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2015

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Millennial Generation and the use of Mobile Internet Devices (MID's) in Shopping Activities

Abstract: The Millennial Generation and the technology revolution using MID's are changing business interactions with customers. Despite the fact Millennials are purchasing through MID's and using these devices to support their purchasing decision, in Dominican Republic there is no available data to explain this consumer trend. The purpose of this study is to explore what Millennials value the most in the purchase process using MID's. For this study a phenomenological interview approach, contrasting two main elements: "Social Management" and "Consumer Empowerment", using the framework described in "The Meaning of Shopping Experiences Augmented by Mobile Internet Devices" from Brian Spaid and Daniel Flint, was used to collect data. An outcome of this study is the finding that the Millennial Generation spend time sharing and validating information as well as reading reviews through social networks in order to seek other's opinions which in turn impacts on their purchase decision. Also seeking product information, comparing prices and having control of the purchase decision, make Millennials feel they can trust their shopping experience for value and smart shopping. This consumer trend in the Dominican Republic to use MID's may change the way companies interact with customers requiring they adapt their businesses model to connect with consumer behaviors and buying patterns of Millennials.

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1. Introduction

There is talk about the importance of embracing change, how it is better to move forward, and to remain flexible when facing new obstacles in life. The reality is the world is changing so drastically that people do not have enough time to react. Change and resisting change is a normal condition in human nature; the only difference today is the pace of change has accelerated.

This resistance to change not only affects individuals but also organizations. Only those organizations that can identify the opportunities hidden in this change process are the ones who will survive today's changing world.

In this moment, society finds itself in the middle of a revolution. The new possibilities that digital technologies give society commercial, social, and intellectual are unparalleled in human history. Over the next few years, it is anticipated there will be a complete transformation of the way society lives, driven by the internet, smart phones, and new wireless devices (Hammersley, 2013).

Millennials, also known as the Millennial Generation, are the demographic cohort following Generation X. There are no precise dates when the generation starts and ends. Researchers and analysts use birth years ranging from the early 1980s to the early 2000s (Howe & Strauss, 2009). This year, Millennials aged 20-37 are the biggest generation that has ever existed (Schawbel, 2013).

Millennials consumers are changing the way companies do business (Schawbel, 2013). The core characteristics from this group are very different from the other generations (Howe & Strauss, 2009). The usage of Mobile Internet Devices (MID's) is a preference for them (Cruz & Mckenna, 2011).

There is a trend among Millennials consumers to purchase products and services online (28% of Millennials prefer shopping online rather than in stores) and most of them use their devices every day (Research Mintel Database, 2014). Another source shows they use their devices while shopping in retail environments to complement their purchase decision (Cruz & Mckenna, 2011).

The usage of technology and being connected with the Mobile Internet Devices (MID's), is one clear characteristic of this group. What does Millennial Generation value the most when purchasing through Mobile Internet Devices (MID's) or using them as a support in their purchase process? Do researchers in Dominican Republic have relevant information about this phenomenon?

1.1 Research problem:

With technology's revolution, Millennials shoppers use Mobile Internet Devices as a support in the purchase decision. Companies who want to understand Millennials purchase decision through MID's will need applicable information to benefit of this consumer behavior.

Despite an exhaustive search of the literature no sources were found related to what Millennial Generation value the most when purchasing through Mobile Internet Devices (MID's) or using them as a support in their purchase process when acquiring products or services in the Dominican Republic. Also, there is not available information related to any other generation and their shopping preferences using Mobile Internet Devices (MDI's).

1.2 Significance of the study:

Companies and researchers will obtain from this study applicable information about the Millennial Generation and the usage of MID's in the Dominican Republic. With these results they can continue with further investigation to design new innovative approaches to meet their needs or preferences.

1.3 Research question:

What do the Millennial Generation value the most when purchasing through Mobile Internet Devices (MID's) or using them as a support in their purchase process?

The focus of this study is to explore the elements that Millennials values the most when purchasing through Mobile Internet Devices (MID's) or using them as a support in their purchase decision process in the Dominican Republic. Understanding this phenomenon is essential to comprehend the elements on the purchase process of the Millennials when using Mobile Internet Devices (MID's) (Spaid & Flint, 2014).

