

Generation Z Demanding a Transformation to Purposeful Marketing and Management

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Abstract

In 2019, Generation Z (Gen Z) became the largest consumer segment worldwide comprising 32 percent of the world's population. Born between 1997 and 2012, the oldest Gen Zers have graduated college and joined the workforce, while the majority of this cohort are students in college, high school, middle school and elementary school. The most culturally diverse generation, according to Pew Research, nearly half (48%) of American Gen Zers are ethnic minorities.

Gen Z is also known as the “purpose generation.” The pandemic and Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 has expedited Gen Z's demand that employers/management and marketers demonstrate purposeful communication and action. Gen Z is insisting that marketers and management must prioritize purpose over promotion and profits. In a nationwide online survey of Generation Z by Mark Beal in December 2019, 36 percent of Generation Z said that a corporate culture of diversity and inclusion is the most important quality they are seeking in future employer management, more than competitive salary and competitive benefits.

Digital natives, tech-smart, entrepreneurial-spirited, experience-craving, community-minded, purpose-driven and socially conscious, Gen Z consumes news, information, content and communication unlike any generation. According to an August 2019 national survey of Gen Zers, 62 percent of this cohort get their news and information from Instagram followed by Twitter (50%), YouTube (45%), SnapChat (41%) and news apps (31%). Gen Z does not read newspapers or watch traditional television including the evening news.

Whether media, the workplace or on the receiving end of marketing communication via a YouTube video or sponsored Instagram post, Gen Z is a discerning consumer. Stephanie Michael, a 2019 graduate of Montclair State University and an entry-level public relations executive commented, “Brands and companies should be on notice as Gen Z will conduct extensive, in-depth research before we make a decision. We will even take the time to review their past posts, tweets and communication to learn if they are contradicting themselves in trying market or promote a product or service.