

MARKETING TO MILLENNIALS

ENGAGING A GENERATION
OF VISUAL BUYERS



SMARTER MARKETING THROUGH IMAGERY

JUNE 2015

CONTENTS

3	Why Care?
4	Defining the Millennial Generation
5	The Rise of the Visual Consumer
6	The Perception of What's Valuable and Authentic
7	How to Use Images to Connect With Millennials
8	The Boss Babe
9	The Brogrammer
10	The Nostalgic
11	The Underemployed
12	The Shut Out
13	The Travel Enthusiast
14	The Culinary Explorer
15	The Exuberant
16	The Collector
17	The Millennial Martha
18	The Millennial Mom
19	The Quarter-Life Crisis
20	The Activist
22	The High-End Minimalist
23	Putting it Into Practice
24	Make it Easy to Shop
25	Feature UGC on Your Site
26	Turn Content Into Commerce
27	Contests and Campaigns
28	Tap Influencers
29	Conclusion

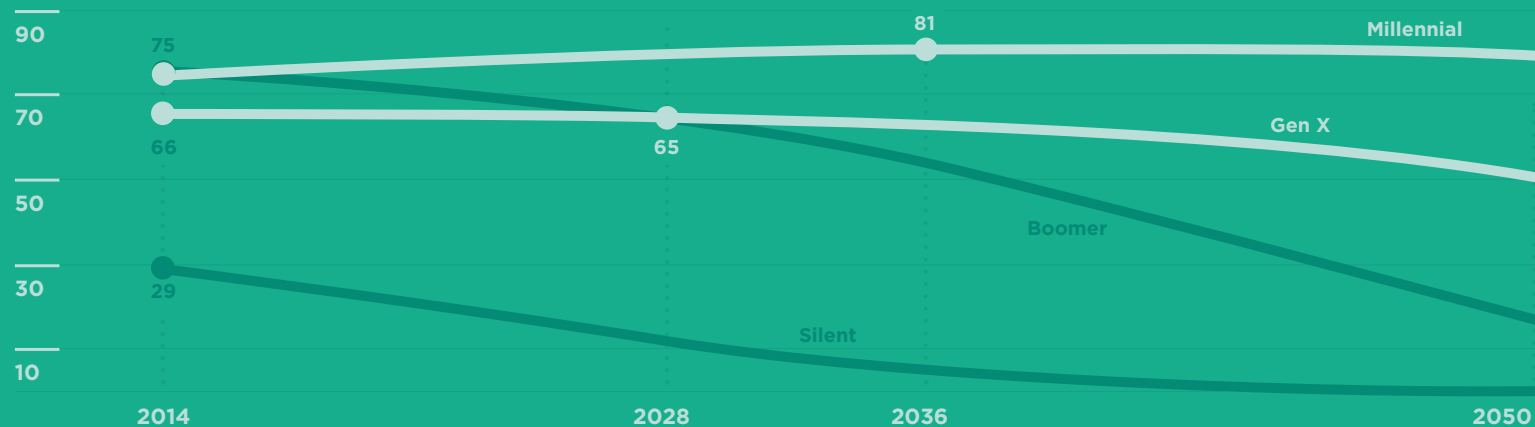
WHY CARE?

There's a lot of talk in the marketing world about the complexity of effectively engaging the millennial generation. And there's no question why marketers want to make a good impression. By the end of 2015, millennials are set to overtake Baby Boomers as the largest living generation in the U.S.¹ By 2017, they will carry the bulk of the spending power.²

The young adults of today came of age just as ecommerce, cellphones, social media and instant messaging were becoming pervasive technologies, which molded them into the communicators and consumers they are now. The challenge lies in delivering relevant messaging in a vast sea of content.

This guide will illustrate how brands can identify the diverse subsets of millennials and start gaining their loyalty now with relevant images.

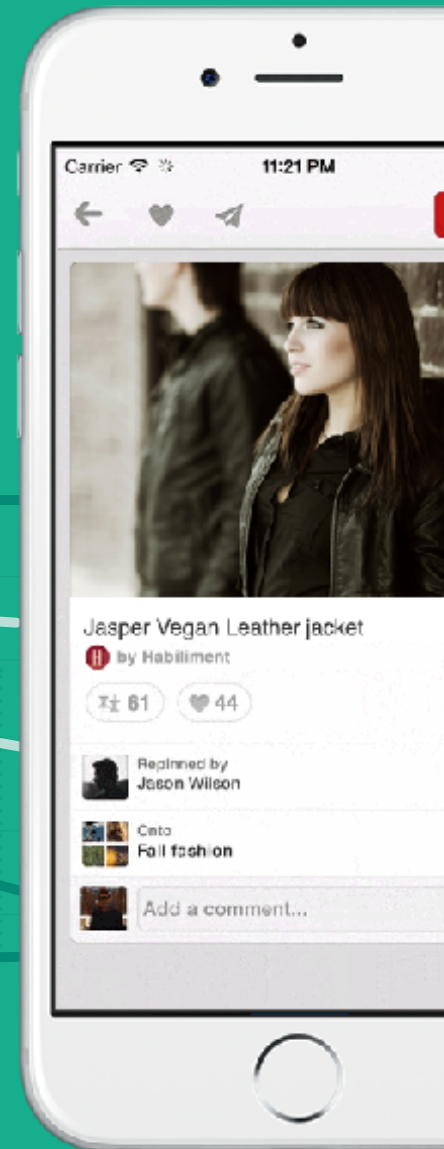
PROJECTED POPULATION BY GENERATION IN MILLIONS PEW RESEARCH CENTER



NOTE

Millennials refers to the population ages 18 to 34 as of 2015.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of U.S. Census Bureau population projections released December 2014



¹ [Pew Research Center](#), 2015

² [Berglass + Associates; Women's Wear Daily](#), 2013



DEFINING THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION

Lazy. Entitled. Narcissistic. These words have been used countless times by the media to describe Gen Y. But how can we define a generation of approximately 75MM people so readily? The reality is: We can't when they comprise the most ethnically diverse generation in the history of the U.S. (43% are non-white); they possess varying levels of education (one-third have at least a

bachelor's degree); and they are choosing different paths for themselves (many are parents, many are delaying parenthood).

Here's what we can say with certainty: Millennials are avid users of digital, highly visual communicators, and are greatly influenced by one another.

