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The “Net Generation” in Portugal

and its Importance for Strategic Marketing:

A Longitudinal Research

Publication Summary

The "Net Generation" or Internet generation began to be born in the 1990s, in parallel with the popularity of Windows (Tapscott, 1998) and the arrival of the Internet.

As discussed by Tapscott (1998) and Feather (2002), this is the first generation where young people are teaching adults on the use of a new technology, they being happy and receptive to learn from their kids. Technology is part of the daily life of this generation, but they still have other types of contacts and interests.

This paper, based on an exploratory research, demonstrates that while the Net Generation in Portugal is increasingly and more frequently using new technologies, becoming a ever-connected generation, they are also retaining other media contexts (television, radio, magazines, and others), plus are engaged in outdoor activities, school, and home life. All these six contexts have importance for young people, and they do not overlap each other.

To develop the analysis, the paper applies a model based on existing ones, as from Tapscott (1998) and Feather (2002). The methodology used was a longitudinal study, made with 3.600 kids, aged from 6 to 12 years old, and undertaken between 2005 and early 2009 in Portugal, using personal interviews and subsequent statistical analysis.

The results obtained show that the Net Generation in Portugal is increasing its use of new technologies, but it is not abandoning other technologies or more traditional life activities. They live their daily life in different contexts, but they are always connected to the Internet through different devices.

For strategic marketing, the research concludes and explains that there is an important challenge on how and when to connect with this ever-available generation, without being intrusive.

Key Words: Net Generation, Strategic Marketing

1. Introduction

The entry of new generations of consumers on the market, first as children and youth, then as young workers, professionals, business managers, and parents of yet more new families, always cause changes in the markets. This repeating life-cycle forced companies to rethink their strategies and in some cases their business model. But most of the time, this occurred as a market evolution and not as a revolution.

Tapscott (1998) considers that the entry of the Net Generation in the market will force some firms to go through a true marketing revolution because their characteristics are quite different from those of previous generations. The new Net Generation dominates like no other the use of modern technology because it was born and grew up with it and in fact is contributing actively to its development. We are living in an era in which children teach their parents and teachers, who willingly accept their explanations on the handling of new technologies and the Internet. An excellent example is the case in Finland where the government chose 5,000 kids to teach teachers properly how to use the computer and the Internet (Tapscott, 1998). Whereas new technologies and the Internet are only at their beginning (Berners-Lee, 2000) and that its development is expected to be exponential in the near future, we cannot doubt the influence that this new generation will have on markets and companies.

Tapscott (1998) and Feather (2002) reported that in the next ten years a new generation of consumers born during the 1990s (the Net Generation) would regularly use the Internet through different devices, such as PCs, mobile phones, TVs, game consoles, electronic calendars, and other devices yet to be created. These new consumers will want to connect and can be contacted at any time of day and anywhere, thus contributing to a major development of the Mobile Internet. The Net Generation will be the first interactive and always-connected generation. Previous generations simply did not have such ability, but were restricted to letter writing and fixed-line telephone connectivity.

The Net Generation therefore is not an evolutionary sequence from the previous generation, and it has specific cultural and consumption characteristics.

Tapscott (1998) identifies the cultural characteristics and consumption trends of the Net Generation as follows:

Cultural Characteristics of Net Generation:

• Independent and Autonomous - This feature is due to the availability of and the ability to actively seek and obtain information, unlike the passive role that characterized generations prior to the emergence of the Internet;

• Emotionally and Intellectually Open - This generation often uses the Internet to share their personal data and thoughts, subjecting them to intrusion into their private lives. However this situation seems to be an acceptable part of their culture and way of being;

• Socially Inclusive - The use of technology by this generation leads to greater social inclusion because it allows a quick and direct contact between individuals of different socio-economic condition, ethnicity and culture;

• Freedom of Expression and Open Mindedness - The Internet enables this generation to be exposed to a greater number of ideas, opinions and arguments, to which they would not otherwise have access. This reality leads to them having a more open mind to new ideas, and to consider it a natural opportunity to openly discuss their ideas and opinions;

• Innovativeness - This generation is constantly looking for how to make better and faster their personal activities, and school studies. The online world is a natural and ideal place for the new generation to develop their innovative capacity;

• Preoccupation with Maturity - When young people get a high degree of independence and autonomy, it is also natural to have a degree of maturity greater than that normally-acceptable for their age. This is one of the characteristics of this generation to be considered seriously by adults;

• Research Curiosity - They do not understand how search technology works but care only how they can work with it to find information. The curiosity to discover new ways of "doing" things and new knowledge is now more typical of young people, due to the availability and ease of obtaining information that the Internet provides;

• Immediacy - The Internet enables personal contact quickly and almost immediately. Features like e-mail and chat are the new means whereby one or more persons are in constant dialogue, unlike what happened previously with the letter or fax. Also, online search is much faster than in the offline world of bookstores or libraries. The life of the Net Generation is faster and even yields immediate answers;

• Sensitivity to Corporate Interests - The change to a more interactive Internet mentality determines the potential disappearance of a few monopolies and the possibility of developing a lot of creativity by entrepreneurial individuals or small organizations, which thus gain greater respect and socio-economic presence.

• Confidence and Authenticity - Since the Internet and much of its content are anonymous, diverse and easily accessible, people need to continually validate the information they get in terms of the authenticity of its source.

