

Empowering The Young & Old In MROCs

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In these times of crisis, the older consumer is becoming more and more interesting for the online business.

The group of "senior" consumers is growing as the baby boomers start retiring. And they are catching up with us online. The use of social networks among the older internet user has nearly doubled over the past year to 42% in the US (PEW Internet). Enough reasons for marketers & researchers to get to know them a little better!

The senior consumers & social media

The senior consumers are one of the fastest growing demographics online. In the US, half (47%) of internet users ages 50-64 and one in four (26%) users age 65 and older now use social networking sites (PEW Internet). Together with the loads of free time available, these developments show that the senior consumer is very suitable to collaborate with in engaging online research methods.

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A research community is an engaging experience, which enables consumer to interact with like-minded peers about their favourite brands and/or topics. This works well for different consumer groups; from youngsters to the baby boomers and beyond. Depending on the consumers you invite for your research community, it's essential to customise your settings and the story you want to tell. For the senior consumers, we can already share some key learnings on grey power in communities;

1. I'm not old! Don't approach these consumers based on their age (explicitly)! They don't feel old and still have a lot of active life ahead of them. They will lose interest if you make them feel otherwise.

2. A KIS-platform, please! It's no secret that the older consumers have typically been slow to use new technologies, including social media. Therefore, it's more important to focus on the ease of use of the community. They like to navigate through the community by themselves and understand how to use the community. Therefore, it's best to resist the temptation of all sorts of cool new features and just keep it simple.

3. Searching for practical tips and tricks; The senior consumers like the information benefits they can get from the community. Previous research shows that in marketing, the older consumer is more interested in practical benefits than emotional benefits. The older consumers often have fewer issues with self-esteem than the young ones do. Consequently, they search for products and information that fit a functional need rather than fulfilling an emotional one.

The younger consumer however requires a totally different approach. They want to be entertained! Based on our community experience, we've identified 3 learnings about youngsters (16-24 year old) in MROCs to keep in mind;

1. Explicit targeting works; Youngsters like to interact with other youngsters. It's as simple as that.

2. Create a dynamic experience: Working with new and cool tools and integration of multimedia challenges are more fun for youngsters. The community needs to offer something new every time they visit the platform.

3. More tasks = better. The youngster community participants have a shorter span of attention (segmented attention) and prefer to join multiple discussions or tackle different challenges faster. Therefore, it's better to spread your research questions over multiple tasks instead of few more intensive tasks.

Youth expert Joeri van den Bergh, author of How Cool Brands Stay Hot and co-founder of InSites Consulting comments: "Millennials have seen it all. Raised in the era of consumerism and commercial TV, they are not easily wowed. You don't buy Gen Y's attention, you need to earn it. By actively engaging and involving them with your marketing ideas, you'll build a long lasting deeper connection and better understanding of this important target group."

What's your experience in research communities with these age groups? How can we best empower them to create the best possible experiences?

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