

# Engage:GenY

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## Millennials Share Some Of Parents' Purchasing Behavior

by Mike Doherty, 10 hours ago

As marketers look for new opportunities to grow their businesses among the 70 million or so Millennials, they might want to start by looking at their Boomer parents' behaviors. As we know, Millennials are a group that doesn't reject their parents or their tastes, and they seem to trade purchasing cues back and forth.

Like their Boomer parents (who drove the last wine boom as they matured), Millennials are taking up wine at a faster rate than Gen X. According to Nielsen, wine now accounts for 20% of their alcoholic drinks, up from 13% for Gen Xers at the same age. Even 7-Eleven has noticed and launched its own wine called Cherrywood Cellars to capture a share of this audience.

So what other Boomer behaviors might Millennials adopt from their parents? Camping seems to be one. Many Millennials grew up camping with their parents and, according to Simmons, they index 135 for camping and even higher for those who are working full-time. I've also noticed that the last two Millennial weddings I've attended have had bridal registries at REI. Another contributing factor could be that many couples live together before getting married, so when the big day finally arrives, they fill out their household possessions with fun recreational stuff rather than boring necessities.

Living in Seattle, I also thought about coffee consumption. As Boomers cut back on the amount of coffee they consumed, they introduced tea into their households as Gen Yers were growing up. Today, 72% of Gen Y households drink tea.

Another behavior that seems uncharacteristically strong for Millennials is cooking at home. While cooking seems like something older homebody types might rather do, Millennials over index for "cooking for fun," and a study by Ketchum Global Research for Liberty Mutual also found that Millennials are 50% more likely than the general population to want to cook for someone to show their appreciation rather than take them out to dinner.

These are just a few examples of where positive experiences and parental modeling could affect Millennial purchasing behaviors. This could also work in reverse. Considering how many Millennials have seen their parents' retirement savings plummet in the recession and the investment risks made real by scandals like Enron and Bernie Madoff, it's no surprise that only 19% of working Gen Yers have a 401(k) account.

Marketers need to remember that just because a Millennial is adopting some of the same consumption patterns as their parents, they have to treat them differently in their messaging.

Unlike their parents, Millennials can't be overtly marketed to. We need to create opportunities to interact with them in a way that is authentic to the brand and engaging to them. We have to appeal to their values and sensibilities. Wine companies, whose products have traditionally been treated as a serious reviews-and-ratings business, should reconsider their approach.

For Gen Y, content can be informative and educational but it's also a means to be entertained in the process (see also: Jon Stewart, The Huffington Post). There isn't time to treat them separately.

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