

## **How surrogate marketing influences brand perception of generation Z**

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### **Abstract**

The research paper is aimed at studying the influence of surrogate marketing on the generation Z. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods are used in this process. However, quantitative research forms the core of data that reveals the ultimate outcome of this particular research process. Literature Review was conducted to draw the proper themes and lay it out for the progression of the research. The quantitative part of the research process is based on the questions that are posed to the participants of the research process. The participants are chosen from the population of youngsters who are likely to be influenced more by the surrogate marketing techniques than the average population.

### **1. Introduction**

The brands must connect with customers and potential customers. They always have to find a way to take the extra step. It would lead to more customers being attracted to the brand itself. It would also lead to a better level of reputation for the brand. Various companies with a variety of products have to make sure that they come up with something new to make themselves visible to potential customers. However, the same opportunity does not exist for all of the brands and other products. Numerous products are banned from being promoted to the target audience. In society, there is an understanding that some of the products have a negative effect on the customers, specially selected customers. Products like alcohol for consumption, cigarettes and other elements that are harmful to the psyche and the body of people. Also, these products have a social stigma attached to them and that is the reason they are barred from promotion. There is a technique called surrogate marketing where they mention other products while advertising the brand and thus stay engaged and connected to the target audience.

### **2. Research Questions**

The **research aims** to find out how surrogate marketing, a different type of marketing technique, influences the minds of the generation Z people and how it becomes popular among the generation.

The **objectives of the research** are to study how media exposure and cultural exposure is influential on the psyche of the masses, and especially the younger generation. It is also important to know the techniques that are used by the brands to sell the products and to throw knowledge on how the attraction among the masses spread.

The research questions are as follows:

1. Is surrogate marketing making an obvious difference to the psyche of the generation Z?
2. What are the reasons that make the Generation attracted to the elements and features that these products have to offer?
3. Are prohibited substances that have a social stigma a source of attraction among the generation Z?

### **3. Review of Literature**

Its important for any brand to make a pitch of the product that they are selling in the market. Let us take the example of a car. Before the product is out in the market, there is a high level of knowledge sharing about the characteristics of the product. Many people would be interested in the transition properties of the product (Schuster Bruce, Brhlikova, Heath and McGettigan, p. 2873, 2019). They would be eager to get into a conversation about the properties with the other people who also

share an interest in the new car model. It is the job of the brand to make sure that they know about these conversations and the trends that emerge from these conversations. Once they gain a level of knowledge, they start to spread the word through their promotion techniques about the properties of the car that would be unique and helpful for the targeted customers (Kraus et al, p. 575, 2019). This is exactly how the brands and the personnel in the brands communicate with potential customers. In the new day and age, the trends in the conversations and discussions about the products would be much more readily available for the owners of the brands to pontificate. They would now have a much better idea about what the general public think about the new product that they are about to launch (Kemp and Prasad, p. 134, 2017). Even if the specifications of the product have already been decided and the product manufacturing has already commenced, there is a way that the brand managers and the experts of the market could manipulate the minds of the people. They can generate curiosity among the audience through the influence they yield in the market. The information that they would share from that point on would include the discussion about the features that the people are already talking about. This is the way the brand keeps the crowd engaged, when there is a scope to include everything about the product and there is no compulsion in keeping anything hidden from the customers, the brand personnel would have a wild open field in which they can interact with the target audience and make more people interested about the prospect of launch of a product (Duffett, p. 5075, 2020). The same people who are enthusiastic about the launch of a product would also be interested in the launch of the very next product. This way, the brand gains new followers and makes sure that the humdrum about their products is kept alive in the audience by one source or another.

However, in the case of surrogate marketing, the same principles do not at all apply. Surrogate marketing concerns mainly the brands that sell products on whom there is a public rule of no promotion. Mostly, the rule is in place because there is a high chance the product can cause the society to be aggrieved in some way or another (Priporas, Stylos and Fotiadis, p. 377, 2017).

