THE EUROPEAN MILLENNIALS VERSUS
THE US MILLENNIALS:
SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

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di

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1. Introduction

Each demographic generation exhibits character traits that distinguish one from another. Closer examination and understanding of these habits and preferences provide vital clues to communicate effectively with and to respond to the demands of the people within a particular demographic group. The study of consumer behaviour forms a core component in strategic marketing and branding. A deeper understanding of and a clearer insight into what makes the consumer “tick” can often decide the success of a marketing campaign, and ultimately the long-term success of any given company. This paper will describe the US Millennials, compare them to the Baby Boomers and Gen-Xers, and explore what distinguishes the European Millennials from the US Millennials.

The Millennials form a demographic group of people born approximately between 1980 and 2000. The Millennial generation, often marginalized as an echo of the Baby Boomer generation, is shaping up to be a comparable force to be reckoned with. With an estimated population size at over 70 million in the US alone and with over US$200 billion in purchasing power, their generational impact on politics, economics, social and cultural constructs, etc., are similar in magnitude to that of the Boomer generation, but magnified exponentially by the power of the Internet and its related technologies and applications. Understanding the Millennials and their consumer behaviour will have the same revolutionary effect on marketing and branding as was the case for marketing to the hippies of the 1960s and 1970s, and the bourgeois bohemians (i.e. bobos) of the 1990s.

The Millennial generation is distinctly unique from the generations preceding it. The consumer market is changing, and marketing departments, agencies and institutions must adapt to these changes in order to survive in the 21st century. Because of the Internet and other emerging technologies, there are new ways of communication and social interaction. On the surface, it appears that the motivations behind consumer behaviour have changed. The research will attempt to discover the extent of these changes and the true underlying causes in order to understand the future's largest demographic consumer market and to predict future trends.

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1 When we talk about Millennials, we should also talk about the Baby Boomers. They're the ones who raised Millennials and they're the ones who created the world in which Millennials grew up.
2. Literature review and hypotheses development

Much research on the Millennials has been conducted in the United States since the early 1990s. Comparable studies in Europe are almost non-existent. The first official study into European Millennials behaviour was first published in 2006 by Forrester Consulting. This document, titled Is Europe ready for the Millennials? Innovate to meet the needs of the emerging generation explores Millennial behaviour and suggestions for companies to respond in their hiring practices and to change the way they manage the workplace.

William Strauss & Neil Howe, authors in 2006 of Millennials and the Pop Culture - Strategies for a new generation of consumers in music, music television the Internet and video games, describe the challenges faced by entertainment and communication companies in the very near future as well as provide advice on how to interact with and anticipate the needs and desires of this completely new type of consumer. The entertainment world is highly influenced by this generation change.

The same authors also published Millennials rising (2000) that examines the Millennial phenomenon from a sociological point of view. Sam Binkley's article, Cosmic profit: countercultural commerce & the problem with trust in American Marketing (2003), is specific to marketing. Brad Sago, The online shopping psychology and expectations of Millennials (2004), refers part to marketing and part to psychology. Resource Interactive, Decoding the Digital Millennials (2006), studies culture and trends from a sociological point of view. The articles proposed by Trends & Tudes newsletters of Harris Interactive look into education and children.

Harris Interactive also teamed up with Yahoo! and Carat Interactive to look into the role of new media for the digital generation, meaning the Millennial generation. Titled Born to be Wired (2006), this report describes the Internet as the youth medium of choice and explores how different subgroups with in the US Millennial group use the Internet. Segmenting the Millennials into six general groups (Hubs, Now Crowd, Chic geeks, Miss Insulars, Alter-ego.coms, IQ Crew), Harris Interactive’s report describes each of these consumer segments and provides advice on how to reach them with brand messaging.

Because most of the existing research to this date has been done almost exclusively on US Millennials, delving deeper into Millennial consumer behaviour from the unique viewpoint of the European Millennials is an
exciting opportunity to explore the corresponding trends in Europe and to examine both the similarities and the differences. Despite the spread of globalisation, European culture and attitudes remain and continue to influence social norms and behaviours, distinguishing European Millennials from their American counterparts. Such European traits as widespread travel, multilingualism, work-life balance and appreciation for Europe’s rich culture alongside cutting-edge technological advancements leave an indelible mark, inevitably separating the European Millennials from the American Millennials.

