source: Content with respect to relationships between parents and their Generation Y offspring added to Cameron (2005:130)

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With parents fulfilling the foundation levels of the hierarchy of needs their children automatically advance into the esteem needs level as a starting base in the phases of human motivation. As this chapter unfolds needs for esteem become clearly recognisable amongst Generation Y (that is during this stage of their development with the period of this study, as at 2011). In Chapter 2 it was recorded that societal change has motivated individuals to seek greater self-actualisation, as an outcome of postmodernism (Brown, 1994:35).

**Artificial progression?**

One cannot help questioning if this aided advancement through the pyramid of needs truly benefits a generation. Do people need to personally fulfil each stage to recognise their needs and appreciate that these have been attended to?

This debate is in the realm of sociology and psychology hence falls out of the scope of this study. However referring back to Chapter 2 it was noted that individuals with a trivial past (combined with an insignificant future) were more likely to experience a short-lived present (Harvey, 1992), which is evident amongst Generation Y who partakes in short-lived experiences. Living in the here and now is characteristic of postmodern culture (Firat & Dholakia, 2006:128).

**Disconnected cultures**

Perhaps there is a cultural dissociation between postmodernism youth and their modern parents?

If one applies Baudrillard's concept of simulacra and hyperreality, young adults could be considered as simulacra of previous generations, although similar they are not the same as their predecessors.

Self-esteem, cultural, social, personal and psychological factors have a strong influence on customer buying behaviour (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010:161). Marketers would benefit by identifying ways for products and, or communications to target Generation Y's esteem needs, either directly or indirectly through media vendors (such as publishers and broadcasters) that have already established connections with this generation. *Cosmopolitan* magazine, for example, is one of the world's largest magazines. The basis

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of its success rests with its understanding of young women, how this segment is developing and their need to establish their identities. *Cosmopolitan* achieves this by positioning its content as a reference to possibilities rather than a prescriptive how to guide (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:81).

A further point to mention is that whilst Generation Y remains in the family home they are likely to have fewer financial responsibilities, like mortgage repayments. The result is that working members of this segment, residing at home, have higher disposable incomes than if they were starting out on their own, which is likely to equate to more flexible spending power. Their attitudes towards spending, shopping in particular, will be the focus of section 5.4.

Consumerism in general has increased under the relatively stable economic conditions of contemporary society. Under these circumstances Generation Y finds that they have more time at their disposal and more time to shop. Physical or online shopping is a notable pastime and collective experience, “84 % of teens prefer to shop with others; of those 74% with friends and 26% with parents” (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:36).

**Shopping equates to social currency**

For Generation Y shopping is a way of connecting with their social circle. Their purchases and the path to these acquisitions provide a form of social currency. From a marketing perspective the more time Generation Y spends in shopping environments, the more time they spend with brands of interest to them, and the anticipation is that this will lead to acquisition.

**5.4 SHOPPING – THE CURRENCY OF ESTEEM**

Shopping for Generation Y is more than just a means to fulfilling a need. Shopping is a key tool in the construction of their identities. The purchases they make, particularly the choice of music, clothing and accessory brands they select, represent a reflection of who they are (or want to be) and what they stand for (Lemon, 2001:358). These values are borrowed from the equities and attributes of the brands they have decided to be associated with (or

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choose not to be associated with). This is indicative of the postmodern notion that whilst people might not know what they want, they know what they do not want.

Shopping malls play a significant role in the lives of Generation Y as one-stop destinations. Brown (2006:215) remarks that the shopping malls of today are postmodern constructions, which invite shoppers to enjoy the shopping experience, as opposed to earlier shopping venues that had less welcoming atmospheres. They serve as points of congregation, offer entertainment services, access to retail shops and are perceived as centres of relative safety (which in a high crime country, like South Africa is a welcome respite). In the mall environment Generation Y is constantly surrounded by shops, and for this reason the temptation to shop is a natural outcome.

**Take advantage of Generation Y's impulsive behaviour**

Generation Y has been considered to act on impulse and makes impulsive buys. This characteristic presents an opportunity for marketers to alert this segment of special promotions or exclusive offers that are available for a limited time only. Vouchers and time limited offers incentivises this segments' impulse buy characteristic. Mobile phones readily lend themselves as an appropriate medium to effect these types of promotions or content which can be accessed conveniently by their users on the go.

**I am my brands**

Shopping therefore forms a vital role in Generation Y's passage of identity building and the shopping environment also provides a venue for social interaction. Marketers targeting Generation Y would benefit from aligning their brand values with the aspirations of this generation and feeding these consumers brand content orientated around a brand's equities to drive further persuasion.

When a community believes that buying into a specific brand confers an attribute to them, then this belief manifests in the community and it becomes a reality to this group (Firat *et al.*, 1995:42; O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002:113). In the process of using brands to represent qualities the consumer aspires for consumers take on a production role, producing themselves from their consumed artefacts (Firat *et al.*, 1995:52).

