

**Does Greater Consumption Produce Better Quality of Life? Evidence from  
South East Queensland, Australia**

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**ABSTRACT** This paper set out two research objectives. First is to examine the inter-generational difference in the consumption patterns; and second is to investigate the difference in the urban quality of life across generations. Using the SEQ Quality of Life Survey data, the characteristics of consumption has been measured using a range of behavioural items that reflect the lifestyle choices the survey participants have made. Participants were categorised into one of the generational cohorts and their consumption patterns were differentiated. Factor and discriminant function analysis were used to determine the underlying structures explaining the consumption patterns and to address the differentiated consumption patterns across generations respectively. The results of the study suggests that in consuming public/common goods there persist minor differences among all the generations except GENY in the SEQ region. The findings of the study also suggests that among all the four labelled components of the research the ‘new leisure’ is the most discriminating component which impacted the lifestyle of younger generation significantly. Regarding satisfaction with their life the study findings suggest that Pre-BB and BB generations appear to be most satisfied with their life as a whole; GENX is found to be least satisfied.

**KEY WORDS:** *Consumption; lifestyle; generation; urban quality of life; sun-belt region, and multivariate analysis.*

## **Introduction**

The last two to three decades rapid growth and socio-economic transformation of the South East Queensland (SEQ) region with in-migration being a large factor driving that growth, satisfying a classic ‘sun-belt’ migration phenomenon (Chhetri et al., 2008). More than a decade’s sea change movement that has made this region as the epicentre of that change, and, despite the reputation that this region has earned as a landscape of urban consumption and tourism spectacle (Curran and de Sherbinin 2004; Bryant and Goodman 2004; Miles and Miles 2004; McCarthy 2005; Smith and Holt 2005; Bialasiewicz 2006; Harrison 2006; Rawlins 2006), it is very hard to find information relating to the consumption patterns and lifestyle choices of this population. As the region’s population is made up of a diverse group of people and has attracted a large number of retirees and lifestyle-oriented migrants, it seems very likely that consumption patterns and quality of life across the generations would be different.

The current trend in global consumption patterns indicates that the present day’s consumers are more generationally diverse and eclectic in their lifestyles than previous generations (Schewe and Meredith 2004). Therefore identifying different groups of consumers and their specific needs/desires have become very important thus the ‘generation-based research’ has experienced rejuvenation in the last ten years (Corster 1999). The change in values dictated by age and embedded differences in generations (Badger, Simpson-Craft and Jensen 1998; Burke 1994; Carmichael and McGue 1994; McConatha and Schnell 1997, Musek 1990; Penn 1977; Prager 1998) have been examined in a number of studies by researchers to find out the desired lifestyle choices that define and differentiate contemporary consumption patterns (Feather 1996; Kahle 1996). A wide variety of issues ranging from mapping shifts in consumer values to the identification of consumer behaviour patterns to

enable the development of effective marketing strategies were the purpose of such studies (Beller et al. 2005).

The notion post-materialism has been expressed as major cultural shifts in values from a primary focus on functional goods/materiality toward sustainability/lifestyle (Abramson and Inglehart 1995, 1994). In recent years, this notion has been utilised to reflect the changes happening in and around consumption, including a value orientation that accentuates self-expression and quality of life over economic security. Over the last part of the twentieth century has seen increased value and attitudinal attachment and support to environment and quality of life issues, such as societal responsibility, sustainable consumption and environmental consciousness, as compared to the so called 'materialist values' (food and housing) mostly from the consumers of the developed world (Featherstone 1991; Hannigan 1995; Zukin 1998; Mullins et al. 1999). Meanwhile, these socio-cultural shifts are not necessarily experienced and shared between different generational cohorts. For example, people who grew up during the boom years of 1945-73 typically hold different values and priorities than the older generations (those born before 1940). Presence of different shifts/economic conditions/values systems inevitably shapes consumption choices, for example, people born before 1940 are traditionally hold 'materialist values' as they grow up at the time of material hardship. Therefore it can be argued that there are some distinct differences among the generations where each generation has its own character (Roberts and Manolis 2000), a subtly different mix of cultural influences. Along with these, the shared life experiences or lifestyles are creating generational differences (Jurkiewicz and Brown 1998) and shaping consumption behaviours. Importantly for this paper we were interested mainly in probing the contemporary forms of consumption and quality of life across and within different generations in Australia.