Because of the phenomenon of globalisation, it is assumed that European Millennials will be somewhat similar to the US Millennials, although it is safe to assume there will also be some significant differences between the two groups. In this paper, existing research have been analyzed, current attitudes and social trends have been surveyed, and acknowledged experts have been interviewed in order to discover if there are fundamental differences in consumer behaviour between generations, as well as differences between European and US Millennials, and what exactly are these differences.

The Federal Forum of Family Statistics underline that the average age of an American mother is 27 bringing more maturity to the roles of caregivers, teachers, and coaches. In Europe, according to the National Italian Statistic Institute (Instat) and the European Statistic Institute (Eurostat), that figure is even higher.

In six states within the European Union, the average age for first-time mothers is 30 years old and the average age in the Euro25 zone is 29.5. In Italy in particular, the average age for women having their first child is 29. In addition, although birth rates fell between 1960 and 1995, they remained relatively stable during the period between 1995 and 2005 in the EU as a whole. The ratio of children born to unmarried mothers rose from around one in five births in 1995 to almost one in three births by 2004.

The importance of family is thus present even among European Millennials², albeit the definition of the typical European family may no longer conform to the traditional ideal. For one thing, there are fewer children born per family as suggested by the declining birth rate.

² Most Millennials are still in the care of their Baby Boomer parents, but the first several million of them have joined the adult world, and many more are coming.
For another, parents feel less social pressure to enter the matrimonial state as indicated by the rise of single parents. From the 1980s onwards, with the greater acceptance of abortion, people had greater personal freedom of choice with regards to starting their own families. Their children thus became the central figure within the household. The resulting generation is one that is much indulged. In short, the Millennials are children who were desired and are carefully nurtured.

The Millennials are the Internet babies, having grown up with this technology. Such early applications as Kazaa allowed them to download music off of the Internet and to share files among their peers, without regard for existing copyright laws. Instant messaging platforms, such as MSN Messenger and AOL Online, gave them instant connectivity with their peers, even allowing them to complete homework or conduct group work without being in the same physical space. Gone are the days when a student would manually scroll through encyclopaedias, abstracts, and microfiches as an initial source of information. “Google-ing” is much less time-consuming, and often relevant enough for the casual Internet surfer. Cellular phones meant that they could be contacted anytime, anywhere. For older generations, these technologies emerged during their lifetimes, and the uses and applicability of these technologies and applications had to be consciously learned. For the Millennials, the Internet and associated applications are not considered technology because for them, it is a part of normal, everyday life. In truth, the Internet has become mundane. The Millennials have a full range of media available in an extremely technology-friendly environment. Cable television, satellite television, digital television, Internet-on-demand channels, Google, etc. provide answers to every possible question and address almost every possible need.

This technological menagerie has fundamentally changed how Millennials think and act. From a social point of view, Millennials possess a different attitude towards immigration and interracial, intercultural relations. Because of heightened mobility, the average classroom is likely to exhibit a more diverse mix of ethnicities. For this reason, Millennials are generally more tolerant towards multiculturalism, and this open-minded attitude can sometimes be a source of friction with their parents and the older generations, who were likely brought up in an environment that had less

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3 Perhaps it's because of the great attention and high expectations from parents that they display a great deal of self-confidence. This group is technically literate like no one else.
ethnic diversity. The Internet opened up pathways to break down preconceptions and prejudices, offering numerous possibilities to bridge cultural gaps.

In general, the age in which US Millennials are growing up in is much more accepting of differences and change. The last 25 years have seen many groundbreaking and life-altering events, including the breakdown of the former USSR, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the rise of China and India, the intensification of environmental and global climate change concerns, the destruction of natural catastrophes such as the Indian Ocean tsunami and Hurricane Katrina, the killings of Columbine High and so on and so forth. This generation has seen ideologies fail and taboos broken, which would not have seemed likely 25 years ago. Such topics as gay rights, sexual attitudes and interracial relationships are no longer much of an issue for this younger generation.

