



What Millennials Want From The Fashion World

By Giselle Childs @gisellechilds | April 15, 2014 4:30 pm

Millennials are a tricky bunch, a bundle of contradictions. Many millennials can't even be bothered to finish a whole sentence—"I just, I can't."—but they care enough about the environment and sustainability to demand a certain level of transparency from retailers they shop. They're tech savvy to the n-th degree and selectively open with their lives, but resent privacy infringements with a force to rival all the armies of Westeros. ([Facebook privacy settings](#), we're looking at you.) And for those in the fashion business, figuring out exactly what millennials want is the key to maintaining customer loyalty and growth down the line.

Millennial desires were a key topic of conversation last week at the Global Retailing Conference in Arizona [reports Women's Wear Daily](#). Terry Lundgren, chairman and CEO of Macy's, told audience members, "If you are not listening to Millennials, you will totally miss the boat." But what are millennials even saying? (Nothing! They're texting it! Jk. LOL. Sort of.) In all seriousness, capturing and keeping the attention of millennials is going to involve a mix of improved "data, technology and face-to-face interaction."

Using technology to make the customer experience better, faster, and stronger will be a key point in play. This could mean smart, sentient shops; smart clothes (shirts that can talk? [We've seen the dangers of that...](#)); and more in-store mobile shopping. Thanks to increasing technological advances, we're limited only by the ends of our imagination.

But at the same time as millennials look to the future, they're also very much concerned with what's happening on the planet right now, making it very important that fashion designers and companies are transparent about their business practices, write Maxine Bédard and Soraya Darabi in their op-ed "[Watch Out for the Millennials](#)." Millennial shoppers want to know that they're doing good when they purchase items, which is why companies like Everlane, Warby Parker, and TOMS have been so successful in such a short amount of time. Millennials aren't going to quit shopping at Forever 21 and other fast fashion outlets any time soon, but it's important to note that "attitudes are changing."

In any case, it won't matter what millennials want if they don't thrive. Millennials haven't been dealt a very good hand in life' many have graduated into one of the worst recessions in decades, many have [piling amounts of student debt](#), and many suffer [a routine malaise](#) and [dissatisfaction with their current status in life](#).

This bad lot leads many people to believe that millennials are, in fact, doomed, which was the proposition in consideration at last week's Intelligence Squared debate here in New York City, "[***Millennials Don't Stand A Chance***](#)." Four debators participated in the discussion, and the side for the proposition—the side that believed millennial's don't stand a chance—ended up winning the debate. Their reasons? Bad education, narcissism, and among those who are educated—huge competition and not enough jobs. They argued about a fundamental disconnected between expectations and reality, and things *as they stand today* are not working well to fix all of these issues.

The counterargument came from two millennials themselves who extolled the group's virtues of entrepreneurial interest, social activism, technical and digital knowledge, and diversity as skills that make them uniquely suited to tackle the world's problems and position them not only in a position to succeed, but to thrive as well.

Whether you're on the pro or con side is, of course, a personal decision and probably depends on the year you were born, but the debate is definitely worth watching. (You can check out the whole video [here](#) or read the transcript [here](#).) We've got a feeling this conversation will be coming up a lot.

PS: Wondering how millennial you are? [***Take this quiz to find out.***](#)