

## **Regional Differences in Culture among the online Gen-Y Consumers in Smart City Dubai, UAE**

Majed Zamil Hatem Alkindi<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Kenny Teoh<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Asaad Naji<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Media sales, College of Media and Mass Communication/ American University in the Emirates, UAE

<sup>2</sup>Management Department, Faculty of Economics and Management/ UPM University, Malaysia

<sup>3</sup>Department of International Studies, College of Art & Sciences/ University of North Texas, USA

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**Abstract:** Consumers of the Generation-Y cohort, also referred to as Millennials, born between 1977-1999 include approximately 45% of the population in Dubai, United Arab Emirates who have significant purchasing power. This study aimed to explore and evaluate the idea of a cross-cultural approach that divides online Gen-Y consumers into different segments depending on their Regional Differences in culture. In internet communication, how Gen-Y perceive information source directly affects whether or not they accept information, which in turn affects the communication effect. A self-administered questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection among 441 respondents in Dubai through stratified random sampling technique. The ANOVA result showed that there was a significant difference between regional categories on their culture, the difference between Arabs and North and south Americans and Africans. Based on these findings, the researcher concludes that, this study shed lighting for a new vision that new digital technology changes the world. Not only in internet communications, the traditional personal communication today also is moving gradually from offline to online side by side effect culture regional differences.

**Keywords:** Culture, Digital Technology, Generation-Y

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### **I. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND STUDY**

We are currently living at the cutting edge of a unique era, witnessing a phenomenon of a constant and fast growth in the use of the Internet for communication and collaboration between people (Georgescu & Popescul, 2015). Internet marketing attracts attention because of the current shift in marketing strategy in favor of deriving maximum response from selected target groups instead of maximum exposure to many unknown audience groups (Saad Alqahtani, Al-Homoud, & Al-Otaibi, 2014).

Gen-Y is described as communicative, profitable, productive technologically, sophisticated (Baldonado & Spangenburg, 2009), skilled, keen, and techno-sharp (Berta, 2005). Gen-Y consumers were born between 1977 and 1999 (Dulin, 2005; Na'Desh, 2008) and also are identified as Generation WWW, the Digital Generation, the Millennial Generation, Net Generation, Why Generation, First Globals, iPod Generation, and Y Generation (Ordun, 2015). Gen Y has approximately 51 million consumers in the United States alone (Williams et al., 2012). The Millennial Generation is the present generation of college-aged consumers who have been inundated with technology for a large part of their lives. Notwithstanding being an essential primary market, Gen-Y unequivocally impacts family buys choices, making this purchase portion a focal market for many companies. Furthermore, Gen Y is emphatically worried about the world and general global issues (Partridge & Hallam, 2006).

Gen-Y has spent their developmental years in a globally linked, educational, digitally based society (Frاند, 2000). Consumers of the Gen -Y cohort, also referred to as Millennials, include approximately 75 million Americans who have significant purchasing power (Schewe et al., 2013). While in Dubai, United Arab Emirates Gen-Y has the largest generational cohort, they are around 45% of the total population (Luscombe, Lewis, Biggs, & Lim, 2013). Gen-Y is more than a gathering of individuals fitting into a similar age range. Every group is guaranteed to shared experiences of social, the pastor life events of that time, the style in the generation's values, attitudes and behavior (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007). In UAE, Gen Y's determinative years, from mid -the 1990s were by economic prosperity, regional political unity, and turbulence, social advances in life expectancy, literacy rate, growing women involvement in work and politics. In fact, Comparable to many emerging markets, the Middle East region is represented demographically by a "youth bulge" (Mahajan, Banga, & Gunther, 2005).

In the past 20 years, the United Arab Emirates has played an important economic role as a major trading center for the Middle East region (Business Monitor International 2009). These measures would have impacted the formation of Gen-Y characteristic behaviors, life, and work values in the UAE (Kamal, Chu, & Pedram, 2013). The Gen-Y cohort in the United Arab Emirates comprises more than 200 different nationalities (Obaid, 2009). Dubai population contains, that over 85% were foreigners, most of them are temporary residents and working expatriates bound by current immigration laws (Epps & Demangeot, 2013) they share experiences

of life occasions in the UAE that have molded their values and attitudes. However, it would be simplistic to expect that they are a homogenous gathering simply because they have undergone development periods together in the same time and place; While Emiratis are born and mostly raised in the UAE, the expatriates originate from diverse countries. Therefore, Gen-Y cohort in Dubai, UAE is might show differences in culture, life values and work attitudes (Luscombe et al., 2013). In spite of, “Culture is a pervasive influence which underlies all facets of social behavior and interaction. It is evident in the values and norms that govern society. It is embodied in the objects used in everyday life and in modes of communication in society” (Craig & Douglas, 2006). The individuals from Gen-Y conceived after 1990 are computerized natives who appreciate the making of online substance, are dynamic in social communities and appreciate innovative commercial enterprises with a liking for less inflexible social structures (Williams et al., 2012).