2. Literature Review

Today's society has a problem with the concurrence of three different generations interacting simultaneously: Baby Boomers, Generation X, and the "New Look" of the Millennials. These three generations, whose core characteristics often conflict with each other, are influencing new tendencies and behaviors.

In contrast to Baby Boomers and Generation X, for Millennials, it is more important to enjoy the present time and to have fun along the ride, than to reach to the final destination or goal. Additionally they are experts in recognizing opportunities that combine passion and work (Box1824, 2012). Also their combination of confidence and impatience involves: collective power, civic duty, social ability, and extreme fun is inducing new professions and new ways of thinking. Some other core characteristics for Millennials are: diverse, realistic, optimistic, highly tolerant, confident, avid consumers, and are the most educated generation (Howe & Strauss, 2009). Also the speed at which they are connecting to the world is setting the pace for work relations at this moment (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009).

Despite an exhaustive search of the literature no sources related to the Millennials Generation and their shopping behaviors in the Dominican Republic could be identified. However, according to the last census in 2010 for Dominican Republic, it has approximately a total of 2,950,000.00 Millennials that represents the 29% of the total population. Additional, in 2014 the Dominican Institute of Telecommunications published a report that shows more

than 3,513,341.00 cell phones have access to Internet connection (INDOTEL, 2014). If we contrast this huge number against the last Census in 2010, the Dominican Republic has a total population of 9,445,281 habitants. This concludes that a 37.2% of the population has a smart phone with Internet connection.

As there is no available data about Millennials in the Dominican Republic it will be presented the information gathered from the United States of America due to the similarities on the characteristics of this generation in both countries.

One element that probably influences the Millennials in the DR could be the commercial relationship between the Dominican Republic Government and the United States Government, which has been enhanced by such things as the formalization on the Free Trade Agreement DR-CAFTA. According to the DICOEX, Bilateral Annual Commerce report from 2012, in 2011 the products imported from the United States to the Dominican Republic represents 52% of the total imports and 93% of the total imports within countries participating in DR-CAFTA (DICOEX, 2012).

Another element influencing the connection between Millennials in the Dominican Republic and the United States is Dominican Republic´s geographical location, located nearby the United States in the center of the Caribbean. It has four international airports and many connections with flights to the major cities of USA. This shows a preference for Dominicans to travel to the US instead of other countries. Also many immigrants from Dominican Republic live in the United States.

2.1 Millennial Generation in the United States.

According to a recent US Bureau of Statistics research, Millennials in the United States represent 36% of the U.S. workforce and by 2025 they will account for 75% of the global workplace. By 2015, their annual spending is expected to be $2.45 trillion and by 2018, they will eclipse boomers in spending power at $3.39 trillion (Huffington Post, 2013).

Recent researches shows 41% of Millennials in the United States have made a purchase using their smartphone and 48% of Millennials say word-of-mouth influences their product purchases more than TV ads. For 2014, Millennials (aged 20-37) number 78.3 million, account for 24.5% of the US population and projected to grow 2.7% by 2019 (Schawbel, 2013).

The Industry reports on Millennials indicate that around 60% of Millennials use social media to interact with brands and businesses, and over 50% of Millennials feels social media affects their opinions about offerings (products/services) (Mohapatra, 2013). This "social management" could be the key to a sustainable e-commerce model.

The author Sanjay Mohapatra, in his book E-Commerce examined how the "social management" can be relevant to a customer purchase decision. Once customers get used to the benefits of buying through the MID'S, they become a type of customer that has high expectations, demands, and also has the desire of personalized products/services with a fast delivery (Mohapatra, 2013). This type of customer behavior requires company's managers to

provide digital product specifications, in order to encourage a good experience in the buying process that may influence them.

Millennials are the generation that spends most time connected to the Mobile Internet Devices (MID's). Also for this generation, it's important to be connected with friends and family which is why they use the social media as a bridge to share information (Schawbel, 2013).

According to Brian Spaid and Daniel Flint: "The utilitarian ability to gauge others opinion during a purchase decision seems to build shopper confidence and makes them feel empowered" (Flint & Spaid, 2014). This "Social Management" is as a fundamental element of the purchase decision on the Millennial Generation.

