



TRANSFORMING LIVES
THROUGH *the* ARTS

BRAVE NEW AUDIENCE

A Guide to Reshaping
Our Perspective On
the Millennial Target

 [themarketingarm](http://themarketingarm.com)



FOREWORD

Almost every arts organization, both in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area and across the country, is struggling with growing its audience and getting new individuals to attend its performances. What's equally challenging is managing to retain these highly sought-after individuals after capturing their attention at a single arts event experience.

Over the last few years, there has been significant noise in the arts space about the attitudes and behaviors of an emerging population segment called millennials. Because millennials will make up 75% of the workforce in 2025, it's no surprise they're making their way into a prominent position on the radar of arts organizations near and far.¹

On behalf of the organizations that TACA supports, we reached out to The Marketing Arm, a locally headquartered, global promotions agency, to garner insight and direction on the attitudes and behaviors of millennials as they relate to arts experiences and how they interact with arts organizations.

The Marketing Arm is known for being deeply grounded in developing data-driven solutions — which is of prime importance in this circumstance, given the amount of misinformation there is about millennials.

The Marketing Arm has studied secondary research, conducted a small local research study, and gathered their collective thoughts on the issues facing our industry in hopes of providing local arts organizations with key insights and recommendations about millennials so that each of us can attract them to our respective brands and keep them coming back for more.

We know that you will find this information invaluable. We hope that it provides you new creative advertising tools and challenges you to approach this important market segment in a more strategic and effective way.

We'd like to extend our thanks to The Marketing Arm for their leadership and their passion for the arts in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area.

Wolford McCue

Carlson President
& Executive Director TACA

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As our friend Wolford mentioned... everywhere, arts communities are struggling to rise above the fray in an age when social media, streaming content, and a litany of appetizing distractions are king.

There is a concern for putting butts in seats today, but in the long term, where will the companies that thrive now find the loyal donors to help keep vibrancy and quality in our arts community down the road?

This guide aims to inspire fresh thinking and alter your perception of the way millennials think, who they are, and how they behave differently from the generations that precede them.

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It's like the State of the Union but without all the press coverage.

THE STATE OF ARTS

Unfortunately, there's no clear-cut answer for where the arts stand with millennials, but we do know this:

According to the 2015 National Endowment for the Arts' Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA), since 2002, adult attendance rates have declined for a core set of arts activities: jazz, classical music, opera, musical/ non-musical plays, ballet, and visits to an art museum or gallery.²

It's sad but true. Conversely, the popularity of other forms of entertainment masquerading as art and culture is on the rise.

Whether it's an artist streaming on YouTube, branded art museums, or a workout at the Met (yes, Met workouts), it's getting harder and harder to define what constitutes "art" these days.

And to complicate matters further, the line between art and the normal stuff people do is starting to blur.

For example...

59% ≡

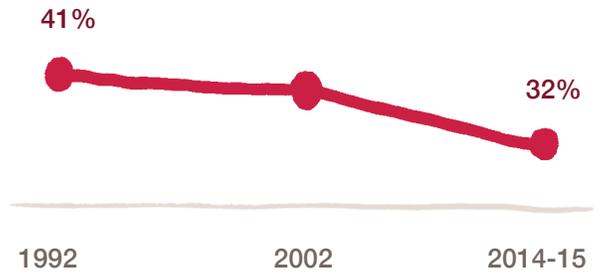
of millennials consider a community festival or a street fair a cultural activity.³

51% ≡

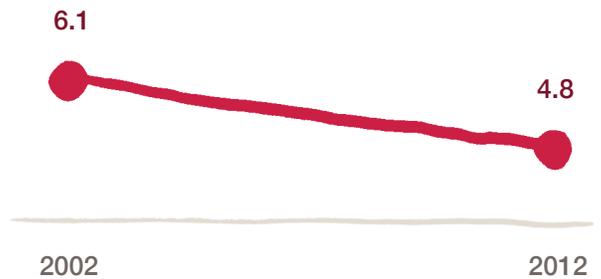
of millennials consider food and drink experiences a cultural activity.³

ATTENDANCE IS DECLINING.

