

# THE BLIND SPOT OF MARKETING: GENERATION X IN BRAZIL

By Ana Claudia Malamud and Miriam Steinbaum | December 2019



**IPSOS**  
FLAIR COLLECTION

**GAME CHANGERS**



## WHO ARE GENERATION X?

In recent years, marketing has learned a new way to classify its target audience: generations.

From the need to understand Millennials, companies sought to delve into the evolving theme of generations, their behavior, their nature and their challenges they face. Today, the focus has shifted to Generation Z (those born after 1996) and the myths about their behavior that circulate between clients and researchers.

Generation X - born between 1960 and 1979 - is the generation that comes before Millennials and after Baby Boomers. In the United States, the term Generation X originally referred to "baby bust", to the generation so-named because of the fall in the birth rate after the boom seen in the previous period. Known as the "middle sibling," Generation X are not old, have made a career, money, but sometimes seem ignored. They are often forgotten as brands focus on Baby Boomers and Millennials, leaving them stuck in the blind spot of marketing.

In this article, we look at the challenges and opportunities for this forgotten group, which represents about 25% of the Brazilian population and is responsible for 50% of total household income. This generation is the outboard of our economy, but seems to have little relevance in the innovation pipeline of our consumers.

## OUR UNDERSTANDING IS OUTDATED

As we know, the increase in life expectancy and drop in birth rates have meant that the world population is aging. A recent study by Ipsos MORI<sup>1</sup> brings an interesting point of view on the subject: "The shift has been gradual, and because humanity is better at spotting immediate change or danger, rather than noticing steady transformation, our shared understanding about what later life is like is woefully out of date. It is portrayed as a 'narrative of decline' – not a time of opportunity and change."

The first author to write about Generation X was Douglas Coupland, in the novel *Generation X, Tales of an Accelerated Culture*. Coupland brings an extremely pessimistic view of life in Beverly Hills and characterizes Gen X as frivolous - or as a generation that worries about the prospect of having less money than their parents. We argue this approach should be abandoned. It regards time as inevitable decay and we should instead be identifying opportunities and creating a narrative that rebuilds the more traditional chronological frames, going beyond our obsession with Millennials or Generation Z.

---

**“Our shared understanding about what later life is like is woefully out of date. It is portrayed as a ‘narrative of decline’ – not a time of opportunity and change.”**

# WHAT IS OLD?

Musician Arnaldo Antunes says, there is nothing tackier than to want to be adolescent forever. And yes, Gen X are thinking about how they should grow old. So, the question is, what is it like to be old in 2019? Or even, what is old?

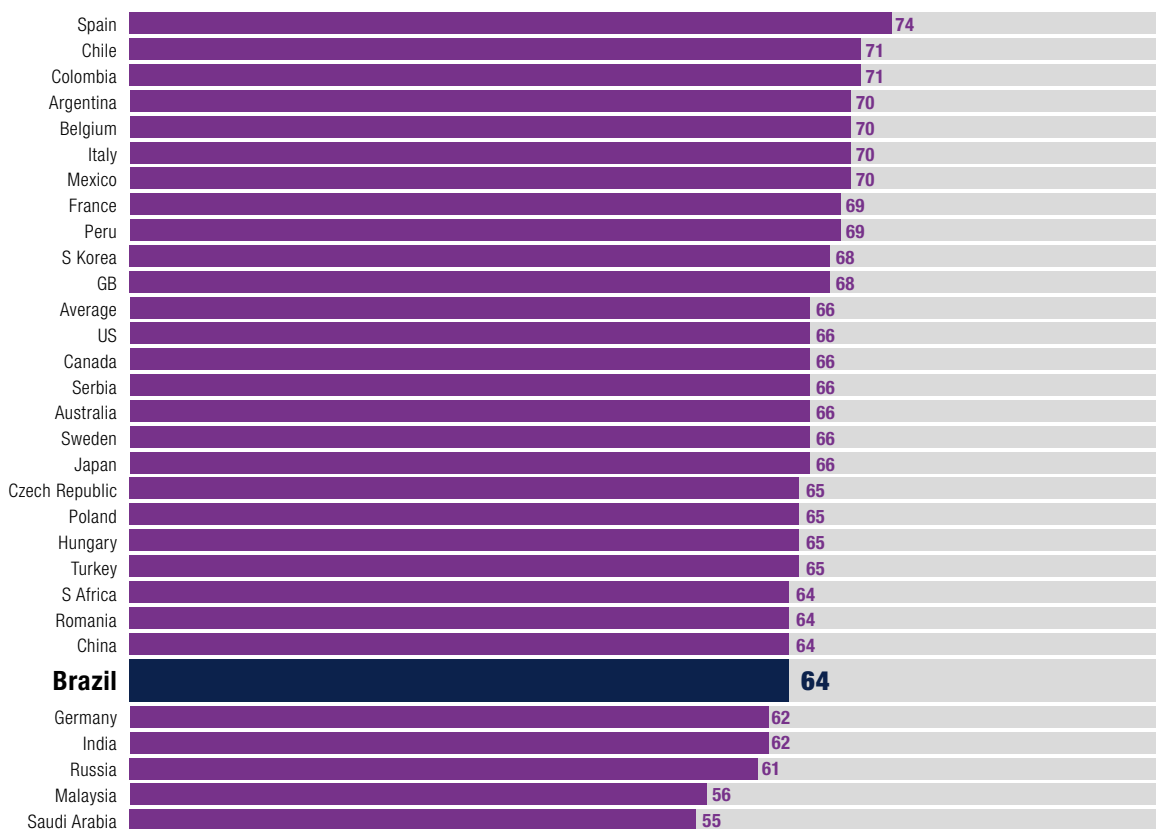
Globally we think old age begins at 66, but in Brazil this falls to 64 (see figure 1). This perception is not only driven by the life expectancy and the cultural context of each country, but also by our age. The older you are, the more likely you are to think that old age comes later.

