

Generation X Females and the Magazine for Them

Generation X (like the unknown variable X), first coined by the Canadian novelist Douglas Coupland in his book *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture* in 1991, is roughly defined as the group of people born between 1965 and 1980 (Stephey). In the United States, Gen Xers is a 46-million group, representing 13%–18% of the population of every state, and half of them are Generation X females (“Demographic Profile”).

Sandwiched between open-minded Generation Y girls and “power-wielding” (Rezvani) Baby Boomer women, Generation X females who are reaching their forties and fifties are kind of stuck in the middle or muddle (Dawson). Gen X women have been usually described as “empowered, skeptical and tech-savvy”(Rezvani), and this research will reveal more aspects of these middle-aged women.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Family: Always the Priority. Having grown up in an era famous for uncertainty, Gen X females get used to weighing pros and cons of everything in their life (Smith, Clurman). In order to get away from this sense of uncertainty, they regard having children and a stable family as one of the most crucial things in their life. These women are actually the group of people who are most likely to say they place greater emphasis on family and personal life instead of work and money (“The 2009”).

According to the primary research, all of the interviewees said family ranked high on their list of priorities. “Actually I don’t spend the most time on family since my daughter

went to university, but family is always the most important thing in my heart,” Interviewee A said. As a Christian, Interviewee B ranks “relationship with my husband and then my children” as the second important thing, just right after “relationship with Jesus.”

Children: Childless or Prioritize Children. According to the findings published by a New York think tank, the Center for Work-Life Policy, 43% of college-educated Generation X women were childless, despite three-quarters being in established relationships (Mills, McGinnes). Gen X women were brought up by mothers inspired by the feminist revolution and so these mothers would like their daughters to aim high (Belkin). Therefore, women born in Generation X don’t have much pressure put on them to have children. In addition, many females decide they want to do two things well—their relationship and career, rather than three things badly (Bindley). Actually, they “represent the first generation of women who truly, honestly have a choice about whether to be society’s incubators.” (Belkin)

However, the primary research result is contradictory to the finding which indicates many Gen X women choose not to have children, because all of the three interviewees have children ranging from 1 kid to 4 kids. All of them also place a lot of importance on their offspring. Interviewee B spent almost all of her time on children activities, and so her favorite movie is *Beauty and the Beast*. She “worked” at home—and her work is raising her four children and teaching them with the help of *Teacher Manual*. “All of my

children don't go to school, because we are doing home school. This year, their subjects are Math, Reading, English, History, Science, etc. By the way, I have a friend teaching them sewing once a week." In terms of interviewee C, she spent most of her time "helping kids do homework and read" after work.

Work: Ambitious or Not? While some of Gen X women are leaving the workplace to be stay-at-home moms, many others are a hard-working bunch, and 44% of them work in "management, professional, and related" fields (Mintel). Although Gen X women are better educated, work longer hours, and read a lot when compared to other generations (Flotz), they are still feeling more stalled in their careers than men (Bindley). Besides, some of Gen X women are becoming entrepreneurs, being dubbed as "mom-preneurs" by Katie Couric on NBC's *Today Show*. That offers them an opportunity to earn a living as well as a better work-life balance.

In terms of their work attitude, although 74% Gen X women consider themselves ambitious (Belkin), the interviewees in the primary research are not that career-focused and aggressive. "I did want to achieve great accomplishments when I was in my twenties, but now I am just working for survival. I do envy those who have retired," interviewee A said. The stay-at-home-mom interviewee B said she would not go back to the workplace to work even if when her children had grown up, because "I am able to visit my kids and their family if I am still staying at home."

Finance: Empty Wallet. Generally speaking, Gen Xers don't have enough money.

Two-thirds of Gen Xers doubt they'll have enough money to live comfortably in retirement or cover medical expenses ("Gen X"). Financial pressure is not relieved for women in this generation, since few of them "have the option to rely on a man to pay her bills for the rest of her life." (Bindley)

According to the Consumer Expenditure Survey by U.S. Department of Labor in 2008, housing is usually one of the largest expenditures. Interviewee B said, "We just don't usually have extra finance at the end of the month and put that in anything else other than bill. The majority of our money goes to paying our mortgage for our house." Married Gen X women, especially those with children, tend to be more concerned about their economic situations (Mintel). "It takes me about \$40,000 per year to pay for my daughter's tuition, and after that, we almost don't have money left," said interviewee A, whose daughter goes to Harvard University.