Attended live music, theater and dance events



Events attended per year



So while we may be considering our competition to be another theater or dance group, in actuality, these activities are also vying for our consumers' time as well. This means we have to consider every strategic choice we make through this new lens.

As LaPlaca Cohen's Culture Track '17 eloquently puts it:

"Audiences do not place priority on whether an activity is 'culture' or not. Now, culture can be anything from Caravaggio to Coachella, Tännhauser to taco trucks."³

Who are these people?

IT'S DEMO TIME

Now that we've set the stage, let's talk millennials and set the record straight.

Who really are they?

Most studies differ when it comes to defining the age boundaries for this group.

For our purposes, we'll refer to them as roughly:

23-40

years old making them born somewhere between

1978 →
1995 ←
...ish.⁴

There are a lot of them!

77.7
million

millennials, in fact.⁴



So while you may have heard that millennials are avoiding certain milestones like getting married and buying homes altogether, in actuality, they're not avoiding these milestones, they're simply delaying them in order to prioritize the many other splendors that life has to offer.

44%

of millennial adults are people of color.⁴

They're more likely to be educated. But they're also more likely to have significant student loan debt — an average of

\$37,000

(for a 2016 grad).⁵

49%

of millennial adults are married.⁶

OVER
50%

of millennial adults are parents.⁷

They're more than just numbers!

PSYCHOGRAPHICS

Now that we've covered the basics, let's dig a little deeper and talk about who they are and not just how they tally up.

When asked what values best describe themselves, these are the five that differentiated them most from other generations.⁶

RELAXATION
ADVENTURE

Think about these in context. they're beginning to work their way up the corporate ladder, seeking purpose and expertise, but also maintaining their token millennial values of discovery and adventure. But now that might be with a family or a spouse in tow. So yes, they might need a break every once in a while!

EXPERTISE
DISCOVERY
PURPOSE

Here are some other key points to dimensionalize these guys and gals:

DIGITALLY SAVVY

73% 

aged 18-29 say that they check their smartphone a few times an hour, if not more (every few minutes)⁸

EXPERIENCES > THINGS

78% 

would choose to spend money on a desirable experience or event over buying something desirable⁹

POLITICALLY & SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS

50% 

of millennials would be willing to make a purchase from a company if their purchase supports a cause¹⁰

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

57% 

say that work-life balance and well-being in a job are "very important" to them¹¹

When else do people go to brunch?

LIVING 4 THE WKND

On a typical weekend...¹²

93%

Go Out to Dinner

81%

Stream Media

(Like Netflix)

72%

Go See a Movie

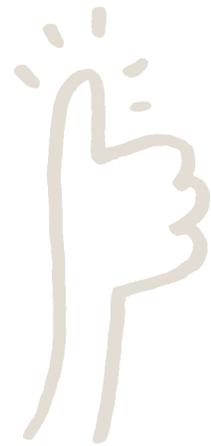
(At the theater)

65%

Grab a Drink at a Bar

61%

Attend a Food or Drink Festival/ Experience



How do we know this? Well, we interviewed a sample of Dallas millennials in order to understand what's competing for their time here in the area.

Most important, though, through this survey we found that our local millennial contingency doesn't plan ahead for most of these activities — they're making these decisions at the last minute.

Our research also revealed that, if and when Dallas millennials attend an arts event, they're likely to go to the theatre above all other options, with ballet coming in at a close second.

On the less frequent chance that they plan their weekend activities in advance and decide

to snag a ticket to an arts event, they usually do so two weeks beforehand.¹²

Regardless of the activity, when deciding what to do on the weekend, millennials turn to social media and their peers to learn about what's available to them and to formulate their plan of attack.

Finally, other research also shows that they're usually going around once a year, but

70%

who recently attended a performing or visual arts event expressed they'd like to do so more often.¹³

Which is good news for us!

Who? What? When? Where? Why?

