

COLUMNS

Millennial women and visual platforms

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By **Stacy DeBroff**

Visual platforms such as Pinterest, Instagram and Snapchat continue their deepening influence with today's consumers. And in our work with influencer marketing campaigns, as well as our consumer research studies, we have particularly seen how visual channels resonate with millennial women.

Our study of more than 1,000 millennial women and moms, as well as boomers and Gen-X women, illuminated that this generation truly connects with visual and video elements.

Moreover, as we see the rise of visual influencers a new connective cadre of digital storytellers who share insights solely through visual images it becomes apparent how this movement also continues to transform the consumer-purchasing journey.

To demonstrate how millennial women's adoption of visual platforms has upended their path to purchase, I have outlined here five trends that illuminate this shift:

Image-focused platforms resonate with millennials: As true digital natives, millennials grew up surrounded by social media and online technology and demonstrate real fluency with both existing and emerging digital platforms.

Our survey showed that millennial women gravitate toward visual channels that allow them to share image-oriented content.

According to our study findings, 85 percent of millennial women post pictures of past experiences to social media, while 80 percent post pictures in real time.

Moreover, 72 percent of millennial women post videos that they find on the Internet or on others' sites all of which contribute to the impact that product images have on this generation as they continue along their purchasing journey.

Millennials showcase life experiences via still and video images: More than 60 percent of millennial women strongly agree or agree that they love sharing significant moments in their life on social media channels.

In addition, this generation uses today's visual platforms to provide their communities with a real-time glimpse into their experiences and adventures.

In addition, our study revealed that 93 percent of millennial women check out videos on YouTube, 77 percent visit Pinterest and 61 percent own an Instagram account.

We also saw that the amount of time that millennials now spend on these visual platforms has increased, and experiences both ones they share and ones they seek out figure significantly into how this generation thinks about consumer purchases.

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Image-focused social platforms spark product discovery: For millennial women, visual channels allow them to discover everything from that just-opened boutique to cool new products.

In many ways, Instagram has become this generation's new blogging platform, allowing millennial women to learn about potential purchases and new retail establishments through compelling images.

Along the path to purchase, millennials seek out highly visual elements as they collect insights and information ranging from must-have tips to styling options to help them evaluate potential purchases.

In fact, 30 percent of millennial women check YouTube multiple times per day, and more than a quarter check Instagram daily.

Millennial women create, collect and curate compelling content: Millennial women endlessly seek out and collect online content.

Yet their objective rarely centers around generating significant numbers of followers or being viewed as a subject-matter expert. Just 5 percent of millennial women use social media to establish themselves as an expert.

Instead, they post everything from videos of themselves trying out their most recent purchase to compelling food images from their favorite bistro.

Not only does this content allow them to share their latest updates and happenings in real time with their communities, but it also helps shape their consumer purchasing journey.

Millennials' embrace of lifestyle sites helps inspire new spends: Lifestyle bloggers and sites continue to resonate with millennial women, as they have become more drawn to visual and video.

These sites include pictures, as well as quirky and trendy content, and really focus on the aspirational how millennial women can envision the life that they want to lead.

In fact, millennial women increasingly are drawn to established (32 percent), yet stylish (31 percent) brands.

From compelling videos to beautiful photos to image-oriented, news-you-can-use, this image-focused content has become a real resource to time-pressed, fact-gathering millennial women consumers who seek out ways to streamline their purchase decision-making process.

ALL IN ALL, visual engagement continues to characterize millennial interactions online.

Content, including both still and video images, from visual influencers has now become this generation's approach to storytelling.

This visual movement will continue to become increasingly influential with millennial women as it inspires, motivates and shapes their consumer path to purchase.

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