The confluence of technology and the geopolitical events that have shaped the world in the last two decades forms the foundation of the typical Millennial. Because they behave so differently from Boomers and Gen-Xers, their needs must be addressed according to their own preferences. Companies must not make the mistake of approaching the Millennials in the same manner as with Boomers and Gen-Xers. Although the Millennials are technology-savvy, optimistic, enthusiastic, and generally well-rounded, they are also less trusting and less inclined to trust marketers out of hand. Having grown up with Internet crime, they will need to be convinced in order to buy into a product or an idea. With so many brands of the same product available with a click of a mouse, marketers should not expect brand loyalty from them.

As mentioned previously, much of the existing research on the Millennials has been conducted in the United States. Although different sources vary slightly, the following is a relatively comprehensive list of elements describing the US environment in which the US Millennials are growing up. These elements, which have to be tested against those of the environment of European countries, are (Raines C., Managing Millennials, 2002):

- **focus on children and family.** The Millennials are growing up in a moment of the American culture where the role of family has once again become a much more important feature in an individual’s life. The Federal Forum of Family Statistics reported that the national attention to
children is at an all-time high. Older parents bring more maturity to their roles as caregivers, teachers, and coaches;

- **scheduled, structured lives.** The Millennials are the busiest generation ever seen in the US, facing time pressures traditionally reserved for adults. In addition to school curricula, children are involved in many extra-curricular activities such as music, sports, art, charities, etc.;

- **multiculturalism.** Kids that grew up in the 90's and 00's experience more daily interaction with other ethnicities, religions, and cultures than ever before. The most recent data from UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute shows that interracial relationships among college freshmen has reached a record high;

- **terrorism.** In their lives, Millennials have experienced several terrorist and violent acts: the Oklahoma City bombing, the Columbine high school massacre and finally the terrorist attack of 11th September 2001 in New York and the subsequent anthrax threats. This means that US Millennials are growing up in an era of great insecurity, paranoia, and hostility;

- **heroism.** Despite the aforementioned events, US Millennials also live in an environment where acts of heroism emerged alongside acts of violence. Policemen, firemen, and firefighters, who already traditionally held roles of protection, emerged at the forefront of national news in the aftermath of September 11th. Technologies, such as video cameras, mobile phone cameras, and YouTube, quickly transmitted images of these protectors in the act of saving lives. Such displays of heroism encourages and reinforces a similar sense of responsibility and duty, especially on impressionable young people;

- **parent advocacy.** Unlike Generation X, the Millennials and their parents share a much closer relationship. Millennial parents are involved in almost all aspects of their children’s lives, and communication channels between the two generations are kept more open than ever before. According to research conducted by Lou Harris on behalf of Northwest Mutual Life insurance, mothers and fathers were most often named when young people were asked whom they admired, versus the political or religious leaders of the day;

- **globalisation.** The Millennials have friends and pen pals all over the globe, thanks in part to digital technologies that allow them to communicate with each other almost constantly. Geographic limitations are no longer a barrier.

From all of these driving forces, it can be concluded that US Millennials have grown up in an environment that conveyed the following themes:
The European Millennials versus the US Millennials: similarities and differences

- each individual is special;
- in order for greater social equity, people should not be left behind if it can be helped;
- each person can choose to be always on, always connected;
- no one should wait to achieve something, “if you have an idea, act on it now”;
- each one should give back to the community.

In response to all of these external pressures, the US Millennials have developed a set of general characteristics. From the research material sources that have been published on the US Millennials, a list of these general characteristics has been generated. US Millennials are generally:

- confident;
- goal and achievement oriented⁴;
- optimistic;
- civic minded - widespread involvement in charities and volunteerism;
- inclusive;
- team oriented⁵;
- moral / integrity oriented;
- diversity is a plus, they see no need to conform to social norms;
- technologically adept (e-mail is “old school”);
- require instant feedback⁶;
- work/life balance vital for general well-being;
- hyper-communicators.