The question of time tends to be seen through a distorted lens, as discussed in the book, *The Perils of Perception*<sup>2</sup>, based on Ipsos' long-running global survey. In this, for example, we find that asking people to estimate how many

people in their country are aged 60 or over can generate mistakes of more than 25 percentage points. Current records tell us that in Brazil, the population of more than 60 years represents 14% of the total. In this sense, we already know that the Brazilian population is aging, but, thinking about the coming years, what will we define as "senior"? In 2015 the average age of a Brazilian citizen was 31 years old, but by 2050 it is projected to be 45.

Globally, about a third of Generation X believe that as they get older they will have more free time and less stress, and that they can devote more time to family and friends, travel, reading, and hobbies. However, the same proportion have concerns about not having enough money, losing quality of life and independence and, above all, losing relevance.

**Figure 1** Thinking about the phrase 'old age', at what age do you think people can be considered 'old'? *Average Guess*



Source: Ipsos Global Advisor. Base: 19,262 adults aged 16-64 in 30 countries, online, 24 August – 7 September 2018

Just over half of respondents (52%) worldwide, according to the same study by Ipsos, agree that they are worried about aging. However, Brazil is most worried about getting old, with 72% saying they are concerned more than any other country. (See figure 2).

Interestingly, older people are less concerned about aging than younger people (54% of those aged 25-34 vs. 46% aged 55-64). Is it that as this phase of life approaches, we come to understand that getting old is not necessarily negative?

