

Millennials: between hyperconnectivity and e-commerce

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Millennials: entre la hiperconectividad y el e-commerce

Yamil Ali Abdelnabe Vidal¹, Javier Romero¹¹Universidad Siglo 21. Córdoba, Argentina.

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: the article addressed the characteristics of the millennial generation in relation to their digital consumption habits. It highlighted that this generation grew up in an environment marked by technology and that social media, mobile devices, and e-commerce were an essential part of their lifestyle. The studies cited showed how trust in recommendations from family, friends, and influencers played a decisive role in their purchasing decisions, as well as the influence of digital advertising and the role of platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook.

Development: it was explained that millennials transformed the way they shop, prioritizing online shopping over physical shopping due to convenience, accessibility, and the ability to compare prices. The analysis showed that they preferred to use mobile phones to find information and make purchases, with a particular interest in products such as clothing, electronics, and personal care. The relevance of the purchasing process or customer journey was also highlighted, as well as the sales funnel, in which attraction, interaction, conversion, and loyalty became crucial phases for companies. Likewise, the importance of customer experience, personalization, and brand commitment to sustainability were pointed out as differentiating factors in this generation's loyalty.

Conclusion: the study concluded that millennials redefined digital consumption and marketing by becoming the most influential segment of e-commerce. Their behavior, marked by hyperconnectivity and the search for positive experiences, forced companies to adapt with innovative strategies that combined technology, personalization, and sustainability. In this way, it became clear that this generation not only led the shift toward e-commerce, but also shaped a new paradigm in the relationship between consumers and brands.

Keywords: Millennials; Digital Consumption; E-Commerce; Social Media; Customer Experience.

RESUMEN

Introducción: el artículo abordó las características de la generación millennial en relación con sus hábitos de consumo digital. Se destacó que esta generación creció en un entorno marcado por la tecnología y que las redes sociales, los dispositivos móviles y el comercio electrónico formaron parte esencial de su estilo de vida. Los estudios citados evidenciaron cómo la confianza en las recomendaciones de familiares, amigos e influencers tuvo un papel decisivo en sus decisiones de compra, así como la influencia de la publicidad digital y el papel de plataformas como YouTube, Instagram y Facebook.

Desarrollo: se expuso que los millennials transformaron la forma de comprar, priorizando las compras en línea frente a las físicas debido a la comodidad, la accesibilidad y la posibilidad de comparar precios. El análisis mostró que preferían el uso de teléfonos móviles para informarse y concretar adquisiciones, con especial interés en productos como indumentaria, electrónica y cuidado personal. También se resaltó la relevancia del proceso de compra o customer journey, así como del embudo de ventas, en los que la atracción, interacción, conversión y fidelización se convirtieron en fases cruciales para las empresas. Asimismo, se señaló la importancia de la experiencia del cliente, la personalización y el compromiso de las marcas con la sostenibilidad como factores diferenciales en la lealtad de esta generación.

Conclusión: el estudio concluyó que los millennials redefinieron el consumo digital y el marketing, al convertirse en el segmento más influyente del comercio electrónico. Su comportamiento, marcado por la hiperconectividad y la búsqueda de experiencias positivas, obligó a las empresas a adaptarse con estrategias innovadoras que combinaron tecnología, personalización y sostenibilidad. De esta manera, se evidenció que esta generación no solo lideró el cambio hacia el e-commerce, sino que también configuró un nuevo paradigma en la relación entre consumidores y marcas.

Palabras clave: Millennials; Consumo Digital; Comercio Electrónico; Redes Sociales; Experiencia del Cliente.

INTRODUCTION

Millennials are a generation characterized by being digital natives who have grown up in a world where technology is a fundamental part of their lives.⁽¹⁾

According to SAP and The Economist Intelligence Unit, online shopping increased by 15 %, with millennials investing the most in it. The same study also revealed that after the pandemic, online shopping increased by 40 %, and online clothing purchases increased by between 10 % and 15 %.^(2,3)

According to Kissmetrics, 89 % of millennials trust recommendations from friends and family more than brand claims about a product they are interested in.^(4,5)

According to HubSpot, this generation is 44 % more likely to trust experts they don't know and 247 % more likely to be influenced by social media, blogs, or websites.

