

## Beyond Age and Income: Employing Demographics to Craft More Effective Marketing

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Demographic attributes—age, gender, income, education, and geographic location—subtly influence individuals' needs, values, and purchasing behaviors. When used effectively, demographics enable marketers to identify their target audience, understand the reasons for segment variations, and customize products, pricing, channels, and communications. This essay reconceptualizes demographics as dynamic perspectives rather than simplistic classifications, emphasizing their utility when integrated with psychographic and behavioral insights, and proposes a pragmatic, ethical methodology for identifying and qualifying target groups in an evolving economy.

A demography is a population segment defined by characteristics pertinent to market behavior. The recognized variables—age, gender, income, education, race and ethnicity, occupation, household composition, and geographic location—systematize a chaotic environment into actionable patterns for a team (Kotler et al., 2021). Marketers utilize these elements to create demographic profiles: succinct representations of a "typical" segment member that predict requirements, media behaviors, limitations such as budget, and probable purchasing

patterns (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019). A profile such as “single, working-class male, 18–24, high school education” is not a stereotype; it serves as a hypothesis generator. It recommends testing channels, pricing ranges to explore, and obstacles to eliminate.

Significantly, demographic characteristics seldom function in isolation. When age correlates with income, or race correlates with gender, unique subcultures arise—market segments characterized by shared norms and consumption patterns influenced by environmental, political, cultural, and socio-economic factors (Solomon, 2020). These intersections frequently elucidate behavior more effectively than any individual variable.

A 22-year-old student residing in a densely populated metropolitan area with constrained finances may exhibit media consumption patterns akin to those of a 40-year-old urban professional, yet differ in price sensitivity; conversely, a rural retiree and a suburban parent may experience time constraints but differ in their trust in different channels. Intersections transform general categories into specific, actionable insights. The advantages of demographic targeting are evident. Initially, it enhances relevance: communications and propositions may be aligned with the specific requirements and limitations of segments—such as highlighting pricing for lower-income demographics or convenience for time-constrained parents. Secondly, it enhances efficiency: resources are concentrated on highly compatible audiences, often increasing return on investment (Lamb et al., 2020). Third, it enhances planning by rendering segment sizing and demand forecasting more dependable. However, demographics also possess constraints. Overgeneralization is a continual concern; no group is homogeneous. Dependence on demographics without verification leads to stereotypes, overlooked opportunities, or exclusion (Wedel & Kamakura, 2012). Precision may incur significant costs: micro-segments, although distinctly defined, may be excessively

small or prohibitively expensive to target. Demographics represent dynamic snapshots. As civilizations evolve, fixed beliefs such as age, gender roles, and urban-rural distinctions can become rapidly obsolete. Prudent marketers consequently regard demographic research as an ongoing process rather than a singular event, linking each profile to actual behavior.

Generational cohorts—Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, Generation Z—provide a well-known example. Cohorts are influenced by common formative events: economic recessions and recoveries, migrations from analog to digital, and battles depicted on television and subsequently in livestreams. These prevalent experiences can affect channel preferences, creative styles, and value propositions (Solomon, 2020; Parment, 2013). A cohort represents a climate rather than a prediction. It aids in formulating theories, but it cannot replace observed behavior. In practice, generations serve as a valuable initial framework when combined with transactional data, feedback mechanisms, and studies that validate what effectively influences a certain group. Among the demographic variables, five remain significant after controlling for the others. Age affects requirements and media consumption patterns throughout different life stages, influencing product characteristics and risk appetite. Gender influences specific categories, such as clothing and personal care; nonetheless, marketers should eschew entrenched stereotypes and meticulously evaluate creative alternatives. Income determines purchasing power and acceptable price ranges, influencing "good-better-best" product categories and financing alternatives. Ethnicity and race frequently intersect with culture and language, necessitating localized messages and representative imagery that convey respect and relevancy (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019). Ultimately, geographic location—frequently underestimated—serves as a significant factor: temperature, commuting habits, infrastructure, and local pricing shape how abstract aspirations



translate into tangible purchasing decisions, while urban-rural disparities influence channel accessibility and logistics. These anchors, however, are most effective when integrated with psychographics (values, interests, lifestyles) and behavioral indicators (recency, frequency, monetary value; channel utilization; churn risk).

