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Do Millennials read books or blogs? Introducing a media usage typology of the internet generation

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Abstract

Purpose – Millennials, the Net Generation, and digital natives all represent the same, fervently discussed phenomenon, especially in the education sciences. As the terms suggest, the main idea behind this phenomenon is that the younger generation embraces new media far more comprehensively than the older generations. However, the literature is mostly based on anecdotal evidence. To date, surprisingly little empirical research exists on the media use of the "Internet Generation". In this paper, the authors aim to partially close this gap. In doing so, they focus especially on the use of social media.

Design/methodology/approach – Active media use is a key element of social software and Web 2.0 and has the potential to affect the media industry on a fundamental level. Using a large-scale empirical study with over 800 participants, the authors identify three different subgroups of Millennials.

Findings – The results indicate that, although participation in and identification with social media is generally high, Millennials are less homogeneous than the literature suggests. Furthermore, the traditional media still represent integral parts of the overall media portfolio.

Originality/value – These results are valuable not only as a starting point for future research on the Millennials' media usage but also for media management practices in general.

Keywords Millennials, Digital natives, Social software, Social media, Media use, Mass media, Internet

Paper type Research paper

An executive summary for managers and executive readers can be found at the end of this article.

1. Introduction

Modern life has been particularly shaped by the rise of new information and communication technologies. As the main drivers of this transformation, digitization and interconnected networks have led to services such as cellular networks and the internet. The most recent phenomenon in this field is the emergence of social software (i.e. social media), which has taken place in the context of Web 2.0 (Shuen, 2008). Social media differs fundamentally from traditional mass media. Whereas traditional media services focus on the one-to-many distribution of content created by professionals to a rather passive audience, social software establishes many-to-many networks of active users who share their own content among themselves. These users build on active social networks and enable consumer-sided social interactions and exchanges. Thus, these networks have the potential to fundamentally

change the behaviors of media users and thereby redefine the business practices of the media companies.

An intriguing example is the market for encyclopedias. The literature frequently discusses the case of *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Küng, 2008). *Encyclopedia Britannica* dominated the market for approximately 200 years until the 1990s, when electronic encyclopedias, such as *Microsoft Encarta*, began to serve the same market at a fraction of the cost for both companies and consumers. However, in 2009, less than 20 years after the program was launched, *Microsoft Encarta* itself became a victim when the service was closed. Not surprisingly, the fall of *Encarta* has been attributed to the rise of one of the prime examples of social media, Wikipedia. Microsoft justified this move by stating, "The category of traditional encyclopaedias and reference material has changed [...] People today seek and consume information in considerably different ways than in years past" (McDougall, 2009).

Though the extent to which Wikipedia succeeded is unique, the example shows that media businesses must monitor these new developments in technology and user behavior to adapt their products and services to the changing needs of their customers. Adapting is highly important because shifts in media behavior are likely to be more profound in the future. Changes in media use often occur more slowly than technological developments because usage patterns are partly habitual and, therefore, often sticky. The existing research shows that the way people have been raised and educated (i.e. socialized) has a profound influence on their future behavior (i.e. media use) (Parsons and Bales, 1956).

Do Millennials read books or blogs? A media usage typology

Thomas Kilian, Nadine Hennigs and Sascha Langner

Journal of Consumer Marketing

Volume 29 · Number 2 · 2012 · 114–124

For example, some young people grew up with MP3 music files and never developed a preference for music on CD, vinyl, or cassette, whereas older people are likely to continue to prefer music on a carrier medium because of the manner in which they have been socialized. Thus, the full impact of social media on society in general is likely to become fully visible only in the long run.

To assess the future impact of new information and communication technologies, we focus on the members of the young generation who have been brought up in a digital media landscape because their present media use allows for assumptions about society's future average media use. Furthermore, young consumers adopt media innovations earlier than older consumers do because they tend to be more likely to experiment (Lee, 2005). Therefore, significant changes in media habits can be detected early in this age group.

We note that the media consumption behaviors of young adolescents have recently been to the subject of heated debate, especially in the education sciences. The term Millennials, which refers to people who grew up in the 1990s (Howe and Strauss, 2000), and similar concepts such as Digital Natives (Prensky, 2001) are labels that suggest that the younger generation embraces new media far more comprehensively than the older generations do. However, there is disagreement over how radical this change will be. Whereas Prensky (2001) marks the development as "(...) a 'singularity' – an event which changes things so fundamentally that there is absolutely no going back", other researchers are skeptical and demand empirical proof of a change in media use in the younger generation (Prensky, 2001; Bennett *et al.*, 2008; Lee, 2005; Selwyn, 2009). Currently, the literature is mostly based on anecdotal evidence, as surprisingly little empirical research exists on the media use of Digital Natives.

Empirical proof is even more urgently needed by media companies. In the past few years, many media companies with strong roots in traditional media have invested heavily in Internet technology, but only a few have been successful. A popular example of a failed Internet-based business model is the *New York Times*' subscription-based "TimesSelect" service, which was ended in 2007 (Pérez-Peña, 2007). Given these results, media companies have discovered that they must thoroughly analyze any new developments in media use before they jump on yet another bandwagon. The same holds true for companies that utilize media for advertising purposes. To establish communication with their target group(s), these companies need to know what type of media their consumers prefer and, especially, what needs are satisfied by the new media to achieve a fit between the media and their advertisements.