This paper is structured as follows. The next section defines the concept generation, quality of life and consumption, and that is followed by a section that describes the quality of life data, how and where they were collected, and what measures are used to examine the consumer behaviour. That is followed by an analysis of the data and a discussion of the implications of the findings.

## **2. Understanding the concept of QOL, Consumption and Generation**

### **2.1 *Defining QOL***

QOL relates to the total well-being of people, including physical, mental, social and spiritual components (Eckersley, 1998). The object of evaluation in QOL is the ‘life’ (Veenhoven, 2000), where the focus is on assessing the life of an individual. ‘Well-being’, ‘happiness’ and ‘life satisfaction’ have all used as proxy indicators of QOL. Happiness tends to be more concerned with the psychological aspects of life and perhaps is state-centred (that is, moods, feelings and emotions). A ‘satisfaction based measurement’ has been adopted in the research presented here, because, as argued by Campbell et al. (1976) and Marans (2003), it comprises more definable properties and it implies judgemental or cognitive experiences, whereas ‘happiness’ reflect a relatively short-term mood of elation or gaiety. QOL is thus a multi-layered and multi-dimensional concept (Marans and Rodgers, 1975; Marans, 2003; McCrea et al., 2005). It is multi-layered in the sense of its representation at the level of individual, family and community, and it is multi-dimensional in its reflection of various aspects of life.

#### **2.1.1 *Domain of Life Approach***

In adopting a ‘subjective well-being approach’ to the study of QOL as reported by respondents to a survey, satisfaction with life in a number of domains was assessed following

the strategies developed by other researchers (Cummins, 1996; Headey and Wearing, 1992; Salvatore and Muñoz Sastre, 2001). The domain of life approach appraises life as a whole on the basis of a multi-dimensional vector of specific appraisals in more concrete spheres of well being (Rojas 2004). Debates surround the number of independent domains; nevertheless, partitions based on parsimony, meaningfulness and usefulness underpin their success (Rojas, 2004). Cummins et al. (1996) has identified seven domains: material well-being; health; productivity; intimacy; safety; community; and emotional well-being. Van Praag et al. (2003: 3) added satisfaction with life as a whole as an aggregate concept which, if unfolded, represents the sum of its domain components (health, financial situation, job, housing, leisure and environment). In the study discussed in this paper, satisfaction with life as a whole and with its various domains are subjectively assessed in terms of perceived well-being.

## **2.2. *Understanding consumption***

Every aspect of people's lives encompasses consumption ranging from basic eating habits through to the use (and purchase) of services for emotional gratification. Consumption values as identified by Sheth et al. (1991a, 1991b) are of five distinct types that impact the consumer choice behaviour; namely, functional, social, emotional, epistemic and conditional values. 'Consumer goods are goods to think with, goods to speak with' (Fiske 1989) rather than just the objects of economic transaction. Consumption is part of an individual's broader identity work and social integration, one mechanism of self expression. This notion is related to the central proposition of postmodern theories -that consumers consume products for their symbolic and interactional gratification not necessarily for their material needs. Arguments like these indicate a shift in consumption behaviour from materiality to symbolism. New types of consumption such as 'conspicuous' and 'compulsive' (Elliott 1997) are also pushed by social theorists to have a diversified understanding of consumption.

