BACKGROUND

After the Baby Boomers and Gen X, the Generation Y or echo boomers are said to be the next strong influence in the U.S. economy. With this new generation comes the great influence of the internet, as a part of their cultural experience. They spend more time than any other generation-playing games, chatting, and shopping for the latest products in electronics and apparel using the internet. Because of this new cultural experience, apparel companies have had to come up with new ways to attract the Generation Y consumers. Designer jeans have become a hot item among the Gen Yers with the introduction on the low rise fit in the early nineties. When asked about what are favorite brands of jeans, many said Levi's, American Eagle, and Seven for All Mankind. When then asked where do they hear about these brands, the majority said friends and celebrities. When asked who has the greatest influence on what jeans they purchase, the top three responses were family, friends, and peers. Then when asked what kind of jeans they buy, for the most part the ladies responded with boot-cut and the guys responded with the straight relaxed jeans.

INTRODUCTION

The Generation Y or echo boomers are composed of about 82 million Americans (O'Donnell, 1998). They are unlike any other generation and thus require an in-depth look at what they are like. They were born in a technological world (Miyen, 2005). They are aware of the resources that are available to them. The Gen Yers have become more rapidly comfortable with sending e-mails, shopping online, and using the internet for everyday services like checking the weather. When it comes to spending, Gen Y rely more on what their peers know about the products than what they see being advertised. They are not easily sold on a product until they have heard good recommendations from their peers. They hate if an item is being pushed on them. This generation rates to wait for a product and will have no problem waiting for their favorite music band to come to their area to play. They believe that brands are very important but are not always loyal to that brand if they find a better brand with the same quality. They are also a group that is influenced by the media, since they spend more hours watching television and browsing the internet than any other generation.

METHODOLOGY

1. Search Fashion Theories: To understand how the SI Theory of fashion works and comparing it to other past fashion theories.
2. Interview & Survey: A group of randomly selected Gen Yers (25-28) were asked questions about their favorite activities, jeans, brands, shopping preferences, and fashion icons.
3. Data Analysis: The information provided was analyzed to find similarities among the group. Then the information was used to determine if the trend trends among Gen Yers applied to the five axioms of the SI Theory.

SYMBOLIC INTERACTION THEORY OF FASHION *

Axiom 1. Under certain transitional conditions in a society, cultural ambivalence increases.
Axiom 2. Given that appearance-modifying commodities emerge in the open marketplace to express cultural ambivalence, if cultural ambivalence increases, then the heterogeneity of appearance-modifying commodities will increase.
Axiom 3. If heterogeneous appearance-modifying commodities emerge in the open marketplace to express cultural ambivalence, then appearance styles created by consumers will convey a high degree of symbolic ambiguity.
Axiom 4. If appearance styles convey a high degree of symbolic ambiguity, then the meanings of these styles will be collectively negotiated through social interactions in a given group or subculture, and styles become meaningful will be adopted by a majority of consumers in a given group or subculture.
Axiom 5. If meaningful appearance styles are adopted by a majority of consumers in a given group or subculture but do not resolve cultural ambivalence, then the appearance styles undergo change in an ongoing dialectic between ambivalence and style change.

HISTORY OF JEANS

1850: Gold was found in California and the famous Gold Rush began. Miners needed a strong fabric that wouldn’t tear easily. 1890: Western movies became very popular, and cowboys who often wore jeans, became more noticeable. 1908: Because of the war not many jeans were made. But some soldiers wore them when they were on duty and many started to see jeans as an American symbol. 1950s: Jeans became popular among the teenage rebels. 1960s: Jeans are the great equalizer, the perfect all-purpose garment for the classless society sought by the hippy generation. 2000s: New developments in the apparel industry have made it possible to get custom-designed jeans.

RESULTS

1. It was found that the y generation is more diverse than any other generation in the history of the United States.
2. It is important for them to fit in, but also maintain a sense of individuality.
3. With the growth of diversity is a growth of what are social groups. In other words, it is no longer important to be accepted into a certain group, but to be accepted within their group.
4. Friends are very important to the y generation. The Gen Yers trust more what their friends say than what they see on television or hear on the radio.
5. The internet has also made it possible for the Gen Yers to communicate at a click of a button.
6. Jeans are the great equalizer, the perfect all-purpose garment for the classless society sought by the hippy generation. 7. With new advancements in technology, it is important to understand the needs of the Gen Yers. They have to wait around for something and try to outdo other technology and apparel industry needs to be ready to keep up with these demands.

REFERENCES


*The Symbolic Interaction (SI) Theory was developed by Richard H. Nagasawa, Burton H. Kaiser, and Sandra H. Hutton. The theory is composed of five axioms that are interpreted in exploratory research among certain groups.