AGE VS. STAGE

When you take a step back to realize that a millennial could be anyone from a student moving into their first apartment to two soon-to-be parents setting up their nursery, it's easy to see how one generalized approach for these vastly different individuals could fall flat and leave you with a lot of empty seats.

Although we sometimes focus on capturing everyone's attention by painting (ahem, marketing) in broad strokes, we're not going to examine our millennial generation this way.

The time to stop marketing to a demographic defined by age and start marketing to unique life stages is officially upon us. If you can learn to cater your strategies and messaging to individuals, considering this life stage lens, we believe you'll find countless opportunities with this ever-so-elusive target.

This is reflected in an NEA study that said, more than age alone, life stages such as

THE PURSUIT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

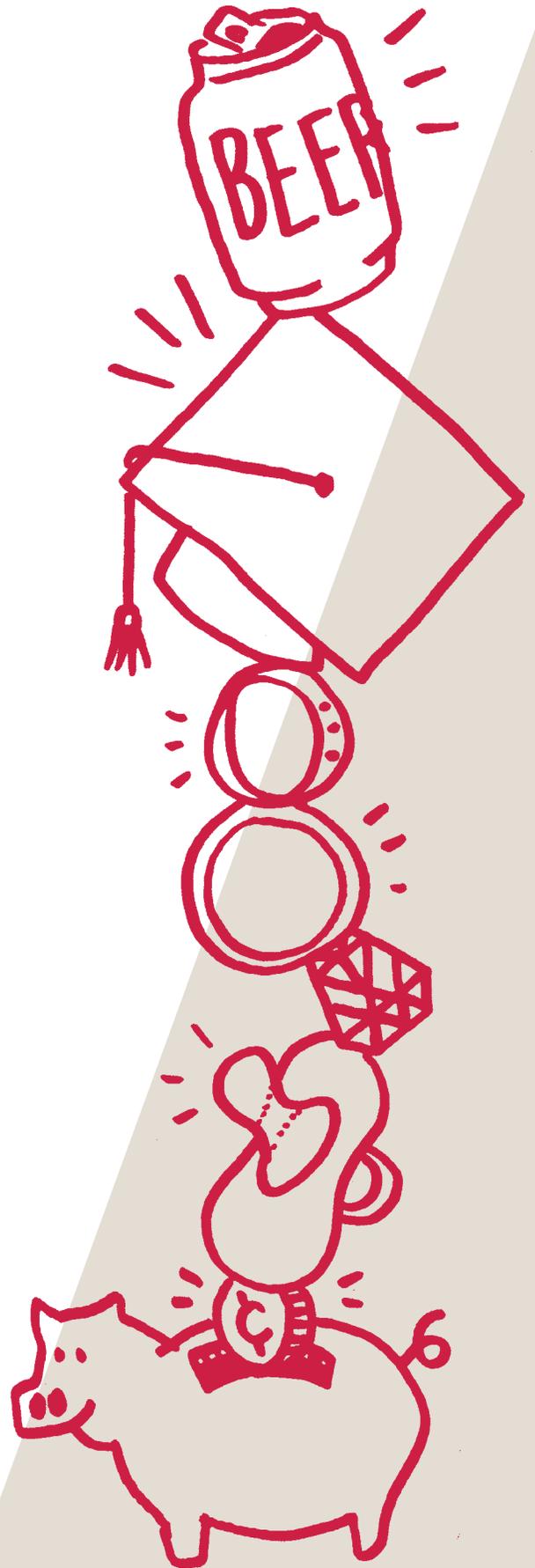
MARRIAGE

CHILD-REARING

& RETIREMENT

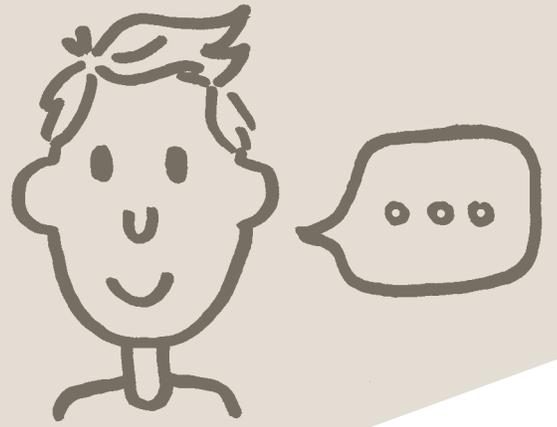
tend to be predictive of people's decisions to attend and their motives for doing so.¹⁴

So pick up a smaller brush, and let's get down to business!