In this pilot study, we aim to address four issues. First, we want to assess if Millennials are indeed a homogeneous group, as suggested by some authors, or if subgroups exist that differ in their use of social media. Second, we empirically test the assumption made by some scholars that traditional media are replaced by their digital heirs in a process called displacement (Neumann, 1991). Third, to motivate future research, we establish the first steps toward exploring the motives of young people who use social media. Fourth, we sketch the first typology of the new media users to help both media companies and businesses that rely on advertising to market their products. With this typology, we specify and categorize

different types of media users by referring to their actual media behavior and motivational drivers.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Millennials, Digital Natives and the Net Generation

As Table I shows, different researchers have used different terms to characterize the same phenomenon.

Prensky (2001) coined the term Digital Natives for the generation born after 1980. This generation has grown up with digital technologies and the Internet as well as the ability to use and understand the "digital language". This generation differs fundamentally from earlier generations. Older people who were not brought up with the internet and learned to use it as adults are given labels such as Digital Immigrants. Other authors use similar terminology to describe the generation that grew up in the 1990s, such as the Net Generation (Tapscott, 1997; Oblinger and Oblinger, 2005), Generation @ (Opaschowski, 1999), the Dot.com Generation (Stein and Craig, 2000) or the Net Kids (Tapscott, 1997).

Our research is based on the concept of Millennials that was introduced by Howe and Strauss (2000). Their research did not emphasize law-related topics, such as copyright issues or identity theft, which were subsequently discussed by Palfrey and Gasser (2008). However, Howe and Strauss based their ideas within a complex generational theory that embraced both the social and technical long-term changes caused by the internet. The authors compared these developments with those of earlier generations and created a distinct chronology of generations that provided a holistic view on new media usage compared with the use of traditional media in different generations. Thus, this study may represent the most theoretically developed approach in the literature.

Although the term Millennial is widespread in the non-academic literature, prior authors, especially those from the education sciences, criticize the concept as an oversimplification of socially relevant phenomena (Bennett *et al.*, 2008). In contrast to that discussion, our paper examines whether the so-called Millennium Generation is a relevant phenomenon in terms of media usage or a mere buzzword. More precisely, we ask whether and to what extent the use of the Internet, especially by the young generation, represents an actual break in media use compared with the traditional way of using and communicating via media. Are there differences in the social media usage patterns within the Millennial generation?

To answer this question, we next examine why people use media in general.

2.2 Media usage

People use both new and old media for different purposes and to fulfill specific needs (e.g. information or entertainment).

Table I Internet generation and related terms

Author(s)	Term
Howe and Strauss (2000)	Millennials
Opaschowski (1999)	Net Generation
Opaschowski (1999)	Generation @
Prensky (2001); Palfrey and Gasser (2008)	Digital Natives
Stein and Craig (2000)	Dot.Com Generation
Tapscott (1997)	Net Generation/Net Kids

Do Millennials read books or blogs? A media usage typology

Thomas Kilian, Nadine Hennigs and Sascha Langner

Journal of Consumer Marketing

Volume 29 · Number 2 · 2012 · 114–124

An important theory that analyzes the use of media is the uses and gratifications approach. This theory suggests that users actively choose the media that best fulfills their needs. Thus, users are viewed as active, and their choices in using media are based on their past media experiences and the gratification that they have received from these experiences (Blumler and Katz, 1974; Lazarsfeld and Stanton, 1942). This approach is most useful if the users can select from a large portfolio of different types of media. Thus, the actual media choice may vary depending on functional, situational, and personal factors (Groebel, 1997).

However, not all forms of media are used for the same purposes. Rather, different types of media have different characteristics. Some media are mostly used for entertainment (e.g. movies), others for information (e.g. encyclopedias), and still others may serve both purposes (e.g. newspapers).

To conceptualize the motives for individual media use, we followed the approach by McQuail (1983), who distinguishes four main motives for using media and communication technologies: information, personal identity, entertainment, and integration/social interaction. Figure 1 presents these four motives.

McQuail's framework explicitly includes personal identity and integration/social interaction as possible motives for media use. Thus, this approach is especially useful for the analysis of social media (e.g. social networks), whose gratifications may extend far beyond factors such as information and entertainment.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research approach
In this study, we aim to analyze the media usage behaviors of Millennials. We focus mainly on social media because it generates feedback and even active participation from its users. This new feature is a rather significant distinction from the traditional, lean-back media, where user feedback is generally limited to writing letters to the editor and participating in television polls. The Internet and social media in particular have also lowered the economic restraints (i.e. time) and the psychological barriers to actively using media. The active use of media can be considered particularly relevant for the Internet Generation because the members of this group are said to prefer a more active and experiential learning approach (Jonas-Dwyer and Pospisil, 2004; Rowlands *et al.*, 2008).

Consequently, this study focuses particularly on the active and passive use of blogs, social networks (e.g. Facebook), knowledge communities (e.g. Wikipedia), and file sharing communities (e.g. Youtube). Although they show significant differences in their business models, each of these Web 2.0 sites incorporates a community aspect and active user participation. For instance, user comments on videos on Youtube and the compilation of profiles in Facebook allow users to actively engage these web sites.

