

Understanding the Media Habits of the Millennial Generation



Meet Kim, 34. She's a prolific user of social media, tweeting and posting on Instagram continuously, and uses her appearance to validate herself and stand out from the crowd. She's entrepreneurial – a modern self-made woman, and craves the respect of her peers. She's your typical Millennial.

Malala, at 17, is half Kim's age. She's less interested in keeping up with the newest trends, and more likely to be focused on self-progression. She's aspirational, vocal and influential. She's also a typical Millennial.

Reality star Kardashian and Nobel peace prize-winner Malala Yousafzai share a generational tag, along with MP Pamela Nash, as are all in the same 16-to-34 group that advertisers target, but they couldn't be more different.

Accounting for a staggering one in four British adults today, the Millennial Generation is not as simple as the Hoxton Hipster caricature of media lore. As you'd expect from a population of 15.8m men and women they're a diverse bunch, not the one homogenous group they are frequently presented as and that advertisers target.

Meet the new clans

In Bauer Knowledge: The Millennials Chapter, five distinct segments are identified– the Influencers, Adopters, Apprentices, Entertained and Contented - each of whom are as different as they are alike.

The Influencers are the smallest group identified by Bauer. They account for just 11% of Millennials (1.7m) and are more likely to be male. They have the highest media consumption of any segment and exhibit the widest range of media behaviours. They are defined as creative and influential, like their voice to be heard – especially online where they are highly active - and follow trends closely.

It's an audience that online magazine The Debrief believes it captures. It was launched 'digital first' in February 2014 as a multimedia lifestyle brand for the twentysomething woman, with mobile now accounting for 49% of access.

Acting deputy editor Lena de Casparis says: "It seemed crazy that there wasn't a brand that talked to smart, savvy 18-to-25-year-old girls." Many were getting their fixes from MailOnline or fashion blogs, but few were emotionally engaged. By talking with, rather than to, their readers de Casparis says the brand is learning with its audience. Commercially it looks to partner with brands on native content, something the research suggests resonates with this audience.

Adopters, Apprentices and the Entertained

Adopters are also heavy users of media and are particularly prolific on social media. Peer respect is key for these 4.5m Millennials (28%); they seek knowledge that sets them apart and use appearance to stand out. All segments are hyper aware of their online presence but the Adopters in particular take great care to fine tune their online personas. Self esteem and social media are key drivers for the Adopter.

Younger than the average, accounting for a higher percentage of students, Apprentices are more likely to live in London. These 1.8m (12%) are focused on self-progression rather than keeping up with the trends. They use online primarily but rue the screen fatigue and time wasting it can bring. Theirs is an inward focus; they concentrate more on reaching their goals and less on following fads.

The 5m Entertained account for nearly a third (32%) of all UK Millennials. They're older, more likely to have children and more likely to be ABC1. They lead busy lives so media needs to compete for their time. When they do consume media they want to be entertained - celebrity and real-life content are prioritized over news.

For Heat, it's a vital audience, and one that heavily influences the content it serves. Editor-in-chief Lucie Cave says: "We sense that TV and TV stars are almost eclipsing reality stars. The growth of social media has only enhanced that Entertained group, their love for TV in its purest sense – and their love of appointment to watch."

The Contented account for 17% of the generation (2.7m) and are happy with their lives as they are. They are at a stable place in their careers and don't feel the need to be at the forefront of trends. They are older than average, more likely to have children and more rural living.

They are big users of on-demand entertainment and love to create their own TV schedules, picking and choosing from trusted favourites. They're also the first to switch off from advertising, preferring instead to rely on independent content (see box out).

Lessons for advertisers

Three core truths come out of The Millennials Chapter, each with defining implications for advertisers.

Relief is demanded, so brands must entertain and inspire the Millennials. FHM editor Joe Barnes says the insight and brand implications underlines his editorial "hunch" of who his audience is, and what they want from the brand.

Online, they are looking for entertainment, dipping in and out of its website or Facebook page (which, at 8 million Likes has a far bigger audience than FHM ever had in print, he points out) and in print they are looking for inspiration, adding that editorially this means an increasing focus on empowering content.

Adds Barnes: “Most Millennials are open to advertising, they enjoy it and engage with it.” He says commercial partnerships, such as a recent Road Trip campaign with spirit brand Jaegermeister, allow it to produce bigger, better and more immersive content. “We don’t mind [that commercial collaboration], our readers don’t mind. They know how the world works. They love a lot of brands, it reflects who they are.”

Kiss group programme director Andy Roberts agrees: “Commercial partnerships work better when delivered as an editorial partnership rather than sponsorships or spot ads.”

The always-on immersion in digital has made the Millennial an expert knowledge gatherer, both shallow to keep on top of the news and their friends’ lives and deep, or niche, which Adopters in particular relish harvesting.

Roberts points to the growing numbers of digital platforms that allow brands to play in spaces not previously open to them and give consumers what they want – either snippets of news, information or entertainment, or a more in-depth, immersive experience online.

The Kiss radio station is now joined by two stable-mates online - Kisstory (a spin-off from a radio strand) and Kiss Fresh, giving access to new and upcoming music. And though music remains its ethos, Kiss’s brand strength has allowed it to expand into social campaigns such as anti gun-crime and sexual health, as well as related passion-drivers including fashion, film and gaming.

Focus on experiences is key

The third core conclusion the Bauer research insight draws is that ‘experience’ is the new status symbol. Media owners and brands that recognise and act on this can empower the Millennial consumers to do, feel and share. They can become an intrinsic part of that experience; an enabler in their lives.

Roberts says: “We want to be with you at a festival not waving from the VIP enclosure.” He cautions: “Brands must be mindful that when you provide experiences they must be the best experiences for the audience, and not elitist in any way.”

Matt Rennie, managing director of music television business Box TV, concurs. He says that creating meaningful experiences for and with its audiences is a growing trend for his brands such as 4Music. “Our challenge is how to make [the TV platform] more interactive.”

He points to a weekly live TV show on 4Music, with the host and community editors interacting with tweets coming through the show. People tweeting in requests that were then shown live on screen were often then tweeting photographs of their tweet on TV, a virtuous sharing circle.

“The younger Millennials are so quick, so up on everything, that we have to sprint to catch up with our audience or we’ll lose them,” he adds. “We’re in a perpetual stage of innovation.”

Engaging with young people through media used to be relatively straightforward, a matter of simply selecting the media your target audience read. The complexity of the Millennial Generation means that today, a deep understanding of the often conflicting behaviours of this entire audience is crucial.