From the exploratory research, it is proposed to add some distinct characteristics to be tested for European Millennials to this list:

- heightened geographic mobility – European youths are well-travelled and have most likely visited almost the entire European continent by the time they enter university;

⁴ They're good multitaskers, having juggled sports, school, and social interests as children.
⁵ Millennials are typically team-oriented, banding together to date and socialize rather than pairing off. They work well in groups, preferring this to individual endeavors.
⁶ Millennials seem to expect structure in the workplace. They acknowledge and respect positions and titles, and want a relationship with their boss.
• multilingual – Because of globalisation and the prominence of certain European languages over others, most European youths are multilingual, speaking not only their native language, but also English and likely other prominent EU languages, such as French;
• cultural transplantation (easy migration from one environment to another) – The proximity of European countries and the obvious change in language and culture across borders has nurtured an openness in European youths and an enviable adaptability. This particular strength enables them to move fluidly to other parts of the world to live and work with relative ease.

3. Method: sample and data collection

This study was exploratory and consisted of two stages. The first stage involved primary qualitative research using focus groups from three major market segments of high school and university students and professionals. Four focus groups were conducted with between eight and ten participants. The focus groups revealed the main features connected to the characteristics to be tested. In the second stage the Millennial features developed in the previous section were tested through a quantitative study based on data obtained with a questionnaire survey. The survey was sent out to 500 high school students, 500 university students and to 250 professionals. The high school students and the professionals received a paper version of the survey and the university students received the questionnaire electronically. This study was exploratory and so the first country taken into consideration was Italy, with 700 questionnaires sent out, with the remainder distributed within England, The Netherlands, and Germany. For more detailed studies in the future, the questionnaire has to be distributed to all European countries. Our final sample consists of 450 respondents.

Among the survey respondents, those whose answers were most consistent with those of US Millennials were by and large born after 1980. This is a strong indication that one of the aspects of the European Millennials may also be a birth date that falls between 1980 and 2000, not unlike that of the US Millennials. This assumption is reasonable given that the 1980s and 1990s saw an era of unprecedented growth sowed the seeds for globalisation and also saw the birth of the Internet and its subsequent spread across the globe. For the purposes of this paper, survey responses were filtered to include only the respondents that fell within this range. From this point onward, all mention of survey respondents pertain to these
“Millennial” respondents. The figures quoted are derived from the filtered responses.

4. Results

The results from the online study provided a more in-depth understanding of the European Millennials. The study was divided into three broad sections: demographics and family, views and attitudes, and cultural transplantation and geographic mobility. In each of these sections, the European Millennials are described and then compared to corresponding details for US Millennials in order to highlight the similarities and differences between the two groups.

4.1 European Millennials: demographics and the changing role of the family

The assertion that family plays a significant role for the European Millennial is supported by our research findings, which show that more than 90% of the Millennials respondents declared family as a particularly fundamental element of their growth. A meagre figure of only 1.4% indicated that family played a marginal role in their lives. Focusing on Italy, more than 80% of Italian Millennials are still living with their parents. The rest of Europe show lower percentages of stay-at-home Millennials, although the difference is not as extreme as one might expect.

The argument that family is a fundamental building block for the European Millennial is supported even further by the analysis of communication methods used by European Millennials to remain in touch with their families. A considerable 18% of respondents communicate with parents and family via the Web. The “European” family has been irrevocably changed by technology, whereby family members can always be connected by using the latest technologies in the event that physical contact or face-to-face communication is not possible (fig. 1).
Similarly, US Millennials also find family as a source of personal strength and wisdom. US Millennials rank their parents as among the people they most admire, and their personal decisions are often guided by the advice of their parents. Where Gen-Xers rebelled against authority during their adolescent years, the Millennials seem particularly content to go with the flow of parental edicts, instinctively understanding that their parents mean the best for them. Despite the extraordinary time and performance pressures placed on them by well-meaning but high-achievement parents, the US Millennials have found a way to resolve issues and tensions between themselves and their parents.

When it comes to personal achievement, European Millennials are not so different from their American counterparts. They assume that, as a group, they can meet any standard and rise up to any challenge. They are self-confident, sure of themselves and in their ability to influence the world. The important decisions of their lives are often decided with the assistance of the family (more than 80% of Millennials). More minor, mundane decisions are reached with the help of a group of peers. However, the importance of family and the value of the family’s input remains strong.
4.2 Millennial Views and Attitudes: European versus US Millennials

The fundamentally different European social structure, the presence of a wide and open family, and the muted impact of terrorism attacks and other major events can probably be identified as the reasons behind another huge difference between US and Europe. European youths are apparently not as civic minded as US Millennials. Well-developed legislative frameworks are present across the European Union. However, Millennials reserve for themselves the right to decide if these laws are relevant or not. Therefore, downloading music is not considered illegal; 58% of survey respondents indicated they did such at some point during the week before the interview. Even the involvement in charities and volunteerism is low. Only 20% of respondents indicated that they were involved in such activities, and more than 40% of respondents expressed no overt desire to join any non-profit organization nor an inclination to help others.