We also collected data on the use of traditional media, including books, newspapers, radio, TV, and movies, to develop a full picture of the Millennials' media consumption behaviors in general.

3.2 Measures
To explore our research questions, we generated a number of new measures. We measured the actual use of both traditional and new media through direct questions regarding social media and the traditional media as well as active and passive use (in the case of social media). For example, blogs can be read (i.e. passive use), comments can be posted, and a user can even construct his or her own blog (i.e. active use). We employed a five-point scale (i.e. daily use, at least weekly use, at least monthly use, use at least once a year, and more seldom use) for both traditional and social media and for active and passive use (Jordan *et al.*, 2007).

In this pilot study, we measured each motive with one item (see Appendix). This limitation was necessary because we measured the motives for all of the traditional and social

Figure 1 Motives for media use

Information	**Integration and Social Interaction**
• Finding out about immediate surroundings, society and the world • Seeking advice on practical matters • Satisfying curiosity • Learning	• Gaining insight into the circumstances of others • Gaining a sense of belonging • Finding a basis for conversation • Substitute for real-life companionship • Connection with family, friends, society
Personal Identity	**Entertainment**
• Reinforcement for personal values • Finding models of behavior • Identifying with valued others • Gaining insight into oneself	• Escaping from problems • Relaxation • Cultural or aesthetic enjoyment • Filling time • Emotional release • Sexual arousal

Source: Adopted from McQuail (1983) and Meyen (2004)

Do Millennials read books or blogs? A media usage typology

Thomas Kilian, Nadine Hennigs and Sascha Langner

Journal of Consumer Marketing

Volume 29 · Number 2 · 2012 · 114–124

media (i.e. nine media types). Thus, multiple item scales would have overburdened the participants.

3.3 Data collection
We used an online questionnaire for data collection. To detect problematic items and ensure the questionnaire's reliability, we face-validated the first version of the questionnaire by using expert interviews with five marketing researchers and five students majoring in marketing. In addition, we pre-tested the questionnaire with 25 respondents. The participants in the main study were approached via internet forums and mailing lists related to games, online media, schools, and universities. The return rate could not be accurately calculated, but 61.74 percent of people finished the online survey, which is considered satisfactory. The study sample was composed of male and female respondents aged 30 years and younger. In autumn 2009, a total of 813 Millennials participated in our study. A description of the sample can be found in the following section.

4. Data analysis and key findings

4.1 Step 1: internet generation: a homogeneous group?
To determine whether the Millennial Generation is composed of different subgroups, we applied cluster analysis, which is a particularly powerful instrument for segmenting a population (Hair *et al.*, 2005). We conducted a hierarchical cluster analysis followed by a k-means analysis. The actual use of social media was utilized as a cluster variable for both the hierarchical cluster analysis and the k-means analysis. We calculated the distances between the clusters using the Euclidean distance measure, and we aggregated the clusters through Ward's procedure. To reflect the true structure of the data set, we used the elbow criterion to determine the number of clusters. The thresholds existed at three and four clusters. We performed a multiple discriminant analysis to determine the appropriateness of each of the two alternative solutions. Because the hit rate (i.e. the proportion of media users correctly classified) was highest for the three-cluster solution, we considered this rate the most adequate representation of the existing segments related to Millennials (see Table II). Overall, by following the typical criteria to generate effective segments with homogeneous needs, attitudes, and responses to variables, we found that the three clusters were distinct from one another, were large enough to be managerially

useful, and provided operational data that were practical, usable, and readily translatable into strategy (Weinstein, 1987). Thus, this three-cluster solution successfully produced interpretable and stable results.

Once the clusters were identified, we used a discriminant analysis to check the cluster groupings, which revealed significant differences among the group characteristics, as shown in Table II (Churchill, 1999). For the sake of clarity, only frequent use (i.e. at least once a week) is depicted. For example, 22 percent of the Restrained Millennials passively used (i.e. read) blogs at least once a week compared with 54 percent of the Entertainment Seekers and 60 percent of the Highly Connected Millennials.

For segmentation purposes, further profiling the cluster solutions should lead to a classification scheme that describes the characteristics of each cluster to explain how they differ on the relevant dimensions. To develop a profile of each segment, we obtained more detailed information by examining the questionnaire variables that were cross-tabulated by each cluster segment. We compared the three clusters based on the demographic variables. Table III provides an overview of the characteristics that differentiated each cluster from the others.

Based on the variables from which they were derived, the three clusters can be described as follows.

1 *Cluster 1: The Restrained Millennials.* This cluster formed 45.6 percent of the sample, was 51 percent female, and had a mean age of 23.71 years. Compared with the other clusters, the members of this group showed the lowest ratings for social media use in terms of both active and passive behavior. For example, this cluster had the lowest ratings for both active and passive blog use as well as the lowest passive use of social networking sites.

2 *Cluster 2: The Entertainment-Seeking Millennials.* The second cluster formed 34.9 percent of the sample, was 54 percent male, and had a mean age of 25.02 years. Its members showed the highest mean ratings of all three groups with regard to the passive use of social networks and file-sharing communities. Taken as a whole, this segment was more active in social media use than the Restrained Millennials. However, in comparison with cluster 3, they were more passive. For example, this cluster had the highest ratings for passively using social networking sites and file-sharing communities.