An important article for this study is "The Meaning of Shopping Experiences Augmented by Mobile Internet Devices" from Brian Spaid and Daniel Flint. According to Spaid and Flint's research "Social Management" is a subjective evaluation of a behavior when purchasing a product that relates to a person's close social network. Many of the participants recalled incidents where they relied on the opinions of trusted friends and family to guide a purchase decision. (Spaid & Flint, 2014, p. 79). In their interviews, they noticed that "Social Management" is a real-time assessment of normative behaviors and it seems to affect shopping decisions immediately. This occurs when interacting with the social network using a Mobile Internet Device (MID's).

For example, one of their candidates demonstrates a clear example of a subjective norm affecting a purchase decision through MID usage:

> *"Do I want this car?" Take a photo and send it to someone. "Or this car?" Take a photo and send it to someone. And they respond back, "I like the blue." Well, if you send that to ten people and everyone likes the blue, you'd be much more inclined to go with the blue. But that really doesn't have to do with the Internet-enabled phone. That just has to do with using the phone to shop; in general, to get other people's opinions that maybe aren't there, that sort of thing.* (Spaid & Flint, 2014)

Buyers are using the MID's to search others opinions about the products. This is directly affecting the purchase decision. This also occurs when buying through internet looking for consumer's reviews. Another tendency is when buying a product at store consumers avoid social interaction at store and prefer using MID's to interact with people on their social network, using different social media channels.

The other component is the "Desire for Consumer Empowerment". Consumer sovereignty espouses the view that "aggregate sums of well-informed, autonomous consumer agents possess greater power than individual producers" (Denegri-Knott, Zwick, and Schroeder 2006, p. 955). In other words, power is exchanged and is the source of conflict. This line of thinking stems from economic theories and pits the consumer and retailer against each other in a zero-sum game. As one participant checks the legitimacy of a retailer's price, he also communicates an underlying sense of fairness:

> *Interviewer: How does it feel to be able to use your phone to essentially change the circumstances of the transaction? James: Yeah, like I said earlier, it's empowering. Like, it makes me . . . it just helps out, I guess. That you can pull up a price and say, "Okay. I'm paying a price that's legitimate." I can go back and I can feel good that I paid a price that everybody is going to have to pay* (Spaid & Flint, 2014, p. 83).

They explained how consumer empowerment feels like an obligation for the buyer. Whenever the shopper is analyzing the information about the product itself (including price), if this process is not completed there is a sense of guiltiness and or anger for not doing the best shop with as much information as possible. Following the concept with an example:

> *Marina: I hate finding, after I purchase something, finding it cheaper. Interviewer: What is it about that you hate so much, is it a huge price difference?*
>
> *Marina: It's a feeling of having been taken advantage of and also sometimes guilt at not having researched enough or not having been patient enough* (Spaid & Flint, 2014, p. 84).

Shoppers have also learned that the effort invested to include these new tools into the shopping experiences provides a significant advantage in both time and dollar savings (PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2010, p. 2). As part of the purchase decision buyers like to be well informed about their purchase. Using Mobile Internet Devices (MID's) is a crucial component to feel empowered to make a decision and to feeling satisfied. Consumers feel when using MID they have some power, they don't feel alone when they are speaking to the salesman, because they have information already to help them make the purchase decision.

3. Methodology

After understanding the characteristics of the Millennials Generation, the intention is to contrast and to validate two of the main elements from the framework described in "The Meaning of Shopping Experiences Augmented by Mobile Internet Devices" from Brian Spaid and Daniel Flint. This is an important study sponsored by a grant from the Marketing Sciences Institute (MSI) and the Association of Consumer Research (ACR) published in 2014 Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice (Spaid & Flint, 2014).

Spaid and Flint (2014) presented a Gestalt Framework that combines in store MID's behaviors with extrinsic motivators (Economics, Desire for Product Information, Desire for Trust) and intrinsic motivators (Need for Security, Desire for Consumer Empowerment). A total of seven themes are gathered in the framework: Product Information, Trust, Economics, Security and Empowerment, Shopping Management, Social Management, and Hedonic Shopping. Two themes from this research were selected for this study: "Social Management" and "Consumer Empowerment". These two themes gather most of the intrinsic and extrinsic motivators of the Gestalt Framework, as it will be seen in this study; Social Management gathers the desire of trust, the desire for security. Consumer Empowerment gathers the economics and the desire for product information.

The expectation of this study is to confirm if these themes apply to the Millennial Generation in the Dominican Republic when using MID's as a support in the purchase process.

