



#GENERATIONWINE

They have become the king-makers of cool. But what is it that makes Millennials tick? And how far should businesses go in bending towards them? **Christopher Cooper** hangs with the Y-Gen #onthedownlow





Much has been said about Generation Y. The so-called 'millennial' generation is so often negatively quoted by ageing generations, change nay-sayers and pessimistic luddites; no wonder they're getting frustrated.

But they're not all bad, they're not all alike and, more to the point, they're now becoming a rather powerful bunch of people.

Whether we like it or not, Millennials will become the largest generation with the greatest combined purchasing power in history (£1.62 trillion worldwide in 2015, according to Forbes). In an era when a viral tweet or an opinionated blog post has the weight to drive an entire industry, launch a product or bring down politicians, perhaps it's time for the wine trade to take this section of society more seriously.

But who are they? Well, these 18- to 30-year-olds are a flighty, flaky bunch. They've grown up with technology as a right rather than a luxury, so it comes as no surprise that they are leading drinks industry growth and innovation.

The connectivity of social media has meant Gen Y-ers are much more social beings than previous generations. This closer social connectivity goes way beyond the internet, with social media an extension of their social lives when they go for a night out with friends. Yes. It's not your imagination. They do spend half the night out on their phones...

DIGITAL DRINKING

For the Millennial seeking a more sophisticated and social drink, wine, hearteningly, is becoming the beverage of choice. Craft beer and creative cocktails have their place, of course, but wine can be communally enjoyed while its stories are shared and divulged

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WHAT DO MILLENNIALS WANT?

#dopeasfuck

- ✓ Great visuals and good design
- ✓ Information – they want to know it all
- ✓ Short descriptions – keep it to the point 'cos they're busy
- ✓ Clued up and enthusiastic staff (much like themselves)
- ✓ Quirky yet explainable and memorable wines
- ✓ Quality and value for money – they know how much stuff costs

#shitonastick

- ✗ Anything mundane or tedious – yawn!!
- ✗ Pages of stuff to read – they don't have time to read long things
- ✗ Sales-y information – if you push them they won't buy it
- ✗ Anything *just* good
- ✗ Pushy staff – 'I'll make my own decision, thanks! Bye!'
- ✗ Shinfo – no information or bad communication

– a crucial element for any self-respecting Millennial. They want to taste it all and know it all right now, and they probably want to share their discoveries.

One side effect of the quest for information is an increased awareness among Generation Y of the harms of alcohol – and this has, in turn, had a big impact on the way they drink.

Plus, with every moment of their life fully documented across social media platforms for all to see – including friends, colleagues, employers and even potential employers – it's important for them to stay in control. >>



'The foodie Millennial is adventurous about wine, and enthusiastic about exploring new regions'

Their social footprint is fundamental to their identity, and a drink-sodden online persona can be seriously negative, which is why, for the most part, when it comes to wine and drinks, it's about quality not quantity... A significant shift from the attitude of previous generations.

Good food culture is increasingly popular amongst Millennials, and they're constantly seeking new ways to enhance their culinary endeavours. It's unsurprising then that the foodie Millennial is adventurous about wine, and enthusiastic about exploring new regions to complement his or her restaurant meal or dinner party.

Millennials don't need a special occasion to drink wine and in fact, many Gen Y-ers consider cooking, relaxing and watching TV to be prime wine o'clock. Many will drink wine several times a week.

When they go out, Millennials are as adventurous as they are conscientious and are very much aware of value for money and quality. They like great design, great visuals, clued-up staff, choice, quirky options and they want to know about it all too. Whatever they want, they want it fast – they're an impatient and demanding crowd.

If in doubt, give them information – even if it's a) more than you think they need to know, and b) ostensibly negative. They won't be happy if you tell them why their drink/food order is taking a while to arrive, but you'll have less harmful feedback than if you keep them in the dark.

INDUSTRY TWEETS



David Gleave, director
@liberty_wines



'The Millennials' outlook reflects our own passion for what we do and our desire to share our discoveries and expertise. Our opportunity as a wine industry is to utilise the dynamic nature of social media to engage interested individuals in a conversation and build an emotional connection between the wine in the glass and the faces and places involved in producing it.'