Table II Cluster solution

	The Restrained Millennials *n* = 371 (%)	The Entertainment Seeking Millennials *n* = 284 (%)	The Highly Connected Millennials *n* = 158 (%)
Passive blog use (at least once a week) [**]	22	54	60
Active blog use [**]	4	20	25
Passive use of social networks [**]	61	80	74
Active use of social networks [**]	57	74	71
Passive use of file-sharing communities [**]	55	72	72
Active use of file-sharing communities [**]	3	14	20
Passive use of Wikipedia [*]	56	61	69
Active use of Wikipedia [**]	0	1	8

Notes: Chi-squared tests were applied, as the variables are ordinarily scaled; [*]*p* < 1 percent; [**]*p* < 0.1 percent

Do Millennials read books or blogs? A media usage typology

Thomas Kilian, Nadine Hennigs and Sascha Langner

Journal of Consumer Marketing

Volume 29 · Number 2 · 2012 · 114–124

Table III Demographic profile of the cluster groups

	The Restrained Millennials n = 371		The Entertainment Seeking Millenials n = 284		The Highly Connected n = 158	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*
Sex [*]						
Male		49		54		68
Female		51		46		32
Occupation n.s.		9		12		10
School		66		62		55
University		25		26		35
Job						
Age n.s.	23.71		25.02		25	

Notes: n.s. = non-significant; [*]$p < 0.1$ percent

3 *Cluster 3: The Highly Connected Millennials.* Comprising 19.4 percent of the sample, this cluster was the smallest of the three clusters. Its respondents were 68 percent male and had a mean age of 25 years. Its members were more likely than the members of other groups to actively use social media to build social networks with other users. Most notably, this cluster had the highest ratings for active blog use and active use of Wikipedia.

The results of our cluster analysis contradict the notion of Millennials as a homogenous group; rather, there are at least three groups with different degrees of social media use. The demographic variables in our sample do not contribute much to the distinction among the clusters because the differences between occupation and age are not significant.

The comparatively low usage rates of social media by the Restrained Millennials show that the Millennials are less homogeneous than previously assumed by the literature. This result is particularly noteworthy because in our sample, university students are clearly overrepresented. Thus, the low usage rate can hardly be attributed to a lack of media competence, which is an argument used to explain the digital divide (DiMaggio and Hargittai, 2001). The cluster analysis shows that social media have specific characteristics that are not valued by all Millennials to the same extent. Another possible explanation could be that privacy concerns play a role in Millennials' wariness of social media (Paine *et al.*, 2007).

The media usage by the Entertainment-Seeking Millennials resembles the media usage of the majority of the traditional media users. Their main motive seems to be entertainment for both digital media and the traditional media, such as TV, radio and books. However, the Entertainment Seekers use the internet in addition to traditional media. This development is interesting because prior to the establishment of broadband internet, the internet was not considered a medium that could transport emotions.

There is one group of users that is dedicated to social media. The Highly Connected Millennials, dominated by males, can be seen as a group formed by the Millennials or Digital Natives described previously in this essay. However, this group only accounts for 19.4 percent of our sample. Thus, the idea of a homogenous Millennial Generation must be fallacious. Although Entertainment Seekers and Highly Connected Millennials both use social media intensively, they

do so differently. The former group is predominantly passive, whereas the latter is both passive and active.

4.2 Step 2: Replacement of Traditional Media
In the next step, we analyzed the use of traditional media and determined whether these media have been replaced by the new media and the new media habits exhibited by Millennials. For instance, early studies on the displacement of television showed that television decreased the use of radio, comics and movies, whereas the reverse was true for the use of newspapers (Brown *et al.*, 1974; Coffin, 1955; Schramm *et al.*, 1961).

Figure 2 compares the use of traditional media in the three cluster groups and the use of traditional media by the total population of Germany.
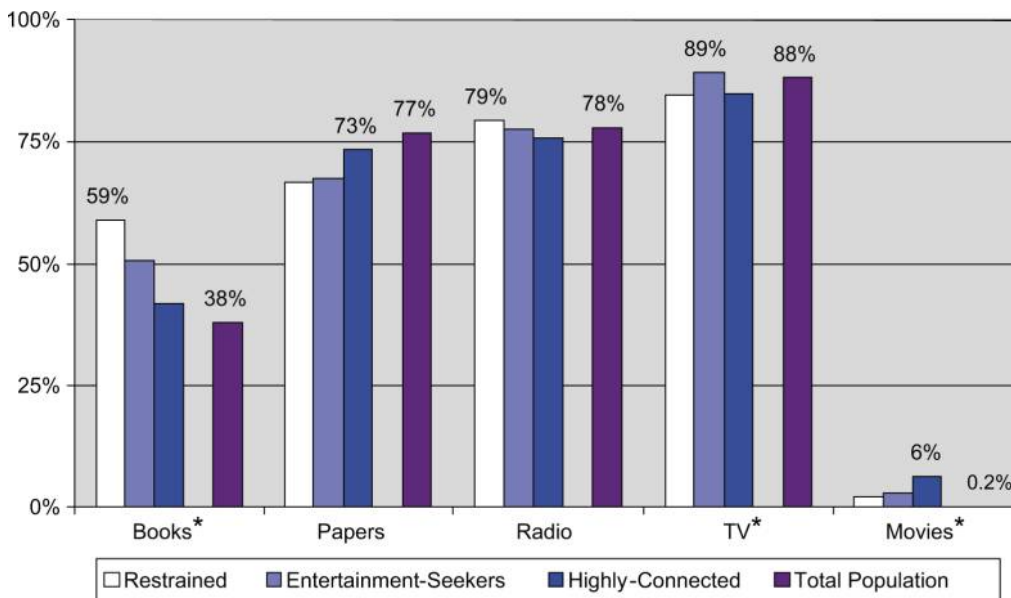
The analysis shows that no replacement has taken place to date. This finding is consistent with prior research (AC Nielsen, 2009; Robinson *et al.*, 1997; Robinson *et al.*, 2000). Media researchers are aware that younger people read newspapers less frequently than older students. In addition, older students' use of books is even higher than that of the total population. However, this finding might be due to our sample. In our study, university students are clearly overrepresented, with most of them reading on a regular basis. Thus, this rate is likely to decline if the students finish their studies and leave the university.

