



## Derleme • Review

### Digital Era and Changes in Consumer Behaviors: An Assessment on Generation C

#### Dijital Çağ ve Tüketici Davranışlarındaki Değişiklikler: C Kuşağı Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme

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#### ABSTRACT

In the digital age, the change in technology affects people and life in various ways. Changes have occurred in the purchasing behaviors of the generations living with the conveniences provided by internet technology. It has been an imperative for businesses and marketers to understand and adapt to the changes in consumer behaviors on the one hand and the changes brought by technology on the other.

This study surmounted the changes in the consumer behaviors brought by technology. The focus was on the purchasing behaviors of today's consumers, who are almost constantly connected to the internet and each other by mobile devices. The concept of Generation C, which is used to identify these digital consumers has been examined. In the study, the literature was searched to explain the concept and to form a basis for applied research. The concept of Generation C is related the demographic and psychographic features and suggested that these feature groups should be evaluated together in the future studies.

#### ÖZ

Yaşamakta olduğumuz dijital çağda, teknolojiye bağlı olarak insanların ve hayatın çeşitli yönlerden etkilenmektedir. İnternet teknolojisinin sağladığı kolaylıklarla yaşamakta olan nesillerin, satın alma davranışlarında değişiklikler ortaya çıkmıştır. İşletmecilerin ve pazarlamacıların bir taraftan tüketici davranışındaki değişiklikleri, diğer taraftan yenilikleri anlaması ve uyum sağlaması bir zorunluluk haline gelmiştir.

Bu çalışmada, son yıllarda tüketici davranışlarında teknolojinin etkisiyle ortaya çıkan değişiklikler ele alınmıştır. Mobil cihazlarla neredeyse sürekli olarak internete ve birbirine bağlantılı, sürekli iletişime açık günümüz tüketicilerinin özellikleri ve satın alma davranışları üzerinde durulmuştur. Bu dijital tüketicileri tanımlamada kullanılan C Kuşağı kavramı incelenmiştir. Çalışmada literatür taraması yapılarak kavram açıklanmaya ve uygulamalı araştırmalar için bir temel oluşturulmaya çalışılmıştır. C kuşağı kavramının demografik özelliklerle birlikte psikografik özelliklerle ilgili olduğu ve bu iki özellik grubunun birlikte değerlendirilmesi önerilmektedir.

## 1. Introduction

It is an important issue for businesses to consider following the developments in information and communication technologies and their reflections on life in the digital age in which we live. Consumer behaviors are affected and changed by technology. It is necessary to monitor and understand consumer behaviors for accurate marketing activities. One of the basic criteria for identifying the target consumer population of businesses is the age factor which has a decisive role for many products. Individuals from the same generation who were born and lived at similar times

show similar characteristics in terms of lifestyle and behavior as consumers.

Generations are defined in the literature with some different classifications: The Interbellum Generation, The Silent Generation, The War Baby Generation, The Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z (Solomon 2015: 450). Generation Y and the individuals born after it are generations growing with internet technology. However, there are individuals able to use digital technologies effectively among consumers of other generations. Therefore, there is a need to define a new generation in order to express this group of consumers. The

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concept of Generation C used for this demand represents the intergenerational individuals who have taken their place in the digital transformation process emerging with the developing technology. It consists of young generations growing up with digital technology and consumers of different ages who have subsequently adapted.

Studies on Generation C in the literature are limited. By examining the subject within the framework of the exploratory research model, it was aimed to determine the basic variables and to form a basis for future applied research. In the study, literature review, which is one of the qualitative research methods, was used.

The purpose of this paper is to create a framework that will enable businesses to understand today's consumers. With this study, it is aimed to contribute to the determination of the target market, market segmentation activities of the marketers and the development of appropriate marketing strategies. In the study firstly briefly touched on age, generation factors and generational classifications. Then, as a new concept, Generation C's definition, features and social media usage are emphasized. The effects of digitalization on consumer behaviors are discussed.

## 2. Age and Generation Factor in the Segmentation of Consumer Markets

Using the innovations introduced by technology, it is possible to shape business and marketing activities and adapt to the change in consumers. Businesses need to develop marketing strategies based on adequate and up-to-date information about consumers to achieve this adaptation. There are two important steps in establishing an effective marketing strategy: to identify the target market and develop a marketing mix appropriate to the target market.