Consumer Characteristics of Net Generation:

• They Want Options - the possibility of a diverse choice is very much valued by this generation and can be an important factor in loyalty;

• They Want the Offer Personalized - This generation is drawn to customized environments that they can influence. On the Internet there is always an option to offer products that are more in line with the need or desire of each customer. For example, when buying software, or a Dell computer, it is possible to adapt or customize the product or service to the specific needs of each individual;

• They Change Their Way of Thinking - Electronic computer and Internet-based games applications are “virtual worlds” where mistakes are easily corrected and situations recreated. This generation also wants to be able to do the same in the real world;

• They Want to Try Before They Buy - Young people are not just "eyes and ears", but real users and it is difficult to convince people otherwise who want the option to try the product before they buy it. Industries such as electronic games makers have understood this reality by allowing their products to be used for a period of time without cost or by providing demos. To try before you buy, or in fact, to obtain relevant information before buying, will be part of the purchase routine of this generation;

• They Want Functionality - Young people use the technology just like any other application in the home, feeling it no more difficult to install new software than to boil a kettle of water. They are more concerned about ease of use and technology’s functional benefits than with the technology itself.

Another author, Forsyth (2003) characterized the future as consumer “i-rich” (information rich) but “time poor” (little free time). His 1999 study, conducted in Australia, identified a new kind of emerging consumer (then representing 22% of the population) with a buying power above average but little time available. These individuals seek out activities with little expenditure of time in self-service environments, where they can perform and meet their needs quickly. For the consumer it is important to find suppliers that meet demands quickly and with quality, and they look online and offline for such suppliers. This type of consumer, increasingly common in developed societies, will pursue what new technologies and the Internet in particular offer in addressing their needs more quickly and with the expected quality.

Authors such as Lewis and Bridger (2003) state that consumer time and attention are critical factors in the New Economy, and the companies that do not recognize this fact, run the serious risk of being penalized financially. The limitation of time in the new consumer causes a limitation in their attention to commercial messages. A "lack of time" causes a great pressure in convenience, choice and offers made in real time. Companies must be able to persuade their potential consumers and users to spend some of your valuable time with the message they want to communicate. Attention to the message more or less will answer the question: "What is in it for me?". However, to be able to act on the new message, consumers must have confidence in those who sent the message.

In 10 years time, when the Net Generation has on average 20 years of online experience, much of the population will already fully integrated into the digital revolution. Of course the culture of the Net Generation will extend to the whole society and cause major changes in institutions and markets. Forsyth (2003) characterizes the demand markets in the future, given the changes in the desires of consumers and the role that technology can have, as follows:

• There will be greater demand for a self-service environment where the consumer can meet their needs in a more personalized way, and will be willing to pay for it if the service and products have the quality expected;

• Marketing communication will be initiated more often by the consumer, contrary to what is happening now, which is usually initiated by the supplier. Companies will not be intrusive by sending contacts via phone, email or SMS, which are not previously authorized by consumers;

• Consumers will want to see their problems solved and their needs met, imitating the concept of B-to-B market solutions. This movement will force companies to change their business structures to respond properly and achieve the quality expected;

• Consumers will highlight companies that provide them with the solutions and products or services desired, considering that these are companies which are "on my side";

• Markets will be very transparent in relation to price, because consumers will be able to easily see and compare online prices available for a particular product or service and can thus create a major threat to the profitability of enterprises;

• Margins achieved by companies in selling their products and services will be lower due to greater transparency on prices and difficulty to justify a higher value in products and services offered. The consumer will be more rational and will find it more difficult to value product benefits which bring little added value. Companies will need to offer undifferentiated products with a lower price;

It is essential for companies to already know who they are and how their consumers will be different in the future, because marketing media will not only be using existing but also new resources made available by new technologies and the Internet.

In Portugal there is also a thorough knowledge of the new generation, or Net Generation, but this has assumed that it is equal to that already characterized in other countries. This assumption may not be correct and as such it is important to study this characterization.

Therefore the Children's Forum was established with the aim of investigating and providing knowledge about the Net Generation in Portugal, through the continuous and annual survey of 1,200 children aged between 4 and 12 years, by holding group meetings with children and parents, and searching for scientific information available on this issue.

This research, developed together by academics and companies, aims to better understand the importance of this new generation for today and future business. Due to this reason, results tends to be mainly descriptive, business oriented, allowing an easy interpretation and marketing application by the companies.

As major inputs we consider the new findings on net generation, coherent with those referred by authors as Tapscott (1998) and Feather (2002) and the methodology applied being suitable for different countries and businesses.

2. Research Methodology

This work, aiming to characterize the Net Generation in Portugal, was developed based on a local project named Forum da Criança (Children Fórum). Forum da Criança was developed by three entities: Apeme – Portuguese research company operating from Lisbon in Portugal and Angola; BrandKey – Portuguese marketing company operating from Lisbon in Portugal and Spain; Georg Dutschke – PhD in Marketing & Management and researcher at Sevilla University (Spain).

The project started in 2005 and is supported by major local and multinational companies, paying an annual fee for receiving information and new knowledge on kids aged from 6 to 12 years old. Information received is regarding uses and attitudes, but also on relations with each brand, in particular those brands supporting the project, but also of their main competitors.

Information is obtained from a quantitative research made twice a year in Portugal, focus groups made with kids, best academic and professional practices available on papers and literature, and field implementations made by clients. Also meetings with sponsors are organized to share information and best practices and, once a year a major conference is organized in Lisbon, open to professionals and the public.

Results discussed in this paper were obtained from the continuous research made from 2005 to early 2009, involving a total of 3.600 kids.