Alcohol is a substance that people often are known to use while at the same time showing behavior that is highly problematic. It can lead to situations where people are shown to display a feat of anger and frustration and violent behaviors. It leads to accidents in the public on many occasions. Whenever there is an accident, the police keep a check on whether the driver had consumed alcohol before getting behind the vehicle. It is by law a crime to drive while having alcohol traces in the body (Iványi and Bíró-Szigeti, p. 52, 2019). Therefore, it is reasonable that the social stigma attached with this product is widespread. Even though by tradition in many societies, alcohol consumption is considered to be something completely natural, the weight of something like physical violence or accidents that may cause the death of an unknown person is too large (Duffett, 2017). Therefore, it is reasonable that alcohol consumption is stigmatized in the society and there is a ban on promoting the substance in the media. Along with alcohol,

cigarettes are also barred from media promotion. The substance has the potential to cause lung cancer among the users and other types of diseases. Therefore, it is not ideal to give the idea to the audience through the media that this substance can cause them benefit. They are actually causing them a lot of harm (Baran and Popescu, p. 7, 2016). So, there is a bar on these types of substances in the market and the society in general is very strict on such issues.

One of the areas that need to be pondered is the way the generation Z perceives the world. In a world where consumption has taken over, the people are always bombarded with the thought process that using some new substance would be really beneficial for them. It is a fact that people buy things for their personal use (Loveland, p. 35, 2017). It is also a fact that many people buy items just to be in the trend of the modern society. They would not like to fall back in the world of trends. For the generation Z, this is more prominent because these people are newly introduced into the world of adults. They do not have the clearest of ideas of what can be good for them or what can be harmful (Artemova, 2017). It is a fact that these people are eager to try new things in life that would make them much more cheerful and provide them with a lot of instant pleasure. The terms instant pleasures and guilty pleasure are much more prominent today than what it used to be a few years ago. For this generation of young breed of people, it is very important to show to the world that they are grown-ups. It is a matter of psychology when they feel that they need to portray a version of themselves which gives them the false idea of being adults. These people have been through childhood and for them it finally feels like the time where they can show to the world that they have finally arrived. For these people, an object that is generally thought of being a stigma in the society is highly sought after. Their thought process surrounding the matter comprises of how much of the substances they can consume and when would they do so (Francis and Hoefel, 2018). Among the circles of these people, it is a fact that the ones who are left behind in consuming these substances would have to face a lot of

peer pressure. The person would not be considered as a true member of the group if he fails to take part in these activities. For these people, a colorful life is what they want for themselves. The promotion techniques through surrogate marketing needs to show a colorful world which would attract these people more and more towards the brands. A world which is highly trendy and highly attractive to the inexperienced eyes is what attracts these people from Generation Z (Bäcklund and Martin, 2019). What they need is the opportunity to experience the substances and feel like an adult. What the brands need is to market a world that acts like a platform to these people from which they would feel safe and within the thick of things.

#### **4. Research Design**

##### **Research Approach**

The research has to flow in a particular direction in order to yield the results that the researcher is aiming at. The researcher has to decide on the aspects of the research and then only can he proceed with the research process. Here are the types of approaches and the direction that was ultimately chosen for this particular research project:

- **Descriptive Study:** A descriptive study is the one where the researcher describes the elements of the research project and also lays out the inference that is derived through the research process in a descriptive manner. It is important to note that the descriptive studies in research mostly has to do with the facts of the research. The facts can be the available information that is collected through the review of literature. The facts can also be derived from the research activity that is orchestrated by the researcher. It is important to note that the researcher should not cherry pick the facts to suit a particular opinion or a particular agenda (Holmes Jr et al, p. 139, 2018). If the same is done by the researcher, the research project would be deemed to be unethical and the findings in the research would not be valid for the other researches of the same topic to refer to in future projects.
- **Explanatory Study:** In this type of research approach, the idea is to make sure that the relationships between the variables of the research and the roles that the same variables has to play within the research is properly explained. The researcher needs to make sure that proper handling of the variable sand the issues that are connected to the topic of the research are also carried out (Seifzadeh and Rowe, 2019). These details form the nitty gritty of the research and it is important from the perspective of the researcher to make sure that the plan for the research project is properly laid out.

Out of these two research approaches that are explained above, explanatory research approach was selected for this particular research process. The cases behind selecting this approach over the other is the fact that in the study of the taste and activities of Generation Z, it is important to lay down the causes that are behind the particular behavior of the research elements. Here, the approach of the researcher as an investigator of facts would prove to be useful because the events that would be detected in the process of the research would need to be assessed properly (Paulus- Rohmer, Schatton and Bauernhansl, p. 10, 2016). It is critical to lay out the causes and the effects of the same events and the researcher has to professionally be involved in finding out about the same. The investigation would then proceed to establishing the relationships between the variables that are identified in the research process. The researcher needs to identify the facts and information of the research with proper scrutiny.

