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MTV'S "LOOK DIFFERENT"

As part of its multi-year Public Affairs campaign to address bias, MTV closely studied American Millennials' (14-24 years old) perceptions of subjects like fairness, equality, privilege and discrimination with a special emphasis on race. The findings reveal that equality and fairness are hallmark values of this generation, but their vision may be clouded by a lack of historical perspective.

Key Findings

Millennials are coming of age in a racially sensitive society.

- The majority (84%) was raised to believe that they should treat everyone the same and shouldn't acknowledge racial differences.
 - However, only 37% overall were brought up in families that talked about race (30% white vs. 46% people of color, "POC").
- A belief in equality has become this generation's 'first commandment' – true across all races.
- 91% of respondents believe in equality and believe everyone should be treated equally.

The majority of Millennials believe that their generation is post-racial.

- Most Millennials believe that racism is a problem for previous generations.
- 72% believe their generation believes in equality more than older people.
 - Over half (58%) believe that as their generation moves into leadership roles, racism will become less and less of an issue.
- Having a black President has helped confirm this belief.
- 62% (58% for POC, 64% white) believe that having a black President demonstrates that racial minority groups have the same opportunities as white people and 67% believe it shows race doesn't have to be a barrier to accomplishments.
- But they still feel the country is deeply divided.
- 70% of people of color vs. 64% of white respondents agree that America is still a deeply divided place despite having a black President.

Millennials feel that 'colorblindness' is something to strive for, yet also believe in 'celebrating diversity'.

- 73% believe never considering race would improve society.
 - 68% believe focusing on race prevents society from becoming colorblind.
 - 70% say they don't see racial minority groups any differently than they see white people.
- But this seems counter to their equally strong belief in celebrating difference.
- 81% believe embracing diversity and celebrating differences between races would improve society.

Despite a universal belief in equality, real world experiences differ greatly.

- Half of young people of color feel that "individual microaggressions, when added up, have had a serious effect on me."
- 60% of young people of color – including 74% of young Asian Americans – are often asked about their ethnic background vs. just 19% of young whites.

Despite the reality of their experience, their unwavering belief in equality trumps all else and makes it difficult for them to support affirmative action.

- 88% believe that favoring one race over another is unfair.
- 70% believe it's never fair to give preferential treatment to one race over another, regardless of historical inequalities (65% for POC, 74% for white).

The modern day face of bias -- defined as treating someone differently and unfairly because they are a member of a particular group -- is subtle, but most Millennials see it in their lives.

- Millennials believe discrimination today is more subtle than that experienced by previous generations.
 - 60% agree that most of the bias seen is mostly subtle bias that is small but real.
 - 94% of Millennials have seen examples of bias in their lives and 79% admit they are friends with people with biases.
- The majority of respondents (60%) say they have worked hard to eliminate biases.
 - When asked, 41% admit they have their own biases now and 58% say they had biases in the past.
 - Racial biases are the most frequently cited types of biases.
 - 61% of Millennials overall report having been the target of bias (83% LGBT vs. 69% POC vs. 64% women).

Millennials believe open conversation about bias will reduce prejudice, but being raised not to acknowledge race means they struggle with how to talk about it.

- Over half (54%) agree that it is hard to have a respectful conversation about bias in person or online.
 - Nearly half (48%) believe it is wrong to draw attention to someone's race, even when being positive.
 - While 73% think we should talk more openly about bias and that constructive conversation would reduce prejudice, only 20% say they are comfortable having such conversations.

Millennials want to go beyond talking. They're ready to take action.

- Millennials agree that it is important to address bias when encountered.
 - More than three in four (78%) agree that everyone has a responsibility to help tackle bias and a full 90% say that it's important to make their community a less biased place.
- However, the majority say it feels a little risky to speak up.
 - 61% agree: "it's easier to see the risk of calling out bias than it is to see the immediate benefit."
 - 79% worry that addressing bias could create a conflict or make a situation even worse.
- The majority of this generation feels they don't have the tools to tackle bias in themselves and others.
 - 65% say they "wish that they knew more about how to address bias when they see it" and the same percentage is interested in a tool to help them work on their own biases.
 - 80% would want to know if they had biases they were not aware of.
 - 80% would want to know if they had ever inadvertently exhibited bias towards someone.