According to the research for this paper, European Millennials are similar to their American counterparts with regards to their personal confidence about the future. More than 80% of respondents are sure that they will reach their individual target goals. Unfortunately, only 3% have a well-defined plan, while 38% of respondents have only a vague idea about the future. The remaining 59% of surveyed European Millennials have no clear vision about the future, but nevertheless maintain a strong confidence and optimism about the future.

Unlike US Millennials, European Millennials have yet to find individual expression within large groups and massive social networks. Such online communities like MySpace, LinkedIn, Facebook, etc., are not yet widespread in Europe, although massively popular across the Atlantic. The participation rate of 15% is surprisingly low. The usage of these instruments is not made by request but is representing a sort of parallel reputation in the United States and it is update daily. A recent study in the United States (Goldberg S., How much time do Millennials spend on MySpace & Facebook?, 2007) into the appeal of online social networks such as MySpace and Facebook for Millennials revealed the following: “We made sure to ask each subject one particular question: “What role does MySpace or Facebook play in your life?” The students would answer with a laugh or roll of the eyes, as if to say, “That’s all I do.” Some described their MySpace/Facebook life as a love/hate relationship. In other words, they hate how much they love it. I asked a girl who gave the love/hate answer why she continues with Facebook when she hates it so much. She said it’s out of her hands at this point: You either have a Facebook or MySpace page, she seemed to say, or you have no life.”
In this respect, European Millennials lag behind US Millennials in embracing such trends. Conventional Internet activities such as e-mailing, web surfing downloading music, etc. are consistent on both sides of the Atlantic. Where European and US Millennials diverge is in the concept of community culture. European Millennials appear to prefer more face-to-face interaction versus screen-to-screen communication. It is more likely for a European Millennial to use communication technology to quickly make arrangements to go out for a coffee or to make travel plans with friends, rather than to view technology as the lifeblood for social acceptance. Where European and US Millennials come together is in the embrace of using any and all technologies available in order for the greatest convenience (fig. 2).

European Millennials lag slightly behind US Millennials in that the preferred online means of communication is still e-mail, whereas US Millennials prefer instant messaging platforms such as Windows Live, Google Talk and Skype. US Millennials view e-mail as an “old school” means of conveying a message. European Millennials are slowly catching up, with instant messaging becoming more widespread among younger Millennials. However, this rising trend does not only include online chatting, but also voice over IP (VOIP) and video chatting. Where European Millennials pull ahead of US Millennials is in the use of SMS for greater instant gratification, although SMS texting is rapidly gaining popularity in the United States as well. An analysis of these results reveals a marked difference in external interactions between people among the European Millennial community. Although there are admittedly similar online social networks to Facebook and MySpace in Europe, such as Hi5, the European hypercommunication movement has not progressed along the same lines as in the United States.

What is the reason for this apparent dichotomy in the penetration and usage of these technologies? Is it due to a lack of IT expertise? A difference in adequate infrastructure to support the technologies? Or do these differences represent intrinsic European values and attitudes as compared to generally accepted American values and attitudes?
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**Fig. 2 Internet User Activity Within the Last 7 Days**

- Email
- Downloaded music, movies, etc
- Instant messaging (e.g., Google Talk, MSN, Skype chat, etc)
- Surfed for travel information
- Instant messaging (e.g., Google Talk, MSN, Skype chat, etc)
- Downloaded music, movies, etc
- Chatted
- Uploaded pictures
- Made a VOIP call
- Listened to a radio broadcast online
- Blogged
- Made a personal page in my social network area (e.g., Myspace, LinkedIn, etc)
- Participated in a social event (e.g., MyFace, Myspace, etc)
- Made a purchase online for more than $100
- Changed your browser's "startup" or "home" page
- Modified "cookie" preferences
- Other
- Other
- Other