Richard Foster-Thorn, associate director
@collinskingltd



'Millennials are revolutionising the hospitality industry and are carving a different path as they follow their passions using classically-trained skills combined with their flair and a new-wave thinking. They're relaxed without any inhibitions and while they are no less professional or any less formal, they are trailblazing a new culture in modern dining where everybody benefits.'



Rory McCoy, general manager
@ducksoupsoho @raw_duck



'Creating and driving the trend of serving seasonal produce, natural wines, homemade soft drinks and quality cocktails have certainly appealed to a sort of healthier, younger crowd, and we're increasingly seeing people wanting to embrace this healthy living culture without chemicals. Parts of society are now seeing this as the norm for the future and not as a fad.'

GOOD ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH

Millennials now fill the largest proportion of positions within the hospitality industry, so to get the most out of them you may need to adapt the way you work. Rather than training them, progressive employers are now engaging them in rich working/learning environments for life-long development.

Millennials have grown up to expect a two-way conversation on any subject, rather than lectures from a parent, teacher, or employer. They're used to constant and quick feedback from friends about everything – their homework, a new gadget, and now, their job. As an employer you'll need to go along with that way of thinking to get the most out of them.

Progressive employers are now engaging (Millennials) in rich working/learning environments for life-long development

If you don't change willingly, the chances are that social pressure will force you to change eventually whether you like it or not. Free and good-quality Wi-Fi, for instance, will be absolutely the norm everywhere in a few years, so why not bring it in now? And don't forget extra plug sockets for laptops.

Likewise, drinks selections will need to be inspirational, rather than just ok – creative non-alcoholic drinks for the abstainers for instance, rather than coke and juice; while staff need to be in the know, inspired to work and love their jobs.

Everything needs to be not just good, but great. Why? Because in the world of the Millennial good is average, humdrum, boring. So good is actually not good... It's bad.

INFORNOGRAPHY

The speed and accessibility of information (and its communication) is key for the drinks industry to build relationships with this growing market sector. Sure, the stuffy old guard and traditional wine companies are going to find it harder than start-ups to change the way they do business but that's not to say it's impossible.

Many advertisers and spirits brands are already fully engaged with this target demographic. Yet wine companies, breweries and the on-trade are moving more slowly, and are doing themselves out of potential business in the process.

Gen Y-ers didn't invent idealism, optimism, narcissism or the desire to change the world – the 1960s generation, to name one group, got there first. But they may, however, have invented the concept that the world should change for them.

Moreover, with the digital revolution acquiring an apparently unstoppable momentum, the reality is that it will – meaning that the only real issue at stake is how soon we will adapt to go with it. For sure, those who change quickly will reap the rewards sooner than those who pine for a world that, at least for this generation, never existed. 🍷

THE URBAN DRINKABULARY

#winechat from
@cooperology

MARA MARTIN GODELLO 2013, MONTERREI DO, SPAIN (£7.50 @LIBERTY_WINES)

Fresh, clean and modern – this wine leads the charge of interesting pronounceable grape varieties; spot on for the millennial market.

CHÂTEAU DERESZLA DRY FURMINT 2013, TOKAJI, HUNGARY (£10.49 @ARMIT_WINES)

The Y-Gen knows all about Furmint and how cool it can be, but this one is the real deal. Bone dry with bitter orange and apricots.

RODRIGO MENDEZ CIES 2012, RIÁS BAIXAS, SPAIN (£13 @BIBENDUMWINE)

Albariño is THE choice amongst Gen Y-ers and always the go-to on a pants list. 'There's always an Albariño, right?!?' Refreshing, citrusy and silky.

HEINRICH BURGENLAND ZWEIFELT 2012, AUSTRIA (£11.45 @LIBERTY_WINES)

The easy-drinking red of choice for the Generation Y is Zweigelt – it's the new Pinot Noir you know. Blackberry, bitter chocolate and flavourfully smooth.

MARCEL LAPIERRE MORGON 2013, BEAUJOLAIS, FRANCE (£14.98 @BIBENDUMWINE)

According to Mark Riley of @bibendumwine, 'Beaujolais is on the rise among this generation of consumers who are approaching this particular category with no preconceptions'.

PIETRADOLCE 'ARCHINERI' ETNA ROSSO 2013, SICILY, ITALY (£18.99 @ARMIT_WINES)

Cooler than a hipster peloton, this wine's already a firm hit with the savvy millennial quaffer. A very complex wine with wild cherries, strawberry and minerality.