Social, psychological and personal factors are effective in the purchasing decisions of consumers constituting the target market. Personal factors consist of demographic characteristics and situational factors. Demographic characteristics encompass qualities such as age, gender, marital status, educational status and occupation. Demographic qualities are also used to define the target market and segment the ultimate consumer markets. The age distribution of the population is one of the main determinants of demand. The products and services that consumers prefer to meet their needs vary according to age. Individuals of similar ages have common characteristics in their behaviors as consumers. The concepts of 'Age cohort' and 'Generation' are used to identify consumers' age-related motivation for a common purchase.

By definition, "An age cohort consists of people of similar ages who have similar experiences." They share many common memories about cultural icons, important historical, social, political, and economic events. Marketers often target products and services to specific age cohorts (Solomon, 2015: 449).

Individuals in the age range covered by generations have a similar tendency on how to think and behave. The tendencies of generations are influenced by world events and the social, cultural and developmental characteristics of the country in which they live. Various generation names

have been defined from the past to the present. Market segmentation studies have been carried out according to the differences between generations.

A few studies have also been conducted on the relationship between the segmentation of generational cohorts with purchasing behavior, more specifically in the domains of fashion (Littrell et al. 2005; Pentecost and Andrews, 2010), travel and tourism (Beldona 2005) and fair-trade consumption (Ma et al. 2012).

Although different classifications in terms of age and name are seen in the literature (Dietz 2003; Howe and Strauss 2007; Moore and Carpenter 2008), generations are generally defined as (Solomon 2015: 450):

- The Interbellum Generation: People born at the beginning of the twentieth century
- The Silent Generation: People born between the two World Wars (1914-1938)
- The War Baby Generation: People born during World War II (1939-1945)
- The Baby Boomer Generation: People born between 1946 and 1964
- Generation X
- Generation Y
- Generation Z

In general, today's society consists of the individuals of the last six generations listed above. Due to the subject of this study, brief information about the Baby Boomer Generation and Generations X, Y and Z considered to be more associated with digital technology, will be given and continued.

### 2.1. Baby Boomers (1946-1964)

The Baby Boomer cohort consists of people whose parents established families following the end of World War II and during the 1950s when the peacetime economy was strong and stable. As a general rule, when people feel confident about how things are going in the world, they are more likely to decide to have children (Solomon, 2015: 457). Baby Boomers are characterized by a revolutionary outlook, ignited by the 1968 student revolt in Paris, France, and by the war in Vietnam (Parment, 2013: 192). People of this generation wanted their own culture, which rejected the values of their parents. They were involved in a massive social revolution which changed music, fashions, political thought and social attitudes. The large segment coupled with its purchasing power—it was the first to become empowered as consumers—means it is a favorite target for marketers (Evans et al. 2009: 162-163).

They held power in the marketplace because of their numbers and marketers aimed to satisfy their wants—quality, personally satisfying, healthy, natural and if possible noncaloric products. Baby boomers buy more and save less than past generations, spending on products that past generations would have considered luxuries, such as consumer electronics, multiple cars and household services (Blackwell et al. 2006: 247). Some have a 'cognitive age' less than their 'chronological age' and therefore act much more youthfully than their age might suggest (Evans et al. 2009: 163).

They are very attracted to new products and technologies that will make their lives easier. It is helpful to use communication methods such as social and recognition activities, professional counselors, direct mail, face-to-face talk and e-mail. TV is still a major media route. Baby Boomers like the convenience and customization of the internet, especially for health information, online job sites, and joining social networking sites. Although Baby Boomers' general uptake of mobile phone technology is high, they have a limited use and understanding of functions beyond simple voice calls and SMS (Williams and Page, 2011: 5-6).

Today (2019), individuals between the ages of 55 and 73, i.e., 1.119 million people (We are Social and Hootsuite, 2019) in the world, are from this generation. Some of them are retired, getting by with the pension changing according to the country they live in. It is the oldest group using digital technology. Health is a major concern for the Baby Boomer generation.

## 2.2. Generation X (1965-1979)

Today (2019), this generation covers individuals in the age range of 40-54 i.e., 1.418 million people in the world (We are Social and Hootsuite, 2019). It is also referred to as the 'lost generation' due to the fact that it is a generation growing up through social pains and economic difficulties such as the stagnation in the early 1980s and 1990s and Generation X had to adapt to developing information and communication technologies and experienced some difficulties in this process. It is a generation whose members are compliant with the rules, sensitive to social problems and able to solve their problems on their own, who love working, are patient, and respect authority, use technology to run their errands rather than for entertainment purposes and to make life easier.