### 2.3 *Understanding the concept of 'generation'*

Sharing birth years, age, location and significant external life events during an individual's formative years are some of the characteristics that have made a 'generation' an identifiable group (Kupperschmidt 2000; Rice 1995). The concept 'cohort' is often used as replacement of generational group/generation by some authors (Ryder 1965; Glenn 1977; Kertzer 1983; Van den Broek 1994). The age-defined generations is largely employed by most of the existing research, identifying five broad age-cohorts to capture the commonalties and specificities of people's shared life experiences during the last century. 'Generations' in this study are temporal in character and largely defined by age and in this paper we tried to identify the differences among the four contemporary generations (i.e. 'GENY', 'GENX', 'Baby-boomers', and Pre-baby boomers). As shared lifestyles are critical in shaping generational differences and differentiation based on generation may give valuable typologies of consumer behaviour and more effectively isolate market potential (Jurkiewicz and Brown 1998), studies like this one may also generate some insight to validate the arguments regarding the existence of generational differences thus differences in consumption pattern and quality of life.

In the light of the presented discussion and the lack of focus on wider generational differences in consumption patterning and quality of life, this paper set out three main questions to be answered

- How are the various generations spatially distributed across the region?
- Do consumption patterns vary across generations and in what ways?
- What do these patterns tell us about contemporary consumer behaviour and quality of life across the generations

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1 *SEQ Quality of life Survey***

The researchers at the University of Queensland have conducted the SEQ Quality of Life (QOL) in 2003 using the Computer Assisted Telephoning Interviewing facility at the University to collect data through a telephone survey mode. It was a spatially stratified probability sample survey and a total of 1,612 survey participants were interviewed across 10 survey areas. The sampling procedure was designed to generate a minimum of 100 respondent households from within each of the survey areas. The survey interviewed a randomly selected person aged 18 years and older respondents in 1612 households. The sample was split for some sections of the survey due to the length of the survey instrument and the range of topics investigated. Therefore, questions related to consumption were asked to only a half-sample of 773 participants.

#### **3.2 *Questionnaire Design***

The standard socio-economic and demographic characteristics of respondents, along with locational information of their place of residence and work were collected for the survey purpose. Besides a wide range of information relating to perceived QOL across life satisfaction domains and the behaviour of people with respect to work, recreation and consumption were also collected for the same purpose. Consumption has been measured using a total of 16 items on a measurement scale of 1 to 4, where 1 represents 'not done at all', 2 'once', 3 'a few times' and 4 'lots/many times'. The survey items include: 'go to a public library'; 'visit the botanical gardens'; visit an art gallery'; go to South Bank parklands (a recreational park on the Brisbane River)'; 'go to a weekend market'; 'go to a hotel, club or pub'; 'eat out at a restaurant'; 'go to the beach'; 'go to a movie theatre'; 'used the internet/WWW'; 'go to a theme park'; 'eat take-away/fast food'; 'go to rock concerts'; 'go to live theatre'; 'go to the opera'; and 'travel overseas'.

Life satisfaction was measured by asking survey respondents this question: *'How satisfied are you with your overall quality of life'*. It was measured on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 represents 'very dissatisfied' and 5 'very satisfied'. Twelve questions were asked to assess satisfaction with the following aspects of life; as *'your employment situation'*; *'the amount of money you have available to you personally'*; *'your housing'*; *'the amount of time you have to do things you want to do'*; *'your relationship with your partner'*; *'your relationship with your children'*; *'your independence or freedom'*.

The QOL questionnaire did collect data on age; however it did not record the broader generational characteristics of survey participants. Using the data on age, we have assigned each participant into one of the categories of generation and these include: the Generation Y (GenY); Generation X (GenX); Baby Boomers Generation (BBGen) and Pre-Baby Boomers Generation (Pre-BBGen includes both DEPGEN and WW2GEN).

#### **4.0 Statistical Analysis**

This section has been divided into three parts. The first part deals with the determination of the underlying factors of consumption. The second part examines the ability of these factors in discriminating the designated generations while the third part deals with the pattern of quality of life across generations.