Forum da Criança quantitative research was developed based on existing models from Feather (2002) and Tapscott (1998). These models were based on an online community of kids sharing information among them. Since in Portugal at the time the project started the online penetration of kids from age 6 to 12 was low, and due to legal constraints on managing such an online community, the decision was made to develop the research based on individual interviews. This methodology obtains better insights and achieves very relevant quantitative and qualitative information. To complement the information, focus groups were developed with two objectives:

- Validate concepts and items to develop the questionnaire;
- Achieve in depth information for specific concepts or concerns by companies.

Quantitative research is done twice a year so as to evaluate seasonal differences, thus also allowing seasonal products and brands to achieve more accurate information. The first part is done in winter (November-December) and the second in summer (May-June). In total 1.200 kids are interviewed each year, 600 in winter and 600 in summer.

Interviews are made in public and private schools from two major cities in Portugal: Lisbon and Oporto. The decision to limit the study to these two cities was due to budget constraints, difficulties in contacting schools in more rural areas, because approximately 50% of Portuguese kids aged from 0 to 14 years old (INE, 2008 [1]) lives in these areas, and major trends normally emerge from these places.

The sample is built by quotas considering factors such as gender, region, age and public or private school. In each part of the research (winter/summer) different kids are interviewed. In the last one made in winter 2008-2009, sample data was 601 Kids (Table 1).

Table 1. Sample distribution:

Gender		Age			Region		School	
Masc.	Fem.	4 - 6	7 - 10	11 - 12	Lisbon	Oporto	Public	Private
311	290	201	199	201	302	299	302	299

Source: Forum da Criança (2009)

This sample reflects the ones considered in previous parts of the quantitative research.

Considering the total number of kids aged from 0 to 14 years old available at INE (2008), 1.622.991, this sample considers a sample error of 4,0% for a 95% level of confidence. These values have statistical significance (Fortin, 2003) and enable us to generalize the results to the existing population. Also it is important to point out that the population aged from 6 to 12 is lower than that considered for this analysis, such that the sample error is, in fact, lower than 4%. If we consider total interviews made during the research (3.600 from December 2005 to January 2009) then the maximum sample error would have been only 1,6%. This sample error is a strong support for this research consistency and the validity of its findings and conclusions.

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[1] INE (Instituto Nacional de Estatistica) do not have kids segmentation from 6 to 12 years old. This is the closest available information to our target group

Information was collected by individual interviews made in thirteen schools, seven in Lisbon and six in Oporto. In Lisbon five schools were public and two private. In Oporto three schools were public and three private.

In this way, field work was made between December 2008 and January 2009, involving a staff of fourteen professionals. Each interview took 30-40 minutes.

Interviews were made based on a questionnaire previously developed according to project objectives and supporting brands needs. Basically the questionnaire considers:

- Respondent information
- Kids preferred activities (uses and attitudes)
- Kids relations with technologies
- Kids relations with brands
- Kids influence on family consumption
- Specific questions for each of the sponsor's brands

On average, 70% of questionnaires were common to all sponsors and 30% closed to each one, being the common information shared among all.

Each questionnaire was first tested with kids within a focus group and a small sample. Focus group results enabled us to validate item's importance and relevance. Pre-tests with small sample (10 kids) enabled us to validate questionnaire dimension, easiness and time needed to respond. Being a quantitative longitudinal research questionnaire, it was adapted during the study years, according to experience obtained.

To facilitate the answers, different stimulus were used, such as photos, cards with brands, among others. This allows a better perspective of the reality from the kids, facilitating the answers, their interpretation and the findings obtained.

3. Research Results

As expected from a longitudinal and quantitative research, findings are very relevant both in quantity and quality. As referred by Feather (2002) and Tapscott (1998), Net Generation kids have some important characteristics and behaviors:

1. They are independent, autonomous and mature.

2. They have an open mind and enjoy easy socialization.
3. They like to express their thoughts freely and are confident.
4. They are innovative and like to investigate.

We will discuss now the key findings by identifying major interests and behaviors by age and sex.

4-6 years old

Main interests are:

- Going to beach (96%), be outside (96%), watching DVDs (95%)
- 57% make collections of things
- 50% play sports, with being swimming (35%) and gymnastics (30%) being more frequent
- 60% from those not playing sports, 29% would like to play soccer, 14% ballet and 13% swimming
- They would like to have more outdoor activities than those actually having them
- 53% have music classes, 43% English lessons and 29% catechesis

Preferred heroes:

- Boys: Panda Kung Fu, Spider Man
- Girls: Hello Kitty, Winx, Dora the Explorer

Relation with animals

- 49% have pets at home
- 88% of those not having a pet would like to have one

TV vs Internet preference

- 74% prefer TV and 10% the Internet.
- 36% use Internet. Main use is to Play games

Devices possession

- 82% have PC, 56% with Internet access
- 12% have mobile phone (Vodafone 25%; TMN 21%; Optimus 4%)
- 57% listen to radio

Going Shopping

- 95% go shopping with parents and 85% enjoy it
- They like to go shopping in Shopping Centers (25%), Continente (19%) and Pingo Doce (14%).

