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## "Generational Marketing Myths"

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*"They have trouble making decisions. They would rather hike in the Himalayas than climb a corporate ladder. They have few heroes, no anthems, no style to call their own. They crave entertainment, but their attention span is as short as one zap of a TV dial..."*

Gen Z or Millennials? Actually, that's the opening from a [1990 TIME](#) article about the "twentysomethings" of the day, many of whom would soon fall under a catchier demographic label: Generation X.

Swap out a few details, and it's easy to see how history repeats. Younger people, we're told, crave authenticity (as opposed to older people, who apparently valued mendacity?) They want to buy from companies that share their values. They're pessimistic about the future they've inherited, but engage idealistically with their communities. They're putting off marriage and children and are turned off by traditional career paths and 80-hour work weeks (did anyone ever like those?) They value diverse cultural experiences over materialism. And so on. If you've been around long enough, it all sounds familiar.

Since at least [the time of Aristotle](#), each generation is convinced the ones that follow it can be summed up in a few pithy rules. But can they? Let's take a look at a few myths around generational marketing:

### "Attention spans shorter than a goldfish."

The idea of an 8- or 9-second attention span [doesn't seem to be true](#) of humans — or goldfish, for that matter. Attention is a tricky thing to measure, and is highly situational. The healthy [#BookTok](#) community is a sign that [long-form content is still popular](#) with the short-video crowd — if it catches their interest.

The grain of truth to the goldfish myth is that Gen Z are used to having a seemingly constant deluge of content (and ads) competing for their attention and clicks. So they're used to wading through it and deciding quickly what's worth a deeper dive. Marketers should take note: younger audiences grew up with the "Skip Ad" button and they're not afraid to use it.

### "Millennials have all the purchasing power now."

While Millennials are catching up to or surpassing Gen X in spending, and now represent a larger share of Canada's population than Boomers, it's still the Boomers who have [the most to spend](#) by far. Don't ignore the older demographics if your brand is of interest to them.

Still, we've moved past the days of avocado-toast-munching [Millennials "killing" everything](#) by not being able to afford it — the demographic of people born between 1981 and 1996 is now [the largest group of home buyers](#) in the U.S.

### "Born with smartphones in their hands."

The idea of "digital natives" with an innate affinity for technology, glued to their phones all day, [may be a myth](#). For example, many Gen Z folks who went to school via Zoom during the COVID pandemic are tired of "virtual" everything and want more real, in-person experiences. And some are [pulling back from always-on connectivity and social media](#). Don't assume that flashy tech will always win their business.

All of that is not to say there aren't differences between these generational divides. But some of them are simply a consequence of being at different stages of life. Of course people in their thirties and forties are thinking more about buying homes than people in their late teens or early twenties. Of course Millennials respond to nostalgia (just as Gen X and Boomers do) more than Gen Z does — they've got more years to be nostalgic for!

It's tempting to make sweeping generalizations about everyone born in a span of 20 or so years. It'd certainly make our jobs easier if they were true. But marketing is, and always has been, more complicated than that. You need to know your customer, meet them where they are, and understand their journey to making a purchase.

We'll see you back here in a few years, with an article about marketing to "Gen Alpha" (spoiler: they want authenticity.)

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