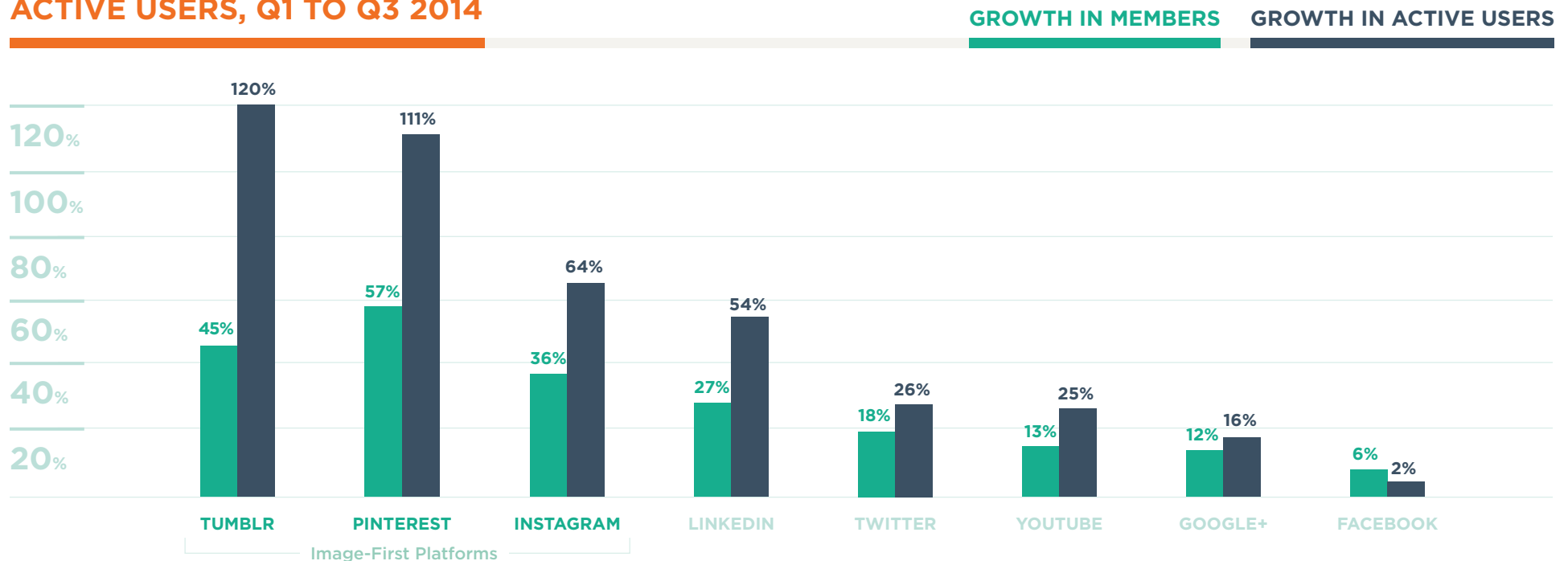
THE RISE OF THE VISUAL CONSUMER

Some 85% of 18 to 34 year olds in the U.S. own a smartphone³, and they check them an average of 43 times per day.⁴ Unlike previous generations at young adulthood, millennials have the ability to access whatever they want, whenever they want.

The ubiquity of digital images has made it easier to consume even more content, and that's exactly what millennials are doing. The growth of visual-based platforms within the last couple years speaks volumes. Tumblr, Pinterest and Instagram—which are all dominated by images—were the three fastest growing networks in 2014, according to GlobalWebIndex.

Access to a wealth of content—articles, photos, videos, social media posts, blogs and messages—comes at a cost though. It's total content overload, and it's contributing to our minimized attention spans. In 2013, the average attention span was eight seconds, down from 12 seconds in 2000.⁵

GROWTH IN MEMBERS AND ACTIVE USERS, Q1 TO Q3 2014



Source: GlobalWebIndex Survey Q1 2014 - Q3 2014 / Base: Internet users aged 16-64, exc. China

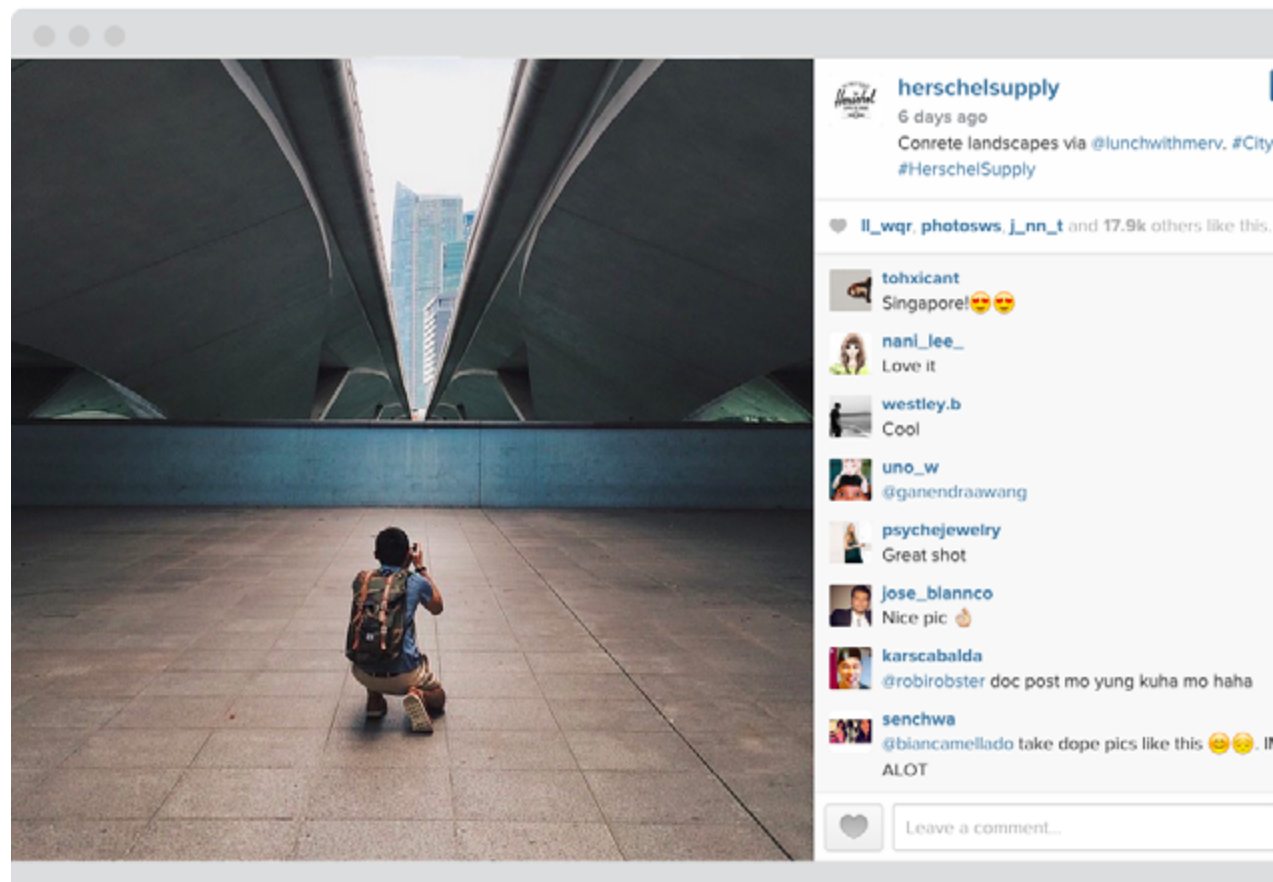
³ Nielsen, 2014 ⁴ SDL, 2014 ⁵ The Brief Lab, 2014

THE PERCEPTION OF WHAT'S VALUABLE AND AUTHENTIC

There's something else the ubiquity of digital has done for the millennial generation: It's transformed what they perceive as valuable and authentic.

Seeing a photo of a friend unboxing the latest gadget, having a great time in the streets of Bangkok, or eating out at a highly-rated local restaurant seems to trigger everyone's FOMO. A July 2014 Eventbrite survey found that 78% of millennials would choose to spend money on a desirable experience over buying something desirable.

What this means for marketers is that they shouldn't just sell products – they need to sell experiences. An example of a brand that's doing this well is Herschel Supply Co. They don't just market backpacks; rather, they show off how their brand carries fans through these amazing, "limitless" city adventures.





