

How to be a 'Millennial' brand



By Louise Marsland

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Every generation has its own music, its own icons, beliefs, culture, story - so why not their own brands? Is marketing so 'young' that it is only realising now that you can't necessarily sell the same 'fairy-tale' to every generation?

I can't remember how many times I've written about ['clean-slate' brands](#) and about the fact that legacy can also be a disbenefit to brands selling to the [millennial generation](#) that are now entering the market. Or that our first truly digital generation have a different world view...

In fact it is not only certain brands that millennials want nothing to do with, but entire categories. Havas Worldwide calls this the "Hashtag Nation". They share everything and need nothing. Advertising doesn't fool them. 'Their brands' have to stand for something, so they can tell the world.

Beer makers in the United States met recently to discuss the fact that the youth are not drinking as much beer and in fact don't want to drink the same brands that the generation before them did. Of course, factors like health and increasing joblessness were also cited as contributing factors.

[Advertising Age](#) reports that beer category sales are expected to decline by 1% in 2014. This follows on from beer's share of absolute alcohol consumption falling consistently over 15 years from 59.6% in 2001 to a projected 50.9% in 2015. Product positioning, packaging and old-style marketing were blamed, as wine and spirits categories and craft beers, continue to do well.

Apparently beer needs to appeal to the millennials with more emphasis on quality and the "functional strength" of the various beer brands, most especially the light beers. Brewers need to reach millennials in different ways, like through experiential marketing and user-generated content opportunities. In plain speak: give them experiences, not just ads. They want something to talk about and share. It's called 'conversational currency'.

Branding 'self'

These woes faced by certain brands and categories are despite the fact that millennials do consider brands "essential" to their lives, according to the [new research](#) released by Havas Worldwide last week.

In fact, the millennial generation seem far more invested in brands than previous generations, in terms of identity to content. They have a "powerful relationship" with brands, when contrasted with the Baby Boomer generation, says Havas. The report 'Hashtag Nation: Marketing to the Selfie Generation' did find that millennials also have a far more sustainable

approach to consumption, as reported by *Marketing Magazine*:

- They believe that people should consume less.
 - They believe they can have a bigger impact with what they buy than with how they vote.
 - They want brands they can be loyal to, so they match brands with their personalities.
 - Pop culture has a massive influence on their very personalities and world view.
 - Millennials want to like brands - give them a reason to.
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- They want to talk about brands - give them the 'conversational currency' to do so.

"Young people want to be able to rely on brands to make their lives better and to help them stand out from the crowd," Andrew Benett, global CEO of Havas Worldwide and Havas Creative Group, said in a statement, writes *Marketing Magazine*. "It's a relationship built on mutual interests and trust - and it's up to brands not to blow it by being disingenuous or failing to keep their promises."

Havas Worldwide has this piece of advice for brands trying to navigate this millennial world: build brands that the youth can rally around and connect with "wherever and whenever". They call these 'compass brands', which support the millennial generation, but also show them the way.

For more on the Havas prosumer report 'Hashtag Nation': [*'New research from Havas Worldwide reveals a powerful partnership between young people and brands'*](#); and [*'Why we're living in Hashtag Nation - and what it means'*](#).

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