Note: Continente and Pingo Doce are local generalist retailers

Products being chosen by themselves

- Boys: toys (65%), ice cream (46%), goodies and game consoles (45%)
- Girls: goodies (56%), ice cream (48%), and cookies (41%)

What type of gift they like to receive

- Toys (92%),
- Clothing (12%)
- DVDs (11%)

How they choose their gifts

- TV advertising (55%)
- Catalogs (21%)
- In store (19%)

About money

- 78% have savings

Relation with TV Advertising

- 51% like it

Brand awareness

- They know 58% of brands evaluated in the research

- Most known categories are TV Channels (67%) and Stores / Shopping Center (67%)
- Less known categories are Cable TV (45%) and Banks (41%)

Main preferred pets

- Boys: Ronald McDonald (44%), Capitão Estrela (34%), Yoco (29%) and Quicky (28%)
- Girls: Popota (43%), Panda (37%), Leopoldina and Ronald McDonald (31%)

Note: Capitão Estrela from a local company, Quicky from Nestle, Popota and Leopoldina from Continente.

7-10years old

Main interests are:

- Going to beach (93%), watching DVDs (92%), Playing games with friends (91%)
- 63% make collections of things
- 32% are members of a club
- 65% play sports, 36% play soccer and 34% swimming
- 78% of those not playing sport, would like to do it, mainly soccer and swimming (27%)
- They would like to have more outdoor activities than those actually having them
- 52% have English lessons, 46% music lessons and 42% catechesis

Preferred heroes

- For both boys and girls: wrestling fighters
- Boys: Cristiano Ronaldo, Undertaker and Panda Kung Fu,
- Girls: Rita Pereira (local actress), Hannah Montana and Winx

Relation with animals

- 63% have pets
- 88% of those not having a pet would like to have one

TV vs Internet preference

- 47% prefer TV and 28% prefer Internet.
- 73% spend more time on TV and 8% on Internet
- 77% use Internet, mainly for playing games and looking for school information

Device possession

- 89% have PC, 76% with Internet access.
- 55% have mobile phone (Vodafone 36%; TMN 35%; Optimus 14%)
- 65% listen to radio
- 54% read magazines

Note: TMN and Optimus are local operators

Going shopping

- 92% going shopping with parents and 78% enjoy it
- They like to go shopping in Shopping Centers (30%), Continente (31%) and Jumbo (14%)

Note: Jumbo is a Auchan brand

Products being chosen by themselves

- Boys: toys (69%), goodies (63%), ice cream (61%), game consoles (48%)
- Girls: toys (58%), CDs (56%), goodies and ice cream (52%)

What type of gift they like to receive

- Toys (55%), console games (34%) and clothing (29%)

How they choose their gifts

- TV advertising (39%),
- Catalogs (25%)
- Magazines, and in store / shopping center (22%)

About money

- 51% receive a monthly income
- 24% use monthly income to pay lunches and goodies
- 43% have savings in a bank and 86% in the home

Relation with TV advertising

- 57% like it

Brand awareness

- They know 84% of brands evaluated in the research
- Most known categories are Stores / Shopping Center (91%) and Drinks (88%)
- Less known categories are industrial brands (76%)

Main preferred pets

- Boys: Ronald McDonald (44%), Quicky (29%) and Sapo (28%)
- Girls: Ronald McDonald (41%), Popota (38%) and M&M’s (30%)

Note: Sapo is the Internet brand from Portugal Telecom

Members of a brand club

- 25% are a brand club member, of which, Auchan Rik&Rok (74%), Toys’r Us (11%), Nestle Quicky (11%)

11-12 years old

Main interests

- Speak with friends (96%), going to cinema (93%) and listen to music (91%)
- 53% make collections of things
- 40% are club members
- 64% play sports, with swimming (28%) and soccer (25%) being the preferred ones
- 91% of those not playing sport, would like to do so, mainly soccer (32%) and swimming (21%)
- They would like to have more outdoor activities than those actually having them.

- 24% have catechesis, 22% English lessons, and 19% music lessons

Preferred heroes

- Boys: Cristiano Ronaldo, Gato Fedorento and Quaresma
- Girls: High School actors, Hannah Montana and Rita Pereira

Note: Gato Fedorento are a humoristic group, Quaresma is a soccer player

Relation with animals

- 67% have pets
- 80% of those not having a pet would like to have one

Preferences related to TV

- Preferred channels are TVI (62%), Disney Channel (44%) and SIC (34%)
- Boys preferred programs: Morangos com Açúcar, Gato Fedorento, Movies
- Girls preferred programs: Morangos com Açúcar, Soaps, Hannah Montana

Note: Morangos com Açucar is a local teen oriented soap

TV vs Internet preference

- 37% prefer TV and 30% prefer Internet.
- 59% spend more time on TV and 16% on Internet
- 92% use Internet, mainly to Play games, use instant messenger, and to look for school information
- 96% have PC, 88% with Internet access
- 89% have mobile phone (Vodafone 54%; TMN 27%; Optimus 12%)
- 79% listen to radio
- 65% read magazines

Going shopping

- 94% go shopping with parents and 78% enjoy it

- They like to go shopping in Shopping Centers (53%), Continente (20%) and FNAC (15%)

Products being chosen by themselves

- Boys: game consoles (69%), CDs (67%), goodies (66%), ice cream (65%)
- Girls: CDs (67%), goodies (65%), ice cream (63%), DVDs and books (57%)

What type of gift they like to receive

- Clothing (51%), console games (45%) and money (27%)

How they choose their gifts

- TV advertising (34%), magazines and in store /shopping center (22%)

About money

- 72% have a monthly income
- 35% uses monthly income for paying lunches, snacks and goodies
- 58% have a bank account
- 78% have in home savings

Relation with TV Advertising

- 59% like it

Brand awareness

- They know 93% of brands evaluated in the research
- Most known categories are Stores / Shopping Center and Drinks (98%)
- Less known categories are Industrial brands (89%)