@sharinsoomro



Urban Outfitters

*For fostering authenticity, consumer-generated content works remarkably well. An analysis of Curalate data from 25 major brands, each with more than 75K Instagram followers, shows just how impactful user-generated images can be for marketers who share them in addition to their own. On average, over a 30-day period, **69% of the top three photos shared by brands on Instagram originated from fans.***

These findings are unsurprising. Just look at these photos of a hat sold at Urban Outfitters. Which image seems more desirable to the average consumer? Seeing real people experiencing cool things and falling in love with great products – that’s what fosters authenticity; that’s what demonstrates value.

Shortened attention spans and elevated perceptions of authenticity mean one thing for marketers: Those who fail to adopt consumer-centric content strategies risk losing them to brands that do. Some have already mastered the art of pushing forth targeted, authentic imagery, and they are reaping the benefits. With a thorough understanding of the type of content millennials respond to, any brand marketer can win this demographic over, too.

HOW TO USE IMAGES TO CONNECT WITH MILLENNIALS

It's indisputable that channels like Instagram, Pinterest and Tumblr are fostering brand awareness, affinity and even sales among millennials, but with so many different personas and lifestyles comprising this generation, tailoring effective messages can be tough.

In 2014, advertising intelligence agency [Exponential Interactive](#) analyzed data from more than 4MM millennials to determine some of the different personas that comprise Generation Y.

They identified 12: **"The Boss Babe," "The Brogrammer," "The Nostalgic," "The Underemployed," "The Shut Out," "The Travel Enthusiast," "The Culinary Explorer," "The Exuberant," "The Collector," "The Millennial Martha," "The Millennial Mom"** and **"The Quarter-Life Crisis."**

In addition to these, Curalate has analyzed qualitative data to identify two more: **"The Activist"** and **"The High-End Minimalist."** As millennials place increased importance on understanding the social impact that brands have, and exactly how products are manufactured, we were compelled to define these personas as well.

Exponential outlined the type of buying power each of their personas carries, but with today's shopping landscape being dominated by visual consumers, it's imperative that marketers consider the type of imagery that will hook them. In the following pages, you'll learn the characteristics of these 14 millennial subsets and Curalate's take on how to engage them with images.

THE BOSS BABE

Feature young women taking the world by storm.

Outpacing their male counterparts in college degree attainment and more inclined to live outside of their parents' homes, the women of this generation are a determined bunch.

"Boss Babes" are assertive, career-driven women who typically reside in urban areas. These women will head to the gym before work, crush it at the office and then meet friends for a drink after a long day. They're delaying marriage and having children, and carry strong purchase power.

Though "Boss Babes" are focused on making it professionally, marketers shouldn't underestimate their spending on home goods and CPG items. According to a 2014 study by DeVries Global, women without children spend more per person, per household on groceries, beauty, personal care and household products.

To that end, these women are drawn to images that connect with the hectic lives they lead: people working out, stylish outfits and weekend relaxation.



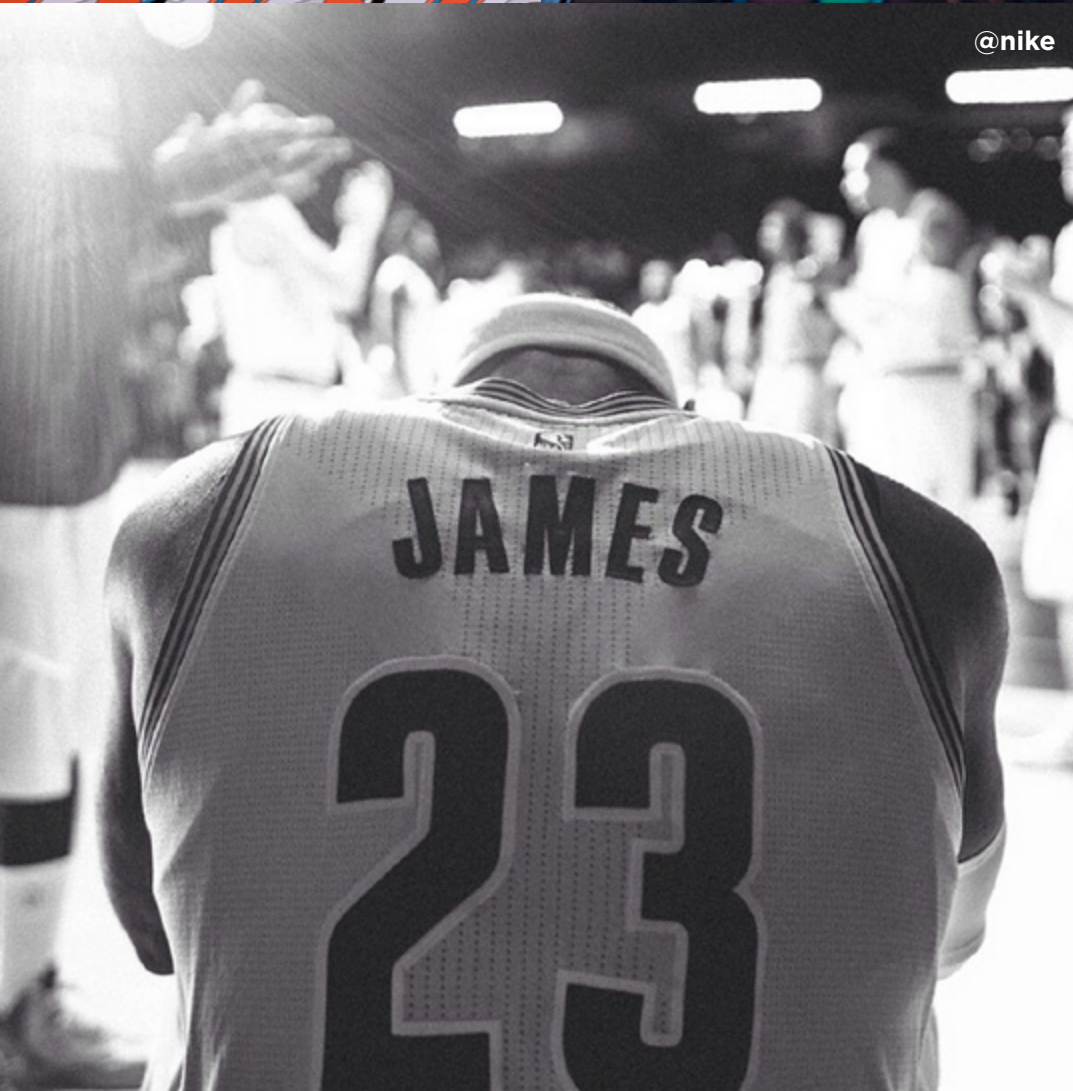


@samsungmobile



@budlight

@nike



THE BROGRAMMER

Illustrate how hard work pays off.

“Work hard, play hard.”

That about sums up the “Brogrammer.” Like “Boss Babes,” they are incredibly career-focused, but what sets them apart is how they unwind after hours. “Brogrammers” are avid sports fans who are always down for a beer. Though Exponential describes this persona as a male working at a tech startup, the characteristics apply to young men in a variety of fields, including finance and law. They tend to idolize people who play by their own rules, but remain wildly successful, like Kanye West, LeBron James and Mark Cuban.