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### 5.4.1 The gender divide

Women tend to shop more than men and they spend more time and more money on retail purchases. However the increased social integration between young men and women, with Generation Y males having more female friends than perhaps previous generations, is having an effect on male shopping patterns. Female friends are influencing their male friends' purchases, and as men become more familiar and confident in their shopping abilities they are starting to pay greater attention to their appearances and spend more money and time in stores. Marketers have not ignored this trend and have developed clothing lines and skin ranges specifically for men (for example: Gillette, Old Spice, and Nivea).

### 5.4.2 Shopping for men

Gender differences still prevail in terms of generalised attitudes towards shopping between men and women. Men, are focused, favouring a simple, clutter free path to purchase (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:xiv) compared to women who demonstrate preferences for greater choice and variety. Men, typically, do not consider shopping to be an active experience; rather they perceive it to be passive, which is one of the reasons that shopping has been low interest activity for men. Therefore, in terms of targeting men, if retailers can somehow incorporate an active component into their stores or make shopping a by-product of another activity, so that shopping is not the main purpose but rather an add-on to an existing experience, they will be more likely to elicit sales from men. This is one of the reasons attributed to spikes in apparel sales at events, because men are not attending the event to shop, shopping is merely a spin off at the occasion.

**Marketing implication: Marketing to men in retail should be a secondary activity**

According to Yarrow and O'Donnell (2009:134), when targeting men marketers should keep interactions practical focussing on the product, offering suggestions that are solutions-orientated, according to the targets' needs, but they must not be perceived as prescriptive or advisory. The provision of positive product testimonies from other customers is persuasive. Men do not like spending time looking for things (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:119), so they would benefit from being able to conduct quick searches online, even when in a retail environment, possibly using their mobile phones to perform the search. Marketers could consider

using location based promotions on mobile phones when targeting male customers to subtly direct them to specific outlets.

### 5.4.3 Shopping for women and word-of-mouth

As a generalised observation shopping has been recognised as an important activity amongst women, something that they are highly involved with. They take delight and pride in finding specific items, as such, the item, the hunt and the experience matter to them and become social currency fuelling conversations with others (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:137).

#### **For women shopping is an event not just a buy**

From a marketer's point of view, it is not just the product that has to be considered, but also the experience in store and the process of acquisition. Women will talk about their experiences both the good and the bad and in turn have an influence on others within their networks. These personal testimonials provide powerful persuasion in terms of influencing people's decisions to accept or reject stores or brands through the proxy of a friend's opinion. Opinions (word-of-mouth) are important amongst friends.

#### **Marketing implication: Use word-of-mouth (WOM) as an activator to market to women in retail**

The mobile phone is an instant word-of-mouth medium. It provides direct access for one-to-one communication or one-to-mass conversing. The use of social media platforms has potential for exponential influence. Touchpoints like *Twitter* and *Facebook* are word-of-mouth enablers and depending on the influencer and number of followers or friends they have, these channels could amplify the effects of the experience. Marketers should consider using promotions that will generate social experiences for this segment that they can proliferate through social media. For example, best bargains, the opportunity to attend brand sponsored events, and rewarding them with gift vouchers.

## 5.5 WHAT DOES GENERATION Y THINK ABOUT BRANDS?

Generation Y is attracted to brands that offer clear value propositions, because they stand out from the mass of products available and their specific proposition is a representation of sorts to the individual that selects them (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:28). As a reflection of self, Generation Y seeks authenticity from brands. Brands that are accepted by this generation become a connection currency traded between members of groups.

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Consumers conversing about brands attach authenticity and endorse brands within their networks (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:34).

**Marketing implication: Leverage brand presence in consumer conversations**

Marketers need to participate in consumer-brand conversations. In these exchanges marketers have been challenged by Generation Y to not push their products directly on this segment, but instead be relevant and try to get close to this segment by relating to them through their interests or causes, until they accept the brand for themselves as an individual and also amongst their social group to achieve social approval (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010:42; Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:28).

Generation Y borrows values that brands or organisations represent as a reflection of who they are. Brands with higher order values are perceived to have greater authenticity. Brands associated with causes, that ring true to Generation Y captivate this segment (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:35).

### 5.5.1 Constructing identities

In the construction of their identity Generation Y fuse together aspects of their environment, culture and heritage. This is a dynamic process, evolving according to influences and inputs. This fusion presents a problem to marketers because it means that Generation Y is rarely wholly aligned to one specific group, but rather appeals to multiple interests. This finding resonates with pastiche and diversity traits of postmodernism. These skills for mashability are applied to other parts of their lives (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:112), how they engage with products and brands through the different combinations they like to recreate. This presents opportunities to stimulate them with content that they can use and make their own.

**Marketing implication: Contribute to Generation Y's identity needs**

- It is anticipated that marketers should leverage the emotional benefit of their brands. High parity performance amongst competitive products means that functionality is seldom a competitive advantage. Therefore, marketers should appeal to the emotional and social needs of this segment.
- This group is opinionated, therefore the use of mechanisms that seek their point of view and the provision of platforms to air their perspectives are recommended.