The United Arab Emirates' demographics show a large Generation Y (Gen Y) segment in the workforce. Organizations need gifted human resources and, henceforward, this pattern augurs well for the country's continued economic development. Nonetheless, little is thought about Gen -Y in the UAE (Luscombe, Lewis, Biggs, & Lim, 2013). Dubai consists of a multitude of ethnic groups and cultures, Fletcher and Fang (2006) recommend that there are two basic approaches to studying; culture, social behavior: etic (culture-general) and emic (culture-specific) approaches (Triandis, 1994). The former is concerned with identifying universal dimensions that underlie cultural differences and tends to be quantitative and based on large-scale surveys. There are few studies on Culture among the online Gen-Y in UAE, and most of them are essentially subjective or concluded from social surveys. The aim of this study is to explore and evaluate the idea of a cross-cultural approach that divides online consumers into different segments depending on their culture and expected culture-driven preferences, offerings a number of challenges in Dubai, UAE. Many people acquire several identities (Askegaard et al., 2005).

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

A stratified convenience sampling technique was employed for this research because the data was collected based on five geographical locations of the population. As mentioned by Teddlie and Yu (2007), when a researcher is interested in choosing a sample to be representative of the population on some characteristic of interest then a stratified sampling technique is more appropriate. So, coordinated with the distribution of the target population which is based on people from difference geographical backgrounds.

A structured questionnaire was designed for this study, using anominal scale for demographics data. Our population is 2,588,396 of Gen-Y who are locals or immigrate to UAE (Lim, 2013), a convenience sampling of 441 is sufficient. The questionnaire (hard copy - face to face) and Google Docs Questionnaire for data collection allows for the selection of specific individuals that share similar interests, experiences, and behavioral traits. While the advantage of using online Questionnaire is the targeted audience customization tool as a data collection process which provides timely data responses from individuals that match the specific demographics targeted for this research study. Therefore, 441 questionnaires from 103 different countries were distributed by hard copy and online Google Docs Questionnaire and 409 (97.3%) were successfully retrieved.

## **III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 1 below illustrates the descriptive analysis of the demographic profiles such as gender groups, age distribution, residency, and nationality. The result revealed that, among the total respondents of 409, the descriptive analysis showed the gender distribution of male and female, in which male constitutes 60.4% (247) and female were 39.6% (162). This indicated that male is the majority in the study area. Dubai is exceptional in that majority of its population is comprised of expatriates, the gender distortion is mainly due to the large number of foreign male workers that do not relocate with their family, Dubai Statistics Centre in 2014 showed the percentage of males to females is skewed, with approximately 69.7% of the population actuality male, and that give the study more credibility to reflect the mean result. Moreover, the ages of the respondents ranged between 18 to 35 years, in this regard, the descriptive analysis showed that the age group of 18 – 22 years old were 24.7% (101), 23 – 27 years old was 24.2% (99), 28 – 32 years old was 23.7% (97) and 32 – 35 years old were 27.4% (112). The descriptive analysis has shown almost even distribution across the age categories. However, considering the mean age of 32.67 years ( $\approx$  33 years) and the standard deviation of 3.88 years which fall between 32 – 35 age group; this indicated that the respondents in that age category were slightly more than the other age categories. For residency status, the majority of the respondents i.e. 83.4% (341) were residents, followed by locals 13.9% (57), only 1.5% (6) and 1.2% (5) were non – residents and visitors respectively. Similarly, the respondents also defer on their region of origin in which Arabs constitutes 38.9% (159), Europeans (west & east) were 21.0% (86), Asians were 18.8% (77), North and South Americans were 14.4% (59) and lastly, Africans were 6.8% (28). The analysis revealed that Arabs were more than the other nationalities constituting 38.9% out of the total respondents of 409, because of the United Arab Emirates in general and Dubai in particular, is different from what Americans call “a melting pot society”.

Therefore, It is a fact that there are more than 202 nationalities working in Dubai which have changed the demography of the emirate, creating a multicultural society where it's indigenous the UAE nationals being a minority in their own country and that give them the power to preserve their own culture that stems from Islam and the Arabs land environment and their societies who live and work in UAE, so are against assimilation as a local population and day after day are more clear in decisions, traditions, and habits. Moreover, Malaysia adopted a different form of multiculturalism as a Muslim multi-ethnic country. Malaysia is considered as a model of a new Muslim multicultural state that promoted multiculturalism and preserved its culture and identity (Obaid, 2009).

