



UPDATE ON GENERATION "Y "MARKETING

Generation Y has been with us for some time: beginning in 1977 and ending in 2000 with current ages between 31 and 8. As a senior or wedding photographer you have been marketing to Gen Y for over a decade now. What is different now is that Gen Y seniors of Classes of 94 and 2008 are really two distinct marketing groups because of the effects and impact of technology. Same can be said of the new century bride. Marketing strategies once applied to the first wave of Gen Yers will most likely not work well for the second wave of Gen Yers. As a direct result of this marketing dichotomy, far too many established studios in the 1980's have begun to see senior head count eroding while new studios are experiencing an increase. As an example Coke and Pepsi brands have given way to Mountain Dew, Jones Soda and Red Bull.

There is still time to learn new tricks. The youngest Gen Yer is just 8 years old and will be a senior in 2017. With an average marrying age of 25, the last of Gen Y will be marrying in 2025. So as a wedding photographer there still is a lot more time to adopt new marketing strategies. What is unique is that many of the new wedding photographers are Gen Y themselves. Being marketed to as Gen Y, they definitely have a basic understanding on how to market to their own peer group: word of mouth for one. What is significant about this fact is that they understand their own peer group better than the Gen X or Baby Boomer photographer.

Over the span of time between 1977 to 2000 much has happened in the world of technology which has had an impact on how Gen Yers perceive their needs and wants. Social-economic factors combined with rapid changes in technology have continually "shaped" Gen Y: the internet, cell phones, cable, reality TV, electronic games, the Iraq War, 9-11 and terrorism, Columbine, the 2000 election crisis and Starbucks. 25% were raised by single-household parents where cable TV and internet/games were not only a form of entertainment but were a constant companion.

Given what Gen Yers have been exposed to, their lives have been shaped to the point that 1) anybody can be a star almost overnight, 2) everyone deserves to have their say in interactive experiences and 3) all this seems to be second nature to them. As a marketer trying to reach Gen Y, these three points cannot be ignored only to one's own peril. As teenagers they 1) send 4,000 text messages per month, buy 40 songs on iTunes per month, have an iPod (love Apple as a brand) and watch only 1 to 2 hours of TV per week (internet and games take precedence.)

OK. How does one market to the 17 year old senior and the 25 year old bride? Currently, Gen Y makes up 25% of the workforce and by 2014 will comprise 47%. Total population of Generation Y is 70 million. They will definitely have economic clout. Gen Y teens (13-19) spend nearly \$100 Billion/year which is 40% partially funded by parents. Gen Y brides will most likely have been employed prior to their wedding and will have saved a nest egg to contribute towards their weddings. They will have the funds for excellent photographic coverage of their weddings. And seniors could pay for special photographic products too.

Marketers have researched young adult Gen Yers and classified at least four important buying parameters.

- 1) Cheap cost
- 2) Good quality
- 3) Fast service
- 4) An "experience"

What makes a New Millennium Gen Yer different from teenagers of the past? Simply put, they are made up many small communities that are "into" themselves. Meaning: Gen Y is very selective about who they listen to--mainly themselves, resulting in a lot of advertising falling upon deaf ears. **The secret formula is: word of mouth.** If your photographic products are not recommended by a friend or someone they totally respect, you are simply wasting your time and marketing dollars. **Whether for a Senior of Bride, your photo sessions and products must be "experiential."**

Here is a brief outline on how a Gen Yer spends their free time----they are on MySpace & Facebook-----they get information from each other---not emails, that is un-cool, instead they text message each other---use IM and they watch each other on U Tube----and they can do all three at the same time. This all happens in a community of friends. As a photo-marketer, your product must be discussed in their pipe line of communications. The key question becomes, "How do you get your message into their communication pipe line?" Very easily if you have a successful Senior Ambassador Program. Apple uses focus groups and simply asks the question, "What do you want?" iTunes was the result. Ask your ambassadors the same question, provide it and you are "in". If you try to sell what they do not want or like, you are "out" and soon the whole senior class will know about it. Gen Y does not like to be told "what to like" or "what to buy."

OK, you do not have a Senior Ambassador Program, what to do? **You are "in" if you can be endorsed by their friends.** Again, Gen Y takes their network's recommendations VERY seriously and cares a GREAT deal about what their network community SAYS. Gen Y desires to "embrace life" and wants to experience life with their friends. All marketing activities (written, visual, electronic & spoken) should convey that you have entered and understand their world by emphasizing:

- 1) an appreciation of their music,
- 2) an understanding of extreme sports (skate boarding, snow boarding, etc.),
- 3) an appreciation of outdoors such as hiking,
- 4) knowledge of the latest movies,
- 5) an understanding of video games and video game competition,
- 6) mashups(Weather Bonk, Y!Mash, etc.,
- 7) an understanding of social networking sites(FaceBook, MySpace,Second Life, DIGG),
and
- 8) an appreciation of tattoos (36% have at least one.)

Summary: For both Seniors and Brides to do business with your photography studio, you must BUY into Generation Y and show that you value their perspective on life. Listen to what they have to say before making product recommendations. Talking "with" them, not "at" them will go a long way in selling your business as a brand. **Always be AUTHENTIC.** Studies have shown that Gen Yers will not waste time with businesses not being REAL with them. Being AUTHENTIC is "in." **Most of all give them an "experience" to remember for a life time. You can do this! Note: if you want an idea on how to jump start the marketing process for Gen Y, email us.**

If you think a friend or studio would benefit from our newsletter, have them contact Pechman Imaging to sign up. <http://pechmanimaging.com/contactpechmanco.html>
Let us know your thoughts.

Email us at: marketing@pechmanimaging.com

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