With Generation X, multiculturalism and thinking around the world have become the norm. Those in this age group experienced the growing importance of personal computers, and were the founders of the well-known internet companies of the 1990s. Members of Generation X are pessimistic, skeptical, and highly educated. Their lifestyles and attitudes are aimed at balancing family, life and work. They like initiatives that will make things easier and more practical. Marketers can offer solutions to help them plan for the future, and balance work, family and personal life. People of Generation X are conscious of price, value information and technology, want explanations for the features of the product they want to purchase and to know why these features are required. They are a great force in the market as they need to buy products and services for their families (Williams and Page, 2011: 6-7). They are the consumers of cars, houses, household goods, technological devices and various products that their children will use.

## 2.3. Generation Y (1980-1999)

Different names are used for Generation Y, such as First Globals, Echo Boomers, Millennials and the iPod Generation. Members of Generation Y were born into an environment in which technological, electronic and global boundaries are more transparent. They have a strong sense of independence, and are realistic, objective, open-minded,

fast, selfish and self-confident. They are image-oriented and express themselves with their image (Williams and Page, 2011: 8). Generation Y now covers individuals between the ages of 20 and 39 and there are 2,329 million people in this generation worldwide (We are Social and Hootsuite, 2019). It is a generation that grows with technology, does all of its business via the internet or mobile platforms and uses the internet as a communication tool. For this reason, it is also called Generation N (Net). Most in this generation are seen as materialists, risk-takers, enthusiastic about business, entrepreneurial, and hedonist (Evans et al. 2009: 159). Generation Y expects marketers to be honest, use humor, and be clear, and understandable. They tend to change brand preferences faster than other groups because they need to be accepted among their peers and follow the latest fashion (Blackwell et al. 2006: 246). Their weakness of brand loyalty is a challenge for marketers.

Generation Y is made up of individuals who can easily reveal their wishes, are unsatisfied, challenge authority, are tech-savvy, have a lot of wishes, are comfortable, have fun, love winning, are ambitious, and have little tolerance for criticism. They do not love those that appeal to the general and the standard, but the personal ones (Kavalcı and Ünal, 2016: 1036).

## 2.4. Generation Z (Borned after 2000)

While some authors define Generation Z as the N (Net) or D (Digital) generation, Prensky defines members of this generation as 'Digital Natives'. They have spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all the other toys and tools of the digital age (Prensky, 2001: 1).

They do not know what life is without the Internet. Their primary communication channel is not email anymore, but social media. They not only consume information but also generate and share it. People of Generation Z do not know life without a wireless network, mobile phones and the Web. They use devices on a skilled level, they are typically multitasking: writing blogs, listening to music, sharing pictures or videos, following email and social network messages at the same time (Nagy and Kölcsey, 2017: 109).

The oldest cohort of Generation Z, with 2.541 million people around the world (We are Social and Hootsuite, 2019), is 19 years old. It is composed of children and young people and most of them receive an education. Children in this group have learned to use smartphones and tablets from a young age, watch videos, cartoons and play games. Teenagers in the Z generation live a life addicted to their mobile devices and are strict consumers of any social media content. Their characteristics can be listed as being self-confident, individualistic, open to communication, loving playing virtual games, tending to share every moment on social media, being ignorant about privacy, and skillful at producing creative content.

## 3. Digital Age and Generation C

Innovations in information and communication technologies affect social, cultural and economic life. Advantages such as non-spatiality, speed, and ease of access to information obtained by internet technology

accelerate the spread of facilities such as wireless communication. Every year, the number of internet users is increasing and digital technology is becoming widespread. In the total population of 7 billion 676 million in the world, the number of internet users has reached 4.338 million (57%) (We are Social and Hootsuite, 2019).

The Internet prevalence rate differs between regions according to development. The ratio of Internet users to the population is 95% in Northern Europe and North America, 94% in Southern Europe, 73% in Southern America, 69% in Oceania, 60% in East Asia, 50% in Central Asia and North Africa, and 12% in Central Africa. There are 8 billion 842 million mobile subscriptions in the world. 45% of the world's population are active social media users and 42% are mobile social media users. Thanks to wireless network technology, mobile internet usage is rapidly increasing. Users spend an average of 6 hours and 42 minutes per day on the Internet. An average 3 hours and 14 minutes of this time is spent on social media platforms. The most visited websites are Google.com, Youtube.com and Facebook.com respectively (We are Social and Hootsuite, 2019).