##### ***4.1 Principle Component Analysis:***

We applied principal component analysis to the 17 consumption items because we wanted to identify groupings of consumption items which would then help exploring the types of factors affecting different generations. PCA is employed on the variables listed in table 1. PCA is a commonly used multivariate data reduction technique (Hair et al. 1998) that

facilitates the exploration of manifest data to identify latent components from a set of interrelated variables. A reduced number of new variables, known as components, are obtained from highly correlated variables. For this dataset, the calculated Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) of 0.802 clearly exceeds the 0.5 level considered to be acceptable for the use of PCA. Items were retained if their loadings on one of the factors was greater than 0.40. Items that fail to fulfil this criterion were removed.

The selected model generated by PCA with varimax rotation, extracted four components with eigenvalues greater than 1 (see Table 1). These components were also tested for internal reliability using Cronbach's alpha. The first component accounts for the greatest proportion of variance (26 percent) and the five items defining have high loadings from 0.45 to 0.668. The second component explains around 22 percent of the variance and the four items defining it have loadings from 0.401 to 0.794. The third component defined by four items with loadings from 0.403 to 0.673. The final component has high loadings on three items with loadings that range from 0.580 to 0.645. These components are descriptively labelled and together explain 75 percent of the variability in observations.

The types of items conflated to create Component 1 are: 'go to a public library', 'visit the botanic garden', 'visit an art gallery', 'go to south bank parkland' and 'go to a weekend market'. This has been labelled the '*Aesthetic-Collective Consumption*' dimension. These activities tend to be orientated around human mental health and wellbeing (Wolf, 2004), characterised by taking a short break from 'normal' city life, and enjoying aesthetically and culturally pleasing public places and events. These cultural goods, if you like, reflect a form of collective aesthetic form of consumption, supported largely by State-provided spaces and events, and requiring little time or money.

Table 1: Survey items and rotated component structure

Items	Components- the Dimensions of Consumption			
	Aesthetic-Collective	Leisure-material	'New' Leisure	Identity-Experiential
Go to a public library	<b>.668</b>	.041	-.093	-.038
Visit the botanic gardens	<b>.658</b>	-.002	.161	.155
Visit an art gallery	<b>.556</b>	-.023	-.004	.382
Go to South Bank Parklands	<b>.497</b>	.050	.380	.226
Go to a weekend market	<b>.454</b>	.370	.107	-.202
Go to a hotel, club or pub	-.070	<b>.794</b>	.026	-.101
Eat out at a restaurant	.135	<b>.686</b>	.097	.282
Go to the beach	.043	<b>.465</b>	.291	.077
Go to a movie theatre	.239	<b>.401</b>	.370	.257
Use the Internet/World Wide Web	.139	.051	<b>.673</b>	.169
Go to a theme park	.022	.039	<b>.630</b>	-.081
Eat take-away/fast food	.062	.277	<b>.532</b>	-.253
Go to rock concerts	-.108	.254	<b>.403</b>	.222
Go to live theatre	.241	.254	-.107	<b>.645</b>
Go to the opera	.134	.024	-.002	<b>.634</b>
Travel overseas	-.200	-.016	.267	<b>.580</b>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.  
 a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Component 2 is labelled as the '*Leisure-Material Consumption*' and the items that load heavily on this component are: 'go to a hotel, club or pub'; 'eat out at a restaurant'; 'go to the beach'; 'go to a movie theatre'. This factor could be understood by the fact that for some consumer's leisure time is shrinking rather than increasing relative to income. This has resulted in the proposition of the idea 'the harried leisure class' (Stone 1990) characterised by having quick meal to meet wife followed by 'just in time' theatre entrance. For other consumers, these activities represent a variation in their usual day-to-day life. The leisure consumption implies on elastic realm of pleasure-seeking, where things or activities that were previously regarded as luxuries are now considered a part of normal lifestyle.