According to Hootsuite, the global social media base has increased by more than 5 % in the last 12 months, representing 59 % of the world's population; by July 2023, this is expected to rise to 60 %. Related to this topic, a study conducted by IAB asserts that 48 % of millennials follow a brand on social media, indicating that for 29 % of those surveyed, brands that have a social media profile inspire more trust.

In a study conducted by Morning Consult, 88 % of millennials discover products they are interested in buying through social media. Fifty-six percent purchased a product after seeing it in a post by someone they follow, while 7 % say this happens often, and 49 % say this happens sometimes. For 50 % of millennials, social media is the primary source through which they discover new products.

Twenty percent say that the primary source of discovery of products of interest to them is social media advertising, 12 % is posts from friends and family, and 18 % from influencer posts. In addition, 15 % discover new products on television, 15 % through word of mouth, 3 % through blogs, and 1 % through the news.^(6,7)

The social media platforms most used by millennial men are:

- YouTube: 41 %
- Instagram: 25 %
- Facebook: 19 %

Meanwhile, the social networks most used by millennial women are:

- Instagram: 40 %
- YouTube: 27 %
- Facebook: 26 %

According to a study conducted by Nielsen, 97 % of millennials own a mobile phone, making smartphones practically ubiquitous in the lives of this generation.

The search for information is an essential factor, where, according to CACE, 44 % of users search for information on online pages, 41 % on apps and social networks, 23 % on the manufacturer's website, and 14 % on forums. The information sought corresponds to 61 % for searching the product and its features, 60 % for promotions and discounts, 39 % for availability, 31 % for opinions, and finally 25 % for use in viewing store information.

A study conducted by Mercado reports that the millennial generation is leading the shift towards e-commerce, which, according to Gelt, finds that millennials account for 52 % of online purchases.^(8,9,10)

With millennials making the most online purchases, a study conducted by ESW estimated that women of this generation are the primary buyers, accounting for 69 %, while men account for 31 %.

Regarding online shopping vs. physical stores, a study conducted by 5WPR reported that 77 % of millennials prefer to shop online because they can see products that they would not be able to see in person. In comparison, 38 % still prefer to shop through physical stores.

As technology is so vital to this generation and mobile phone use is so commonplace, according to a study conducted by Kinsta, 72,9 % of online sales are made via mobile phone. Meanwhile, 55 % of visits for information are made from cell phones, 43 % from computers, and 2 % from tablets. Mobile phones are the preferred means for millennials to make purchases and search for information.

A study conducted by CACE revealed that among the 63 % of people who search for information via cell phone, only 55 % end up purchasing the same medium.

According to a study by the consulting firm McKinsey, the products most frequently purchased online by millennials are:

- Clothing: 63 %
- Electronics: 47 %
- Food and beverages: 42 %
- Personal care and beauty: 40 %
- Home and garden: 38 %

According to a report by digital payment platform Klarna, 56 % of millennials prefer to buy clothes online because they can easily compare prices and products.^(11,12)

According to a study by Puro Marketing, 88 % of millennials rate their online clothing shopping experience positively, and 77 % of those surveyed had made four or more purchases in the last month, with price being the main factor in online clothing purchases at 56 %, followed by factors such as website convenience and easier search.

Clothing online was priced (56 %), followed by factors such as the convenience of the website and easier search.

According to a survey by GlobalData, 68 % of millennials buy clothes and accessories online at least once a month.

VOGUE expects that by 2025, millennials will account for 50 % of luxury clothing sales.

According to CACE, the most popular sites for purchasing these products were websites (70 %), followed by apps (23 %) and social media (7 %).

In its annual e-commerce report, CACE reported that there are three types of consumers: regulars, who shop every week and account for 43 % of consumers; occasional shoppers, who shop every 2-3 months and account for 42 %; and daily shoppers, who shop once a week and account for 15 %.^(13,14,15)

Continuing with the CACE study, the most commonly used payment methods for online purchases were:

- Credit cards: 62 %
- Credit cards through a payment gateway: 14 %
- Cash payment via Rapipago, Pago Fácil: 11 %
- Debit card: 7 %
- Electronic wallet: 4 %
- Bank transfer: 1 %

The study specifies that, among credit card users, 7 out of 10 people, or 55 %, usually purchase between 3 and 6 installments,

while 21 % purchase between 6 and 12 installments, and 4 % purchase more than 18 installments.

Meanwhile, the study conducted by Management Society revealed that 86 % of millennials are more likely to make a purchase when a brand offers incentives, such as discount coupons.