Personal Lifestyle: Health – Oriented. Gen X women are becoming health-oriented, as they are growing older and trying to prolong life. "After witnessing some people around me becoming sick or passing away, health becomes the biggest worry in my life," said interviewee A. To keep healthy and fit, half of Gen Xers, including 62% of women in this subgroup, are "watching" their diet (Mintel). Besides cooking healthy meals from scratch, Gen X women are trying to eat veggies, replacing meat. "I tried lots of fresh vegetables

and have a balanced meal,” said Interviewee B. Doing exercise is another way for keeping a healthy lifestyle. Interviewee A has a Samba class at the gym, and interviewee C jogs three times a week.

In terms of personal interests, Gen Xers are generally more likely to engage in a variety of outdoor activities (Mintel). “I’d like to spend as much time as outside as possible,” said interviewee C. “I like jogging outside.” In contrast, many of them are also obsessed with indoor fun. “I prefer staying at home to enjoy cooking, baking, and gardening,” interviewee B said. “I also like reading, although usually I don’t have that time.” The same as interviewee B, interviewee A is longing for reading. “I do hope I can have time to read without interruption, a period of time when I needn’t cook or answer the phone, but I don’t know when I can have a life like that,” said interviewee A.

Being busy is their everyday life, because these middle-aged women have to take care of everything, including work, family, relationship with others etc. “Time is never enough for me,” said interviewee A. “I just feel like everything I am doing can not be finished perfect, because I don’t have enough time to do everything well.” Interviewee B shares the same feeling, and she finds a good way to deal with the time issue. “I usually start by restricting social media, because I find that can be big time waster for me,” she laughed.

MAGAZINE COVER IDEA

Magazine Subject and Target Audience. The name of the magazine is “Soft Time,” which means relaxing and free time. This name is mainly based on the hustling life of Gen X women, who are busy earning money for survival and taking care of the family. The inspiration comes from interviewee A. She desires to have reading time without interruption, indicating that she is dreaming of time that only belongs to her and so she can read in her tranquil, small world. Therefore, this magazine is named “Soft Time,” aiming at offering Gen X women a comfortable reading experience that can help them relax and recover from their busy life. The subject areas of this magazine mainly cover relaxing topics like travel, music, and literature. Other topics include health, and tips that solve women’s issues.

This magazine is like a 40-year-old masseuse. Being easygoing, comforting, and pacifying, this masseuse is close to women in this generation. She listens to their hearts, gives them wise suggestions, and helps them relax with her soft hands.

Based on the magazine subjects and personality, the cover photo is a woman in her thirties lying on a spa bed. She is smiling with a feeling of relaxation, satisfaction, and confidence. Behind her are blurred green plants as the background, which creates an environment that allows women to take a deep fresh breath.

Because all of the interviewees are living in or near New England, it would be better to just apply the research findings to this region. Therefore, this magazine is

generally targeting all of Gen X women in New England and places near to this area. In addition, even if Gen X women are facing many challenges, including financial pressure and a glass ceiling in the course of their careers, this magazine will only focus on offering suggestions about their daily life rather than careers. The reason is that this magazine is for those who want to relieve pressure and learn something in the meantime, instead of those who would like to learn how to make big money.

Titles for Articles. The first part of the magazine includes tips offered to Gen X women that could help them relax and solve their life problems at the same time. Since these women almost spend all of their weekend staying with family, and most of them prefer outdoor activities, one article could be “Weekend With Family: Getaways in New England.” To be specific, these people place great importance on their husband (or boyfriend) and children. Therefore, other two articles could be “Bring Romance Back Into Your Relationship” and “Let Kids Play & Learn: Five Creative and Fun Children Activities.” In addition, Gen X women want to keep a healthy lifestyle by eating healthy. To achieve that, many of them engage in the behavior of cooking from scratch. Due to this fact, there is one article called “Eat Fresh & Healthy: Simply Scratch Recipe.” These articles are offering tips that could give women a hand in their life, but they are not that serious. Instead, their titles are using some words such as “getaways,” “romance,” and “fun,” that can relieve the target audience from their daily life.