Our broader impact or contribution is to open the path to other researchers who want to continue understanding the Millennials phenomenon in the Dominican Republic and how they use MID's into shopping activities.

3.1 Method

Spaid and Flint used "The Phenomenological Interviewing Approach" to gather the elements on those experiences they researched. According to the authors, "The qualitative research tradition best suited to this line of inquiry is phenomenology" (Spaid & Flint, 2014, p. 76). The goal of phenomenology, as Polkinghorne writes, is to "produce clear and accurate descriptions of a particular aspect of human experience" (1989, p. 44). This type of humanistic research method seeks to capture detailed descriptions of the lived experience of the research participant by addressing specific life events (Denscombe M. , 2014, p. 94).

After investigating different sources about this approach we found a formal study from the International Journal of Qualitative Methods called "A Phenomenological Research Design Illustrated" from Groenewald in 2004. This article distills the core principles of a phenomenological research design and by means of a specific study, illustrates the phenomenological methodology. We are using this document as a guideline towards this study.

3.2 Phenomenological Interview Approach

For the purpose of this study the "Phenomenological Interview Approach" was selected as the methodology. This is the same approach used by Spaid and Flint (2014); the intention is not to build out a framework but rather to compare and to contrast the selected elements. According to these authors "The qualitative research tradition best suited to this line of inquiry is phenomenology" (Spaid & Flint, 2014, p. 76).

4. Data Collection

This investigation gathered information focused on the Millennials from Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic - Metropolitan Zone (Campus-CSTA) of the Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra (PUCMM). This study was delimited to the Santo Domingo Campus of PUCMM because it included the major diversity of the Millennials from all cities in the Dominican Republic. Another reason for this selection is the support and permission granted by the university to run this study.

 For the pre-selection process this study included an initial request to 120 participants (Millennials Aged 20-37) that were contacted to become part of this study. In this initial approach participants were selected from those who voluntarily wanted to be part of this investigation and that frequently purchase through MID's. Other participants were dismissed because they don't purchase regularly through MID's or didn't want to be involved as part of the investigation.

For the final selection of the data collection a formal sample of 30 participants were selected. All subjects are active shoppers with their MID's and were enthusiastic to share their experiences when using MID's to support their shopping activities.

4.1 The Interview Process

As mentioned above, the interviews were conducted using the "Phenomenological Interviewing approach". The purpose of this approach was to capture lived experience of Millennials using MID's as a support in the purchase process. The objective with the interviews was "neither a free conversation nor a highly structured questionnaire" (Kvale 1983, p.174). The interviews were used to obtain narrations about the different qualitative aspects of the participant's situation, describing the facts as close to reality as possible, to gain the experience of each contributor.

During the interview process the intention was to maintain a neutral zone while asking for the information. A neutral zone maintains the real and individual contribution of each participant, including deeper judgments that will contribute to the study. Also, for every contributor conversation/interview, an effort was made to keep the participant feeling comfortable and valued. This allowed the participants to express their experiences intact, opening up their thoughts while sharing the information.

For phenomenological research, an unstructured questionnaire is considered the main method of data collection. Using this approach, the interviewees develop their own ideas and pursue their own trains of thought rather than have the discussion shaped by the researcher´s

questions (Denscombe M. , 2014, p. 100)**.** This methodology gives an opportunity for interviewees to provide an account of their experiences. It is their version, spoken in their own words (Denscombe M. , 2014, p. 98).

Additionally, the authors Brian Spaid and Daniel Flint from "The Meaning of Shopping Experiences Augmented by Mobile Internet Devices" were contacted to understand the types of questions they used for the phenomenological interviews. Their approach to unstructured interviews started by asking: "Tell me about the last time you used a device to help you shop". Then, they followed the conversation with open ended questions depending on the interviewee responses. Each interview was unique as it was based on the participant's experience.

In this study, the process used included interviews with a one-to one meeting between one researcher and one-respondent. The interviewee was contacted in advance and a convenient time was arranged for the interview. It was explained to the interviewee that the length of the interview would be thirty to forty-five minutes. The place was carefully selected to ensure privacy and good acoustics. The interviewee and the interviewer were seated one in front of the other to allow comfortable interaction between the two. The interviewer introduced himself and formally asked the participants permission to record the conversation and provided reassurances about the confidentiality of the comments made during the interview.

