

Generational inclusivity: a brand priority

A recent Salesforce State of Marketing survey found that while South African marketers are optimistic about the future, 66% believe that challenges are afoot, primarily due to constantly shifting customer expectations.



Source: © dolgachov [123rf](#)

To succeed, marketers will have to adapt their strategies to meet these changing expectations.

This means realising that no two customers are the same. By recognising the distinct nature of each audience, marketers will understand that what works with one group may not resonate with another.

Businesses may see the value of engaging with the younger generation's increased purchasing power, but they should avoid focusing their marketing only to this demographic, as older generations such as Generation X and Baby Boomers continue to hold considerable purchasing power.

Instead brands need to do is adopt a multigenerational approach that shows an understanding of the importance of each generation as a potential customer and then markets to their unique needs.

Data: the key to inclusivity

For Reagan Kok, CEO at Hoorah Digital, generational inclusivity needs to be a marketing priority for all brands in 2022.

“We know that the pandemic shifted consumer behaviour in many ways, but brands need to view this as a great opportunity.”

He proposes that the best way to strategically leverage that opportunity is to take the guesswork out of digital marketing.

“The right data holds the key to better understanding preferences, trends, demographic shifts and more,” says Kok.

“Data allows for the personalisation of marketing messages to meet not just the needs of a generational grouping, but of the individual. Rather than speculating about what a consumer needs or wants, or relying on the creative director’s ‘intuition’, data provides measurable insights into actual customer behaviour and preferences,” he explains.

A relevant and sophisticated data capability is central to a brand’s success in the marketing space.

“It is, however, critical that data is responsibly collected and applied with integrity and the highest regard for data privacy regulations,” adds Kok.

Tailor your communication

Good old-fashioned marketing means that there is no ‘1 size fits all’ approach and you must tailor, not only your product offering, but also your communication style.

“Successful marketing is about gathering as much information as possible about your customers in order to segment them into relevant target groups based on variables such as age, generation, life stage and purchasing power,” explains Ross Sibbald, commercial director at Striata South Africa.

Email, he says, has been widely recognised and acknowledged as a channel.

“Email marketing continues to be the most successful medium for communicating a product offering targeted to each customer category, from Millennials to Gen X and Baby Boomers,” notes Sibbald.

The fundamentals of marketing

The same characteristics that are being used to define Gen Z were used to describe Gen Y, and before them it was Gen X, and so on, as we progress through the ages of marketing.

“Defining a target audience by the class of generation that they fit into is to say that everyone in that generation thinks, acts and enjoys all of the same things, all of the time and if that’s true for Gen Z then it must be true for every other generation as well.

“It’s mass marketing and it’s been around for about as long as marketing has existed,” says Pieter Geyser, head of digital and marketing at Irvine Partners.

“While there is nothing wrong with mass marketing - it certainly works for some brands - a clearly defined target audience requires greater segmentation than a person’s year of birth,” he explains.