Besides articles offering tips that help Gen X females live a better life, this magazine covers one story that is relevant to women's work. Its title is "Wendy Bibeau: My Online Handmade Business." This article is made because some women choose to build their own business for a more balanced life, and thus it could arouse Gen X women's interest. Also, it is not a story about great businesswomen who have built their business empires; instead, it is an interview with a normal woman who owns a small and interesting business, and that will not put pressure on the reader. Since this magazine is made with the purpose of relaxing the target audience, there are not many articles about women's work.

The last part of the magazine covers topics that can really help the reader relax — such as music, art, and literature. One article is titled "Ten Most Beautiful Poems about Love," because this group of women is well educated and they are able to understand and enjoy poems. Another article is "Twenty Songs that Help You Relax".

Advertisement. An obvious characteristic of Gen X females is that they are short of money, worrying about their future economic prospects. Therefore, the magazine could include advertising about coupons, saving programs (e.g., Groupon), and tools (e.g., Dealmoon) that can help them find bargains.

Besides, these women are health-oriented, so it is necessary to place advertising about health and personal care products, including massage chairs, dietary supplement,

etc. Other products or services that benefit people's health could also be included, such as fitness centers, coaching services, on-site clinics, weight loss programs, and low-caloric packaged food. Interviewee C mentioned that she enjoyed jogging outside for health, so sporting goods could also be involved.

In terms of outdoor and indoor activities, preferences vary among different Gen X females, so products for both outdoor and indoor activities can be advertised on the magazine. Based on the interview, it's clear that Gen X women are interested in cooking, baking, and gardening when staying at home. So products like a slow cooker and oven in the home and kitchen category should be promoted.

Finally, living in a life filled with a lot of things, Gen X women are always trying to make best use of their time. Therefore, apps that help them manage time will catch these women's attention. For women who are more career-focused and don't have children, birth control products such as contraceptive products could be advertised in this magazine.

However, as a matter of fact, Gen X women rarely notice or are influenced by advertising (Mintel). So, how could we create print ads that are attractive to them? A research study from Nielsen shows that Gen X women are connecting with everyday household and family activities, and "real-world situations and authenticity" ("Reaching Generation X") appeal most to them. Hence, a calm, safe, and realistic approach mixed with emotional appeal in those print ads can work for this group of women. The ads could show a moment when a son is leaving a mother for college, for example.

CONCLUSION

Gen X women in the United States are independent and working hard. They have their own interest and a life that they are dreaming of, but family, children, and work have occupied most of their time. “Soft Time” is reminding this group of women that they deserve having their own time to get relaxed by reading, and learn to live a better life in the meantime.

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Appendix A

Demographic Profile

Interviewee A

Age: 49

Sex: Female

Marital Status: Married

Family size: 3 (Couple and 1 child)

Employment: Clinical Trial Coordinator

Location of residence: Boston

Dates of the interview: Nov. 1, 2014

Interviewee B

Age: 35

Sex: Female

Marital Status: Married

Family Size: 6 (Couple and 4 children)

Employment: Housewife

Location of residence: New Hampshire

Dates of the interview: Nov.4, 2014

Interviewee C

Age: 45

Sex: Female

Marital Status: Married for 20 years

Family Size: 4 (Couple and 2 teenage kids)

Employment: Human Resource in a finance consulting company

Location of residence: New York

Dates of the interview: Nov.5, 2014

Appendix B

Question Guideline

Basic questions:

1. May I know your age, occupation and work place?
2. Could you briefly describe your daily life: what do you do during weekdays and weekends?

Work

1. Do you like your job? Why?
2. Are you working for survival or interest?
3. What is your dream job?

Family

1. Has your family tried any investment? (e.g., stocks and fund) If YES, what are those investments?
2. Which media platforms do you use most frequently?

Life

1. What is your priority in your life? (Things that you care the most in your life)
2. What is your biggest worry in your life?
3. What is your greatest pressure in your life?
4. Do you always find you don't have enough time in your life?
5. Do you think healthy lifestyle is important? If YES, how do you keep a healthy life?

Leisure time

1. What is your interest in your daily life?
2. Do you have more outdoor activities or indoor activities? Which one do you prefer?
3. Who is your favorite movie star?
4. What is your favorite movie?

Values

1. What is the most important thing in your life?
2. For a woman, which is the most important thing, career or family?
3. In your opinion, what is happiness?
4. What is your dream?

Future plans

1. Do you have any plans in the future? If YES, what are those plans?

Appendix C

Magazine Cover