In the digital era, where innovations continue unabated, new devices are being added. Following smart phones, smart watches, smart glasses and wristbands and wearable technology products are on the agenda. In the next few years, the internet of things, artificial intelligence, cloud technology, drones, self-service automation, and robotic applications in production and service are the most important technologies that will affect businesses.

The use of the Internet and social media has led to changes in consumer behavior. Scientists and business professionals are interested in identifying new consumers as a generation that is different from that of their predecessors, taking into account changes in consumer behavior. Unlike age-defined generation definitions, Generation C; is a definition that includes demographic features as well as psychographic features.

The definition of Generation C was first used in February 2004 (TrendWatch, 2004). Generation C consists of individuals who are now able to use and effectively incorporate digital technology, mainly from Y and Z generations. This generation prefers to socialize over the internet. Unlike other generations, it is defined by behavior and lifestyle rather than by their date of birth. Generation C can be defined as the generation with developed digital-literacy skills, people who use social media platforms actively, own a blog, share various contents such as writing, photograph, music, and video, and are active and creative.

Due to the behaviors and characteristics expressed in the definition, it encompasses all the meanings of Content Creation (TrendWatching, 2006), Connected Customer (Solis, 2012), Community, Creation, Connection, Computerized, Clicking and is named after C which is common in all.

When any produced and published content is liked by others and becomes popular, this brings an opportunity for

the content owner to become a Celebrity and raise revenue. With the content they produce, the related companies can make payments to the talented consumers who are making a profit for the brands (TrendWatching, 2006).

The C Generation is a community that grows with online networks. This community is content-focused in communication and is interested in dealing with how to share, store and manage the content. For TrendWatching (2010), C also describes the desire to create and control content (Hardey, 2011: 752). When it comes to digital content for Generation C, young people particularly become prominent. "Generation C is the "You" in YouTube, the "My" in MySpace, and the "i" in iPod. They're you (and me), and they're shaking up the way people make, think about, and use digital content." The creative content developers having accounts on platforms where Generation C is active construct their profiles including location, blog address or website if any, interests, photographs, and user information. They establish their own network of friends with common interests in the real and cyber worlds. They collect their favorite content on social media in the lists they can share or add their bookmarks to (Dye, 2007: 1).

It was mentioned above that the individuals of Generation Z who are included in Generation C have been introduced to digital technology since birth while the individuals of Generation Y are introduced to it as they grow. Today, the pioneers in the use of digital technology are mostly from Generation Y. As they grow older, the individuals in the two generations do research online, do shopping and banking transactions, watch TV and video, read the news and use social media. They prefer communication via social networks and email rather than face-to-face. In addition to their close business, school and family networks, they can communicate with the masses living in other countries in the same way. Browsing through social networks, sharing content, checking the posts of the people they follow, liking and commenting have become their daily routine. Especially, instead of watching the news on the television or reading it in newspapers, the young mostly follow the agenda and events with the shares in social networks. Before purchasing a product, they do research on the net and examine, make comparisons, and read the experiences, comments, scores and complaints of product users. They rely more on the experience and comments of the user than on the information and advertisements given by the companies.

In addition to the fact that Generations Y and Z are predominantly included in Generation C, individuals from Generation X and before who are able to adapt to technological developments and use the computer and internet effectively, can also be included in this generation. In this sense, members of Generation X are ahead of their predecessors and slightly behind Generation Y. While growing with digital technology is about age, being able to use it is about openness to change and lifestyle. Therefore, it can be said that individuals in Generation C have a structure that is open to innovation and learning and adaptable to change. Therefore, age, lifestyle and

personality gain importance in determining the scope of Generation C.

Opportunities to connect to the Internet may not be as widespread in all countries, but Generation C represents the most connected group of users (Hardey, 2011: 762). Today, it is seen that the population of Generation C, based on the distribution of internet users in the world, is more in developed countries (We are Social and Hootsuite, 2019). Current studies in the literature are predominantly in this geography. Depending on the increase in internet users, it is expected that their number in other countries will increase in the future.

### 3.1. Features of Generation C

With the introduction of mobile internet technology, portable devices such as smartphones and tablets have been preferred. Generation C is strengthened by technology and members connect to each other and to the world by networks. The change reflected as a result of being connected is one of the important issues of the digital age. As the wave of innovation is accelerating, mobile devices are becoming the most critical channel for trade and entrepreneurship, and the role of Generation C in economic growth becomes clearer. This generation is expected to be the most important driving force of consumption in the world especially after 2020. In this context, it is necessary to understand the characteristics of Generation C and how its population behaves in the virtual and real world.