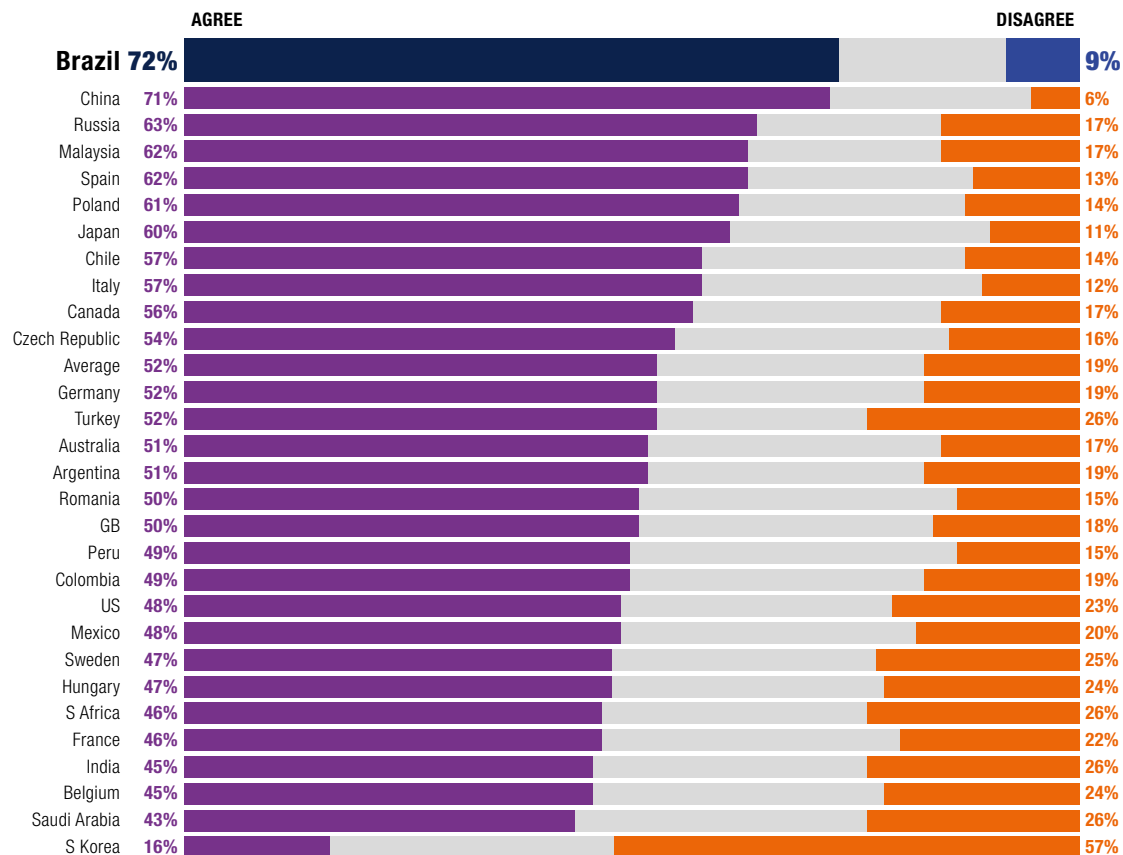
We believe that we will only be old after 70, possibly 80 years old. Until then, we will continue to be active and try

to transform the world in which we live. We want a more sustainable world, we want the adventure, the culture and new experiences.

Among Latin Americans, our study finds one of the most positive views about the prospect of a healthy old age, with more than 80% stating that they should age well.

If at the age of 70/80 the same study finds a population closer to the desired peace of mind, it is precisely in Generation X that the greatest percentage of people are dissatisfied or anxious, having to look after their children, aging parents and career demands.

**Figure 2** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement – I’m worried about getting old.



Source: Ipsos Global Advisor. Base: 19,262 adults aged 16-64 in 29 countries, online, 24 August – 7 September 2018

# GEN X WANTS TO SEE GEN X

We know that the generational approach as a single explanation of behavior can be very limiting. We must include the cultural, educational and socioeconomic background to understand the needs of our consumers.

As in Pedro Almodovar's movie, "Talk to her" (Hable Con Ella), Generation X does not want to be treated as a patient in deep sleep, but wants to see themselves in today's marketing. They want advertising that talks to them. Therefore, we must try to understand the new needs that are on the horizon for this group: what are their concerns, where do they place their optimism and pessimism for the future.

Generation X seems to be taking on new challenges, roles, and responsibilities. As a result, they are independent and self-sufficient. They are not digital natives, but they are still addicted to computers and social media. After all, they grew up with Atari!

Of course, their relationship with technology is an important but not exclusive segmentation. We should also consider the force and energy accumulated by these consumers:

- More women in this group are working than previous generations, and they're fighting for equal wages and the end of harassment in movements like #MeToo.
- This is practically the first generation who has lived through the end of one or more marriages and learned that it is possible to raise happy children after a divorce.
- It is a generation that proposes the revision of the concept of maternity, which used to be seen as an inevitable destiny of every woman.
- They were also the first to understand that genders can be much more fluid than Boomers thought, and to openly have same-sex partners. They learned about the importance of promoting diversity among their friends, as well as in their work life.
- They enjoy songs created by those on the frontier between late Boomers and early Generation X, namely international artists such as Nirvana and U2, among others. In Brazil this includes Legião Urbana, Titãs, Capital Inicial and Ira.