MOTIVATORS

Those millennials who do opt in to arts experiences shared sentiments about seeking inspiration or escape or feeling connected to the arts through childhood experiences that involved the arts in one way or another. From the mouths of Dallas millennials, here's what they had to say about their reasoning for attending the arts:¹²



These inclinations were echoed in an Eventbrite survey, in which those polled said:¹³

“To do something different, be exposed to something new, as well as be a part of the culture.”

“To expand horizons and learn from new experiences.”

“The arts is an escape from my day-to-day life.”

“To do something different.”

“I feel inspired. It also makes a memory with who I go with.”

“Gives me a chance to socialize with friends.”

“Something different to do but fun.”



We can't all be perfect.

DETERRENENTS

In our primary research, the most prevalent piece of data we stumbled upon in regards to why millennials didn't attend arts events was that they simply didn't want to.¹²

Rude, right?

The second-biggest reason was that they didn't have anyone to go with, and tying for third was a lack of funds and/or a lack of time.

We thought it best not to inundate you with a ton of facts about the barriers between your programming and millennial audiences because all of our research leads us to believe that we've already revealed the root of the problem to you.

Remember all that talk of life stages? How a target between the ages of 23 and 40 could encompass a huge swath of individuals leading completely different lives?

Yeah. We weren't making that stuff up.

Instead of thinking about the barriers that research reveals, consider the barriers that differing life stages can show us.

"Parents with young children overwhelmingly cited lack of time as their most important reason for choosing not to attend exhibits or performances in which they had interest."¹⁴

In the same study, they give an example of a different life stage.

"Young adults age 18 to 34 who have no cohabitant partner, spouse, or children living at home attend the arts in order to socialize with friends and family; experiencing high-quality art is of relatively less importance to these individuals."¹⁴

A QUICK
NOTE:



Before we leave these motivations and deterrents pages behind, we'd be remiss not to mention that once you do start to think about intersectionality, these motivations and deterrents start to change. For example, African Americans most often cite that the reason they go to arts events is to support the community, while they don't go because the events are hard to get to and they don't have anyone to go with.¹⁴

For the sake of this guidebook, we focused on millennials overall, but depending on your organization, many of the resources in the back of the guide can help you dig into whatever makes your organization different!

She's about to become your new best friend.

MEET RACHAEL

Drumroll, please.

Based on our research, and a series of what are admittedly huge, sweeping generalizations, we've arrived at the conclusion that the fish you're hoping to reel in is:

Female
**College
Educated**
**Gainfully
Employed**
**Has Arts
Exposure**



She is definitely inclined to attend the arts more frequently and has made it a point of doing so at least once a year.

Many credible resources, the NEA included, echo our thoughts. They've found that:¹⁴

The arts-inclined target is highly likely to listen to the viewpoints of others, sees value in differing opinions, and embraces diversity.

They're very loyal to their friends and family.

They're always down to try new things.

They seek adventure, and they don't back down from an exciting challenge.

They like to be creative.



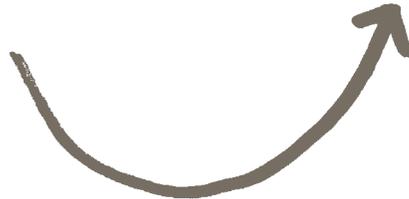
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

So, what now? Right?

First, we should reiterate that research is simply that: research. Every marketing plan for every show for every season will vary in terms of efficacy based on things beyond your control. The political climate, the time of year, your proximity to a bar... it all plays a factor.