Images of the latest gadgets, experiential activities (e.g. music festivals) and high-profile athletes will entice them.

@pabstblueribbon



@warbyparker



@americanapparelusa

THE NOSTALGIC

Give off vintage vibes.

Better known as “hipsters,” the “Nostalgic” persona is comprised of young people who think fondly of blue-collar traditions and times of the past, despite never having experienced them. One of the most notable characteristics of “Nostalgics” is that they truly pride themselves on being unique.

Images with an antiquated feel featuring quirky, difficult-to-obtain items and one-of-a-kind clothing will speak to this group. “Nostalgics” are more inclined to shop at independent retailers and vintage shops than other groups.

THE UNDEREMPLOYED

Celebrate the struggle.

The reality is that Generation Y has been dealt a rough card. Underemployment and unemployment has plagued the generation, regardless of degree attainment. Well into their 20s and 30s, many still face difficulties getting their feet on the ground.

Urban locations are brimming with young hopefuls who can barely afford rent, all while living four to six in a tiny apartment in an “up-and-coming” area. This is the life of the “Underemployed.”

“Underemployed” can relate to the situations faced by characters on Comedy Central shows like “Workaholics” and “Broad City” as well as HBO’s “Girls.” Marketers should keep in mind that, although this group is on the hunt for financial stability, they still treat themselves any way they can. They are not ashamed to coupon, and in fact, feel a huge sense of pride when they score a major deal.

Images depicting city life, motivational quotes and bargains will get their attention.





@comedycentral



@oldspice



@budlight

THE SHUT OUT

Provide comedic relief.

As established with the “Boss Babe” persona, millennial men are often considered the stragglers of Generation Y. They’re less likely to enroll in college and more likely to live at home with their parents. In fact, 17.7% of men between the ages of 25 and 34 live with their parents compared with 11.7% of women the same age, according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

The “Shut Out” tends to be a male with an impractical degree or no higher-level education at all. He likely lives at home, and has low earning potential.

Marketers, however, shouldn’t underestimate their influence. The young people of today are significantly more likely to see their parents as friends – and play a role in their purchase decisions.

So, how to reach them? Make them laugh. Some 88% of millennial men reported in a 2012 Comedy Central survey that comedy is crucial to their self-definition. Images that cater to their type of humor will win them over.

Tap into wanderlust.

The “World Traveler” is that one friend who always seems to be living it up in a different city – enjoying street food in Thailand, walking along the beach in Brazil or backpacking in Europe. These young adventurers tend to be underemployed – or not employed at all, so they’re traveling with little more than a dream and a backpack. They’re reliant on hostels, Airbnb and lots of luck.

These travelers are keen to experience different cities as the locals do, so they'll respond to images that fuel that desire.



@girleatsworld



@airbnb



@lonelyplanet



@momolongplay



@dominiqueansel



@ramenconyc

THE CULINARY EXPLORER

Depict food as an adventure.

"Culinary Explorers" are adventurers, too, but they're more inclined to roam in their own backyard. These foodies are on a constant mission to find the best artisanal meal in town. To them, food isn't just food; it's an experience.

They'll respond well to images of their favorite chefs in action, exquisitely plated meals and behind-the-scenes peeks of notable restaurants.

@hyatt

@louisvuitton

THE EXUBERANT

Exhibit out-of-this-world, novel experiences.

Social savvy content creators, “Exuberants” are constantly seeking to show off just how awesome their lives are. To this group, perception is everything, and they place a lot of weight on how many “likes” and comments their pictures receive.

The aim of the “Exuberant” is to be the first among their friends to own and experience the next cool thing. They can be found on Instagram, unboxing their Apple Watch before anyone else gets their hands on one. Photos exhibiting unique activities, luxurious items and mind-blowing meals will win them over.



@fourseasons



@urbanoutfitters

@betches



THE COLLECTOR

Reveal behind-the-scenes secrets.

Millennials who fall into the “Collector” subset do just that – they collect the experiences of other people. The polar opposite of “Exuberants,” these consumers often lack the means to create adventures of their own, so they live vicariously through their peers.

Collectors will respond well to behind-the-scenes peeks into the lives of celebrities, pop culture references and relaxing locations that speak to their introverted nature.



@nastygal

@laurenconrad



@julepmaven



@allrecipes



THE MILLENNIAL MARTHA

Dare to DIY.

The “Millennial Martha” is the everyday Martha Stewart of this generation. Typically female, she is a content creator whose knack for handy projects has landed her among social’s elite.

They’re always on the hunt for inspiration for their next project, so images of DIY crafts, makeup tutorials and yummy treats are likely to catch their eye. Once they complete their latest masterpiece, they are often happy to share to social media. Marketers who motivate these creators to tag their brand are sure to further their reach.

Former-reality-star-turned-media-maven Lauren Conrad is the prime example of a famous “Millennial Martha.” Her personal Instagram feed is chock full of photos featuring her knitting projects, handmade flower crowns and DIY jewelry holders. Her images are consistent. They all have a light, floral, dreamy look to them. It leaves her 3.9MM followers wishing they could lead lives similar to hers. Conrad’s fondness for DIY projects is the basis for her editorial destination, LaurenConrad.com. The imagery on the site mirrors Conrad’s personal Instagram feed, inspiring her fans to channel their inner-“Millennial Martha” even further.

THE MILLENNIAL MOM

Present family values.

Something interesting happens once a millennial woman becomes a mother: Her identity shifts quite a bit. Her social feed unapologetically becomes inundated with baby-related content.

A common misconception is that these women are all frantically trying to balance their life at home with their professional duties. Not so. Only 30% of moms born between 1978 and 1994 are employed full time, while 35% identify as homemakers.⁶

The important thing for marketers to remember is that, despite the fact that these mothers are constantly sharing images and content about children, they have not lost their identity as women. They're still spending on beauty, hair products and fashionable outfits. According to a study from Exponential Interactive, millennial moms significantly overindex in researching eye makeup and lipstick.

Also important to note – not all moms have a life partner, while many fathers are increasingly taking on non-traditional roles. Brands that exclude dads and single mothers will miss out on two highly influential demographics.

