Chapter 17
The Net Generation

Louis Leung
Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China

Cindy Pei Zheng
Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China

ABSTRACT

This article reviewed Net Generation attributes and examined how these attributes are linked to cyber behavior. Net Geners are global citizens and emotionally open. They believe deeply that they have rights and freedom to information and learning. Being technologically savvy, they are natural collaborators in school projects, entertainment, and work. Net Geners are also prosumers, which means that aside from being frequent consumers, they can co-produce, and co-create contents, products, and services with interested parties. The ability to customize and personalize a product or an application is important to the Net Generation. Net Geners expect speed and instant gratifications in everything they do and are good at multitasking. The Net Generation is impatient, and Net Geners think that e-mails are too slow, as they are asynchronous. How these attributes are linked to Net Geners' learning, entertainment, and social relationships is discussed.

INTRODUCTION

The new digital media are at the heart of a culture and a grown-digital-generation that, in profound and fundamental ways, learns, works, plays, communicates, shops, and creates communities very differently than their parents did (Livingstone, 2002; Tapscott, 1998, 2009). This grown-digital-generation, the group following on the heels of Generation X, is often referred to as the Net Generation. In 2011, this generation comprises adolescents and young adults between the ages of 14 and 34. In many ways, this generation feels more comfortable with computers than its parents do, so its members are more likely to be online consumers and users of social media such as Facebook, instant messengers (IM), blogs, and Twitter. Bombarded with information and being media savvy, this generation has grown up understanding the digital economy. More than any previous generation, this group is conversant with the communications revolution that is trans-

forming business, education, health care, social relations, entertainment, government, and every other institution (Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007).

Previous research has estimated that this group represents 27 percent of the population of the United States (Tapscott, 2009), making it a consumer group that is potentially larger than that of the Baby Boomers. Net Geners are more numerous, more affluent, better educated, and more ethnically diverse than any other generation (Howe & Strauss, 2000). As the Internet is the medium of choice for the Net Geners, a better grasp on how the characteristics of this cohort are linked to their Internet behavior would help marketers and designers understand how to effectively use the medium. This article examines the Net Generation's attributes and the relationships between these attributes and their cyber behaviors, especially in learning, entertainment, and social relationships.

OVERVIEW

One of the pioneers who proposed the concept of the Net Generation was Don Tapscott. In his book, *Growing up Digital: The Rise of the Net Generation* (1998), Tapscott characterized different generation cohorts primarily as Baby Boomer, Baby Bust, Echo Boomer, and the Net Generation (or sometimes called the Y Generation). A Baby Boomer is anyone born between 1946 and 1964, after the end of the Second World War, when the after-war economy was thriving once again. The Baby Boomers, representing 23 percent of the U.S. population, were the first generation raised with television.

Following the boom, birth rates fell dramatically, with 15 percent fewer babies born in the next 10 years (Tapscott, 1998). These babies were named "Baby Bust" or Generation X (i.e., those born between 1965 and 1976); the "X" stands for the feeling of being excluded from society and less competitive in the job market. Given their media diet, Gen Xers are highly media-centered and regularly consume radio, TV, film, and the Internet. Now in their thirties and forties, and representing 15 percent of the population, the experiences of Generation X are good indicators of how the future generation will master the digital universe.

Next came the echo of the Baby Boom, or the Echo Boomer. Tapscott named this generation according to its defining characteristics, because, according to him, naming this generation according to the timeline, such as Millennials or Generation Y, diminished its importance in the larger scheme of things. Therefore, the term "Net Generation" (those born between 1977 and 1997) is the one that most precisely described this generation, as it was the first generation bathed in bits. The Net Generation differs from the boomers in various respects, like entertainment, study, consumption, work, and family values (Djamasbi, Siegel, & Tullis, 2010). It was tagged as a generation because its members grew up with the Internet; thus, they came to view such technology as part of their lives.

Finally, anyone born between January 1998 and the present, Tapscott called "Generation Next" or Generation Z. These are the digital children under 14 years of age, who represent 13.4 percent of the U.S. population. Like the Net Generation, Gen Zers are intensely technologically literate and heavily embedded in social media in everything they do (Leung, 2010; Leung & Lee, 2011).

A second pioneer in the study of the Net Generation is Sandra Calvert, the Chair and Professor of the Department of Psychology at Georgetown University and the Director of the Children's Digital Media Center funded by National Science Foundation in the United States. Her book, *Children's Journeys through the Information Age* (1999), addressed many of the issues surrounding our culture's continuing immersion in technology, looking particularly at how the emerging information technologies influence the Net Generation. Calvert raised questions about the effects

Related Content

Effect of Mass Media on Body Image and Self-Esteem of Teenage Girls
Vandana Shuklaand Sangita Srivastava (2022). *International Journal of Cyber Behavior, Psychology and Learning (pp. 1-14).*
www.irma-international.org/article/effect-of-mass-media-on-body-image-and-self-esteem-of-teenage-girls/298688

Student ICT Use Motives: Scale Construction and Relationship With Student Alienation
Wahid Ahmad Darand Kounsar Jan (2021). *International Journal of Cyber Behavior, Psychology and Learning (pp. 34-53).*
www.irma-international.org/article/student-ict-use-motives/288498

An Architecture Paradigm for Providing Cloud Services in School Labs Based on Open Source Software to Enhance ICT in Education
Yannis Siahos, Iasonas Papanagiotou, Alkis Georgopoulos, Fotis Tsamisand Ioannis Papaioannou (2012). *International Journal of Cyber Ethics in Education (pp. 44-57).*
www.irma-international.org/article/architecture-paradigm-providing-cloud-services/68385

Trolling and Victims' Perception of Trolling: A Thematic Analysis
Shravani Minesh Kapseand Sandhya Gupta (2023). *Cyberfeminism and Gender Violence in Social Media (pp. 49-70).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/trolling-and-victims-perception-of-trolling/331897

A Comprehensive Synthesis of Theories of Mobile Shopping Adoption and Narrative Review
Rajat Gera, Priyanka Chadhaand Shirin Alavi (2021). *International Journal of Cyber Behavior, Psychology and Learning (pp. 52-74).*
www.irma-international.org/article/a-comprehensive-synthesis-of-theories-of-mobile-shopping-adoption-and-narrative-review/275828