Generation C is not a static consumer population. If they do not like their mobile phone ringtone, they can produce a unique ringtone and use it. If they do not like the scope of the news, they can tell their own stories and shoot their own videos (Dye, 2007: 1). Unsatisfied with what has been provided by media or companies, they are a consumer mass open to development and constantly expecting innovation. Concurrent use of multiple screens is among the qualities of Generation C. While watching TV, they can use mobile phones or tablets to check their emails, search for answers about the program they are watching, surf virtual stores, use social media accounts or text.

Brian Solis argues that two-way communication and personal online experiences are important to reach Generation C, and that a radically different organizational vision and philosophy are needed. He expresses that companies need to take Generation C into consideration and to reshape their systems and products in order to not be a victim of the digital age. He points out that in all digital touch-sensitive devices and in the key points of trust of the consumer journey; they must constantly focus on delivering special consumer experiences (Hamill, 2016: 418).

According to Google's research on Generation C, which it also describes as the YouTube generation, 80% of Generation Z born after 2000 are included in Generation C. 65% of Generation C are made up of people under the age of 35. Four features of Generation C draw attention (Google, 2013):

**Creation:** This symbolizes the active role that this generation plays in the creation process. They are not only satisfied with reading and watching, but also creatively try

to tell their own stories, share them and make them shareable by others. They try and adapt to new applications and social media networks.

**Curation:** They organize a collection to create a desired effect. The individuals of this generation know which network to use and how to share it in order to provide the desired effect, and do not hesitate to share their satisfaction and critique. While preparing a profile or a collection on social media, they try to express themselves and create the image they want in the virtual community through the posts they share.

**Connection:** They are almost seamlessly connected to each other and to the Internet. While watching TV, they can also be active on Twitter, Snapchat or other social networks. The concept of Second Screen precisely defines this generation. Regarding the population figures, 91% of the Z Generation, which will constitute the majority of the C generation in the future, sleep with their smart phones.

**Community:** Individuals of Generation C actively communicate by being part of communities in their areas of interest on social media. They gather supporters by creating communities for the things they think are missing, things that need attention and to be done.

### 3.2. Generation C and Social Media

Social media are an important innovation brought about by the digital age; they have democratized knowledge sharing and allowed people to create platforms where they can share their thoughts and expertise. They have offered two-way and transparent communication channels to people. The media have become more independent, personal and scattered. Social media and all this technology are considered a gift that allows us to see and recognize people (Capital, 2016). As consumers connect with each other, a vast information network is formed, and these network experiences begin to guide decisions and markets.

According to Solis, a social revolution started with social media. He states that there is a deep cultural exchange with the Internet and this change creates a new domain of influence besides changing how we define influence. With the support of the socialization of knowledge, a completely new ecosystem was formed, which facilitated the global impact of locally started speeches. On social media, the monologue in traditional media has been replaced by dialogue and this affects all industries. Solis draws attention to the importance of understanding not only how people read and disseminate information, but also how they play a role in the creation and sharing of content that others can participate in because this information offers opportunities for brands. Companies should focus on reaching multiple markets and influencers through social media rather than trying to reach audiences with a single message, space or instrument. Thus, it is possible to have a much greater effect on brand resonance (Solis, 2010: 5).

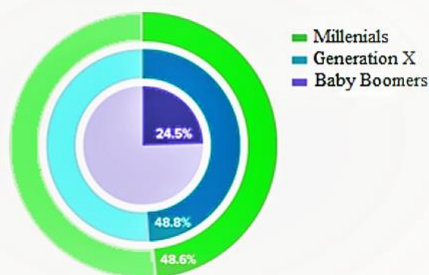
Social networks facilitate oral communication. Popular video clips travel from one inbox to another. The channel structure from consumer to consumer is used extensively. The content is the star of the show, and anyone who loads or uses it has the chance to leave a unique impact on viewers who haven't seen it yet.