@kiehls

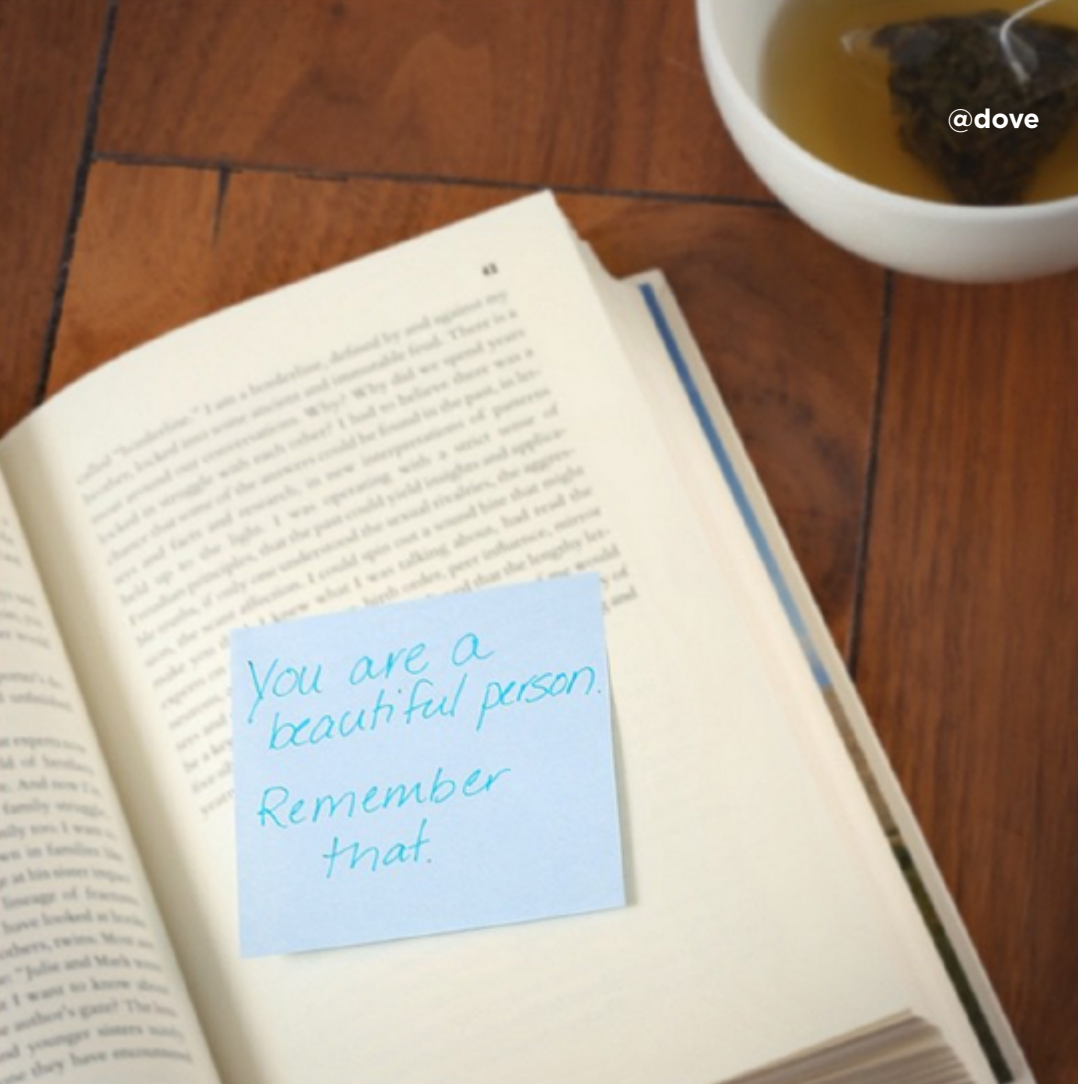


@targetstyle



@nordstrom

⁶ [Webber Shandwick](#), 2013



@dove

You are a
beautiful person.
Remember
that.

THE QUARTER-LIFE CRISIS

Acknowledge just how weird navigating adulthood can be.

After scrolling through any social feed, it's easy to fall under the impression that everyone else is moving forward and doing amazing things while you remain stagnant. "Fakebooking" fuels the plight of the "Quarter-Life Crisis" millennial. This persona is more inclined to be a young woman, still in the process of figuring out what she wants out of life.

She seeks motivational quotes and relates to self-deprecating humor. Sites like "HelloGiggles" really cater to this persona with articles about handling rejection, how to handle going to a wedding solo, and how to navigate getting your career off the ground. The images on their Instagram feed reflect the type of articles they post. On it, followers can expect to find cat-lady jokes galore as well as motivational quotes inspiring young women to "focus on what matters."

@hellogiggles



Pretty excited about my Valentine's Day plans:

1) Petting my cat.

@vspink



THE ACTIVIST

Show support for meaningful causes.

Generation Y is the most racially diverse group of young adults in the history of the U.S. and the most inclusive (approximately three-fourths support same-sex marriage, more than any other generation). Easy access to a multitude of digital channels has allowed them to easily share their life experiences with one another, making them highly aware of social, political and economic inequality issues.

"The Activist" is highly present on social networks to spread the word about causes they care about. Tumblr and Twitter, in particular, have emerged as quintessential communities for young people to rally behind issues, as evidenced by the #BlackLivesMatter and #YesAllWomen conversations that began trending in 2014. These millennials respond really well to cause marketing, so images that feature a brand's support of social issues will go a long way.





THE HIGH-END MINIMALIST

Get into the specifics.

Typically male, “High-End Minimalists” have strong purchasing power, but are careful about how they spend. Their motto is “quality over quantity,” preferring to shell out extra for durable items rather than own a variety of different things. These consumers love tech, traveling abroad (often alone, if they are single) and staying out of debt.

But here’s the catch – marketers probably won’t convert these guys on visual platforms. It’s likely they don’t even have Instagram accounts, and probably haven’t logged into Facebook in ages. Where they can be found is on text-dominant platforms such as Twitter and Reddit. Marketers should still keep them in mind from a visual standpoint, however, because once something piques the “High-End Minimalist’s” interest, he’ll do extensive research on it.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE— 5 SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES

So, there you have it. The ideal way to engage millennial consumers is to share relevant images that speak to their present and future experiences. The more relatable the images are, the likelier these consumers are to feel connected to your brand.

We've established how brands can engage different groups of millennials, but as mentioned earlier, Gen Y consumers can be just as effective as the world's top marketers when it comes to influencing other shoppers. In fact, some 68% of U.S. social media users between the ages of 18 and 34 report that they are at least somewhat likely to make a purchase based on a friend's social media post, compared to 53% of Gen Xers, and even fewer Boomers.⁷

Whether developing content in-house, curating it from customers, or employing a combination of the two, here are five proven ways to monetize your visual marketing strategy and prove the ROI of images:

1. Make it Easy to Shop
2. Feature UGC on Your Site
3. Turn Content Into Commerce
4. Contests and Campaigns
5. Tap Influencers

⁷ [The Webby Awards](#), 2014

1 Make it Easy to Shop

For millennials, Instagram has quickly become one of the most important social channels, influencing not only what they “like” but also what they buy. Fortunately for brands, there are now multiple ways to drive consumers from Instagram to products.