That being said, we think the first thing you should do is conduct some of your own research, specific to your own companies. Ever heard of SWOT analysis? Sounds like something from *CSI: Dallas*, right?

Let us elaborate.



A SWOT analysis is a fantastic way to audit your company's image and messaging, particularly regarding the target in question.

Usually, it reveals something along the lines of:

STRENGTHS

Ex: Our organization offers "tweet seats"

WEAKNESSES

Ex: Our organization's ticket prices are expensive

OPPORTUNITIES

Ex: We could hire someone to increase our social media presence

THREATS

Ex: There are a lot of arts organizations (and a lot of outside activities) that are competing for their time

Second, now that you've got a handle on your organization overall, use these questions as things to consider every time you're targeting millennials – whether it's with a campaign, program, or tactic.

1. **What are all the demographics that make up who they are? Age, gender, job, relationship status, hobbies/interests, etc.**
2. **Does your audience already attend these events regularly? If not, will they want to attend at all?**
3. **What is their perception of the arts?**
4. **What journey will they go through before and after your event? How will they be arriving? Will they eat before they arrive? Will their night be ending or just beginning?**
5. **What tone do you want your messaging to take?**
6. **Will they be traveling alone? With friends? With a significant other?**

TACTICS TO CONSIDER

USE SOCIAL MEDIA!!

Post regularly, and create Facebook events.

Leverage influencers

Don't know what those are? Google it. Sorry, but this book is getting long.

Get on popular email newsletters and calendars

Dallas Observer, Culture Map, Central Track, Dallasites 101, etc.

Pay for targeted social media ads

It's worth the money — TRUST US.

Embrace the fact that you can't reach everyone.

Some people just suck and don't want to go. Ew, them. Because of this, you should either work on targeting people that are already interested in the arts, like we suggested, or find more unique ways (pyrotechnics, maybe?) to expose them to the arts.



Use food and drink experiences to your advantage

These are a popular weekend event for millennials. Guess all that financial hardship works up an appetite.

Invest in the future

Like we said, over 50% of millennials are parents. Find ways to aid them in exposing their children to the arts, or consider going to schools and giving them on-site performances or the occasional free ticket.

Finally, there are countless numbers of case studies out there that detail the best practices and strategies that worked for their respective organizations. Take some time to read through those, and familiarize yourself with what works for others, what might work for you, and what might not.

For example, here are the strategies Eventbrite employs:

- Get Online**
- Bend The Rules**
- Be Creative**
- Allow For Mingling**
- Be Shareable**
- Give Discounts**



There's no shame in modeling your plan on the successful plans of others. After all, good artists copy; great artists steal.

THE CONCLUSION

Remember that millennials value their time just as much as anyone else, and with the advent of social media and a litany of new things that they consider to be culture, any departure from their routine is going to be perceived as a risk.



That being the case, we suggest that you:

Educate audiences about who you are through social media targeting

Build out your seasons to include programming relevant to their varying life stages

Be smart about offering unique, thoughtful incentives

CHECK THESE OUT!

Trying to figure out what's next for you and your org? Here are some resources that might be helpful:

AGENCIES

LaPlaca Cohen: Publish a Culture Track study
Cone Communications: Publish a CSR report every year
TRG
Capacity Interactive

NONPROFITS

National Endowment for the Arts
Americans for the Arts
Wallace Foundation: Case studies and best practices
Morris Hargreaves McIntyre

OTHER

Eventbrite
Clyde Fitch Report
Economist
Washington State Arts Commission

DAILY EMAIL BLASTS

Ypulse: Millennial research
Cassandra: Curated social trends and social happenings; each email is curated with a specific theme in mind and often is art-related
Trendera: Cultural insight and cool marketing promotions

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For real, we mean it!

THANKS A BUNCH

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TACA – The Arts Community Alliance – supports excellence and impact in the arts through grant-making, capacity building, and thought leadership.

We envision an innovative, inclusive, sustainable cultural sector, recognized for its essential contribution to a vibrant, prosperous community.



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