In relation to the Management Society study, a study by a discount app called Ibotta reports that 60 % of millennials would make changes to their shopping cart if a tempting offer appeared.

According to a study by Puro Marketing, 95 % of millennials are attracted to brands that are active on social media, 80 % want to be shown entertaining content, 63 % learn about new products through social media, and 70 % of this generation talk about loyalty when the brand “touches their hearts,” which is when they receive good customer service, have a positive experience, and gain their trust.^(16,17)

IAB Spain revealed that for 31 % of millennial users who use social media, the fact that a company has an active profile is a symbol of security and trust, which are key factors in millennials’ purchasing decisions. Continuing with this study, the main reasons why millennials follow brands on social media are:

- 47 % of them to stay informed
- 36 % to find out what products are on offer
- 35 % solely because they like the brand and products
- 27 % for contests
- 16 % to take advantage of discounts
- 14 % to make purchases
- 8 % when someone from their circle of trust follows them
- 6 % solely to interact.

A study conducted by the Huffington Post highlights that millennials are driven to make a difference, which is why 61 % of them are concerned about the state of the world and feel personally responsible for it.

In relation to this, a study conducted by GlobalWebindex reports that 6 out of 10 millennials are willing to pay a higher price for a product as long as it is more environmentally friendly and sustainable.

Millennials and sustainability are closely linked. A study by the Capgemini research Institute found that 44 % of this generation is even willing to pay a premium for food products with sustainable packaging, which is more than baby boomers, who are at 30 %.

According to the CACE study, the most popular method for buying a product online is home delivery (73 %), followed by pickup at the logistics company’s branch (23 %), and finally, pickup at the point of sale (17 %).

In relation to the above, an IBM study revealed that 52 % of millennials cite convenience as the main factor in online shopping.

A report by logistics company UPS on online shopper behavior found that millennials are the age group most likely to pay for fast shipping services. The report noted that 49 % of millennials are willing to pay for fast shipping, compared to 31 % of shoppers over 50.

Regarding online shopping cart abandonment, a study by the Baymard Institute reports that, based on data collected, the average rate of abandoned carts is 70 % before checkout.

The various reasons are as follows: 48 % did not complete the purchase because the shipping costs were too high, increasing the price of the product; 24 % because the website required the person to register before making a purchase; 22 % because shipping took too long; followed by other reasons such as website errors (13 %) or insufficient payment methods (9 %).

To conclude, a study by Salesforce reported that 91 % of Argentinians consider the shopping experience to be as necessary as the products or services themselves. This is because 36 % of those surveyed are willing to share personal information in exchange for a more personalized experience.^(18,19,20)

DEVELOPMENT

The Millennial Generation, coined by William Strauss and Neil Howe in 1991, refers to people born at the turn of the millennium, also known as “Generation Y,” the children of Baby Boomers or “Generation X.”

Their characteristics vary according to region, referring to the economic, social, and cultural situation of each area, as they are characterized as a “generation related to digital technologies, and not all countries and territories have the same degree of access to technological media.”^(20,21)

The Infobae report highlights that “Millennial households are hyperconnected; cell phones and Wi-Fi have become a key part of their routine” Donato, implying the importance and relevance of technology in this generation and how they grew up and adapted so quickly to these habits, being one of the first generations to grow up with technology in their homes, making them

connected to other users, allowing them to meet people beyond their friends and family, enabling them to make purchases from home, and giving them access to information of interest with just one click. This characteristic marks a significant difference from other generations.^(22,23)

A fundamental aspect that stands out throughout the aforementioned Infobae report is the influence of the millennial generation on online sales and through apps, recognizing that this resource is one of the most important for this generation when making purchases. But why is this medium so important when it comes to purchasing products?

A study conducted by CACE highlights the significant growth of e-commerce in Argentina, which has become one of the most prominent sectors in the economy. This method is chosen not only because it eliminates the need for in-person transactions at the point of sale, but also because it offers the convenience of purchasing at any time and from any device, from anywhere.^(24,25)

Today, through electronic media, brands can communicate more easily with millennials, thereby reaching them more quickly and effectively. According to the article “Millennials and brands: how to appeal and communicate,” a survey conducted by Fractl and BuzzStream found that millennials prefer to be entertained while being informed, creating a blend of infotainment. This allows companies to capture the attention of millennials and make them feel a sense of identification with the brand and its products. Meanwhile, Forbes highlights another key characteristic: millennials are interested in knowing how and where products are manufactured.^(26,27,28)

Returning to the basic issue, consumer behavior across generations has been changing, and understanding it is no easy task. However, before explaining what online consumer behavior

is, it is essential to understand what a consumer.

