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How Cool Brands Stay Hot: Branding to Generation Y
Joeri Van den Bergh, Mattias Behrer
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Detailed information, real world examples highlight this comprehensive look at how to market to Millennials.

In *How Cool Brands Stay Hot: Branding to Generation Y*, Joeri Van den Bergh and Mattias Behrer offer a useful and comprehensive description of the core characteristics that make Generation Y, or Millennials, distinct, and they encourage marketers to appeal to these young people by empowering them through trendy, creative, and fun brands.

Van den Bergh and Behrer identify five unique concepts that appeal to Generation Y—those born between 1980 and 1986. The five concepts are based on the acronym CRUSH, which stands for Cool, Real, Unique, Self-Brand Identification, and Happiness. They identified these aspects through a 2009 study with nearly 7,000 respondents living in Europe.

Van den Bergh is a consultant and founder at InSites Consulting, a research agency that has served clients such as MTV, Skype, and Coca-Cola. Behrer is senior vice president of MTV North Europe. The authors rely on their own research, academic research, and findings from the Pew Research Center and the Boston Consulting Group, among others. They describe Generation Y as: critical thinkers taking longer to establish brand preferences than their Generation X predecessors; tech-savvy buyers dependent on social media; and charitable people who want to support brands with a cause. With 70 million Millennials in the United States alone, and $200 billion in purchasing power, the authors make it clear why marketers need to understand the buying practices of this group.

New information is added in this updated edition (the first edition of the book won the Berry-American Marketing Association Book Prize in 2012), including additional interviews. Van den Bergh and Behrer also expand on their comparisons between Generation Y and earlier generations, specifically Generation X and Baby Boomers.

Real-world examples provide a wide application for those marketing product-based brands and public information campaigns. At times, some information can be dense and technical. For example, detailed information is presented about how the brain works to influence Generation Y decision-makers, particularly by controlling their emotions, driving them to care about brand authenticity, and honesty. But this level of detail ultimately adds credibility regarding their findings.

The book is packed with statistical data, and is intended for practitioners, specifically those working in marketing or public information campaigns. The information is clearly presented and instructional, with vignettes and figures utilized to help illustrate each characteristic. Others who would find the information beneficial are those teaching marketing concepts to future marketers (some of whom may be part of Generation Y). “Takeaways” at the end of each chapter make the format ideal as a possible companion text for marketing and advertising courses.

Applying a key concept the authors present in the book to effectively market to Generation Y—supporting a cause—they are donating a portion of the book’s proceeds to MTV ‘s Staying Alive Foundation, an HIV/AIDS awareness organization.

Van den Bergh and Behrer cite that previous generations have tended to retain their characteristics over time, rather than outgrow them or evolve as they age, and Millennials are expected to follow suit, making this book a valuable resource for decades to come.

Maria Siano