Where, consequently, ought marketers to attune their ears? The response is "everywhere," albeit with caution. Public, affordable discovery channels—forums, comment sections, social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and X, media-sharing sites such as YouTube and TikTok, newsletters, and community groups—document unsolicited statements of demand and challenges. First-party methods—on-site surveys, brief interviews, preference centers, CRM and transaction logs, and A/B testing of creatives, offers, and landing pages—demonstrate actual consumer behavior under genuine conditions. Every source possesses bias; collectively, they converge to reveal the truth. Adherence to ethical standards is crucial: gather limited data, provide transparent disclosures, honor privacy regulations, and remain vigilant against biased proxies, such as zip codes that may inadvertently perpetuate systemic disparities.

Students and practitioners frequently inquire: Which demographic is optimal for my campaign? There is no definitive answer—only the most suitable option for a specific commitment at a specific moment. A methodical approach is beneficial. Commence by elucidating the task at hand: Is the primary objective to initiate a trial for new users, to reactivate dormant clients, or to upsell existing subscribers? Formulate hypotheses regarding the demographic limitations and motivations that correspond with the value offered. Assess the dimensions and accessibility to ensure the audience is substantial and discoverable at a reasonable cost. Subsequently, do rapid tests across two or three viable segments, altering the creative, offer, and channel. Evaluate performance with standardized



metrics—click-through rate to conversion, cost per acquisition, return on ad spend, and lifetime value relative to acquisition cost—and expand initiatives that meet your established criteria. Incorporate behavioral cohorts (such as cart abandoners and high-value repeat customers) to enhance precision. Lastly, observe drift: significant changes in technology, economy, or policy might alter objectives within a quarter.

Contemplate a modest, cost-effective fitness application. The team puts forth two hypotheses. Segment A consists of individuals aged 18–24 residing in densely populated urban areas with limited financial resources who prefer brief, socially engaging content. Segment B comprises middle-income parents aged 30 to 45 residing in suburban areas who prioritize time-efficient routines. The team initiates two creative campaigns and two promotional offers—a student discount and a family plan—on Instagram and YouTube. Segment A provides less expensive clicks, however, it persistently yields lower paid conversions. Segment B incurs higher acquisition expenses but demonstrates a superior conversion rate, particularly when the proposition states, “Fifteen-minute routines before the children awaken.” The team expands Segment B, retains a limited student test for continued learning, and internalizes a lasting lesson: inexpensive attention is not advantageous if it fails to convert. Such circumstances give rise to approaches that enhance the robustness and humanity of demography work. Articulate assumptions in clear language and transform them into tests. Commence with a broad perspective, and thereafter refine it through empirical data rather than intuition. Adapt creative content to language, visuals, and cultural holidays, transforming geography into an asset rather than a hindrance. Confront defaults—particularly those based on gender or age that appear repetitive—and reconstruct where they fail to honor the audience. Invest in adaptable infrastructure to ensure that adding or removing a section constitutes a configuration adjustment rather than an organizational upheaval.



Demographics do not determine fate. They exhibit focused discipline. When employed recklessly, they reduce individuals to caricatures; when utilized judiciously, they provide the paramount benefit a marketer can achieve: relevancy. We establish levels due to income disparities; we select channels because commutes vary; we modify language because individuals merit communication that resonates with familiarity. We conduct tests due to the market's dynamic nature. The objective is not to address everyone simultaneously but to communicate properly with the appropriate individual—today and again tomorrow, as circumstances and lives change.

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