A consumer is. According to Solomon, “A consumer is a person who identifies a need or desire, makes a purchase, and then discards the product” (p. 8). This can be interpreted as a purchase that has a defined time frame, whether offline or online, and ends when the need or desire has been satisfied. Meanwhile, Molla, “is a set of activities that people perform when evaluating and purchasing a product or service, with the aim of satisfying needs and desires, involving mental and emotional processes and physical actions” (p. 18), understood as a psychological process that the consumer experiences before any purchase process and not as a purely impulsive purchase.^(29,30)

The purchasing process, also known as the customer journey, is the sequence of steps that an online consumer follows to purchase a product to address a specific need. Over time, purchasing methods have evolved, and today’s consumers engage in a process of research and information gathering before making a purchasing decision.

For Philip Kotler, the purchasing process extends beyond the offer of a product or service; he considers it a procedure that consumers undergo when obtaining it. Kotler states, “The tangible product—a pair of shoes, a refrigerator, a haircut, or a meal—is only a small part of the consumption package. Consumers respond to the total product, which includes services, packaging, advertising, image, and any other attributes that accompany the product.”

For Kotler, five stages occur at the time of purchase when obtaining a product or service:

- Recognition of a need: The moment when the consumer becomes aware of this need through external factors such as advertising or informational content, or through an internal factor such as desire.
- Search for information: At this stage, the consumer has already defined the need to be met and is informed about the different products or services.
- Evaluation of alternatives: This is the stage where the consumer, using the information gathered previously, evaluates a series of options that can satisfy the need.
- Purchase decision: After selecting a series of options, the consumer chooses the product that best suits their needs and makes the purchase.
- Post-purchase behavior: After the consumer purchases the product, they evaluate how well their need has been satisfied and whether it warrants choosing the brand again or choosing another brand for their next purchase.

Nowadays, the first stages are usually carried out online, as searching for information on the internet is faster and more accessible for all consumers.

To conclude the topic, according to Kotler et al., several factors influence consumer purchasing:

- Cultural factors: This refers to the cultural environment or subculture in which the consumer lives.
- Personal factors: These are characteristics related to age, personality, lifestyle, economic situation, and occupation.
- Psychological factors: These include attitudes, motivation, beliefs, and learning.
- Social factors: These are the consumer’s social group, such as family, and their social status.



Figure 1. Kotler diagram

On the other hand, there is a very important factor that a company must consider: the sales funnel, which outlines the stages a potential customer goes through before becoming a customer. But what exactly is the sales funnel? It is the way in which a company establishes and plans processes to contact different users and thus achieve the objective, which may be to convert customers or close a sale. It is projected as an inverted pyramid, and the stages of the sales funnel are as follows:

- Attraction: This is when the company focuses on demonstrating that it can satisfy the consumer’s needs and desires.
- Interaction: At this stage, the consumer evaluates how the product meets their needs. This includes assessing offers from both our competitors and us. For this reason, it is essential to establish a solid approach by interacting through videos and social media posts to try to demonstrate that we have what the customer needs.
- Conversion: By maintaining a satisfactory interaction, the customer shows a logical or emotional inclination toward what they want to purchase. To achieve this, it will be necessary to provide engaging content that earns their trust.
- Purchase: Many companies confuse this phase with the end of the funnel, but in reality, it simply means that the strategies implemented previously appropriately worked, thus gaining trust and, as a result, prompting the consumer to make the purchase.
- Loyalty: This is a set of strategies that the company implements to ensure that it has generated an emotional and logical process in the customer, so that they make a second purchase.

To conclude the topic of the sales funnel, it is essential to emphasize that it is a slow process that must be carried out carefully and with a well-planned approach to achieve customer loyalty, growth, and profitability for the company, taking into account the customer experience throughout the process.

The DEC, in its article “What is Customer Experience?”, defines it as “the memory that is generated in the consumer’s mind as a result of their relationship with the brand,” implying that “memory” is the image that the brand projects in the consumer’s mind, emphasizing the process before, during, and after the purchase and the relationship that the customer has with

the brand during that process.