According to Solis, the 'social economy' created by social media led to the emergence of a new type of consumer culture. Consumers who are 'connected' to each other and the world no longer visit the websites of brands proactively. They prefer to reach the information through their friends, friends who can help them, or existing brands on the social network. In this respect, social media marketing works as a two-way system like a bridge, where consumers are communicating information and brands convey information to consumers. An effective social media marketing strategy requires a holistic approach. "Connected" consumers want to partly assume control as well as expect interest, consistency, quick feedback, and commitment of brands (Solis, 2012). Companies need to find a way to reach the creative content about their brands produced outside of their control as these contents may also consist of negative evaluations. In a way, they need to manage content provision.

Consumers of Generation C expect to have a satisfying experience at every stage of the purchasing process. Brands and companies should expand their presentations in response to this expectation and ensure the quality and added value of their experience. Firms need to adapt to the content marketing and social sales approach. For this purpose, they should be accessible on social platforms, respond to questions and complaints, and act as a guide rather than a salesperson in the purchasing process (Morin, 2018: 27-28).

A survey was conducted with 1,000 people composed of the Y/Millennium (18-34 years), X (34-54 years), and Baby Boomer (age 55 and over) Generations to understand how each generation is merging with brands on social media. It was determined that Facebook's popularity was almost the same in the X (64.7%) and Baby Boomer (65.2%) Generations, and YouTube was the second favorite social platform. In the case of Generation Y, the survey results were more closely distributed between Facebook (33%), Instagram (22.2%) and Snapchat (15.8%). The younger Generation Y (18-24 years) defined Instagram (25%) as its favorite social media network, followed by Facebook (24.4%) and Snapchat (23.3%). In this group, it was observed that YouTube (11.5%) was a more popular platform than Twitter (7.55%) (Sprout Social, 2017).

Fig. 1 Percentage Currently Following Brands on Social Media (01.2017)



(Source: <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/data/q1-2017/>)

According to the results of the study, the follow rates of brands on social media were listed as 48.8% for Generation X, 48.6% for Generation Y, and 24.5% for the Baby Boomer Generation (Figure 1). However, the motives for following differ between the generations. Generation Y follows brands for entertainment and information, Generation X for contests, opportunities, and promotions, and Generation Baby Boomers for promotion and information. The percentage of likes, shares or comments of the monthly followers of a brand on social media was 32% for Generation X and 30% for Generation Millennium while Generation Baby Boomers is mostly observing. Only 14% regularly initiate dialogue or interaction with the brand.

### 3.3. Generation C and Changing Consumer Behaviors

It is becoming increasingly difficult to examine and understand the behavior of today's consumers. A large portion of consumers, especially young people, is unmanageable and unsatisfactory in terms of consumption and media habits. In order to reach and respond quickly to these new consumers, who expect a quick change, multiple identities, instant satisfaction and a response to their requests, marketing communication practices have to change and become diversified. In communication applications based on information and communication technologies, consumers lose their passive status and prefer open-to-share applications where they can express themselves and use interactive and bidirectional communication (Odabaşı, 2007: 27). Since the economic recession in 2008, people's trust in institutions has been declining. People are interested in the advice of their peers rather than the traditional form of advertising and marketing (Morin, 2018: 28).

Hamill determines that the new global culture that comes with the digital age is more important than the technology for marketers. He refers to this global culture as a Generation Net culture based on a decentralized authority, online socialization and collaboration, content developed and distributed by the user, open communication, one-to-one sharing and global participation, rather than a hierarchy and control (Hamill, 2016: 418). The new type of customer shaped by this culture does not like didactic and one-way information transfer that includes impositions; and wishes for transparent and factual communication. The decline of trust in intense advertisement broadcasts and product commercials has caused consumers to skip or block ads and this has made it difficult for firms.

The intensive use of digital technologies has changed the relationships between brands, organizations and customers. Now users benefit from a variety of content generation and dissemination tools. Nowadays, consumers are more aware of the brand than a company's vendor or representative. If they are not satisfied, they can choose a competitor's product or service regardless of where they are. This increases their power over brands and firms (Morin, 2018: 30). The Internet allows consumers to access an unlimited range of products and services from companies around the world, and it has reduced the time and effort consumers spend on shopping (Dhanapala et al. 2015: 111).