Riepl's law, formulated by Wolfgang Riepl (1913), states that traditional media are seldom replaced by newer, more developed types of media. For instance, the radio has not been completely replaced by the television, as predicted by Riepl. Instead, the radio found another field of use as a subordinate medium, for example, in the car or at work. It will be interesting to observe in the future if Riepl's law can prevail in the era of digital media and networks and to what extent the traditional media will have to reinvent themselves accordingly.

4.3 Step 3: motives for use of social media
Next, we analyzed the Millennials' motives for using both traditional and social media. We conceptualized the motives for using media in accordance with McQuail's (1983) work. In this pilot study, we concentrated on operationalizing these motives, using one item for each dimension: five traditional and four social media (see Appendix). The subjects rated
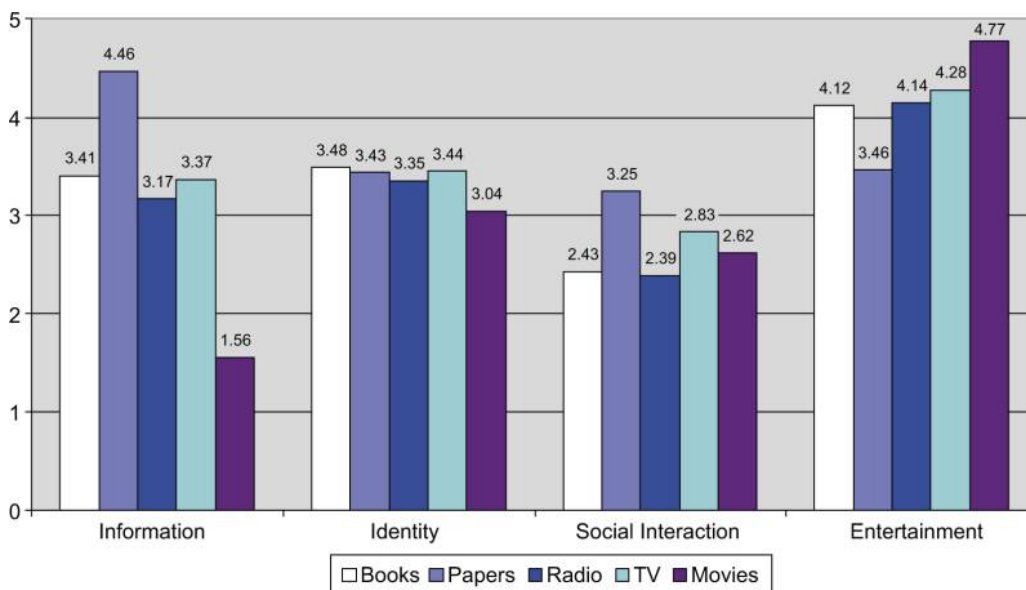
Do Millennials read books or blogs? A media usage typology

Thomas Kilian, Nadine Hennigs and Sascha Langner

Journal of Consumer Marketing

Volume 29 · Number 2 · 2012 · 114–124

Figure 2 Use of traditional media

Notes: *p < 1%
Source: Total population data adopted from ARD (2007)