The first question asked was a general question about something which the interviewee felt familiar with: "Tell me about the last time you used a device to help you shop?", then depending of the participant's responses the interviewer could ask for more details on the experience in order to capture the themes of Social Management and Consumer Empowerment. There was not a list of questions prepared for this study because each interview was unique, but the interviewers had a guide of 5 relevant topics that they had to introduce with the interviewee in order to capture the themes such as Social Management, Empowerment, Security, Trust, and Product Information. The types of questions asked were "What was your feelings in this experience?", "What was your rewards for using MID's in your purchase process?", "Taking an earlier example, do you remember the experience in which the phone helped on your buying decision?", "Taking in consideration the last answer, tell me how does it make you feel to have the control as a consumer?", "Talking about the restaurant you mentioned in last example, how much do social networks influence you as a consumer in order for you to decide to go or not to the restaurant?, "In the purchase you've made, can you explain how you were influenced by friends or related people to motivate that purchase Vs. another?", "In the previous example you gave involving a picture of the item you shared with your friends, how did the recommendations of others help you select the item you wanted?".

All of the interviews were recorded in Spanish, the native language in the Dominican Republic; transcripts were then translated literally to English, as a way to have the information saved. The veracity of the interviewed was corroborated by the observation of the body language of the participants and the responses were checked to see if there was a level of

consistency. Instead of using the real names of the participants they were assigned

pseudonyms; see below Table No. 1 with details.

Table 1

Depth Interview Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Level of Education
Aimara	21	Female	Undergraduate Student
Albert	22	Male	Undergraduate Student
Angie	20	Female	Undergraduate Student
Arsenio	30	Male	Master Degree
Delianny	23	Female	Undergraduate Student
Elizabeth	23	Female	Undergraduate Student
Estefia	21	Female	Undergraduate Student
Estephania	20	Female	Undergraduate Student
Fernando	21	Male	Undergraduate Student
Genesis	22	Female	Undergraduate Student
Hugo	30	Male	Master Degree
Janitza	22	Female	Undergraduate Student
Valentina	33	Female	Master Degree
Julissa	34	Female	Master Degree
Junisa	30	Female	Master Degree
Luis	28	Male	Master Degree
Luis	34	Male	Master Degree
Magdiel	21	Female	Undergraduate Student
Miguel	20	Male	Undergraduate Student
Hector	28	Male	Master Degree
Nelson	22	Male	Undergraduate Student
Paola	34	Female	Master Degree
Ramon	33	Male	Master Degree
Stefania	20	Female	Undergraduate Student
Wendy	32	Female	Master Degree
Yvonne	20	Female	Undergraduate Student
Rosaury	21	Female	Undergraduate Student
Karla	20	Female	Undergraduate Student
Nicole	20	Female	Undergraduate Student
Mary	22	Female	Undergraduate Student

5. Data Analysis

A hermeneutical approach was selected for this study in order to interpret the interviews of the participants. This method is taken to be interpretive (rather than purely descriptive as in transcendental phenomenology) (Phenomenology Online, 2015).

This orientation is evident in the work of Heidegger, who is the foremost representative of the movement of hermeneutic phenomenology and who argues that all description is always already interpretation (Manen, 2011).

The hermeneutical approach helps to interpret each interview individually to explain participant meanings while maintaining the context of their narrative. When consulting different sources of hermeneutic principles we founded many interesting useful ways to interpret data. The selected approach is the "Six Stages in the Analysis" (see Table 2) from Lincoln and Guba (Ajjawi, 2007, p. 10).

Stages of Data Analysis Developed for this Study

Stage	*Tasks Completed*
1. Immersion	- Organizing the data-set into texts - Iterative reading of texts - Preliminary interpretation of texts to facilitate coding
2. Understanding	Identifying first order (participant) constructs
3. Abstraction	- Identifying second order (researcher) constructs - Grouping second order constructs into sub-themes
4. Synthesis and theme development	- Grouping sub-themes into themes - Further elaboration of themes
5. Illumination and illustration of phenomena	- Linking the literature to the themes identified above - Reconstructing interpretations into stories
6. Integration and critique	Reporting final interpretation of the research

(Ajjawi, 2007, p. 10)

It is important to highlight that for the purpose of this study as stated in the research question is to find what is it that the Millennials Generation value the most when purchasing through Mobile Internet Devices (MID's) or using them as a support in their purchase process when acquiring products and services. However, as stated above the focus of this study will contrast and compare the two themes selected from the Spaid & Flint study: "Social Management" and "Consumer Empowerment". Even though the interview process focuses in

these two elements, this study is open to explore other elements that could be related or found during the interviews with the Millennials Generation.