Most preferred pets

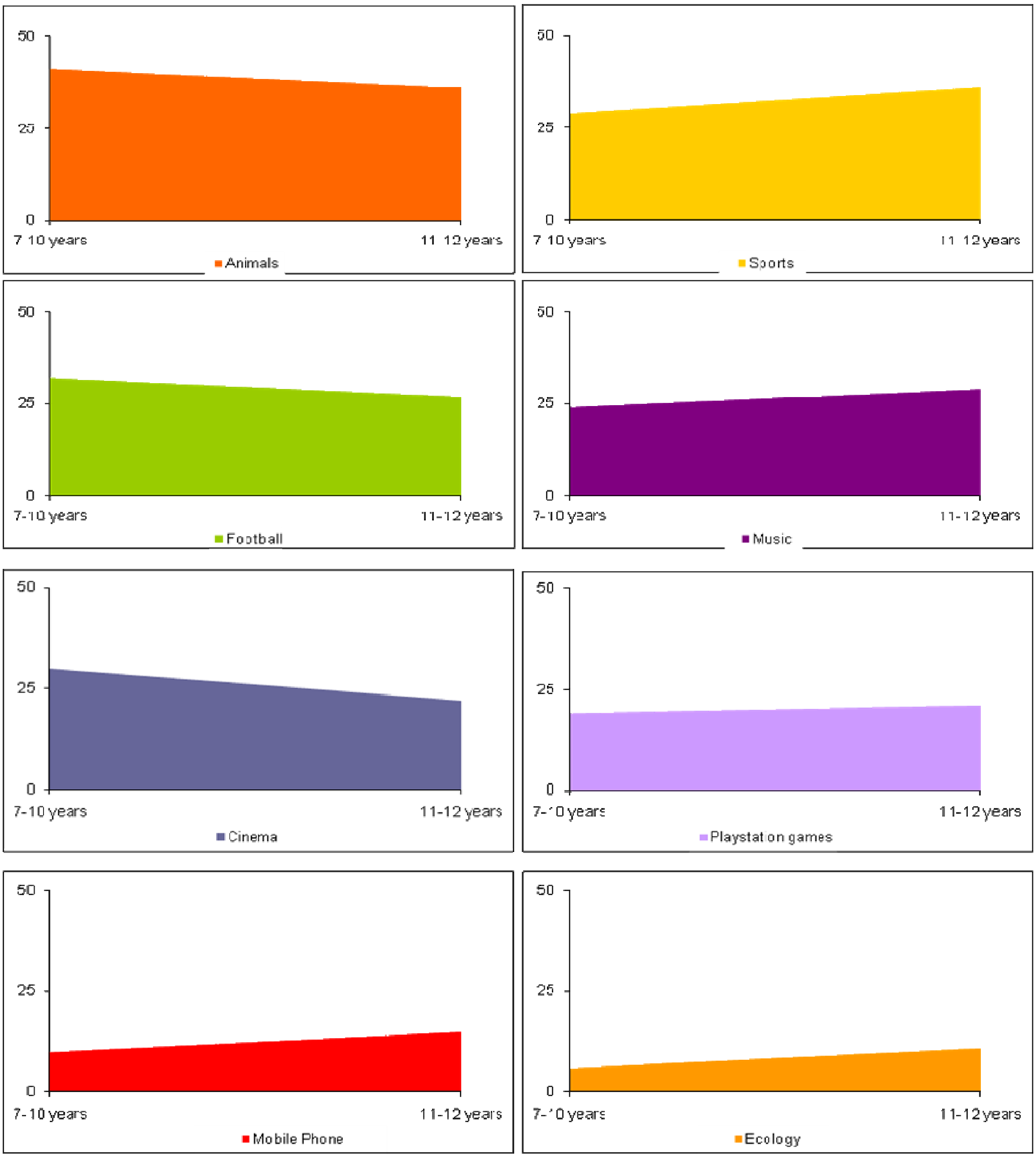
- Boys: Sapo (55%), Ronald McDonald (51%) and M&M's (46%)
- Girls: Ronald McDonald (55%), M&M's (42%) and Popota (29%)

Members of a brand club

- 15% are brand club members, of which, Auchan Rik&Rok (83%), Toys'r Us (8%), Nestle Quicky (8%), Panda (8%)

Having characterized kids by age, it is now relevant to look at the main differences in preferences by age (Graphic 1). It is relevant to observe that the level of interest in sports, music, mobile phones and ecology increases with age, while interest in animals, cinema and football decreases. To play games in a play station is stable among the ages.