Figure 3 Motives for the use of traditional media

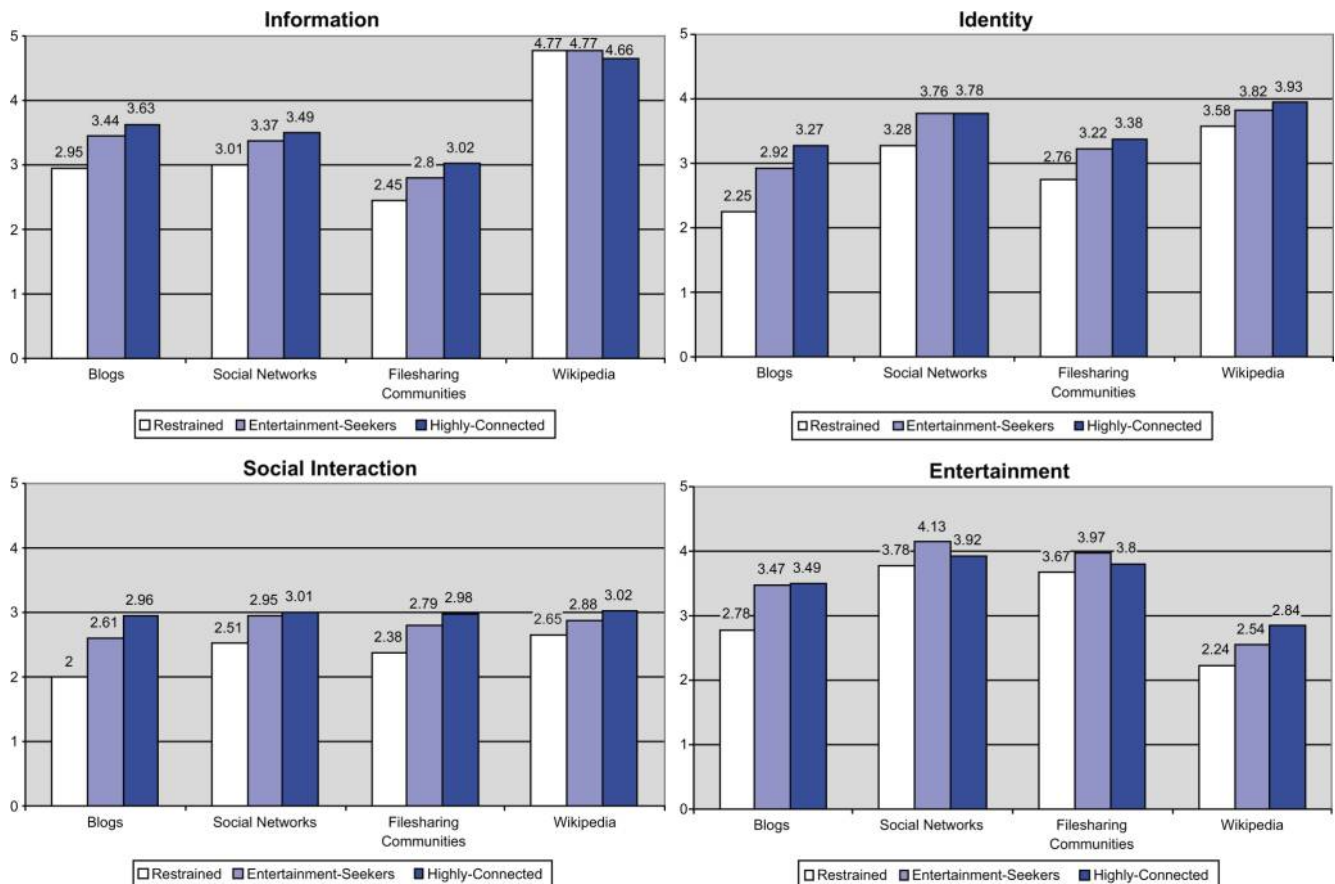these items on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

We first compared the motives for using traditional media, but our results showed no significant differences among the three cluster groups. Therefore, we concentrated on the total population, as shown in Figure 3.

Referring to the total sample, we found that the need for information is the dominant motive for reading newspapers, whereas the other media are mostly used for entertainment. These results provide a good benchmark for understanding

social media use among the Millennial Generation. Then, we analyzed the motives for using social media. Our results are displayed in Figure 4.

With respect to social media, the information motive dominates the use of Wikipedia and blogs, which are most important to the cluster of the Highly Connected Users. Some groups rate the self-identity motive for using social media more highly than for using traditional media. Again, this motive is most important for the Highly Connected Group. With regard to the need for social interaction, our

Do Millennials read books or blogs? A media usage typology

Thomas Kilian, Nadine Hennigs and Sascha Langner

Journal of Consumer Marketing

Volume 29 · Number 2 · 2012 · 114–124

Figure 4 Motives for the use of social media

results show medium or low ratings, which may have resulted from the use of only one item to cover this dimension, which measures media usage and the ability to participate in the discussion of specific topics (see Appendix). Although this motive is highly relevant for the use of media such as newspapers, social interactions within a community-driven social network are motivated far more by the need for social interactions. The desire to be entertained is highly important for both social networks and file-sharing communities, especially for the group of Entertainment Seekers. This finding contradicts the results of former studies, which have found that the entertainment motive was far higher for television use than for Internet use (LaFerle *et al.*, 2000). However, this result might be due to the development of the Internet, especially social media. Whereas the Internet in the late 1990s was largely focused on information displayed in the form of text pages, today the Internet comprises much more content in the form of music, videos, and other multimedia. In general, our data support the notion that the use of online media is increasingly motivated by entertainment, which is important for the design and the provision of media products and services.

5. Discussion and outlook

Social media offer a plethora of choices that empower users to create and share media in profoundly new ways. Applications

such as blogs, Youtube, Wikipedia, and Facebook have changed the traditional methods of consuming journalism, radio and video. In addition, these applications have created new ways to enable knowledge transfer and networking. To understand the rapid transformation of the media sector and the user-driven, individualized, and participatory media use by Millennials, researchers and managers must attain more profound knowledge of the changing attitudes and related behaviors of their users. This research attempts to shed light on the next generation of customers, who are likely to be highly influenced by new technologies, especially social media.