##### **Ethics and Validity**

In any research, it is important to have an ethical overview. The progress of the research can flow in the wrong direction from nothing if the ethical overview of the research is not considered. The ethical consideration in this particular type of research is first of all that the facts of pieces of literature can be interpreted in a wrong manner. It is up to the researcher to interpret the same facts and present them within the research paper in order to further proceed in the research process (Newton and Burgess, p. 37, 2016). An unethical approach in this particular junction of the research would be choosing pieces of literature that do not provide the wholesome information required for the research project. In that particular case, the research projected would not be considered as valid and for further references, it cannot be used by another researcher. Another function that can be performed in a wrong way in the research process is that the research activity that forms the core of the data collection should not be manipulate by the researcher. There is a scope in this process that would ultimately provide a big advantage to the researcher if the data is manipulated. If that happens in this case, the research again would not a valid study in the field.

## 5. Data Analysis

The following questions were presented to the consumers in the market. The sample of the research participation was selected by the researcher from the researchers and experts in the field of study of trends and social affairs. Also, among the participants of the research process are young people aged below 21 who fall within the category of generation Z (White, 2019). These

people were selected in the research process based on their ability to clarify their decision making in consumption. It was also noted that the participants would be selected from the population that has a significantly better chance of being a frequent consumer and follower of trends than the average population of the same group. It was also noted that the participants would be more likely to consume substances that are barred from promotion in the media. The questions posed to the participants are as follows

1. Have you frequently visited advertisements regarding the materials that are not supposed to be advertised online?
2. Have you used the same products on more than one occasion?
3. What do you like about the promotion of the surrogate advertisements?
4. Do you feel that the presence of surrogate advertisements is unethical on part of the brands?
5. Have you been barred by any elder in the family regarding the use of the materials in recent times?
6. Do you think it is correct that these substances are barred by the media from being promoted?
7. Do you feel there is a chance that the same product would be promoted through social media without having to surrogate?
8. What are the aspects about your generation that you feel are attracting you to these barred substances?
9. Do you think you would feel different about the same products after you reach a certain age?
10. Do you think you would have developed the same habits of consumption if you did not have the exposure to media you have right now?

The majority of the people belonging to the generation Z do not feel it is unethical to advertise about the products that are barred from media exposure in a surrogate way. They feel that it is harsh that the products that are available for sell and purchase in the market do not have the right to advertise. As much as 89% of the population in the sample believe that it is perfectly ethical to advertise or promote the products in the way they are promoted. Many of the sample population feel that the fact that these products are not promoted in the media is harsh on the product and the brands themselves. More than 55% of the population feel this way. This shows that the generation Z is highly influenced by the availability of surrogate marketing (Chaney, Touzani and Ben Slimane, 2017). The fact that it provides the brand with some level of exposure in the media helps the generation of people to connect to the brand and the products. They feel that if there is a connection that is developing through the surrogate marketing exercises, the effect of engaging with the masses is already achieved by the brand. According to the analysis of the answers of the population, the colorfulness and the witticism portrayed by the brands are factors that lead them to make the target audience more engaged. It is also revealed through the analysis conducted in the research that the tendencies of the generation Z are some of the main factors that drive them to consume the barred substances (Desai and Lele, p. 807, 2017). The fact that it is viewed as unethical and immoral to a certain extent in the society remains one of the main reasons the generation Z are attracted to the substances and are prone to using them even if they cause bad health.

## 6. Conclusion

Surrogate marketing is one of techniques that are unique and special for the professionals. It gives them an opportunity to be more creative and wittier about the business. Surrogate marketing has been effective in engaging with the audience to a large level. This marketing technique is mostly used for substances such as alcohol for consumption and also for cigarettes and other substances for smoking. These two activities are considered to be either unethical or harmful for the personal health of people. Therefore, the population that are usually barred from exposure of the substances that are promoted through surrogate marketing are young people, or generation Z. However, it is seen that among this generation of people, there is a high level of chance that surrogate marketing is creating an attraction. It is important to gain knowledge about how these chances are materializing. From the research, it has been discovered that the generation Z prefers more exposure to the media

and more interaction with the brands. Also, there is a growing chance among the same people that they would be attracted to the substances that are prohibited in the society. It is also dependent on the lifestyle that has befallen on the young people from generation to generation.

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