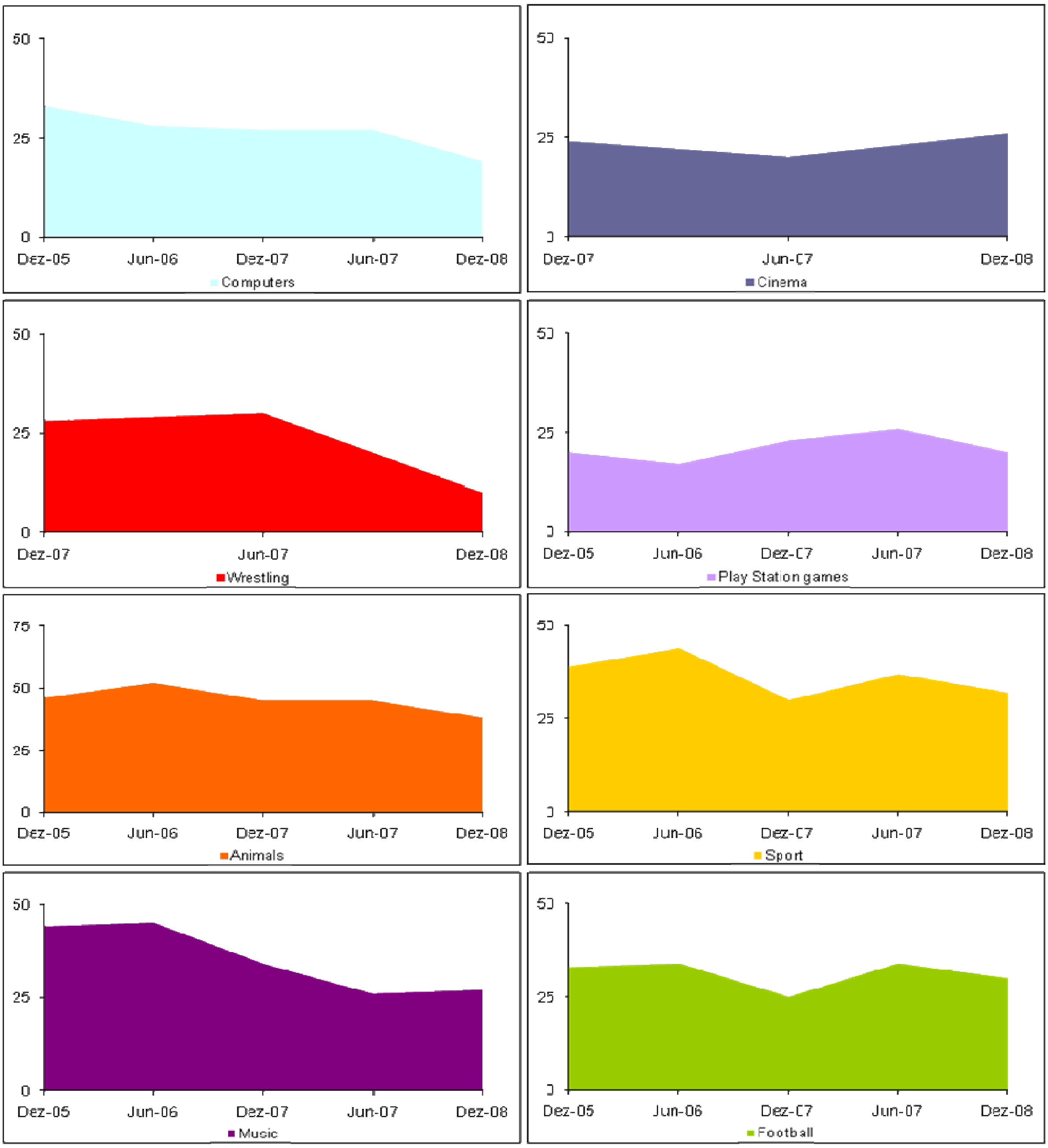
Graphic 1. Main interest evolution by age



Source: Forum da Criança, 2009

Having characterized kids’ interests by age, it is also relevant to look at some important evolutions in their preferences between 2005 and 2008 (some information is not available from 2005 due to the fact that it was not studied at that time). Again, it is relevant to point out that the interest in sports, music, mobile phones and ecology increases with the age, while the interest in animals, cinema and football decreases. To play games in a play station is again stable among the ages (Graphic 2).

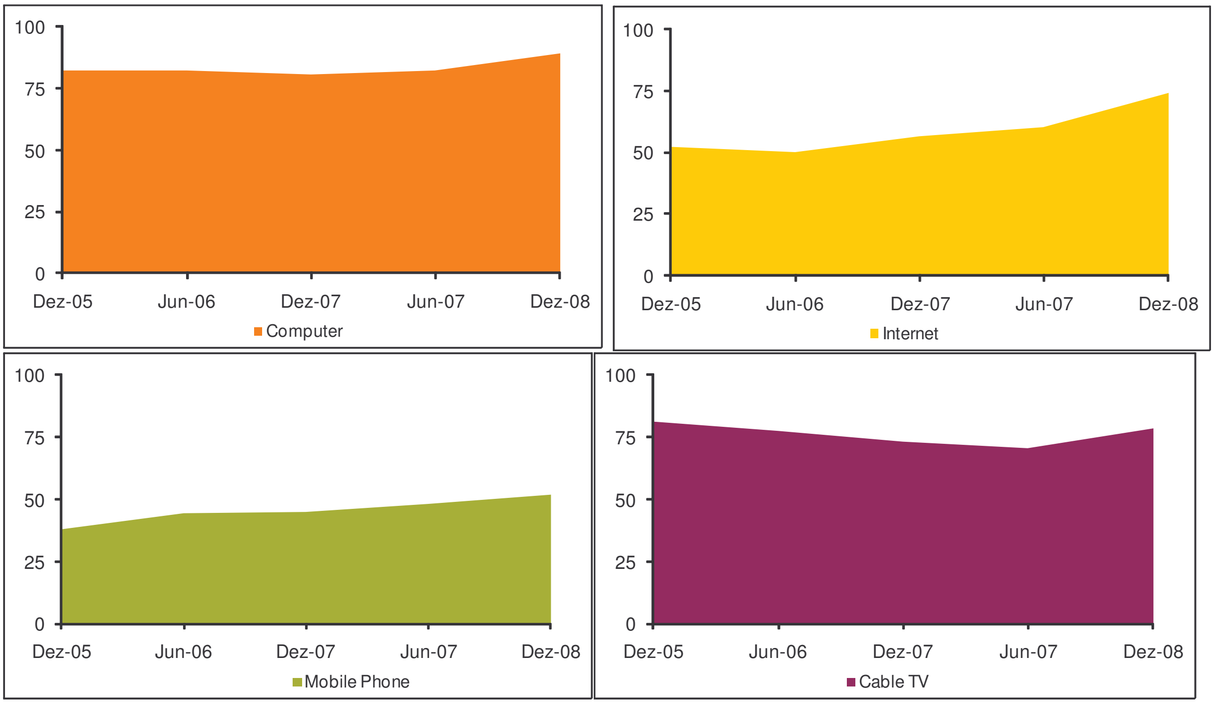
Graphic 2. Main interest evolution by year