5.1 Implications for research
The findings of this study are important for academia because they use empirical data to help to operationalize terms such as Millennials or Digital Natives and open pathways for future research that may explore the new generation of media users and consumers. The study shows that the discussion on Millennials and related concepts currently lacks precision. Although Millennials in general use social media, the degree to which they use social media differs considerably among the different subgroups. Furthermore, the identified clusters use the same social media in different ways (i.e. passively or actively). This finding shows that traditional concepts, such as Millennials or Digital Natives, can only serve as broad labels,

Do Millennials read books or blogs? A media usage typology

Thomas Kilian, Nadine Hennigs and Sascha Langner

Journal of Consumer Marketing

Volume 29 · Number 2 · 2012 · 114–124

whereas the actual decision to adopt and use different media should be analyzed in a much more complex manner.

To identify the different subgroups in a broader context, we must examine the possible segments based on a more representative sample. In addition, we can examine whether there are cross-cultural differences or similarities in the characterizations of Millennials. For instance, some authors predict that a global web culture with unified online attitudes and behavioral patterns will dominate the media consumption habits of younger people worldwide (Rowlands *et al.*, 2008). As Levitt noted, "A powerful force now drives the world towards a single converging commonality and that force is technology." (Levitt, 1984). However, another stream of research posits that the motives for using online media vary between the low-context Western cultures and the high-context Eastern cultures (Ko *et al.*, 2006). To assess this suggestion, we need a more sophisticated operationalization of the motives for media consumption. We must employ multi-item scales instead of single-item measures. In addition, the situational aspects that determine media habits (e.g. media use at home or in the office) should be included in future research efforts.

5.2 Implications for managerial practice

For business practitioners, the impact of new technologies on consumer behavior is of special importance from both a market segmentation and a market positioning point of view. Our research provides a clearer picture of Millennials and offers guidance for the development of efficient social software applications that may provide real value to the different segments of the Millennial Generation.

For traditional media companies, our results are simultaneously promising and challenging. They are promising in that the Millennials still rely on traditional media to fulfill many of their needs. However, there is also a partial substitution effect among the different media, in part because of limited money and time budgets. For example, in our sample, the Restrained Millennials who showed the lowest interest in social media were, at the same time, the most active book readers, whereas the other clusters used social media more actively and read books less often. Thus, media use shifts substantially, but not completely, within the Millennial generation.

Herein lies the challenge. To prevail in the market, traditional media companies have to adapt to the changing usage patterns of their consumers. The adequacy of the user response depends on the segment that the media companies want to address. The Restrained Millennials group is the easiest to serve because they are generally happy with traditional media products and services and only partly shift their time and income to the Internet.

In contrast, the Entertainment-Seeking Millennials use social media more heavily but often in a lean-back mode, where they merely consume the content that other users have created. For these users, we may assume that aspects such as convenience, comfort, and user-generated content are important when they choose a media product.

The Highly Connected Millennials are the role models of the Internet Generation. They adopt social media both passively and actively. They do not always use social media, but they do so quite often. To reach this group, media companies have to leave their traditional channels and address the Highly Connected Millennials in their living space:

Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and other online applications. The media industry must redesign their products and services to meet the recipients' needs for active participation. Though not every user is always in the mood to produce content, the media companies must use this instrument to create customer interest and loyalty. Whether the media industry is able to change accordingly remains to be seen.

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Do Millennials read books or blogs? A media usage typology

Thomas Kilian, Nadine Hennigs and Sascha Langner

Journal of Consumer Marketing

Volume 29 · Number 2 · 2012 · 114–124

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Appendix

Sample items: actual media use
- How often do you use file-sharing sites such as YouTube to watch media files?
- How often do you use file-sharing sites such as YouTube to comment on media files?
- How often do you use file-sharing sites such as YouTube to upload media files?

Sample items: motives for media use
- I use blogs to keep myself informed (Information).
- Using blogs is typical for me and my lifestyle (Identity).
- I use blogs to entertain myself (Entertainment).
- I use blogs to participate when others discuss specific topics (Social Interaction).

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Do Millennials read books or blogs? A media usage typology

Thomas Kilian, Nadine Hennigs and Sascha Langner

Journal of Consumer Marketing

Volume 29 · Number 2 · 2012 · 114–124

Executive summary and implications for managers and executives

This summary has been provided to allow managers and executives a rapid appreciation of the content of this article. Those with a particular interest in the topic covered may then read the article in toto *to take advantage of the more comprehensive description of the research undertaken and its results to get the full benefits of the material present.*

The emergence of new information and communication technologies has been a constant feature of recent decades. Among the most influential of these developments are cellular networks and the Internet. In the latter case, the arrival of Web 2.0 and the social media phenomenon has further advanced the digital landscape. The "many-to-many" nature of social media represents a significant departure from more traditional forms. Passive consumption characterizes these media types, with content invariably created and selected by professional organizations. Contrasting with this "one-to-many" format, social media enables users to interact with others and share and exchange material.