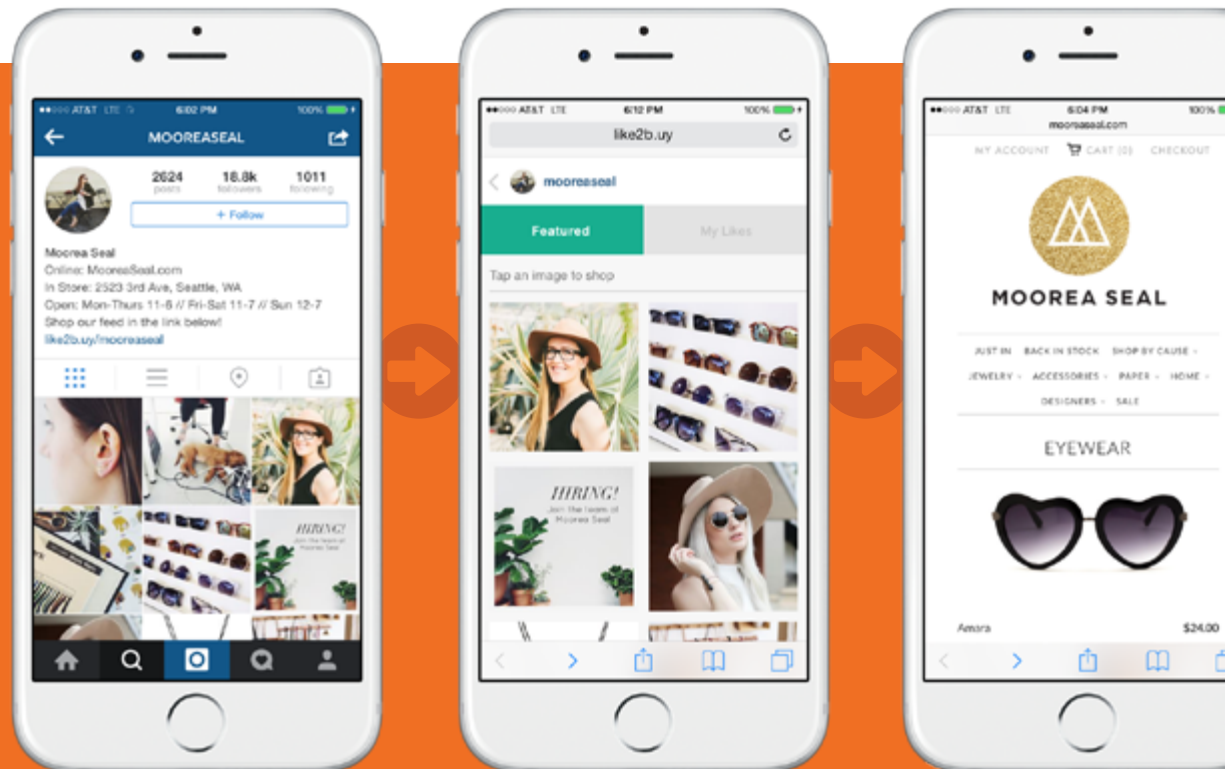
Tools like Curalate’s Like2Buy solution, for example, enable brands to turn their Instagram feeds into shoppable galleries. In just two taps, fans can go from admiring a photo on Instagram to the ecommerce page of the product featured. It also supplies brands with comprehensive insights on the types of images that drive the most traffic and revenue.

SUCCESS STORY MOOREA SEAL

Despite having a relatively modest Instagram audience compared with larger retailers, Moorea Seal knows exactly how to deliver relevant images to her demographic, as well as how to extract the platform’s full potential.

With Curalate’s Like2Buy solution, Moorea Seal is able to give customers an easy way to buy their favorite products. Instagram (via Like2Buy) is now the 5th highest traffic referral source to mooreaseal.com and the 3rd highest revenue driver.

[LEARN MORE](#)



2 Feature UGC on Your Site

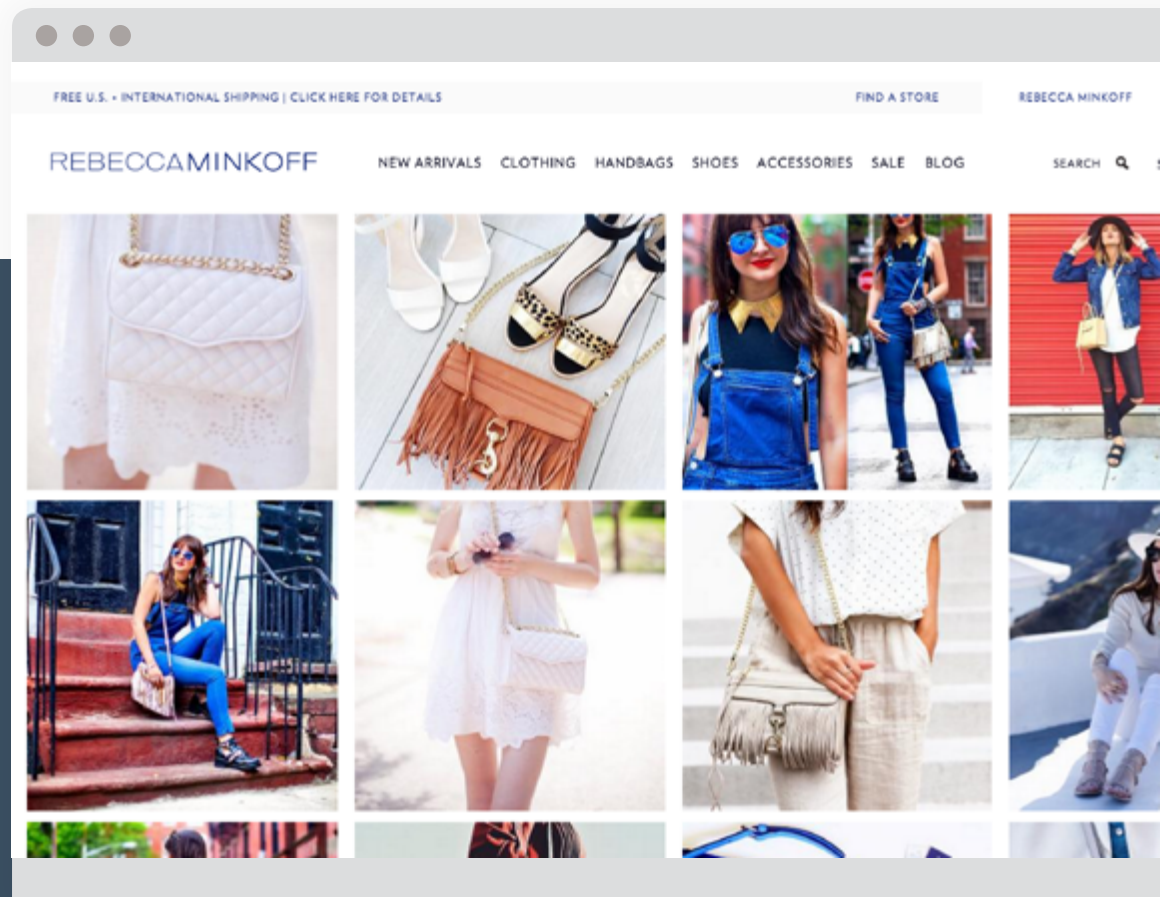
Fans love to be recognized by their favorite brands, and there's no better place to do this than on your website. By showcasing your fans' images within a dedicated online gallery, you can give customers the social recognition they both desire and deserve (think of it as a virtual "high five"). These images can live in a number of places, including your homepage, product pages, microsites and so on. By adding a "Shop It" button to fans' photos, you can turn UGC into a powerful vehicle for sales, creating a new road to revenue.

SUCCESS STORY

REBECCA MINKOFF

Rebecca Minkoff's dedicated fans regularly take to social media to share photos of their latest luxury finds. To harness these images, Rebecca Minkoff uses Curalate's Fanreel solution to capture the best fan photos and display them on-site. Not only are these user images engaging, but they're shoppable, too. Their use of Fanreel led to a significant boost in engagement across the Rebecca Minkoff site, including a 20% click-through rate and an 11% increase in time-on-site.

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3 Turn Content Into Commerce

The actions your fans take on Pinterest, Tumblr and Instagram tell the story of what matters to your customers. Pay attention to these visual engagements; surface popular images and trends; and use these social signals to produce more effective creative—and products—across your brand.

Brands that use socially proven imagery to optimize their marketing initiatives frequently see higher engagement with that creative. Take this a step further. If you know certain photos really drive engagement with fans, there's ample opportunity to use that content to inspire new products.