Implications

While MTV uncovered a commitment to equality and fairness among Millennials, with their lack of historical perspective, many young people have a clouded view of the bias that persists. Still, the news is heartening, with the majority of Millennials ready to not just talk about these issues, but to take action.

The Methodology

This study was based on qualitative research, including in-person focus groups and online discussion panels with participants ages 18-24 years old, and quantitative research, including surveys with participants 14-24 and 2,000 interviews with young people ages 14-24.

COMEDY CENTRAL'S "MAKING THE MILLENNIAL BRAND CONNECTION"

In this study, Comedy Central set out to understand the qualities that make Millennials connect with certain brands. Based on the analysis of a selection of brands that Millennials love, the research revealed 10 "connection points" or commonalities among these brands. These points were consistent regardless of the product or service offered.

Key Findings

Millennials are drawn to brands that are:

1. More Human, Less Corporate

Millennials connect with brands that act like humans – not with ones that seem like corporatized entities or cold institutions. Most of the brands that feel more human and less corporate have a clear and compelling "Story of Origin" and convey a sense of playfulness, a strong Millennial value.

2. Creators as Rock Stars with Grand Visions

Millennials connect with brands that are associated with certain individuals who are held up and treated like rock stars – think Steve Jobs or Mark Zuckerberg – with "grand visions" looking for big glory. Millennials come to associate the values of the brand with the values of that individual.

3. Having A Big Heart

Brands can have grand visions and big glory, but they can still have a soul. In focus groups, young people often praise brands that come across as companies with big hearts, citing, for example, corporations that offer good health insurance programs to part-time employees. For this generation, brands don't have to choose between making money and making a difference; Millennials expect both.

4. Culture Contributors

Millennials value – perhaps even feel ownership over – creativity and culture, so brands that contribute to or pay homage to culture connect with this generation.

5. Constant Chameleons

Many of the brands Millennials connect with are "constant chameleons" – brands that constantly change and improve, while consistently and reliably offering the same great products.

6. Under-Sellers

Millennials are especially wary of unapologetic, flashy self-promotion — whether in brands or people. On the contrary, Millennials connect with brands that ingratiate themselves into their lifestyle, rather than try to sell them.

7. Super-Serving & Empowering

Brands that successfully reach Millennials offer them and super-serve them in three key ways: offering them choice and personalized options; gifts and treats; and personalized customer ways.

8. Transparent

To be transparent, brands must see themselves in a relationship with their customers, communicating, letting them know what they are thinking and feeling as time goes on and explaining the decisions they are making. This is an important connection point for Millennials because transparency squarely aligns with the value Millennials have for openness.

9. I Wanna Work There

If a brand seems like a cool place to work, Millennials are more likely to connect with it.

10. Passionate, Purposeful & Sincere

Millennials connect with brands that express a unique vision, driven by a desire to create something specific, interesting and personal.

Implications:

Brands can apply these “connection points” as a way to build loyalty and connection with Millennial consumers.

Methodology:

This study was based on pattern analysis, using semiotics, combined with secondary research and Comedy Central’s ongoing proprietary research on Millennials. Beginning with a list of approximately 100 brands that are popular among youth, according to published data, Comedy Central selected 10 brands that were considered high passion/high engagement brands; conducted an in-depth brand and campaign analysis of how those brands make decisions and choices that impact a public relationship; and then correlated those patterns and similarities with research on Millennials. Brands include: Trader Joe’s, Facebook, Manchester United, Tom’s Shoes, Apple, Vans, Google, Starbucks, Nintendo, and Ray Ban.