Chapter 12

Characteristics of Millennials and Technology Adoption in the Digital Age

Imad Yasir Nawaz
Northumbria University, London, UK

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the attitude and behaviour of Millennials towards digital platforms. Millennial or Generation Y is the much talked about generation among business circles at the moment, and considering their ways of thinking, behaving, and preferences, organisations are altering their practices as they are the active workforce at the moment. In this chapter, the authors have tried to explore various aspects of Millennial life, preferences, practices, and attitudes including their behavior towards work practices, corporate social responsibility, cultural variations, education, buying patterns and technology, technological devices, and social/digital platforms. Millennial consumers’ behaviours are affected by many personal factors such as gender identity, income level, education, geography, political affiliations, and religion and non-personal factors, such as organisational effort, brand, technological factors, social pressures, and so on.

INTRODUCTION

The Consumer behaviour theories and models attempt to explain the consumer behaviour process, stages and relevant factors that influence the consumer decision process.

However, some studies indicate that the currently available consumer behaviour models are incomplete or are not able to address the needs of a new generation of consumers – the millennials. In 2016, there were around 1.8 billion Millennials worldwide (out of 7.4 billion people), and the estimation indicates that by 2020 around half of the world’s workforce will be of Millennials and a buying power of $1000 billion (Newman, Kramer, & Blanchard, 2016).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-0131-3.ch012
Millennials receive information via ICT channel and have different lifestyles and value systems, hence the way the millennials search, prefer, chose, shop or use products or services are quite different than the previous generations (Cimperman, et al., 2018). Many organizations have responded to the needs of generation Y, but at the same time, there are organisations who are still using their traditional approaches to attract millennials which are proving ineffective. This chapter focuses on the consumer decision process and factor influence millennials’ behaviours with a special focus on their online or digital platform usage related behaviours.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Before discussing the preferences of Millennials or Generation Y consumers, it is worth exploring who Millennials are and what sort of key characteristics they possess which make them distinguished from the older generations.

Characteristics of Millennials

As per the Generational theory (Karl Mannheim, 1959 cited by O’Connor, 2016), a generation becomes different from another generations due to some very significant historical and social context (e.g. world war, technical revolutions, big social changes) in which the individuals were raised. This distinctive generation can be named as new generations due to their different characteristics, values & norms, etc. Such a generation’s ‘time - boundaries’ (period) are formed when some new significant historical and social events occur that would have influenced and changed their values, norms, attitudes, behaviour and the life experiences (as different from other generations) of those people born during and after those significant events. For example generation of baby boomers was born during the period the World War II, generations X was formed post the TV and post-world war industrial growth, Generation y (Millenials) during the period of ‘internet, mobile and ICT revolutions’. Thus each generation is unique and different from other generations due to different and significant life events and experiences, so the people born in different generations have different values, attitudes, traits and frames of reference and decision making processes (O’connor, 2016).

In compliance with the definition of Goffman (2017) that generations offer an opportunity to assess different groups of the population through their position in the work/life cycle, whether they are young adults, middle-aged or retired group of people born at different times. Thus, study of generations provides researchers with valuable information to analyse and understand visual changes in age-related groups’ views, behaviours and characteristics over time, by looking at various indicators such as use of global technology, economic and social change, ageing process that shape the views of people (Blowfield & Murray, 2014).

There are no definitive birth Year delimitations of this generation as various authors claim that the Millennials were born between 1980 and 1996, or from the 1980s to year 2000s as depicted in Figure 1 (Porral, et al., 2017). There is much contradictory age specification of Millennials but most of the definitions situate Millennials as a group of people in the age typically placed between 23-38 years old, born between 1980 to 1996 (See Figure 1) (Pew Research Centre, 2019).