The items that load heavily on Component 3 are: ‘use the internet/world wide web’; ‘go to a theme park’; ‘eat take-away/fast food’; and ‘go to rock concerts’. This component is labelled as ‘*New Leisure*’. This factor could be understood by the fact that there are shifting forms of material consumption between generations, including new forms of materiality and interactionality in younger generations (particularly virtual spaces and interactions). The hyper-real worlds of MySpace, YouTube, Facebook and so on, are indicative of these new spaces of consumption, within which previous boundaries of space and time are contested. As such, the prominence of ‘New Leisure’ will likely only increase given increased constraints on space and time. Meanwhile the ever existent need to ‘be connected’ and ‘at any given moment’ are driving some consumers towards these new means of entertainment.

Component 4 is defined by: go to live theatre; go to the opera; and travel overseas. This component is named ‘*Identity-Experiential Consumption*’ as it is driven by the desire for fulfilment and self-actualisation. It includes forms of consumption whose utility is measured primarily in terms of the particular kinds of satisfactions and pleasures which come from consuming ‘meanings’ in inter-subjective or intangible form. This factor could be explained by the need to be distinctive by fulfilling the higher order needs (again, feeding into the notions of ‘taste’ as distinction). The feelings of self-involvement and experience are more likely to drive the consumption patterns for these consumers who strive for ‘experiential consumption’ (consumption through solely experience) to deviate from purely ‘functional consumption’ (consume only for meeting the basic needs).

In the following section, we utilised these factors to evaluate whether different generations with their specific characteristics exhibit different consumption patterns. We use a discriminant function analysis to capture these differences.

#### 4.2 Discriminant function analysis

The multiple discriminant analysis was conducted using the guidelines that include having ten times more cases than variables; more cases in the smallest group than predictor variables; linear relationships between predictor variables; absence of multivariate outliers (using Mahalanobis distances); and, finally, intercorrelations between predictor variables should not be significant. Box's M test for equality of the covariance matrixes of independent variables across the clusters of dependent variable indicate significant difference ( $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that the assumption of equality is violated. Pair-wise inter-correlations between predictor variables were found to be insignificant in most cases ( $p < 0.005$ ).

Three discriminant functions were identified (see Table 2), which represent the number of classes or groups in the dependent variable (generation categories) minus 1. The significance of the functions can be determined through the eigenvalues, where greater the eigenvalue the greater the variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the function. Function 1, 2 and 3 explain 44.5, 31.2 and 24.3 percent of the variance in the data respectively.

Table 2: List of discriminant functions

##### Structure Matrix

Dimensions	Function		
	1	2	3
'New' Leisure	<b>.924(*)</b>	-.247	.265
Leisure	.167	<b>.874(*)</b>	-.284
Collective	-.095	<b>-.401(*)</b>	-.248
Identity-experiential	-.154	.206	<b>.910(*)</b>

Function 1 has a high loading on the 'new leisure' dimension that has emerged as the strongest function with the ability to discriminate generations on different forms of

consumption identified in PCA. Function 2, on the other hand, is defined on the ‘leisure’ and ‘collective goods’, and clearly differentiates the generations on the basis of greater consumption of leisure goods and lesser use of collective goods. The last function heavily loads on the ‘conspicuous consumption’ in terms of its ability to differentiate generations.

#### **4.3 Descriptive Statistical Analysis**

Table 3 gives the means and standard deviations of the scores of perceived life satisfaction domains. For satisfaction with social relationships, housing, independence/freedom, family life, friends, the means are greater than 4 on the 5-point Likert scale. With the overall standard of living in the Brisbane-SEQ Region and life as a whole, respondents have given high satisfaction scores. On the other side of the spectrum, for six life satisfaction domains, satisfactions with the amount of money, the amount of free time available, romantic relationships, employment situation, leisure time and health, the overall score reported by the respondents are slightly lower being between 3.1 and 3.9. It also needs to be noted that items with relatively lower scores have high standard deviations; while for items with high satisfaction scores lower standard deviations are found.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for quality of life items