Generation C has a structure that covers each computer user and online shopper. Consumers' daily use of the Internet and social media influences the communities of friends and plays an active role in the global economy. Connected consumers inspire each other. Generation C is the group that best adds digital information to consumption decisions. In the purchasing process, these individuals have more information about products compared to traditional consumers. The impacts of information and communication technologies arise at every stage of the purchasing behavior of the consumers involved in this generation. The way in which consumers access, decide, influence information and get influenced by it has started to move away from tradition. With digitalization, the consumer's market power is increasing. This situation weakens the control of firms in the transmission of information to consumers. Now consumers play an active role in every stage of the product purchase process. Shopping decisions are made in a much shorter time. They do serious research about the product and brand before the purchase and act independently in all processes of the purchase. Consumers connect to each other through the Internet and social media, create a broad and effective information network and direct the market by sharing their experiences. Consumers are focused on collecting information from product reviews and complaints websites created by customers and social media prior to purchase.

A survey was conducted to explain why customers read comments written by other customers on internet-based consumer feedback platforms. In the study, an online questionnaire was applied to 2,900 German platform users. It was found that consumers mostly read these comments in order to save time and make better purchasing decisions (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh, 2003: 64).

As consumers of today and the future, individuals of Generation C go through the following stages prior to purchasing a product or brand: Before making the purchasing decision, consumers, by doing research on the Internet about the product they need, review product options, read online comments, and compare prices, conditions and warranties. They learn how to use the product if there are any videos about it on YouTube. In order to decide which brand to purchase, they exchange ideas with their friends on social media. Thanks to an application they have downloaded on their smartphone, they figure out the location of the closest store and go there to examine the product physically. They can buy and purchase the product at the store or buy the product at the most affordable price through a website they have selected on the mobile device. Marketers should be prepared for both cases. This journey may begin on the brand's website or store. In any case, it is necessary to be consistent in the search, company website, virtual and physical stores to ensure that consumers prefer a particular brand. One of the major changes in consumer behavior in the digital age is the increasing tendency to shop online. According to the report of Digital 2019, visiting an online retail store is in first place with 91%, searching a product or service online is in second place with 84%, and purchasing a product or service through a device is in third place with 75% among the electronic commerce activities of internet users. The products on which the most money is spent in electronic

commerce are respectively travel (including booking), fashion and beauty; electronics and physical media; toys, diy and hobbies; furniture and appliances; food and personal care; video games and digital music (We are Social and Hootsuite, 2019).

When we look at the subject in terms of generations, it can generally be said that online shopping is carried out by the X and Y Generations at the highest rate and by Baby Boomers at the lowest (Dhanapala et al. 2015: 113). In another study, despite the high rate of hedonism, extravagance and Internet access of Generation Y, the percentage of people purchasing electrical goods, furniture or holidays in online shopping was higher in Generation X (Lissitsa and Kol, 2016).

To succeed in gaining consumers from Generation C, companies need to actively embrace consumer-created content, understand how it is used, and seek to leverage these developments to facilitate increased business, build customer loyalty and, potentially, support product innovation (Hardey, 2011: 763). Increasing consumer impact can be exploited by businesses. The Internet is an excellent environment for users and creators to come together and find a common vision. Some companies (Apple, Nokia) create message boards and blogs for users so they can share their ideas about the features and developments they want to see in future products (Dye, 2007: 1). Some sites request content from their readers and publish user-generated content. With this approach, a new movement emerges which gives an active role to the consumer.

#### 4. Conclusion

It is important to continuously monitor and adapt to changes in the environment for success in business and marketing. The behavior of consumers is changing in the digital age in which a rapid and continuous technological transformation is taking place. Marketers need to understand the change in technology and consumers and develop and implement strategies and make plans based on this understanding. It is easier to develop a marketing strategy for a market with similar characteristics. It also enables the company to use its resources more efficiently and effectively. Generational definitions of age groups are insufficient to understand the effect of the digital transformation on consumer behavior. In this study, the ways in which consumer behavior in the digital age changes with the effects of internet technology and social media and the characteristics of digital consumers, defined as the C Generation, were examined and explained through the studies in the literature. The proportion of internet users in regions other than Central Africa constitutes 50% or more of the population. Therefore, there are important opportunities for businesses to expand their markets in the virtual world. It aimed to contribute to the work of marketers on this new type of consumer.

Generation C, which is able to adapt to technological trends very quickly and is offering a great consumption potential, has also started to form the focus of the economy. Generation C can be the key to high-value-added economic growth at the macro level, and will be a critical factor in the success of companies to the extent that it can address this

generation at the micro-level. It is anticipated that Generation C will open the way for the 'virtualization' of institutions with an increasing weight in business life in the future.

Consumers of Generation C have high levels of knowledge and expectations and demand more satisfactory practices from firms at every stage of the purchasing process. They wish to be noticed, heard, and listened to as well as wish for their expectations to be met. In this sense, the key approach for firms is to recognize the target audience with the changing dynamics, then to be involved in the game as required.

