

Why Millennials Don't Deserve the Bad Rap They Get

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Millennials are often known as the “entitlement generation.” Matt Anderson, a YouTube ads marketer—and millennial—shares new research about millennials’ behavior on YouTube, which paints a more positive picture of millennials than many give them credit for.

So much has been written and debated about millennials, that you’d think marketers would have us figured out by now. Do a quick Google search for “millennial trends,” and you’ll find more results than you can count.

We’re not only the largest demographic in the U.S., we’re seemingly the most-studied, and for good reason: earn our brand love and you could have a customer for decades.

As both a millennial and a marketer, I’m often amazed at the obsession surrounding millennials. Yes, we are highly sought after, but we’re often misunderstood. As many of us can attest—there’s a lot more to our generation than we get credit for, especially when it comes to our online habits. (Selfies, anyone?)

New research on what millennials are watching on YouTube paints a much more nuanced—and positive—picture than the entitled, self-obsessed stereotypes that abound. By looking into what millennials watch on YouTube—and why—it’s clear the stereotypes may need some tweaking.

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Millennials are self-starters and doers

Surely you've heard how millennials were rewarded as children not for winning, but for merely participating, which made them entitled...which made them lazy. (Truth be told, I probably still have a participation ribbon or two stashed away in my parents' basement, but that's neither here nor there.)

Some may point to millennials' heavy use of technology as proof of said laziness. Sure, technology may mean that millennials haven't mastered the same skills their parents did—like balancing a checkbook—but it's not out of laziness. Millennials are using technology to self-start and learn in different ways.

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In the past year, 70% of millennial YouTube users watched YouTube to learn how to do something new or learn more about something they're interested in.¹ Forget books and instruction manuals—millennials have video. In fact, when learning something new, millennials are 2.7X as likely to prefer to do so by watching a YouTube video compared to reading a book.²



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Source: Google/Ipsos Connect, A total of 1901 U.S. respondents ages 21-36 completed a device-agnostic survey. The study was fielded between April 27, 2017 and May 5, 2017.

Whether learning to be an Olympic javelin thrower or how to prepare meals for their children, millennials are mastering the art of self-teaching with a little help from online video.

For millennials, self-improvement trumps self-promotion

That self-starter attitude comes into play when it comes to millennials' own well-being too, where they take matters into their own hands. Forty-seven percent of millennials say they've watched YouTube videos to improve their health or feel better after feeling down.³



47% of millennials say they've watched YouTube videos to **improve their health** or feel better after feeling down.

Source: Google/Ipsos Connect, A total of 1901 U.S. respondents ages 21-36 completed a device-agnostic survey. The study was fielded between April 27, 2017 and May 5, 2017.

Millennials don't come to YouTube to find a picture-perfect version of their lives—they come to watch video and connect with supportive communities, often led by creators who don't shy away from sharing their own struggles. So it's no surprise that some of the top YouTube creators are strong mental health advocates—whether it's Markiplier speaking out to reduce the stigma around depression and bipolar disorder, or John Green sharing his struggles with anxiety.

Millennials are dreamers

Yes, millennials take a lot of selfies. But that doesn't necessarily mean they're self-absorbed. Millennials believe it's important to hear perspectives of others who differ from them, and YouTube videos are a source of that perspective. Thirty-nine percent of millennial YouTube users say it has helped them see the world differently or go through life-changing moments in the past year.⁴



39% of millennial YouTube users say YouTube has helped them **see the world differently** or go through life-changing moments in the past year.

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In these life-changing moments, YouTube creators can be a source of inspiration or comfort as they share intimate stories with their communities. Forty-five percent of millennial YouTube users agree that a YouTuber inspired them to make a personal change in their life.⁵ Take for example, Gigi Gorgeous whose recent YouTube Red documentary, “This is Everything”, debuted at Sundance and told the story of her transgender transformation.

Millennials are growing up and gaining influence

As millennials grow up, so will their buying power. As many of them now make big life decisions they so famously delayed—getting married, having children, buying a home—it’ll be that much more important for brands marketing to millennials to connect with them authentically.

As for me, I’m proud to be part of a generation that will shape the world into a more inclusive place. A place where self-improvement trumps self-promotion, where authenticity is celebrated, and the ideals of equality are strongly upheld.

Lazy? Coddled? Narcissistic? Nah, those never felt right to me. Just don’t ask me to balance a checkbook.

Sources

¹⁻⁵ Google/Ipsos Connect, A total of 1901 U.S. respondents age 21-36 completed a device-agnostic survey. The study was fielded between April 27, 2017 and May 5, 2017.