- Regarding fashion and other cultural influences, there is no pattern that characterizes this generation completely, just as there is no more hard dress codes. Goth and basic styles end up mixed, with post-punk, rockers, yuppies and a wide range of other trends.
- The similarities between Boomers and Generation X, as well as between Millennials and Generation Z, must be considered. However, Gen X tends to be more cosmopolitan and urbanized since, like their children, they are being exposed to movements that propose a broader use of the cities and public spaces, as well as new forms of mobility.

When approaching Generation X, we must consider its historical baggage, as we have done here, while being careful about the limiting nostalgic bias. The brands that make sense for Generation X surely are not just those of the past.

That is, they drink Coke, use Apple products, their makeup is MAC and also Boticário or Avon. They use La Roche Posay and Nivea. They listen to a lot of rock & roll, but also electronic music, house, Anitta and everything else. Just like everyone else.

If we want to bring back the childhood and youth of Generation X in Brazil, we must remember that they grew up with Xuxa and worship Ayrton Senna, but they also pay close attention to Obama, Lady Gaga and the transformations that Fátima Bernardes underwent.

TV is trying to maintain their traditional habit of watching soap operas. Looking for this goal, they are stocked with this nostalgic bias, as in the novel Summer 90. Radio also looks for this connection by making 'flashback' programs or promoting decades-themed parties.

Among the surprises that bring us the passage of time, the X may be "the caretakers." They are raising children who do not show any urgency to conquer their own apartment and they will have parents who will live longer than previous generations.

However, Generation X do not limit themselves to these functions. With their children and younger work colleagues they are learning to navigate with new instruments and, observing the aging process of their parents, they are getting the importance of a good life lived, with freedom to be the best version of themselves.

Generation X are the largest potential market for luxury goods or more sophisticated services, they believe in dermo cosmetics, creams and anti-aging treatments. But they also value the basics, the tradition and the homemade. They seek innovations that bring a more holistic and balanced life. They want to know and learn more, just as they like to teach and create.

In Brazil, this generation – the adolescents of the 80s lived through the end of the dictatorship, hyperinflation and the impeachment of the President Fernando Collor de Melo.

Worldwide, they saw the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Berlin Wall. They understood - and, hopefully, will not forget - that freedom and democracy should be among our core values.

We believe that by seeing protests and demonstrations, Generation X can always access the memory of some other moment in their lives.

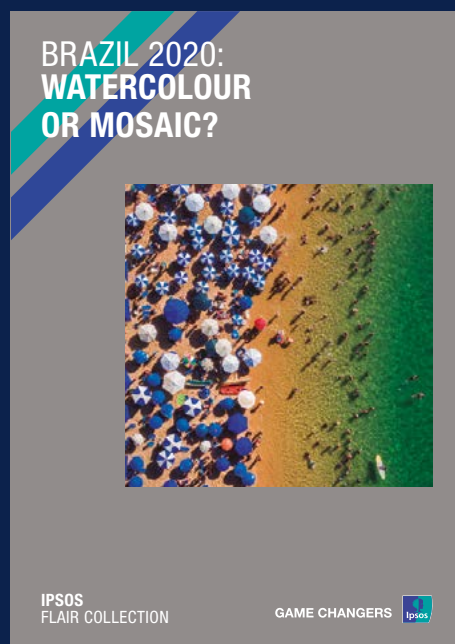
## POINT OF VIEW

In conclusion, this is a generation that begins to want to shout louder, to avoid nostalgia or the limitations of being just the “caregivers” or the “middle sibling”, who inherit clothes and toys from the Boomers and do not have as many worries as Millennials.

Above all, we know that Generation X are demanding more, with the ability to make big changes to adapt and grow in their environment.

## IPSOS FLAIR COLLECTION: BRAZIL 2020

This extract is taken from Ipsos Flair Brazil 2020: Watercolour or Mosaic. To read the full report go to [ipsos.com](https://www.ipsos.com)



## REFERENCES

1. <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/perennials-future-ageing>
2. <https://perils.ipsos.com/>

# IPSOS FLAIR COLLECTION

## **BRAZIL 2020**

---

**Ana Claudia Malamud** Head of Ipsos UU in Brazil

**Miriam Steinbaum** Business Director, Ipsos in Brazil

The **Ipsos Briefing** papers  
are produced by the  
**Ipsos Knowledge Centre.**

[www.ipsos.com](http://www.ipsos.com)  
[@Ipsos](https://twitter.com/Ipsos)

**GAME CHANGERS**