<b>Satisfaction with</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>
- the amount of money you have available to you personally	<b>3.12</b>	1.20
- the amount of time you have to do the things you want to	<b>3.29</b>	1.22
- your romantic relationships	<b>3.77</b>	1.27
- your employment situation	<b>3.78</b>	1.15
- the way you spend your leisure time	<b>3.88</b>	0.95
- your health	<b>3.89</b>	0.99
- with your social relationships	4.01	0.88
- your housing	4.19	0.85
- your independence or freedom	4.20	0.91
- your family life	4.24	0.91
- your friends	4.26	0.75
- living in the Brisbane - South East Queensland Region	4.36	0.71
- your overall standard of living	4.07	0.80
<b>- your life as a whole</b>	<b>4.24</b>	<b>0.73</b>

Table 4 exhibits the satisfaction dimensions with respect to life as a whole, family life, housing, amount available time and money. For satisfaction with the life as a whole Gen X is found to be least satisfied (25%) whereas Pre-BB Gen is found to be very satisfied (45%). The Baby-Boomers Gen and the Gen Y exhibits relatively higher satisfaction with the life as a whole than the Gen X. Similar to these results for the other satisfaction dimension i.e. satisfaction with family life, housing, amount of time and money Pre-BB is found to be very satisfied than any other generation as espoused in this study. The BB Gen also shows higher satisfaction on all the dimensions except for the amount of money available for spending. However, the BB Gen satisfaction levels did not surpassed the satisfaction level of the Pre BB Gen.

Table 4: Perceived satisfaction with the quality of life items

Satisfaction with	Categories	GenY	GenX	Baby-Boomers	Pre-BB Gen
<b>Your life as a whole</b> p<0.05, Significant	<i>Very Dissatisfied</i>	1.0	0.8	1.4	.40
	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	2.4	5.5	2.8	1.6
	<i>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</i>	13.4	10.9	9.8	6.9
	<i>Satisfied</i>	54.0	57.8	50.5	45.5
	<i>Very Satisfied</i>	29.0	25	35.5	45.5
<b>Amount of money</b> p<0.05, Significant	<i>Very Dissatisfied</i>	18.9	23.4	14.5	8.6
	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	22.0	20.3	21.0	15.2
	<i>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</i>	25.2	28.9	30.4	18.0
	<i>Satisfied</i>	22.5	21.9	25.7	41.8
	<i>Very Satisfied</i>	11.0	5.5	8.4	16.4
<b>Amount of time</b> p<0.05, Significant	<i>Very Dissatisfied</i>	9.4	18.8	9.8	4.9
	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	29.9	32.8	31.2	9.8
	<i>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</i>	30.7	31.3	27.4	15.0
	<i>Satisfied</i>	22.8	12.5	20.0	36.6
	<i>Very Satisfied</i>	7.1	4.7	11.6	33.7
<b>Your family life</b> p<0.05, Significant	<i>Very Dissatisfied</i>	4.7	1.6	2.3	0.8
	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	5.5	3.9	4.7	2.5
	<i>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</i>	17.3	14.8	11.2	11.1
	<i>Satisfied</i>	29.0	43.8	38.6	35.4
	<i>Very Satisfied</i>	43.3	35.9	43.3	50.2
<b>Housing</b> p<0.05, Significant	<i>Very Dissatisfied</i>	2.4	0.8	1.9	0.8
	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	3.9	7.0	7.0	1.0
	<i>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</i>	17.3	21.9	8.8	5.4
	<i>Satisfied</i>	38.6	42.2	43.3	41.9
	<i>Very Satisfied</i>	37.8	28.1	39.1	50.8

GenX is found to be least satisfied with the amount of time (5%) and money that is available (5%) whereas Gen Y also exhibits similar satisfaction levels on these items. On other items, there were no statistical differences between different generations. Baby-boomers were found to be more satisfied with housing as they might be able to cash in the benefit of housing boom; whilst GenX is confronting the difficulty in getting the initial entry in the housing market as it is increasingly becoming unaffordable in relative terms. The conservative outlook towards life might help the Pre BB Gen to be very satisfied with whatever available to them. On the other hand, higher freedom of choice, more spending power, availability of larger number of alternative brands have made the Gen X more demanding thus less satisfied with whatever available to them.

