

# 10 trends in

With ever more technology at their fingertips and changing attitudes to media ownership, Melanie Shreffler of Ypulse looks at how the Millennium generation is embracing and shaping these innovations

We follow youth culture and media trends closely throughout the year at Ypulse, and we're seeing some significant shifts in Millennial attitudes and habits that will have an impact throughout 2012 and beyond. Some of these trends, such as cord-cutting (adoption of wireless communications), have been brewing for years and are just now becoming a reality, while others, such as students owning tablets, are the result of rapid technological innovations.

We expect there will be considerable change among the 'Y' generation (teenagers and young adults) and look forward to seeing how things shake out and evolve in the coming year.

## MUSIC OWNERSHIP IS OLD SCHOOL

**1** Ownership of media will take a big step forward in becoming a thing of the past. Students have rapidly adopted platforms like Pandora and Spotify, making the need to own music, even in digital format, less important. In the six months it has been available in the US, Spotify has made it possible for music fans to get access to artists' complete collections online, on their tablets and on their phones. To Generation Yers, it's no longer a question of whether they can find their favourite music online to listen to at their leisure; they expect to be able to do so. While this trend may water down the value of individual songs or albums, it adds value to live performances, which can't be substituted. Shows also add to the personal connection fans feel with bands that they're forging thanks to bands' activity on social media, making them one of the few forms of music Millennials are still willing to purchase.

## CABLE NETS GET STREAMING

**2** TV networks, particularly those aimed at Millennials, are finally embracing streaming services. In the final months of 2011, we've seen The CW, Disney and ABC Family partner with Netflix, Hulu and Amazon to offer their content to subscribers with little, if any, delay following the show's original airing. The networks realise that Millennials aren't going to subscribe to expensive cable services when they can get their TV online - and on their own schedules - for just a few bucks a month. What can cable companies offer that Millennials will value? Internet access. That's one cord Millennials will never sever.

## SOCIAL TV VIEWING

**3** All this is not to say Millennials won't watch TV anymore. They'll still make an effort to catch their favourite shows when they air, because they know their friends will be talking about them on Facebook and Twitter (even while the show is on). If their busy schedules get in the

way - or if the shows air on a channel they don't have access to - they'll find the shows online rather than be left out of the conversation. Apps that help social viewing, such as MTV's 'Watch With Me' are rapidly growing in popularity because they allow fans to connect with like-minded people on topics they're passionate about.

## WHAT SHOPPING TOOLS WORK?

**4** With half the population empowered with smartphones, marketers have tried every means possible to assist and persuade consumers making purchases. From QR codes and augmented reality apps, to Facebook pages and text alerts, 2011 saw it all. During 2012, we'll learn what actually works. According to Ypulse's recent research, new media isn't breaking through the clutter. Even tech-savvy Millennials can be stymied by slick QR codes and would rather just see a straightforward marketing message. That doesn't mean marketing via new media is destined to fail; rather, marketers simply need to learn how to use each medium more effectively. For example, social media is about connecting, and students are turned off by brands that use Facebook or Twitter as a marketing megaphone. Engaging them in conversation around what matters to them will get a more positive response.

## BRANDED = BAD

**5** Young shoppers are no longer interested in brands that put their logos on every product they make (think Abercrombie & Fitch, Juicy Couture, and Aeropostale). They're turning to more generic-looking items. They still want quality clothing, but after several years of economic recession, they don't want to broadcast the brands they wear. As a result, stores like Uniqlo that offer well-made, stylish basics are filling that need. In fact, students - both boys and girls - most commonly describe their sense of style as simple and basic. They would rather fit in than be trendsetters or brand billboards.

# Generation Y

## STUDENTS TOTING TABLETS

**6** Most students won't have an iPad, though they aspire to own one. The price tag is too high, and few have received one as a hand-me-down from their parents when they upgrade their devices. Instead, they'll be the proud owners of a Kindle Fire or Nook Tablet, which offer much of the same functionality (particularly when hacked by tech-sawy Millennials) while fitting into parents' and students' budgets. We expect many students have unwrapped these hybrid tablet/readers as gifts during the holidays, significantly increasing the number of Android platform users. They may be unhappy at first that they aren't the owners of an iPad, but that feeling will likely fade as they get to know their tablets.

## TECHNOLOGY EXTENSIONS

**7** As touch-screen technology becomes ubiquitous, traditional brands are finding ways to use these devices to their advantage. For example, Disney worked with Apple to design toys for its *Cars* franchise that interact with an app on the iPad; Duo has a few products that turn the iPad into board games; and Atari has a plug-in that turns the device into an old-school arcade. Millennials are using mobile devices to help their lives, from keeping track of their health to finding entertainment to supporting learning. There are many opportunities for tech and non-tech brands alike to make the most of this trend.

## TWITTER TAKES OVER

**8** While Facebook is still the leader in social media, young people are increasingly using Twitter as a sort of social media filter. Millennials have been on Facebook for the majority of their young lives, friending just about everyone, from acquaintances to parents to brands. They don't want to unfriend anyone (that's not nice), so they're turning to Twitter as a means to follow just the people and brands they actually care to hear from on a regular basis. Although the Twitter network is more



open, it feels more private because they've managed their connections better than they did on Facebook. While this trend is starting small, it will gain steam as more Gen Yers join the network to be where their closest friends are. Twitter won't replace Facebook, but young people will spend more time with it because it fills a particular niche.

## NOSTALGIA RETURNS

**9** Millennials may seem too young to already long for a simpler era, but they do. As they graduate from high school and college and try to make their way in the world, they're facing tough times. They're returning from university to live with their parents to save money (even when they've found a job). That's also allowing them to return to their childhood years for comfort. They watch cartoons, play video games, and listen to old albums that take them back to a time when everything was possible, gaining the courage to go back out into the 'real world' and forge their own path. Nostalgic media and brands can reap the rewards of this trend.

## HOME MULTIMEDIA HUBS

**10** Now that we're fully in the era of digital media, Millennials are embracing multimedia hubs, singular devices that connect them to their music, TV shows, movies, games and more. The early adopters of this trend embraced Roku and Boxee boxes plugged in to their TV sets, but now Microsoft's recently upgraded Xbox Live platform and Apple's future iTV are both meant to serve as home media hubs. They're perfectly engineered for stream-happy Millennials, with built-in apps to manage their Hulu, Netflix and iTunes accounts, while also allowing them to rent shows and movies that aren't on their subscription platforms. Perhaps more appealing, is the seamless integration of social media that enables simultaneous viewing and game play. And there's voice control operation that pushes these devices into the realm of super-cool.

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Generation Y at  
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