



What Appeals to Millennials? 10 Brands that Hit the Mark

By Carol Phillips
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Ask a Millennial 'what campaigns or brands have captured your attention lately?' and the answer is likely to be, "Ah, can you repeat the question?" or "I don't really watch TV". Ask the same question in email, and the silence is deafening. Millennials truly don't pay very much attention to marketing, despite being the most marketed to generation in history. They notoriously ignore Facebook ads. They use DVR's to zap through commercial messages. And they are flatly opposed to mobile messages on their iPhone.



What penetrates? There are some obvious winners: Obama, Apple, Scion, Converse, The Colbert Report, Facebook. But what other brands hit the mark? Here's my list of less well-documented Millennial brands and why they appeal.

- Herbal Essences
- Zipcar
- NASA
- Grape Nuts
- Victoria's Secret PINK
- Hamlet 2
- Target
- Tom's Shoes
- [adult swim]
- Fat Bastard

1. **Herbal Essence:** P&G has done a great job of updating Herbal Essence, an aging mass market brand, to appeal to Gen Y women. Everything from the language on the package



(‘totally twisted’, ‘drama clean’), to the package to the colors and web site says this is not your mom’s shampoo. The voice is young without being juvenile, fun while still providing useful information. Benefits include 'polishing your look' and 'luscious hair'. Promotional tie-ins work nicely --- pedicures and manicures. Videos provide specific direction on how to achieve that 'casual sexy, just out of bed look'. Nothing Boomer or tweeny-bopper about that!

2. **Zipcar:** ZipCar is a concept, "Wheels When You Want Them", that appeals to Millennial desires -- on the go, always connected but not 'attached', and of course, 'green'. Within a matter of 15 minutes, members can locate and reserve anything from a MiniCooper to



a minivan, all for \$10/hr or less, gas and insurance included. A Zipcar offers the full functionality of a car without the strings of ownership or the hassle and cost of renting. Beyond functionality, Zipcars are cool. Mazdas, Subaru, Honda hybrids, even Scion all integrate technology in the kind of seamless way Millennials have come to love in companies like Apple. While Zipcar has yet to be profitable, this most likely has more to do with the high cost of opening new markets, than lack of appeal.

3. **PINK:** Victoria's Secret's PINK brand is hot. With sales approaching \$1 Billion, it is growing faster than VS overall according to Ad Age (7/7/08). The PINK Facebook Group is one of the largest with 509,478 fans. Recently, PINK started directly targeting the collegiate crowd directly with a comprehensive approach that is only vaguely related to



clothes and more understated than sexy. No digital marketing stone was left unturned, with apps for Facebook, style guides, videos of favorite bands, logowear from 33 universities, video personality profiles, parties called PINKALOOZA, text messaging, free customizable goodies for your MySpace page or computer, insider blogs, a magalog, cause marketing, a \$5 planner promotional offer --

even horoscopes. *Nothing* was left out, and the overall sense is that there's lots more to come. Overall, the site feels more like a social network than a commercial site, and that apparently is the intent and its appeal.

- 4. Tom's Shoes:** One of the most cherished Millennial values is 'making a difference'. This makes cause marketing a natural choice for many Millennial marketers. Tom's Shoes has leveraged both cause marketing and community-building so naturally, it looks effortless.



Tom's promises to donate a pair of shoes to a child in need somewhere in the world for every pair of shoes it sells. Talk about effortless, it's consumerism as altruism. Hey we all need shoes, right? The shoes are well-made and there are endless variations on the basic design. The Toms web site invites you to 'get involved' by joining a 'shoe drop' or

simply joining the mailing list. In between these two options is a smart take on community-building / viral marketing / customization (yes, all three in one) called 'Style Your Sole'. Customers are invited to throw a party, then create a video to share about the experience.

- 5. Target:** Target does a great job of staying in the zone of what Millennials value – affordable, stylish and socially correct. The advertising is as stylish as the merchandise. A recent spot, 'Brave New Dorm', featured original music by Andrea Ravel and people who look like they'd be fun to shop with. The great deals appeal to the 'price conscious' side



of Millennials, who think of themselves as poor. Target demonstrates social responsibility by donating millions of dollars each year to local schools and sponsoring cases and internships at universities (including my marketing classes at University of Notre Dame). Demographic profiles of Target shoppers show they skew younger and

higher income. BIGresearch (8.19.08) reports Target and Macy's shoppers favor Obama, while Wal-mart and Kohl's shoppers skew toward McCain, a finding totally consistent with the demographic profile. This profile should serve Target well as Millennials graduate, start families, and furnish homes. Our bet is that they will keep Millennials' enthusiasm well beyond their 20's. Target is Pepsi to Wal-Mart's Coke -- The Choice of a New Generation.