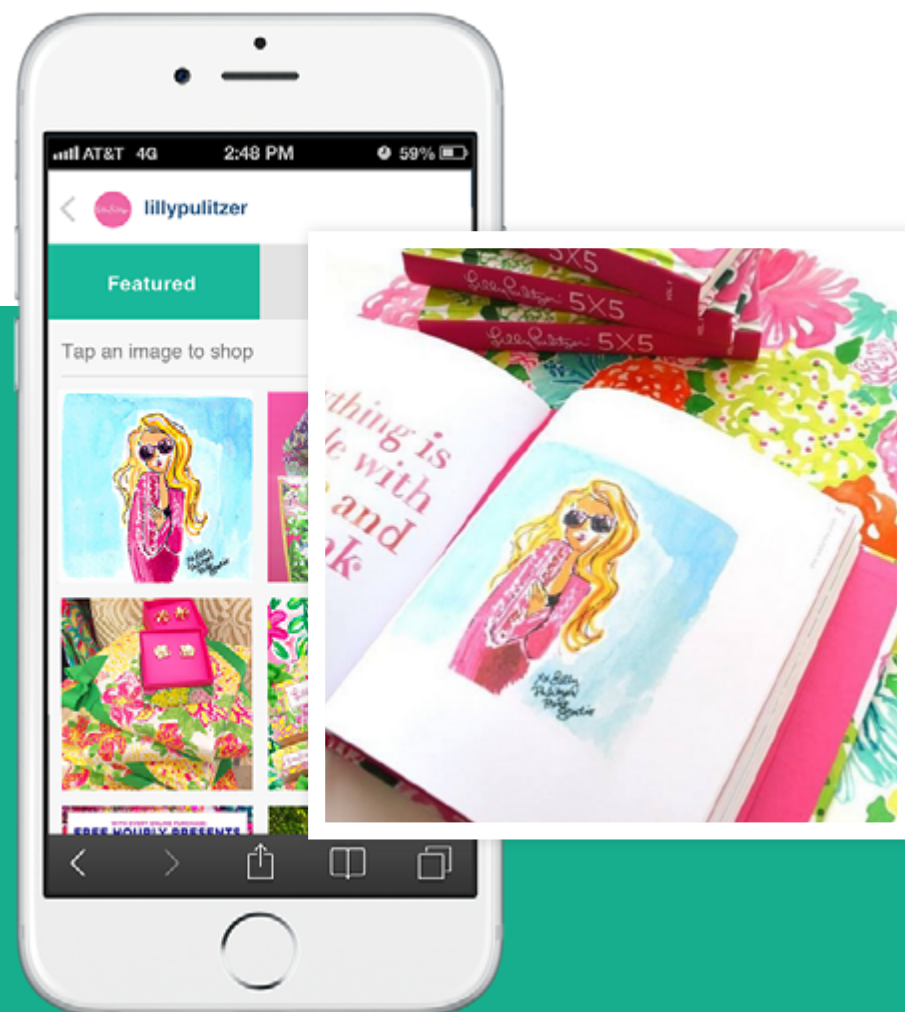
SUCCESS STORY

LILLY PULITZER

Lilly Pulitzer's 5x5 prints—a series of creative paintings inspired by fashion, seasons, brand history and events—are a big hit on Instagram. Since being introduced, photos tagged with #Lilly5x5 have received millions of interactions, amounting to 33% of the brand's total Instagram engagement. The outstanding engagement with these posts inspired the Lilly Pulitzer team to create a beautifully bound Lilly 5x5 book.

A special announcement was made via Instagram on Thanksgiving 2014 to broadcast the book's release. Within 24 hours of the announcement, the brand drove over 400% more traffic from Instagram to their website as compared to their daily average. Lilly Pulitzer's book went on to be a best-seller.

[LEARN MORE](#)



4 Contests and Campaigns

Your fans are already using Instagram to celebrate the products they love. To leverage these behaviors and spark the creation of even more UGC, analyze what types of user photos are already surfacing around your brand, and then launch a campaign that aligns with those actions.

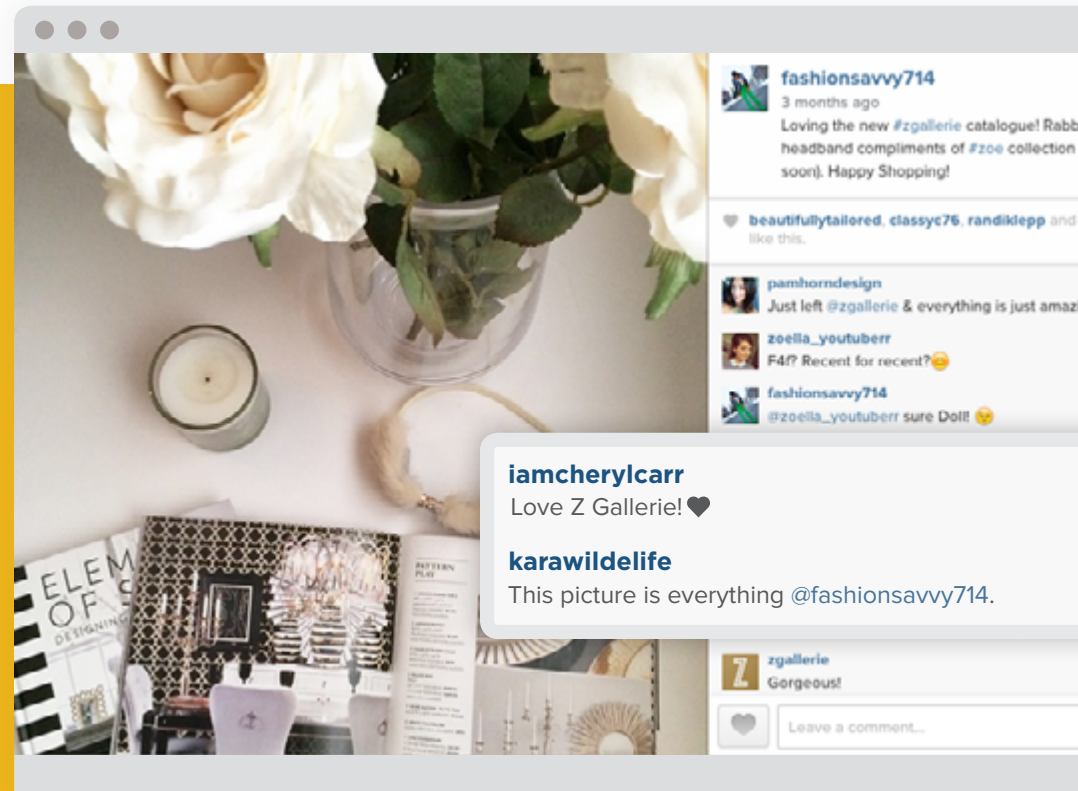
Using a campaign-specific hashtag can be a great way to funnel all of this content into a single, central location. Just be sure to ask for permission if you plan on repurposing any of these images. Rights management is a critical piece of the puzzle – so don't overlook this important detail.

SUCCESS STORY Z GALLERIE

If home furnisher Z Gallerie learned anything from their first print catalog mailing, it's that in-home initiatives can facilitate organic conversation online. Z Gallerie customers who received the print catalog felt compelled to share their own photos on Instagram, styling the catalog atop kitchen counters, coffee tables, nightstands and other locales throughout the home.