The use of Internet and social media affects consumers' relations with firms. In the digital age, socialization takes place in a different dimension on social media. In order to reach Generation C consumers, brands must be social and digital, and exist wherever they are. This entity must be full-time and active. The expectations of consumers in the digital age force companies to focus on personalized communication and solutions. Firms are required to change their strategies to communicate more with people and understand them better. Creating a social media culture, recognizing customers, observing how they communicate and trying to think like them will facilitate their adaptation.

On social platforms, it is important for brands to provide consumers with benefits; this benefit is fun, it encourages imagination, is appropriate in terms of subject, and includes simplicity and innovation that consumers can disseminate. It will be beneficial for firms to create a sense of belonging in the environments where consumers are present, offer content to talk about, create opportunities to share their experiences and create reasons for doing so. Brand content to be published on social media that is interesting, effective, original, surprising, entertaining, and well-prepared will initiate communication among consumers. At this point, it is important to focus on the user experience. Interaction and experience maintained through communication create customer loyalty and lead to purchases in time. It is also possible to employ consumers by giving the brand an active role in producing content. On the other hand, firms can use consumers' suggestions, comments and opinions by considering them when developing innovative ideas, new products and services. Connected consumers can also be a benefit when testing new products.

It is necessary to respond to the questions of digital consumers who do not tolerate waiting and interact with them. For consumers who are constantly speaking on social media, there is a need for timely and full-time customer relationship management. Firms need to take a very careful step towards negative communication with community psychology on social media.

Digital technology gives companies the chance to reach consumers in different but very creative and human forms. Social media provide opportunities for better recognition, understanding and psychographic exploration by following consumers. On social media, virtual communities are created by users in specific areas of interest. Instead of reaching everyone from a single channel, marketing strategies now need to be reorganized in such a way to be from multiple channels to multiple channels by interacting with the intended people and understanding the

communities they are involved in. From this perspective, marketers need to focus on virtual communities and inspirational individuals who develop creative content rather than crowded market groups. Those who produce creative content on social media and influence people are called influencers. Influencers have been the opinion leaders of social media users. Determining the influencers of their target masses, marketers can reach consumer groups through them.

Internet usage on mobile devices in the world shows a rising trend. The increasingly smaller sizes of mobile devices, their increased functionality, lightness and wireless communication offer the convenience of consumers' ease of use. Therefore, organizations that want to reach mobile users have become obliged to prepare websites, applications and mobile content compatible with mobile devices.

In the digital age, the most active age groups in Generation C are the X and Y Generations in terms of internet use, online shopping and social media participation. In the studies examined, Baby Boomers Generation is a participant in terms of social media, but it is seen that it is generally an observer. Although Generation Y seems a more attractive target for businesses because of high rates of internet connection, Generation X spends more money in online shopping. Older consumers of the Baby Boomer Generation show a low participation in terms of online shopping as well. However, it is open to development as a consumer group, which perhaps needs the convenience of online shopping at most. It can be said that it is a generation that offers opportunities especially in terms of health-related products and services, home delivery services and life-facilitating services. In the future, it is estimated that Generation Z, which has grown with digital technology, will have a greater participation in the use of the Internet than other groups. While marketers can focus on digital solutions suitable for new generations on the one hand, it will be beneficial to increase their influence in the market of elderly consumers. The population of the world consists of elderly people at an increasing level. As the blessings of the digital age will make a significant contribution to making the lives of old people easier, it is useful for marketers to consider this opportunity.

The digital knowledge and skill level of generations become prominent in defining Generation C. The basic competence in defining Generation C is digital literacy. In this respect, Generation C mainly consists of young people who have grown up with digital technology. However, it is seen that consumers of middle and older age have this ability even though they are limited. Consumers' use of digital technology is related to age, but also to psychographic factors such as lifestyle, learning and personality. For this group, it is believed that educational background, occupation, economic condition, and maintenance of interactions with people from whom digital devices and applications can be learned also play a role in adapting to the digital age. In the digital age, it is useful to evaluate psychographic factors with demographic factors in market segmentation.

By keeping alive the interaction between consumers in the digital age, it is predicted that companies that can keep their



feelings and opinions ahead of the game will be successful. It will be useful to conduct field research on the impact of the digital age on consumer behavior, focusing on the psychographic characteristics of Generation C consumers.

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