Figure 2. Funnel diagram

On the other hand, the author Alcaide, an expert in marketing, emphasizes that the customer experience is about ensuring that any contact the consumer has with the company is a memorable event that promotes the desire to return in the future, commenting on it with their close circle, such as friends and family, and making the comments more credible than the company's own formal communications. Applying this to the online sphere, we can highlight that every contact the consumer has with the brand is significant for the customer to feel attracted to making the purchase, whether it be from advertising on social media to the customer service provided by the company online, so that the customer feels satisfied and confident in making the purchase.^(31,32)

Given today's cultural context, social media and technology play an essential role in maintaining contact and relationships with customers who consume online, not only to strengthen the relationship, but also to attract new consumers, build loyalty, and monitor the customer's experience with the brand. Websites and e-commerce platforms are among the most widely used tools by shoppers today for purchasing products and searching for information.^(33,34)

However, when it comes to online shopping, some companies face a recurring issue where purchases are not completed due to common problems, such as abandoned shopping carts in e-commerce. But what are abandoned shopping carts? When we use this term, we refer to all individuals who, during the online shopping process, select the products they are interested in but do not complete the purchase when they reach the payment stage. This can be due to various reasons, such as when shipping costs drastically increase the price of the purchase, or when payment methods are limited. The solutions to these problems vary depending on the issue at hand, but they can be addressed through effective planning, such as implementing remarketing strategies.⁽³⁵⁾

Remarketing abandoned shopping carts is an effective strategy for increasing online sales and recovering customers who have shown interest in a product but did not complete the purchase. Some of these strategies are:

- Reminders via email to the customer to complete the purchase.
- Offers and discounts, either through a discount code or by offering a promotion on the abandoned cart webpage.

- Advertisements on social media.
- Personalization, such as using customer information to create personalized messages or including promotions for similar products that may be of interest to them, to boost sales.

In summary, to effectively utilize these strategies and maximize their online benefits, you must be creative and employ various channels to reach your customers in a personalized and relevant manner, which will help increase sales and foster customer loyalty over time.



Figure 3. 7 best abandoned cart strategies

Source: <https://www.securitec.pe/blog/recuperar-carritos-abandonados/>

CONCLUSIONS

The millennial generation has established itself as a key player in the transformation of digital consumption, marking a clear difference from previous generations. Their close relationship with technology and intensive use of mobile devices has redefined the way brands communicate with consumers, favoring digital channels such as social media, websites, and apps. The data show that this generation relies heavily on recommendations from their close circle and the opinions of experts, while also giving a decisive role to the influence of social media, both in discovering products and making purchasing decisions.

E-commerce, boosted by the pandemic, has experienced significant growth, becoming the preferred channel for millennials due to its convenience, speed, and accessibility. However, aspects such as the shopping experience, personalized service, and the trust conveyed by brands remain decisive factors. In addition, emotional, social, and cultural factors directly influence their choices, highlighting their preference for brands that are active on social media and committed to sustainability.

The importance of the customer journey, the sales funnel, and the customer experience reveals that it is not enough to offer a product: companies must build lasting relationships based on trust and positive experiences. In short, millennials are not only driving the growth of e-commerce but also redefining digital marketing, forcing brands to constantly innovate in response to more informed, demanding, and conscious consumers.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Conceptualization: Yamil Ali Abdelnabe Vidal, Javier Romero.

Data curation: Yamil Ali Abdelnabe Vidal, Javier Romero.

Formal analysis: Yamil Ali Abdelnabe Vidal, Javier Romero.

Research: Yamil Ali Abdelnabe Vidal, Javier Romero.

Methodology: Yamil Ali Abdelnabe Vidal, Javier Romero.

Project management: Yamil Ali Abdelnabe Vidal, Javier

Romero.

Resources: Yamil Ali Abdelnabe Vidal, Javier Romero.

Software: Yamil Ali Abdelnabe Vidal, Javier Romero.

Supervision: Yamil Ali Abdelnabe Vidal, Javier Romero.

Validation: Yamil Ali Abdelnabe Vidal, Javier Romero.

Visualization: Yamil Ali Abdelnabe Vidal, Javier Romero.

Writing – original draft: Yamil Ali Abdelnabe Vidal, Javier Romero.

Writing – review and editing: Yamil Ali Abdelnabe Vidal, Javier Romero.

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