

# “A Comparison of the Media Consumption Habits of Gen X, Gen Y and Gen Z”

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**Abstract — Purpose** – The current research seeks to throw light on the media consumption habits of different Generations X, Y and Z. There are many media and advertising platforms prevalent in today’s era. The study will also assess the media usage of the generational cohorts and their implications for individuals, firms and society. The study aims to focus on the impact that different media platforms have on Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z.

**Findings** – The study reveals that the effect on all the 3 generations differ significantly. Gen Z is the most finicky of all the generations about the products and services with most of them having smartphones in their hands with advanced technology and cheap internet connections. It is becoming difficult to woo the Gen Zers. The reasons are numerous which the marketers and the brands need to take care of. Generations X and Y on the other hand behave contrastingly and need to be handled in a different way.

**Originality/Value** – There hasn’t been a comparison between Gen X, Gen Y and Gen Z on the parameter of media consumption habits which leads to many answers and clears the confusion of the marketers, advertisers and the brands. The technology is changing every day and the change has to be adopted by the brands to catch the attention of the consumers. My study will try to decipher insights on the media consumption patterns of Gen X, Gen Y and Gen Z.

**Research Methodology:** The research is based on secondary data. The research is a descriptive research. The data has been obtained through articles, reports, research papers and already done surveys and questionnaires.

## **Keywords:**

Media consumption habits, Consumer buying behavior, Demographic Cohorts, Generation X, Generation Y, Generation Z, VoD, Online Streaming.

## **Introduction:**

Now-a-days, the marketers and brands are trying to map the consumers as according to the different generational cohorts. The demographic cohorts differ in their needs and demands basically due to the age and the advancements in technology. They exhibit contrasting characteristics as of the systematic differences in values, preferences and behavior that are stable over time (as opposed to maturational or other differences). The behavior of today’s generations is different to the way the previous generations behaved. Gen X includes people who are born between 1965-1979. Gen Y also known as the “Millennials” are those who are born between 1980-1994. Gen Z which is the post-millennial generation is the newest and trendiest. Gen Z is also known as the i Gen, Gen Tech, Gen Wii because of their technology dependence nature. Gen Z includes those born between 1995-2015. The consumers behave very differently as compared to the previous times when it comes to purchasing products and services. Buyers now can buy and sell products just on a click on their internet devices (mainly mobile); anywhere and anytime. The consumers can get the reviews and feedback of any product and service in just a matter of time. The brands are facing a fierce competition to sell their products. The media usage and thus the consumption rates differ when it comes to the different age groups. There are multiple media platforms and multiple screens available to the consumers today which have thus lead to multiple media exposures and multi-screening.

With the advent of economic growth, urbanization and advancement in technology and with realistic experiences like 3D, 4DX, IMAX coming into play; cinema advertising as an advertising medium has gained up momentum ever since. The VoD & online streaming facility which is slowly becoming the trend now and is easily accessible by the customers through the OTT platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hotstar, etc. has gained the popularity and has captured the attention of the audience. Thus we see the concept of multi-screening on a high and a reality now.

## **Research Problem:**

In today’s era; with advanced technology, rapid digitization, easy access to internet because of the decreased tariffs rates, offers customized as per the customers’ requirements; customers have various media/platforms of entertainment available. What can be done to capture the attention of the consumers amongst the fierce competition based on their contrasting characteristics and behavior?

## **Research Statement:**

Media consumption habits of Gen X, Gen Y and Gen Z can be significantly distinguished because of the age difference and the usage of technology. Understanding the media consumption patterns and styles and the buying behavior of the demographic cohorts.

## **Research Questions:**

1. What are the media consumption habits of the demographic cohorts Gen X, Gen Y and Gen Z?
2. How does the media utilization affect the buying behavior of the consumers?
3. Is the traditional media fading away and losing the power of luring the customers in the era of digitization?

## **Objectives:**

1. To learn the media consumption habits of different generations.
2. To learn the buying behavior of the different generations
3. To learn the impact of VoD and online streaming on the media usage by consumers.

## **Originality of the study:**

There is a limited comparative study on the consumer preferences with respect to varied media utilization habits

by different demographic cohorts. There is an intense competition among the brands and marketers to capture the attention of the customers when the customers have numerous choices of media available for entertainment. The study will give insights on the media consumption and expenditure by Gen X, Gen Y and Gen Z.

### **Need for this Research:**

With Gen X having more spending power than Gen Y & Z but Gen Y & Gen Z more internet savvy; consumers, in today's marketplace have the opportunity to choose between several available alternatives in almost every product category and behave differently when it comes to media consumption habits and purchasing decision. With increasing competition, changing consumer behavior and advancement of technology; the need for advertising is growing even more for the organizations to reach out to its customers in the best possible way and build the long term relations with them. Advertising today is an important item on the top management agenda. The foremost reason, of course, is the increase in size of advertising expenditures. In many cases, advertising has become the third, second, and in a few cases, the largest item in the corporate budget. Every business invests huge amount of time and money on its advertising but the problem arises when it fails to deliver result. Some of the reason for the failure could be that people never accessed or viewed the advertisement. It could not leave the impact it ought to. It was too costly for the results achieved or the message was not clear etc. Many of the problems arise because of the wrong selection of the medium of advertising. Every medium has its different communication style, reach, public acceptance, cost advantage, shelf life etc.

