



MILLENNIALS ON THE BRINK

As a bonafide Millennial, I felt compelled to dispell some of the myths that class me at the grand old age of late-twenties as having similar interests and lifestyle choices as a callow youth of 20. 'Millennial' is a vastly over used word and it's inadequate when we consider the generations-worth of difference that span the twenty years which define it.

As the younger half of this target demographic start to flex their consumption muscles (they're practically all able to drink, drive and vote now), we need to think more carefully about our definition of millennials and whether tarring them all with same brush will lead to dissillusioned & unsatisfied consumers.

We've identified a distinct group – those born after 1995 – who hit their teenage years as facebook was exploding into our consciousness. They're digital natives, riding the wave of social media, hitting maturity with the advent of web 2.0 and now they stand on the brink of entering the world and the workplace. We've called this group *Imminent Millennial Citizens* (IMCs) and aim to debunk some common misconceptions that exist for them vs their elder millennial peers.

BRAND PURPOSE NOT BRAND PROMISCUITY

An IMC once lost, is lost forever. But a clear & evidenced brand purpose creates a new type of loyalty.

Knowing a brand stands for something can not only recruit IMCs into a brand, but encourage this infamously hard-to-please consumer to stick around for good.

- IMCs are more exposed to information in their formative years than any previous generation. This greater awareness of the world brings with it an added sense of responsibility – to leave the world a better place than they found it.

- Rather than having one singular purpose to rally behind, our IMCs are bombarded with causes. Making a difference in 'the world' can be daunting, and often not the first priority of a twenty-something, but they CAN be a positive force in 'their own world' – their social group, community, family or work-place and brands can play a key role in cementing & facilitating this sense of purpose.

ROUTINE NOT BREAKING THE RULES

The divide between what IMCs say or post and what they actually do can mean that their apparent high-energy, multi-connected lives is hiding a desire for structure and routine. But isn't routine the enemy of time?

- We know that this emerging target is more clean-living than any generation since before the 1960s, partly due to the impact of the financial crisis which hit this age group the hardest on average and caused hardwork to replace hedonism, but also due to the prevalence of social media illuminating every aspect of their lives.
- Rather than see routine as the enemy (as their elder Millennial peers do), if self-created it can be a way to strengthen their sense of self, increase productivity and reach their goals. Their network (digital, social and otherwise) can be a key tool in developing a routine that leads them to success.

TIME WISE NOT TIME WASTERS

Far from shirking their responsibilities, IMCs are simply making the most of their twenties – their bonus decade.

- Since they'll most likely live into their nineties and beyond, the 'expected' career-mortgage-family route isn't being ignored; they simply have more time to play with before they need to settle down and they'll spend this exploring & experimenting with who they are and who they want to be.
- Facing a retirement age of over 70, our IMCs have recognised the freedom of their twenties and are embracing it.
- Following the right course of education & training weighs heavily on this group too – millennials born at the beginning of the 1980s didn't have to deal with the rising rate of tuition fees that our IMCs now find themselves crippled with, meaning they're taking their studies more seriously – truancy has fallen by a third since 2008. It's now relatively

common-place for study, further study and re-training to take up much of IMCs twenties. Being settled in a first job may not happen for this group until they reach their thirties and the average age of motherhood in the UK has now risen to 34.

- This can be an opportunity for brands, financial institutes and services to develop products that fit the changing life patterns of our IMCs.

ECLECTIC EXPERIENCES NOT LINEAR LIVES

IMCs don't see their lives, or even their days, as linear. We know they crave experiences, but for this group, they track their progress & sense of self through experiences too.

- They're more about connections than consumption, and it's not all about fleeting or instant connections and digital interaction but rather a discipline to achieve their dreams.
- For today's 20-somethings the Group is the Scene – where IMCs find & forge their way forward. Often spanning different backgrounds, education, interests, ambitions, the Group is a space to connect, relate and stimulate experiences. The potency of the Group is not being one cohesive demographic but a tapestry of individuals with shared values. What binds them is a common outlook. They're not a group of guys out as a pack or housewives trading secret tips – they're a Group with dissimilar demographics but a shared mindset.
- IMCs no longer tick only one box. This slash/ slash generation who have multiple interests outside of work and refuse to be defined by their job title are also inherently creative & creating all the time, whether this is their pinterest page, their look or what they consume.
- The brands they choose can help them to flex their creative muscles, experimenting with new styles or destinations and messages. In many circles, marketing thinking hasn't caught on to the death of the single demographic. We need to shift from target demographic strategies to a group mindset approach.

As someone looking back at these IMCs (but only just!) marketers need to treat millennials not as homogenous group but as distinct mindsets. What is relevant to a 20 year old, right now, is superfluous to old timers like me.

Our future is now in the hands of these *Imminent Millennial Citizens* – and it's looking bright.