To drum up the sharing of UGC, Z Gallerie designed a contest encouraging subscribers to share photos of their catalog on Instagram and to tag them with #PagesOfStyle. In just over two weeks, Z Gallerie delivered a 24% increase in UGC submissions compared to an average week, as well as a 24% increase in catalog subscribers.

LEARN MORE



5 Tap Influencers

Another way to spark interest from consumers is by tapping influencers to share content. From their large, active followings to their awe-inspiring photo feeds, social influencers are especially popular among consumers and, therefore, especially attractive to brands. That their images feel authentic is part of the secret sauce. When an influencer posts an image of a product, they are not only driving awareness; they are also rousing an entire community to submit snapshots of their own.

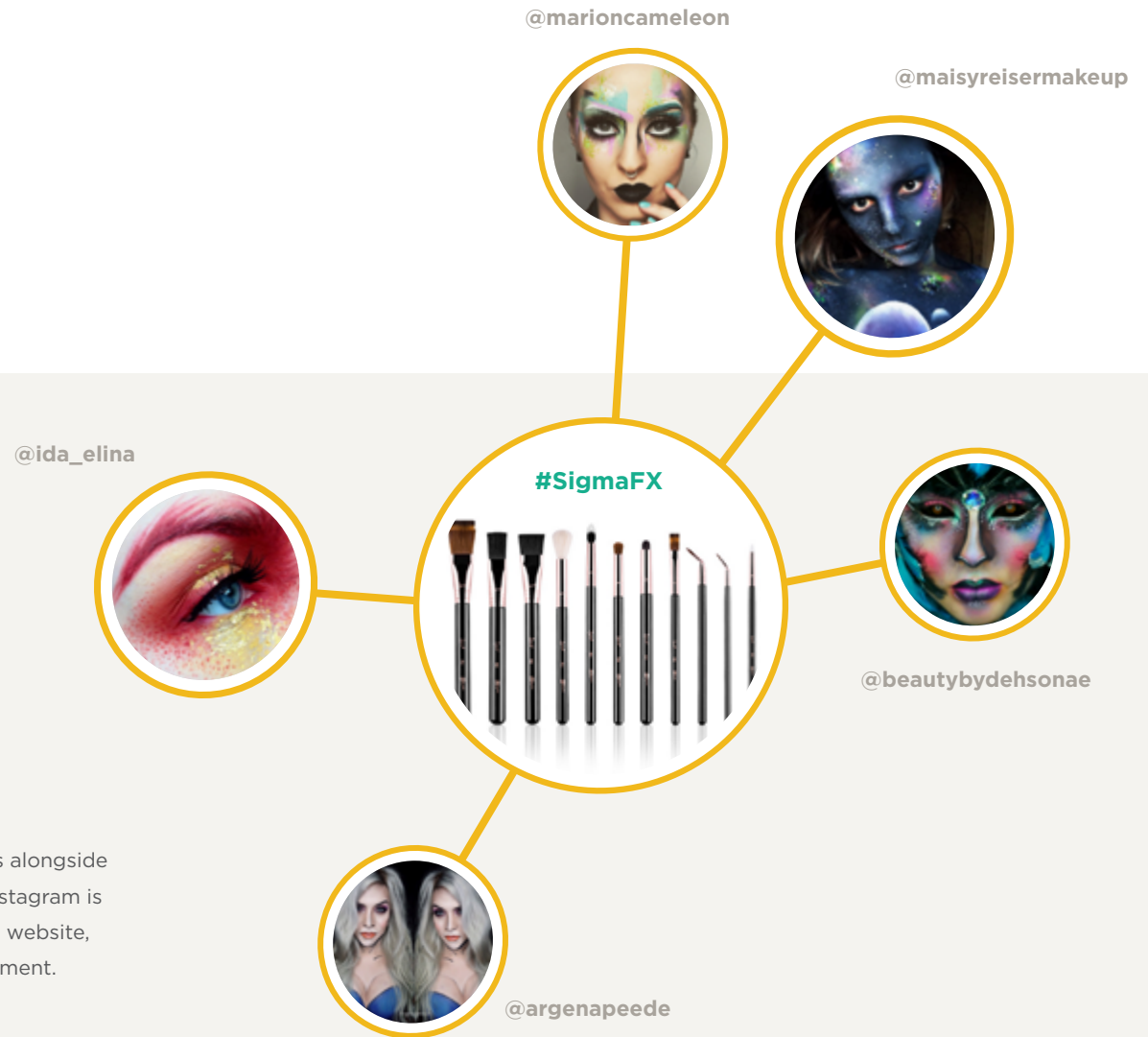
SUCCESS STORY

SIGMA BEAUTY

Sigma Beauty has been relying on user images—via a powerful network of social influencers—for years to get the word out about their beauty products. Inspired by their fellow shoppers, Sigma fans have become voracious photographers, submitting upwards of 16,000 photos per month.

To monetize this content, Sigma features user-generated photos alongside their own branded photos on Instagram and on their website. Instagram is now Sigma Beauty's top social source of referral traffic. On their website, fan photos have contributed to nearly a 4x lift in on-site engagement.

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CONCLUSION

Ultimately, there are countless ways to categorize millennials; most can't be lumped into one subset. However, here's what we know. This is a generation of visual and experiential consumers. If marketers want to stand out in the vast sea of content that exists today, they need to produce material that speaks to Generation Y's current experiences and future ones.

These brands and others are discovering the ROI of tailoring visual content to their target consumers, and making the products within that content easy to buy. With the right data and tools, you can too.



ABOUT CURALATE

Curalate is the leading platform for monetizing imagery. Used by hundreds of the world's most loved brands, Curalate's solutions touch millions of consumers daily across the digital, mobile and social web as well as email and print. See why marketing and ecommerce teams view Curalate as a partner, not just a vendor.

LET'S TALK BIG PICTURE ► [Request a Demo](#)



VISUAL ANALYTICS

Generate insights from images.



LIKE2BUY

Make Instagram shoppable, instantly.



FANREEL

Monetize user-generated content.



SCHEDULING

Advanced social publishing tools.



CONVERSATIONS

Join today's visual conversation.



PROMOTIONS

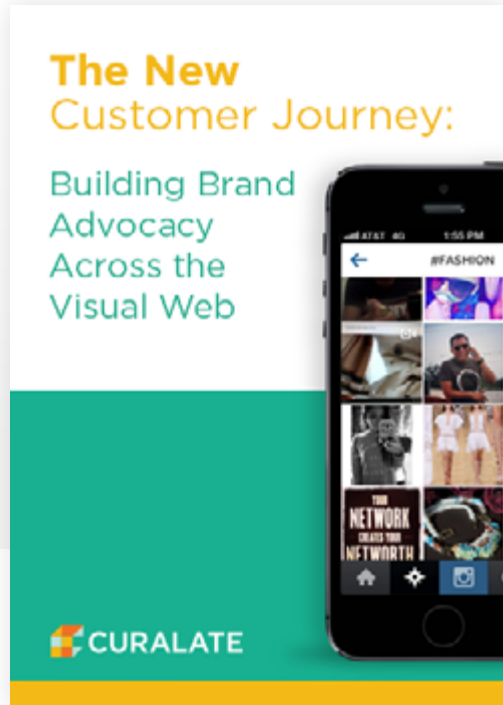
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