## **Conclusions**

The purpose of the study was threefold, firstly to investigate the underlying dimensions that explain the consumption patterns of SEQ residents, secondly to test whether there are any inter-generational differences in terms of the residents' consumption pattern and thirdly, to see whether the quality of life varies across the generations. This SEQ region provides us an interesting case study of recent surge in in-migration attracting a wide range of generational cohorts (retirees and young people) thus proclaiming its status as classic Sunbelt region. This offers an ideal opportunity to examine contemporary shifts in consumption values, potential emergent intergenerational differences in consumption and quality of life. In fact, when consumption patterns and the generational differences of consumption and quality of life are examined, as illustrated in the results of the current study, apart from some commonalities across generations, there is generational patterning in consumption behaviour and values.

Each generation included in the current study exhibited similar ‘common goods’ consumption except the GENY cohort. In regards to consuming ‘public goods’ insignificant differences are observed in the study although GENYN were more inclined to consume ‘going to the movies’ or ‘going to the beach’. Significant differences emerged between the generations examined, perhaps unsurprisingly, with regards to the ‘new leisure’. GENY spent more time online, visiting theme parks and eating takeaway dinners thus exhibiting clearly differentiated lifestyle than the other contemporary generations. This generational cohort is equipped with the latest information technologies and report being busier in life (home and work) which may lead them to choose products that give comfort and convenience. High consumption of takeaway dinners from restaurants may also be a reflection of this. The fast paced character of their everyday lives may be reflected in their preference toward packaged food, and ready to eat food and drink.

In contrary, older generations like Pre-BB and BBgen prefers to visit live theatre or opera. Although this generation experienced a period of struggle thus very busy working life, higher loadings found on the consumption items of this generation reflected their orientation toward ‘experiential’ form of consumption. Among all the components identified in the analysis, ‘new leisure’ emerged as the most discriminating component in terms of inter-generational consumption patterns. The BBGen and GenX demonstrate some similarity in the consumption patterns whereas the GenY is clearly exhibiting higher preference in consuming ‘new’ forms of leisure.

The results of the present study suggest a rethinking of the materialist/post-materialist intergenerational split, at least within this socio-cultural context of SEQ. There is minimal evidence of substantial differences in value orientation or a re-emphasis on self-expression

and quality of life issues amongst one generation over another (or several others). Rather, the situation is more complex with each generation sharing elements of their consumption patterns, but yet differentiated according to cultural-aesthetic and time-space dimensions. In the context of generation X and Y, it could even be argued that there is in fact a return to a focus on materiality, albeit involving different new forms of functional consumption (online interaction and shopping). Rather than indicative of post-materialist or postmodern consumer culture, we would argue that the patterns seen here represent a subtle mix of materialist and post-materialist values, largely differentiated (if at all) by globalised and virtual forms of consumption and interactivity. The fast food and theme park elements also suggestive some generational shift is consumption and leisure activity, indicative of a contraction of space and time within the younger generations (also linked to virtual interactivity).

The older generations reflect a tendency towards classic forms of the consumption culture, including those related to practices of distinction (high culture) and cultural competence (taste). Even though these processes also operate in the younger cohorts, the older generations engage in more traditional forms of community interaction and cultural events, whereas the younger generations are embracing a faster paced, virtual and fleeting form of cultural consumption. This, in one sense, reinforces notions of a shift to more postmodern and post-materialist forms of urban life and consumption, indicated by more individualised and hyper-real interactions. Yet, engagement in classic forms of consumption persist across the generational cohorts examined here and those new elements to leisure and consumption retain key aspects of traditional consumption behaviour that limit the applicability of such ideas of major cultural shift.

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