This study is very much required to understand how the right choice of media can actually help in getting maximum possible benefits from advertising also getting ideas about cinema advertising and its effectiveness. Every medium of advertising carries its own respective benefit, its own set of loyal audience and its own different chief characteristics. Thus, at some point of times companies have no available criteria, to judge, which medium would be most effective to solve their required purpose than budget as a consideration. Through my study, I would like to throw light on the dissimilar characteristics of the generations. I would try to bring out the importance of their varied media utilization which ultimately gives way to the contrasting behavior of the generations. These contrasting norms have to be taken into consideration very carefully by the brands when strategizing their marketing and advertising plans.

### **Discussion based on Literature Review:**

Now is the era of digitization. Marketing and advertisements through internet and online streaming of content is on fire. In such an era of digital boom; the number of smartphone users is growing by leaps and bounds; the reasons being increase in the number of smartphones because of the reduced prices of smartphones and internet data packages. The most affected is the Gen Z which took birth in this era and is growing with the growing technology. Consumers are going online. They get information online, watch content online, purchase products and services online anytime and anywhere as per their convenience and comfort. The Indian digital audience is increasing and there has been a staggering growth of online subscriptions of OTT media service providers. Social media penetration has been increasing at a lightning speed because of easy availability of smartphones because of the numerous sellers of smartphones and cheaper internet tariffs. With a variety of

forms of marketing prevalent in the market; the marketer is in a dilemma as to which form of marketing and advertising to choose in this marketing clutter. Traditional marketing

which includes television and magazines are now fading away and the newer forms of marketing like social media marketing, search engine marketing, email marketing are the emerging trends.

### **Research Methodology:**

It's a descriptive research and the source of information is secondary (articles, papers, various websites).

### **Results and Findings:**

Gen Xers enjoy the balanced usage of traditional and digital media with a good spending power. The Gen Y (Millennials) is more digitally savvy and relies very much on smartphones. Gen Zers which are the youngest of all have less spending power as compared to the others but now they have started to enter into the organizations and have started earning. 98% of the Gen Zers own smartphones and heavily bank on the technology and internet. In 2001, there were approximately seven million Internet users in India. This number has grown by 25 times in the last 12 years at a compounded rate of over 30 per cent year on year. Today, 40 million Indians are online every day, spending 40-45 hours over the Internet per month. India is the world's second-largest internet market. The number of smartphone users is forecast to grow from 2.1 billion in 2016 to around 2.5 billion in 2019, with smartphone penetration rates increasing as well. The online streaming is cutting off the viewers from the broadcast media, that is, the television and cable (According to Phil Contrino, director of media and research at NATO). India is the third largest market after US and Brazil in terms of the number of subscribers of Netflix with its market share growing more rapidly than either of the other two countries. Marketers do not understand the value of connecting and they have been focusing on "collecting" instead of "connecting. This has been a persistent problem with the marketers and advertisers since ages. We can very well compare Convenience and Experience. While sitting back at home and looking at the convenience, people opt for the VoD and thus go for online streaming. If we talk about the Movie theaters, these big auditoriums with very large screens, Dolby Digital sound system and a very conducive environment bring out the experience which streaming cannot. The attention of the viewers is otherwise interrupted and divided while streaming and watching movies on their small screens such as televisions, laptops, tablets, mobile phones. The attention of the audience gets pulled by the sound and color of the movies being exhibited on the 3-story - larger than life screens. One does not feel the same when he/she is sitting on the couch at one's home. This uninterrupted and tension free and relaxed environment is what consumers crave for in their busy schedules. Viewers belonging to the Y&Z generation; (the millennials) are 50% more likely to claim movies as a passion. They are also most likely to buy tickets ahead of time and nearly 90% aim to arrive at the theater early (According to National CineMedia).

### **Contribution to the body of knowledge:**

This study will definitely benefit the businesses and brands in deciding the tactics and strategies to capture the attention of the different demographic cohorts based on the contrasting behavior they present.

The study will also help advertising agencies, academicians and students pursuing marketing and advertising as their specializations.

### Scope of future Research:

The different generations manifest varied traits and buying behavior. The technology has advanced to a great extent and will continuously progress. Looking at the facts and figures of the previous researches and articles; one can get more information about the pattern and flow of the customers' decision about a particular product to purchase. More hidden factors and variables can be taken into consideration for further studies to get more accurate and precise information. Study can be done on what strategies and moves the brands should take to retain the consumers. This can help the advertisers and marketers to plan out their promotional and marketing strategies.

### Conclusion:

The market structure has been ever-changing. The market environment is much different than what it was in previous times. The brands have to decide on how to break through the advertising clutter and got to decide on to which medium/media to choose and capture the attention of the customers for an optimum ROI benefitting both the businesses and the society. The number of smartphones is increasing and the internet charges are decreasing which is giving way to increasing number of consumers being online and increased social media utilization. Reports and studies give evidences that the print media and the broadcast media are fading away and losing their charm. The television is still standing strong because of the generations X and Y. But Gen Z is drifting away from the traditional media mainly because of the strong penetration of the smartphones and internet and thus the social media platform. But the broadcast media and the print media are not dying as of now and are not under the threat. Therefore, I can conclude my study stating that different demographic cohorts are receptive to the unlike media and advertisements through them in contrasting ways because of varied factors; the factors being age, technology, spending power, psychographic, etc. The brands need to come up with unique marketing strategies and make the use of media based on the contrasting characteristics to pull customers belonging to different generations.

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