**Table 1:** Background of the respondents (n = 409)

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	247	60.4				
Female	162	39.6				
<b>Age Group</b>						
18 – 22 years	101	24.7	32.67	3.88	18	35
23 – 27 years	99	24.2				
28 – 32 years	97	23.7				
33 – 35 years	112	27.4				
<b>Residence</b>						
Local	57	13.9				
Resident	341	83.4				
Non-Resident	6	1.5				
Visitor	5	1.2				
<b>Region/Nationality</b>						
Arabs	159	38.9				
North and south Americans	59	14.4				
Africans	28	6.8				
Asians	77	18.8				
Europeans (west & east)	86	21.0				

The finding in Table 2 and 3 respectively further revealed that there was a significant difference between regional categories on their culture,  $F(4, 404) = 4.272, p = .002$ , thus the proposed hypothesis (H1: There is a significant difference between regional categories on culture among the respondents) is accepted. Furthermore, the multiple comparison test using Tukey HSD Post Hoc test in (Table 2) indicated that, there is significant difference between Arabs and North and south Americans ( $Md = .725^*$ , Std. Error = .250,  $p < .05$ ), there is significant difference between Arabs and Africans ( $Md = .993^*$ , Std. Error = .337,  $p < .05$ ). However, the Post Hoc test indicated no significant differences between Arabs, Asians, and Europeans (west & east) in terms of culture. The possible reason for these significant differences could be due to the fact that Arabs have a high level of contact with their families - this reflects the Arab culture where family ties are very strong. Further, Dubai as being part of a culture which stems from Islam (Obaid, 2009). Most Arabs their religious background, are Muslims, they have similar traditions and history, all of them believes in Quran and stick to the culture of Islam that developed all the years, to be life day culture. The Arab situation is similar to that of the Asians, in particular, the Indians, who also have extended family living in Dubai.

**Table2: Multiple Comparisons**

Dependent Variable: Culture  
Tukey HSD

(I) What is your nationality?	(J) What is your nationality?	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Arabs	North and south Americans	.72452*	.25039	.033	.0384	1.4106
	Africans	.99342*	.33663	.028	.0710	1.9158
	Asians	.61932	.22804	.053	-.0056	1.2442
	Europeans (west & east)	.23003	.21986	.834	-.3724	.8325
North and south Americans	Arabs	-.72452*	.25039	.033	-1.4106	-.0384
	Africans	.26890	.37693	.953	-.7639	1.3017
	Asians	-.10521	.28419	.996	-.8839	.6735
	Europeans (west & east)	-.49449	.27766	.386	-1.2553	.2663
Africans	Arabs	-.99342*	.33663	.028	-1.9158	-.0710
	North and south Americans	-.26890	.37693	.953	-1.3017	.7639
	Asians	-.37411	.36247	.840	-1.3673	.6191
	Europeans (west & east)	-.76339	.35738	.207	-1.7427	.2159
Asians	Arabs	-.61932	.22804	.053	-1.2442	.0056
	North and south Americans	.10521	.28419	.996	-.6735	.8839
	Africans	.37411	.36247	.840	-.6191	1.3673

Europeans (west & east)	Europeans (west & east)	-.38929	.25770	.556	-1.0954	.3168
	Arabs	-.23003	.21986	.834	-.8325	.3724
	North and south Americans	.49449	.27766	.386	-.2663	1.2553
	Africans	.76339	.35738	.207	-.2159	1.7427
	Asians	.38929	.25770	.556	-.3168	1.0954

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

**Table 3: ANOVA Test of Regional differences based on the respondent's Culture**

Variable	n	Mean	SD	df	F	p
<b>Regional Distribution</b>				<b>4</b>	<b>4.272</b>	<b>.002</b>
Arabs	159	4.58	1.46	<b>404</b>		
North and south Americans	59	3.86	1.80			
Africans	28	3.59	1.98			
Asians	77	3.96	1.81			
Europeans (west & east)	86	4.35	1.57			

#### IV. CONCLUSION

From this study, the researcher concludes that new digital technology changes the world. Not only in internet communications, Gen-Y is a generation like no other; rely on each other nearly or overseas, whatever the distance or nationality even culture background, sharing ideas and discussing opinions with friends to make more informed decisions, effecting society and economic. It also influences the behaviors traditions in which people communicate from every aspect of life. Hence, the traditional personal communication today is moving gradually from offline to online side by side effect culture regional differences progressively by shifting from offline to online, the aim of this study is to explore and evaluate the idea of a cross-cultural approach that divides online consumers into different segments depending on their culture. the researcher concluded that the Arab culture where family ties are very strong which stems from Islam, that they have similar traditions and history and most those families have cross- border tribal relationship ratios, all of them believes in Quran and stick to the culture, in Islam countries, religion is not a culture but is a system of life that could shape a set of behaviors termed “Islamic”. And give the highest mean culture. However, the study has shown also that there are no significant differences between Arabs, Asians, and Europeans (west & east) in terms of culture, the researcher might believe that the reason is the beginners who came to live and work in UAE are from Asians and Europeans, most of them they like and believe of Arabs environment, all the various ethnic groups, and both genders are united behind one goal heading towards Dubai globalization.

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