*Source: Marketing concept, 2007.*
The results from the survey indicate that it is not from lack of familiarity with the Internet and its associated technologies that is behind the European-American Millennial difference. A basic knowledge of the Internet is enough for emailing and surfing the web. Blogging, downloading music and movies, chatting and even shopping online are also considered to be activities that do not require a deep knowledge of Internet technology (fig. 3). What does separate European attitudes from American ones is in social and cultural norms, influenced by tradition and geography. One might make the conjecture that because European cities by and large have a small centralised hub that makes walking an infinitely preferable option, Europeans have nurtured a predilection for interacting with each other within the same physical space rather than opt for the convenience of a purely online experience, the preference for which would be supported by greater geographical distances. Whether this conjecture is true or not would require further in-depth research and psychological and social analyses.

Fig. 3 Internet Activities in the Last Week Compared Against Internet Familiarity

4.3 Cultural transplantation and mobility: diversity explored

The results of the survey indicate that European Millennials are indeed more accepting of cultural diversity and more ready to challenge themselves towards working through cultural barriers than their US counterparts. Although immigration to the United States remains stronger than immigration to Europe, the population distribution in the United States and the subsequent distribution of ethnicities in public schools remains inequitable. There are schools that have an almost 80% African American and Latin American student composition, and similarly, there are schools that are predominantly white American. Education standards are so uneven that it creates even wider social gaps and greater social problems. The United States government will need to find a better solution to address these inequalities before US youths can truly consider themselves open to ethnic diversity.

The real surprise from the survey is the average European youth’s knowledge of foreign languages. Almost all (99.7%) of the Millennials interviewed speak one or more languages other than their mother tongue. At first glance, this could be attributed to globalisation. Since English is the language of choice for business, educational institutions mandate at least a rudimentary knowledge of the English language. Furthermore, English is the most widely used language on the Internet. Since 96.6% of the European Millennials surveyed connect to Internet more than once a week, for other purposes in addition to checking e-mails (i.e. P2P downloading, chatting, blogging, etc.), English, as a second language, is a natural choice. What is extraordinary is that more than 80% of European youths surveyed speak at least one more European language, and 22% of respondents speak two or more other languages (fig. 4).
The difference between Europe and the United States is evident. In the US, only 21% of the Millennial population speak a second language and often this is often as a result of immigration flow (tab. 1). Newly immigrated youths still manage to retain their native tongues while learning English. Second and third generation Americans are much less likely to speak any other languages except for English.

**Tab. 1 Demographic profile of foreign-language speakers for the United States: 2000**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Speak only English</th>
<th>Speak almost one foreign language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 to 14 years</td>
<td>20,818,199</td>
<td>17,006,910</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 to 17 years</td>
<td>11,869,522</td>
<td>9,534,074</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 to 19 years</td>
<td>8,041,530</td>
<td>6,324,236</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 24 years</td>
<td>19,025,980</td>
<td>14,628,105</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 29 years</td>
<td>19,212,244</td>
<td>14,604,163</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78,767,475</td>
<td>62,097,488</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While it cannot be said that the United States is any less multicultural than Europe, it is interesting to note that the European education system supports the learning of multiple languages. In the Netherlands, children begin learning other languages besides Dutch at the age of 12. This learning process continues through secondary school. School children select from an array of languages, which includes English, French, German and Spanish. Their education is further strengthened by field trips to other countries, which gives them the opportunity to immerse themselves in another culture and language in order to practice and reinforce their knowledge of that language. By the time European youths complete university studies, they are open to moving and living abroad, and may not even view their original home country as a permanent base for the future. Of the survey respondents, 65% indicated that they were ready to relocate with only some minor reservations and 18% indicated that they would welcome the opportunity completely. Because of their upbringing, European youths are more likely to find it easier to adapt to other cultural environments than US Millennials would.

Technology has drastically alleviated the difficulties of geographic barriers. It is not uncommon for Millennials to have many friends living abroad (more than 50% of respondents) and to be in frequent contact with them. Online chatting and instant messaging (more than 20% of respondents) have made letter-writing and “snail mail” obsolete. With such an acceptance of cultural diversity, an interest in other languages and cultures, and an openness to explore other parts of the world, European Millennials, in general, have the advantage over their American counterparts.