How the market for encyclopedias has evolved illustrates how new media can transform user behaviors. For almost 200 years, printed versions like *Encyclopedia Britannia* dominated the market until the appearance of electronic encyclopedias. Cost benefits to companies and users alike made such as *Microsoft Encarta* a more appealing option. However, the success of *Encarta* was relatively short-lived once social media took off and led to the birth of Wikipedia. This collaboratively-produced reference source emphasizes why media organizations need to monitor the impact of new technologies on consumers in order to satisfy their changing needs.

Certain scholars believe that adapting will be even more crucial in the future. In their view, "more profound" changes in media behavior are likely. It is argued that media behavior is shaped by the way individuals are educated and socialized. This resulted in slower change in the past because conventional media forms prevailed. In contrast, younger generations are confident users of digital media and comfortable with new advances. It is widely assumed that the generation, which grew up during the 1990s is much likelier to adopt new media than older generations. However, some academics remain unconvinced that change will be accepted so readily by a cohort often referred to as Millennials or the Internet Generation. What is unquestionable is the fact that media firms need to thoroughly evaluate any new developments before making the investment required. One of the core aims should be to establish what kind of media consumers prefer.

Both old and new media are used by different people to satisfy various needs that include information, entertainment, personal identity and social interaction, or a combination of these requirements. Based on past experiences and levels of gratification, it is assumed that people use the most appropriate media types.

In the current study, Killan *et al.* investigate the use of Internet media among the Millennial Generation and whether the cohort is homogenous in respect of social media usage. Social media was chosen because of the interaction and feedback it encompasses together with the ease of access it permits. These factors may be particularly important for younger consumers, who some researchers claim prefer an experiential approach to learning.

An online questionnaire was used for the study involving respondents aged 30 or below in the autumn of 2009. The final sample contained 813 Millennials recruited from such as internet forums and various online mailing lists. Questions addressed active and passive use of blogs, knowledge communities, social networking platforms, file-sharing communities and *Wikipedia*. This enabled an exploration of various types of social media characterized by the community aspect while exhibiting some diversity in the business models used. In order to develop a more complete picture of this cohort's media consumption in general, the authors also collected data regarding usage of conventional media forms such as radio, TV and print media.

Findings indicated that the Millennial Generation is composed of three sub-groups with suitably distinctive characteristics:

1 Restrained Millennials. Accounting for 45.6 percent of the sample, this cluster was 51 percent female and average of 23.71 years. Lowest ratings for both active and passive use of social media were found for this group.
2 Entertainment-Seeking Millennials. This group was overall more active in social media use than the first cluster and recorded the highest average ratings for passive use of social networks and file-sharing communities. A mean age of 25.02 years was recorded for a cluster made up of 54 percent males and accounting for 34.9 percent of the total sample.
3 Highly Connected Millennials. The smallest cluster representing 19.4 percent of the sample was 68 percent male and an average age of 25 years-old. This cluster was much likelier than the others to actively engage with the different aspects of social media.

Media usage among Entertainment Seekers closely mirrors that of most conventional media users. In both digital and conventional media, entertainment is the main motive. A relevant point is that the internet was not regarded as medium for conveying emotions until broadband connections were established.

Killan *et al.* conclude that between-cluster differences were little to do with demographic variables. They also point out the strong presence of university students in the sample and the improbability that any "lack of media competence" might explain low usage. Privacy concerns and social media attributes not appreciated by Millennials could be a more plausible explanation.

Previous research has suggested it is rare for newer media forms to totally replace traditional forms. The effect of television on radio consumption is cited as an example. The current study provides similar indications although it is acknowledged that reading frequency among subjects may decline once they leave university.

With regard to motives for media use, the study revealed that:

· Subjects read newspapers for information and consume other traditional media mainly for entertainment. Differences between the sub-groups were insignificant; and
· For social media, the quest for information drives usage of blogs and Wikipedia, especially for the Highly Connected

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Thomas Kilian, Nadine Hennigs and Sascha Langner

Journal of Consumer Marketing

Volume 29 · Number 2 · 2012 · 114–124

cluster. Self-identity was found to be another key reason and more than with traditional media.

For social networks and file-sharing communities, entertainment was a key motivator. This finding contradicted late 1990s research, which found this factor more relevant for television than the internet. A possible explanation is that the Internet at that time consisted largely of text-based information pages rather than the rich variety of content available today. Unexpected low ratings for social interaction were possibly due to the measures adopted for this factor.

These findings reveal implications for both traditional media firms and providers of new media. It is recommended that companies segment the Millennial market based on the clusters identified. The authors point out that consumer usage behaviors are subject to change and urge conventional media organizations to remain aware of this and adapt accordingly. Serving Restrained Millennials is considered least challenging as this consumer subgroup appears content with traditional media offerings. Where Entertainment Seekers are concerned, providing convenience, comfort and user-generated content is the ideal. Reaching the Highly Connected cluster requires media firms to address this cluster in the different online spaces, which these consumers inhabit. The desire for active participation demands that companies revamp products and services in order to satisfy consumer needs.

Additional research using broader samples can further increase knowledge of subgroups. Scholars might also conduct studies within different cultural settings to investigate if a "global web culture" is emerging. A possibility that motives for using online media are culturally determined is another idea to explore, along with the usage situation.

(A précis of the article "Do Millennials read books or blogs? Introducing a media usage typology of the internet generation". Supplied by Marketing Consultants for Emerald.)

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