

Generation C - It's about connectivity and community rather than age

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Meet Mr or Ms Connected. Every day, they check Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn multiple times; watch at least an hour of streamed video and listen to the same amount of streamed music; spend four hours on email; send 50-plus WhatsApp messages; and listen to radio (including online radio) for two hours. During a 12-hour media day, they might spend 30 minutes or less watching traditional broadcast TV.



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From the picture of I have painted, many people will picture a student, perhaps, or an ambitious 20-something professional. But the truth is that Mr Connected or Ms Connected are just as likely to be Generation Xers or even baby boomers as they are to be millennials (Generation Y) or digital natives (Generation Z).

Digital technology has transcended age barriers, with tech-savvy people across age groups relishing new ways to connect with others and engage with content and services. As members of the world's largest cities – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube – Generation C comprises early adopters from whom the mobile phone has become an extension of their bodies.

Mobile and urban

Generation C is a mobile and urban generation, so it's not surprising to find many members among the 66% of South Africans who live in cities. Falling prices of mobile connectivity and the growing urbanisation of South Africa are the major factors behind the rise of Generation C. The smartphone is its interface of choice—78% of all web pages served in South Africa are browsed from a mobile device.

What this picture means is that it's time for marketers to leave behind many of their old assumptions about who their digital customers are—millennials are so 2015. Generation C is a large market segment, one that loves engaging using the latest technology, which has disposable income, and eagerly blazes a trail that other consumers will follow.

Speaking to this segment is a great way to get a network effect that goes beyond the millennials and create a brand's most passionate advocates. We can already see its influence through the rise of new digital brands such as Netflix, Uber, Takealot, Joox and others. Generation C isn't just blurring the lines between age groups, but also between industries, which is why we're seeing banks/ retailers offer broadband services and cellular operators moving into mobile money.

Keeping connected customers coming back

The challenge that brands face is to deliver the right engagements to keep the connected customer coming back—a consumer who rejects the traditional hard sales approach and who expects a seamless, personalised on-demand experience from every brand. Digital customers know and love brands (e.g. Amazon, Uber and Airbnb) that delivers an unrivalled customer experience in the digital world, including user interface, responsive websites/apps, relevant content and real-time social media responses.

The importance of content

People won't engage with your brand in the digital environment without interesting content. According to Altimeter Group, 57% of marketers in a global survey said custom content is their top priority. The Custom Content Council, meanwhile, says that 67% of consumers are more likely to buy on custom content.

Getting content right is about four more Cs:

Creation: Create content relevant to your brand that is appealing and unique.

Curation: Sorting your content to accommodate your target audience and to make it personalised and relevant to your audience.

Connection: Positioning your content to ensure it reaches this target audience.

Community: Once you reach your audience, allow it to engage share, in turn creating a community and brand loyalty.

Succeeding with content today is about integrated strategies that span multiple channels and touchpoints. For example, a campaign for a new car could leverage radio as a loudhailer, Facebook as a funnel and search as an amplifier. This is a multidisciplinary effort that draws together analytics skills, content creation, loyalty programmes, and user interface design.

Getting the marriage of data and content right to engage Generation communities is challenging, but it will reward brands through increased customer loyalty in an important market segment. It's worth mastering Generation C today because every customer in the future will be a connected consumer who grew up with digital technology.

ABOUT WERNER LINDEMANN

Werner leads Mediarmark, South Africa's leading integrated, multichannel media sales house, as it continues its journey to create a converged sales capability that can help customers leverage mobile, video and content marketing, in combination with its exceptional traditional platforms...

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