

Can vague go viral for Gen Y?

June 5 2024, by David Bradley



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Generation Y, Gen Y, is commonly referred to as the millennial generation. It usually includes individuals born between the early 1980s and the mid-to-late 1990s or early 2000s. This generation follows Generation X and precedes Generation Z.

The millennials, it is said, grew up during the transition to [digital technology](#) and the rise of the internet, and this has shaped their perspectives, behavior, and the way they use technology and media.

They are often characterized as tech-savvy, adaptable, and socially conscious, with a strong affinity for social media and digital communication platforms. However, this can be said of individuals from preceding or subsequent generations too.

A [study](#) in the *International Journal of Electronic Marketing and Retailing* has looked at Gen Y consumer attitudes in the light of marketing content on social media. Nor Azimah Kamaruddin of the Universiti Utara Malaysia, and Lennora Putit and Amily Fikry of the Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia, have investigated how advertising content, crucial for business and marketing success, seeks to engage audiences effectively.

The team used qualitative methods, such as focus group discussions, to uncover prevalent attitudes among millennial social media users and their attitudes to marketing content on Facebook, Instagram, and X, the platform formerly known as Twitter.

The team found that attitudes varied from positive (I like), negative (I don't like), and vague (I don't know), as one might have anticipated. Positive attitudes typically stem from content that resonates with the interests of users or their values, leading to actions more "liking" or "sharing" of such content.

Conversely, negative attitudes arose from being presented with content that conflicted with user preferences or values. This had the potential to produce a "thumbs down," a dislike, or [negative comments](#). The team found that the "don't-knows" with their vague response to marketing content, were often curious nevertheless and sometimes shared content

despite initial uncertainty.

While the bottom line in marketing is always about purchasing behavior and thus sales, the focus has shifted to some degree to concepts such as viral reach, which can lead to widespread content dissemination that then brings with it the sales way beyond conventional campaigns or traditional word-of-mouth. However, marketers face many challenges in understanding what motivates social media users and how to trigger that much sought after virality of content.

The present study has moved away from the binary "like–dislike" assessment of user behavior to include those who are virally curious, the vague attitudes and the don't-knows that might lead to viral reach. This new understanding could give businesses a better way to develop tailored marketing strategies for [social media](#).

More information: Nor Azimah Kamaruddin et al, I like, I don't like, I don't know: consumers' attitude towards marketing content in social media from Gen Y glasses, *International Journal of Electronic Marketing and Retailing* (2024). [DOI: 10.1504/IJEMR.2024.138300](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJEMR.2024.138300)

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