- Appearances and being recognised are highly rated amongst Generation Y, so similarly to the previous point, the use of mechanisms such as exclusive events provide both photograph opportunities and recognition that they secured an exclusive invitation, which serve as social ammunition for the invitee and hence extended exposure for the brand supplying the event.

### **5.5.2 Intra-generational gap**

The speed of innovation and development driven by technology is widening the age gap between subsequent generations. Significant differences exist between different age groups spanning this generation, they share fewer commonalities (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:79). As they emerge from teens to early twenties, their reasoning skills improve, they become less self-centred, more confident about who they are (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:100) and rely less on others for reassurance. They are less inwardly focussed and more outward with respect to consideration of others and their place in society. They are more discerning about choosing to participate in selective groups. Different age clusters are also showing different preferences in their choice of communication platforms.

#### **Marketing implication: Know your who**

It is important to recognise the specific audience being targeted and select the appropriate communication approaches according to the segment.

## **5.6 MARKETING COMMUNICATION AND GENERATION Y**

When targeting Generation Y Yarrow and O'Donnell (2009:107) compare the relationship between marketers and Generation Y akin to that of parent and child. They advise marketers to maintain presence but not be obtrusive, to observe and be available when needed. The recommendation is for marketers to subtly integrate their products into their target's lives, for example, through product placement, sponsorships, competitions, user generated content, influencers. Brands need to work harder to attract Generation Y's attention and gain trust from this segment; this segment wants to be recognized and understood by marketers. This generation are starting to build relationships with brands and products that are likely to serve them in the future (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:xii). This

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aspect is particularly important because as this segment ages and becomes financially independent their spending and buying power also increases.

Customer insights are integral to the marketing communication content. Insights provide a meaningful multi-dimensional understanding of customers. They bridge the relationships between the idea of brand networks (referred to previously in Chapter 3), brand touchpoints and the brand's customers (Schultz & Schultz, 2004:171). In this context customer insights delve into the complexities of customers, seeking understanding of issues such as: their motivations, their lives, their desires, their needs, their wants, their work, and what is important to them, which brings into play relevant levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The customisation capabilities of electronic media allow marketers to leverage customer insights through the development of tailored communication (with relative ease) to different customers.

**Innovate!**

To attract Generation Y and give them a reason to return marketers need to be innovative, fresh, new, constantly revamping and reinventing (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:174). This generation demonstrates attributes of innovators (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010:183), which suggests marketers could benefit from applying an innovative approach to marketing communication directed at this segment by ensuring communication assets are fresh, new, revamped or reinvented. Kotler and Armstrong (2010:183) note that innovators are likely to respond to special promotions in the form of discounts, coupons and samples.

The act of continual change aligns with the postmodern consumer who is dynamic and has the option and capability to exercise change according to the situation they find themselves in (Procter & Kitchen, 2002:148), which potentially makes them unpredictable, from a marketer's point of view. The implication of a changing customer to marketers is that marketers are likely to be a step behind their customer. Marketing communication strategies that succeeded in the past will not necessarily deliver the same effects again, because of changes to the various variables. Operating on the edge of chaos at the cusp of stability and disorder provides a flexible approach for marketers to react in a chaotic complex environment.

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Generation Y are a testing ground for marketing to future generations; what works with them will work with others (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:xii). This group is communicating in new spaces, which will become the communication spaces of subsequent generations. For optimal return on investment organisations should communicate with consumers through the communication spaces of their choice, and it is suggested using a style that is in keeping with the medium.

Real-time communication has facilitated texting and abbreviation and arguably perpetuated the need for instant communication gratification. As noted earlier in this Chapter Generation Y is living real-time, firmly in the present, which means they are more concerned about what is happening and affecting them in the here and now. To benefit from this insight, marketers should consider deploying sense and respond tactics to tap into topical content.

## **5.7 CONCLUSION**

In general the sphere of communication media has been altered dramatically by new media entering this space, particularly digital media. They provide more opportunities and different ways of communicating between marketers and receivers. However, despite the accelerated development in this field, uptake of new media is not universal to all members of society.

Adoption is dependent on multiple variables, amongst them, lifestyle, lifestage, accessibility, understanding and affordability of new media and degree of resistance to change. In the process of learning people develop mental models that form frames of reference to speed up understanding, but if these points of references are not adjusted with new information they can act as barriers to change. Although selective process (Baran and Davis, 2003:146) preserves and protects individuals, these mental models are therefore likely to affect individuals' perspectives of new media. McLuhan (2006) refers to this coping mechanism on media, that people consider new media types through the lens of previous media types, so instead of considering new media as completely new or

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unique in their own right, there is a tendency for people to reference them to older, more familiar media forms.

The author considers that it is partly for these reasons that new media has found greater success with younger audiences, who have yet to establish unwavering mental models, and with reference to new media, experiment with its possibilities. These early adopters do not have pre-defined points of view or expectations of what media can do, they simply use it and explore its capabilities, treating each media as unique with its own intrinsic properties.

The above commentary acknowledges rapid developments in media as well as changes in society and consumer behaviour as initiator or consequence of this development.