Source: Forum da Criança, 2009

It is now relevant to look at some important evolutions in the possession of technology by kids in the home between 2005 and 2008 (some information is not available from 2005 due to the fact that it was not studied at that time). The main differences are in Internet and Mobile Phone availability (Graphic 3)

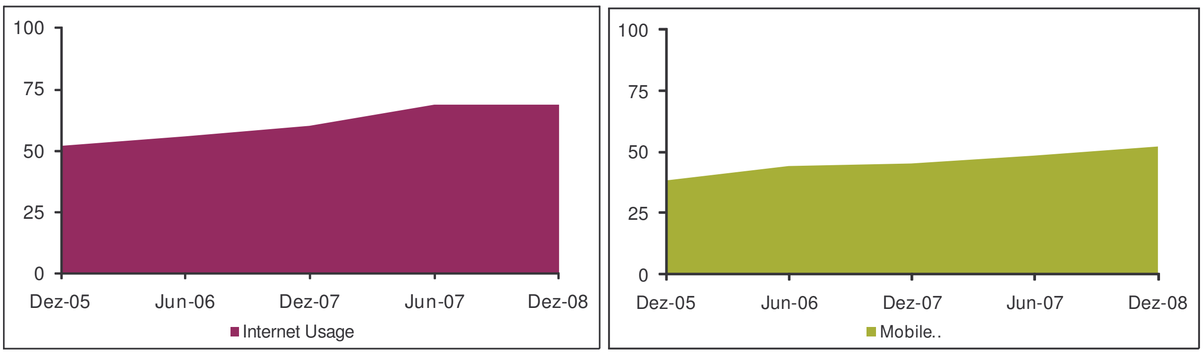
Graphic 3. Technology possession by year



Source: Forum da Criança, 2009

Technology usage from 2005 to 2008 also shows an increase in Internet and Mobile Phone access (Graphic 4).

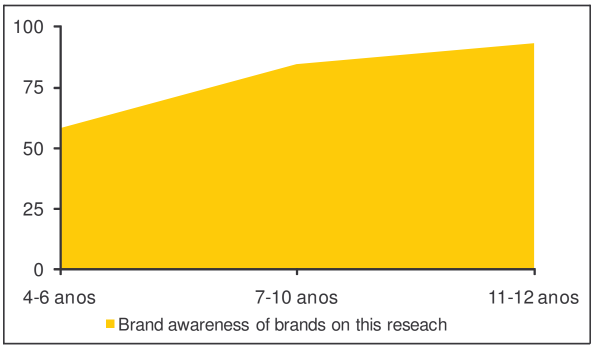
Graphic 4. Technology usage by year



Source: Forum da Criança, 2009

Brand awareness also increases with age. Older kids know more brands than the youngest ones. (Graphic 5)

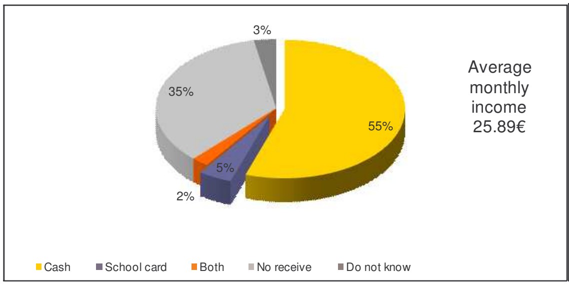
Graphic 5. Brand awareness evolution by age



Source: Forum da Criança, 2009

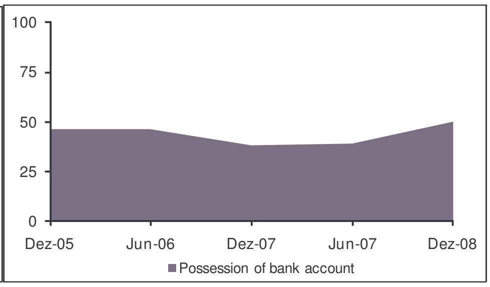
Net Generation kids in Portugal have an average monthly income of approximately 26€uros (Graphic 6) and the possession of a banking account seems to be growing in the last year (Graphic 7).

Graphic 6. Average income



Source: Forum da Criança, 2009

Graphic 7. Bank account possession



Source: Forum da Criança, 2009

4. Research Conclusions

Several important conclusions with relevance for strategic marketing decisions can be observed from this research.

First, it is clear that Portuguese kids, or at least the Portuguese Net Generation, have much in common with those studied by researchers such as Feather (2002) and Tapscott (1998). Since this is also observed in other European countries, then effective global marketing approaches could be considered, thus obtaining important synergies on production and communication.