5. Comments on the analysis

The study results conclude that, despite some basic similarities in Internet and technology usage, European Millennials are fundamentally different from US Millennials. Although European Millennials fall demographically within the same generational time period (1980 – 2000) as US Millennials, social and environmental factors have played a part in influencing the different paths European and US Millennials have taken. As their future plays out, it will be interesting to see if they diverge far enough to warrant different generational names.

The principal difference between European and US Millennials lies in their different interpretations of diversity. For US Millennials, they grew up
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in a country that has its roots as a country for people from every background, every race. In other words, they grew up in a country that prides itself as a melting pot of ethnicities, ideas, nationalities, religions and ideals. Diversity is not new. What is new is the evident disparity of social resources as a result of uneven population distribution.

European Millennials are different. The European continent saw its fair share of wars rising from cultural domination and ethnocentricity. However, in the last 20 years, Europe has tried hard to harmonise these attitudes and differences. Cultural differences in Europe are still present, as evidenced by the almost complete change in language and culture as soon as a border is crossed. Even within each European country, there are many different subcultures that must live harmoniously with each other. If in the past, these subcultures were closed off from one another, the Millennials of today are more willing to accept the diversity between subcultures and come to terms with these differences. This is not to say that long-standing prejudices do not exist. However, there is a careful effort not to identify and impose a supposedly correct or ideal way of life. In its place, there is a new fostering of openness and curiosity to explore and live different subcultures. The different definitions of diversity is subtle, but may be summarised as thus: the American desire is to accept and assimilate every ethnicity and culture from all parts of the world, thereby creating a “diversity” culture which may or may not address fundamental difficulties, whereas in Europe, the desire is to be able to find the delicate balance between different cultures through careful consideration and cultural sensitivities.

Examining technology usage between European and American Millennials, it is clear that the way American youths embrace technology in all its variegated forms is unique to the US Millennials. In this respect, European Millennials are much less adventurous, bordering on reserve. Instead, in Europe, the Web is used between smaller groups versus massive online communities to share experiences. Thus, European Millennial cultures emerge, develop, and disappear or transform into something new, thereby creating a complex cultural environment that means different things to different subgroups, depending on a particular subgroup’s outlook and value set.

What was interesting in the course of the study was that US Millennials have a more well-developed notion of their own generation and what separates them from their parents’ generation and Gen-Xers. In contrast, European Millennials have no clear sense of this differentiation, which may
indicate fundamental differences in media exposure, marketing campaigns, and social values and mores despite the spread of globalisation.

Understanding the Millennials will have long-term strategic management implications for companies across all industries. The long-term sustainability of a company will depend not only on whether its goods and services offerings appeal to the new consumer market, but also whether the company culture resonates with its Millennial work force. The continuity of business operations will rely to a large extent on correctly anticipating and meeting Millennial needs, particularly if Millennials show less of an inclination for brand loyalty and will not hesitate to resign if their needs are not met. Companies will need to change with the times by expanding their range of goods and services to target a wider, and less trusting, audience.

The Millennials are worthwhile to study. Completed research studies on Millennials in the US have become valuable commodities. One recent study by company Packaged Facts on teenage consumer behaviour in the US has a list price of $3500 for access to the information (MarketResearch.com). This is an indication of the growing importance companies are placing on the Millennials as well as the strategic direction in which these companies are headed.

This paper is the first phase of an ongoing research program. The next study will try to improve the overall process, and overcome previous limitations that had prevented a more thorough exploration of the subject matter. The online survey research is ongoing. Completed surveys are still being submitted, both for the online and paper versions. More and more responses are being gathered from other European countries as well. Our goal is to receive an acceptable response rate for all of Europe. The delay is due in part to the start dates of the academic year, which differs between countries. At this stage of the survey, our sample is composed by more than 60% of answers from the Italian Millennials. The analysis of the answers coming from outside Italy are not yet substantial enough to affect the Italian results. Thus, no weighted averages were taken in the analysis of the results. In case future data analysis identifies substantial differences, we will identify the sample by country of origin in order to exhibit a more specific view of the Millennial phenomenon by country. Finally, the survey has been submitted to European youths born between 1980 and 1993 because of the complexity required in obtaining authorisation to interview younger children.
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