6. **Hamlet 2:** Hamlet 2 is not even remotely close to the themes of the original Hamlet- self reflection, self-loathing, revenge. And that is the point. Hamlet 2 is about Millennial's



core values of success through teamwork, inclusiveness and discovering underappreciated talents. While the story *appears* to be about an insufferable failed actor turned drama teacher, the *real* story is about his students. We initially see a hapless bunch of disrespectful, illiterate, racially and class-divided, drug using, losers. But this is just a cover. Their talents -- for singing, stage production, choreography, musical composition, technology, organization, persuasion, and

more – just needed to be given a chance. Together the team transforms the hapless teacher's ridiculous script, overcomes all obstacles and goes all the way to, yes, Broadway. It is significant that none of the wunderkinds stands out as the 'star'. Yes, Hamlet 2 is uneven and predictable, as a reflection of Millennial values it is unerring.

7. **[adult swim]:** When I think of Millennial media, I think of MySpace, Facebook, Youtube.com, MTV, and VH1. Yet MRI (Fall 2007) shows [adult swim] has penetration among 18-24 year olds equal to that of Facebook (21%). [adult swim] appears on the Cartoon Network between 11 PM and 6 AM 7 nights a week. Its web site, adultswim.com, carries a variety



of original programming, syndicated shows, Japanese anime, games and social media opportunities. Promotions for Adult Swim are targeted towards the college age and 20something/30something group, which appears to constitute the majority of their

viewers. With its tremendous aggregation of Millennial attention, Adult Swim, may have the best chance of making the idea of one channel, three screens a reality for Millennials. After all, Facebook and Youtube don't have a TV channel.

8. **Grapenuts:** Yes, Grape Nuts. Talk about an unlikely product for a Millennial target! Yet the advertising and web site are a direct hit for the give-it-to-me-straight-but-don't-



bore-me Gen Y market. The new outdoor campaign, cup holders and web site feature headlines that challenge common euphemisms and end with the line, "It is what it is" — implying simple, basic, straightforward, not covered in a layer of sugar. The web site, nograpesnonuts.com, is fresh and mesmerizingly funny. We watch the narrator struggle to figure out why this site is 'necessary', ultimately

give up make the best of it. Here is a persona to rival Mac Guy, every dude doing the best he can in a ridiculous situation. "If you've got the time, I know I do... I don't know how to get out of here! So stick around and maybe we'll learn something." Both the message and delivery, Grape Nuts is "not trying to become anything it isn't" This approach is smart and fits both the brand and Millennial values perfectly. It's advertising for the advertising averse, of any age.

- NASA:** Kudos to NASA for figuring out the obvious when it comes to getting Millennials to engage with their brand: Let them tell you how! NASA asked four of its Millennial employees to create a PowerPoint slide show profiling their generation and explaining what NASA needed to do to make NASA relevant. The result, available at slideshare.com, Entitled "Gen Y Perspectives", is full of insightful recommendations for connecting with their generation in the voice of the Millennials themselves. A sample: "Gen Y is defined as "mobile, interdependent, quickly bored, instant information, instant gratification, likes mentors, global, empowered, wired, multi-tasking, impatient if delayed, expecting NOW, (not 5 minutes from now), but highly adaptable... and willing to sacrifice economic rewards for worklife balance". Among their recommendations was to help Millennials 'see the point, understand the facts, and facilitate a discussion with Gen Y that allows them to participate in the mission'. NASA management must have listened, you can now follow NASA on Twitter.

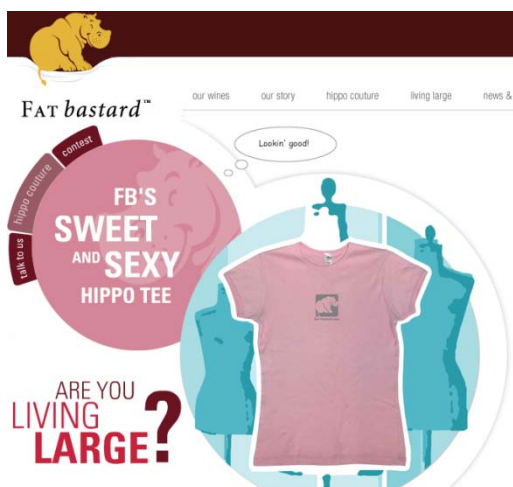


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- Fat Bastard:** Millennials, with their above average earnings and sophisticated tastes, are an untapped market for 'luxury' goods -- you just can't *call* them luxuries. French Millennials are forgoing wine; U.S. Millennials are embracing it in large numbers.



According to Nielsen, beer drinking among 21-30 year olds dropped 12 percentage points in the last 10 years, twice as much as those over 30. (Beer still accounts for 83% of Gen Y alcoholic beverage purchases, so don't expect Beer Pong to lose popularity anytime soon.) Why are Millennials embracing wine? Well, it's not because its hip or cool – wine is considered too elite to be cool. The answer is that Millennials have sophisticated tastes, a function of early exposure to the finer things in life by their boomer parents. (Most Millennials who like wine say they were introduced to it by their parents). This is a huge opportunity

for winemakers, and Fat Bastard is among the first to jump on it. Their irreverent site does its best to take out the mystery and put in the fun: “Are you Livin’ Large?”

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