Kids move in different contexts — technological ones (TV, Internet, others) and non-technological ones (outdoor activities, pets, others) — but new technologies allow continuous contact with other kids. This generation is more open to the outside world and likes to interact. Brands thus have the opportunity to increase the frequency of moments for contact. Being present in new local markets, brands have new opportunities to be relevant.

When communicating through the internet, it is key for brands to have relevant subjects, both for fun and education. Relevant subjects correctly adapted to each different context, allows for a much higher number of interactions, with obvious benefits for brand recognition and positioning. However, subjects should be coherent and consistent among the various marketing communication tools.

Kids have different ways of living during the week and on the weekend. They spend their time differently. During the week the available time (out of school) is mainly absorbed by school homework, being with family, watching TV, and with reduced access to the Internet. On the weekend, time is spent more on outdoor activities and in the use of technology such as the Internet, or play station. We may say that kids tend to select and specialize their activities according to their available time. They tend to be rational on time management.

Understanding the different contexts in which this generation moves is key for a correct and effective marketing communication. Brands should carefully evaluate the temporary nature of their actions so as to maximize the focus and profitability of their actions.

The need to know information and to search online is one of the main characteristics of this generation. Since a very young age, kids are naturally curious and motivated to search for information. Technologies, in particular the Internet, are much used for that. Knowledge obtained with search, or the simple fact that search is normal and needed, introduces important changes in the purchase decision process. Brands should understand the subjects (for fun and for learning) that are relevant for kids, and make them available through different media, in a friendly and continuous away. Only those brands that are relevant to kids, through products or services, would be sustainable in the future.

Series like "Morangos com Açucar" (a teen-oriented local soap) have achieved unparalleled success. Children will not miss a single episode. It is possible to infer that this success is due to the affinity between the real life of children (going to school, where there are friends and teachers) and the content of the series. The concept of simultaneous lives is relevant. There is never any repetition, no getting lost in any one episode or adventure; there is no chance to see or live it again. In each episode there is the exclusivity of the moment. Brands must understand that in the new logic of network socialization, the experience of time is important. What happened cannot be repeated. The new generation of children gives importance to time. Children do not want to lose moments that they believe to be relevant.

By using the different media available today and understanding the different contexts in which children move, brands must develop relevant content for each moment of experience, obtaining relevant and continuous communication with this group.

Children’s opinions are increasingly important and influential in family purchase decisions. Children have a heightened awareness about money. They give it high importance and know when and how to spend. Plastic money or virtual reality is well perceived by this target group.

Children’s lives increasingly happen across different media and contexts, where they interact with money (bank, school, garden, Internet, others). Brands have to understand how to establish relationships with children, and their decision-making and knowledge of money, so they can be prescribed by this new generation. Virtual decisions would also require the virtualization or digitization of money (in concept and in practice). This new generation is accustomed to seeking out the “best buy” product information, thus allowing for a better use of their money. This reality is true for their large purchases (or their daily spending) but also for the family shopping, both physically and online. Value of money is keenly felt by this new generation. Brands have to learn how to communicate, at each moment of contact, their brand value, providing valid reasons for the product to be chosen and purchased.

Brands are an integral part of a kid’s reference system that generates sociability. Brands which are equivalent to imaginary characters gain legitimacy with the kids, to create value. By developing values that capture the imagination, brands are accomplishing their goals bypassing the frontier of just being a product brand, and becoming brands with values for life. Disney is perhaps the best example. Brands have to know how to develop values well beyond their basic business goals. This new generation appreciates those brands that really care about creating value for life through relevant products; brands which have a real concern with their users and their world. The continuous and consistent use of different media — in different contexts and at the right time — to send messages reflecting values for life, is highly relevant for brands to master.

Children show a widespread interest for characters. They like Matilda and James (actors in Morangos com Açucar) as well as the Power Rangers or Cristiano Ronaldo. New technologies allow the emergence of new global characters, understood as being real. Any character (real or fictional) can be quickly spread around the world. The existence of more characters and the global media, allowing mass messages, creates fewer differences and perceptions between real people and actors. It becomes more difficult to identify what really is real. To a child, everything can be real.

The possibility of recruiting new "virtual opinion makers" of short duration, but high profile, is a new reality. Brands have the opportunity, and are almost obliged, to identify or create new characters, fictional or real, who can communicate effectively with their customers, across the board in different ways, contexts and times. These new characters should be the passport to the world of perceptions created by the brand.

The new Net Generation is not a sequence of the previous one. It is much more complex, informed, active, mature, and moves across different contexts and moments. Strategic marketing must know how to create key relationships with these kids, understanding them as actual and future brand consumers. If they do not act this way, brands will face strong issues, not only in the short term, but also in their more strategic long-term marketing vision.

5. Research Limitations

As usual in any research paper, on the use of different techniques and tools and development processes, we have been made assumptions and faced restrictions imposed by research limitations as follows:

- The research does not consider correlation analysis between items, thus not allowing us to verify "cause and effect" relations among Net Generation characteristics and their influence on brand and marketing management.
- By using only a descriptive analysis of data, the research does not allow us to validate the effective importance (actual and future) of this new generation in terms of corporate profitability.

- Since this research was primary developed for company use, the questionnaire was developed for this purpose, thus not allowing its use for academic research as it was not verified for its statistical internal consistency.

However, we do not consider that these limitations invalidate the overall conclusions for brand marketing and communications, both to today's kid's market, nor to future consumers.

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