6. Results

6.1 Social Management Results

In the interviews participants were asked to describe shopping experiences they've had using their MID's. The participants gave different examples of how they purchase through MID's and also how they use it as a support in the purchase decision process. A common ground found in the different interviews was how other´s opinion influenced their purchase decision. An 87% of the participants express that validating with others made them feel secure before the purchase.

This immediate interaction seems to help Millennials to make their shopping decisions. For example, the interview with Rosaury's demonstrated how this immediate interaction influences her decision:

> *"I wanted to buy the earrings for my graduation, so I searched on Instagram a store that sells earrings and chose the pictures of the ones I liked and consulted my friends, then I wanted a specific model and I communicated through this social network with the owner of the store and I asked them if they had that model I want it, but in a different color. It was very interactive and it influenced my decision. I tagged my friends in the photos of the earrings that I liked on Instagram and through WhatsApp they sent me pictures of other models, so I could have variety. Then I felt secure with my purchase."*

For participants who answered they consult with friends and family, around 88% of them use MID's to share information (WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook etc.), and they also consult the web to search for product reviews. The opinions and the interactions in the social media with people they know or through the Web with unknown users, influence their purchase decision.

> *"Now we have many online stores that sell accessories, when a person shares one of those products on any social network, one that is interested asks the person who posted it about the accessory, so there is influence because of the number of likes the post has or because a friend shared it, gives you curiosity about the product…"*

> *"…for example, on Instagram you see the lives of other people that are in your circles, but this platform gives you the opportunity to see the ones you know that gave like to the photo of the accessories business and that makes you ask for references and price in order to see if they liked what they bought."*

Participants who share information (WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, etc.); are frequently connected, continually interacting, sharing and commenting, not only to buy products but also services.

> *"This kind of interaction happens very often, especially with services, when they are presenting concerts, we tag our friends, and if it is that we want to go to a restaurant and we don't know where to go, I ask the opinion of my friends or look for them on Instagram…."*

> *"Let's say it has a great influence in me, because when using Instagram or Facebook, the post that has more likes and the people who are in your circle visits the place and post their picture, comment or like, makes you want to visit the place. You can ask for references, and if my friend Laura says "what a good Margarita they made?" you'll want to go to the restaurant and try it."*

Approximately 90% of participants expressed they read reviews, compared prices, shared or validated products information in social networks before they made the purchase decision through their MID's or even inside the store.

In the interviews, participants expressed different reasons why they bought items using their MID's. It was found that recommendations from others were important to them when choosing to buy online. For example, Hector states that in his last shopping experience he saw a coworker with a cushion and he asked him where he bought it, his coworker recommended an online store to him and Hector immediately bought it without taking into consideration any other option. Other participant, named Angie responded that in her last experience she bought a pair of shoes and she felt secure because a friend recommendation.

6.2 Results of Consumer Empowerment

With the support of the Mobile Internet Devices (MID's) consumers have relevant information in their hands with a simple click. Consumer's empowerment is important for Millennials; 90% expressed feeling more confident to make a purchase knowing the details such as product specifications and different prices, before they made the decision whether to buy or not. These participants agreed on how important it is to verify the price of a product, because many retail companies offer random special discounts and "sale prices". For Millennials the access provided using their Mobile Internet Devices is unparalleled. This can be seen in Rosaury's response:

> *Interviewed: "I go to the Mac store in Agora Mall and search the price of the makeup I want before buying the product, I check the price online in the MAC virtual store and then I compare whether the product is at the right price and the variety of makeup I was looking for. I bought the product in the store, not because it suited me, but because I*

desperately needed it, the price difference was significant because it cost RD $800 pesos and on the internet it was at $14 dollars. For 300 or 400 pesos of difference, one might have waited some time for the product to arrive, but I needed it."

Interviewer: Well, but the price difference calculating shipping and weight at the end is not very significant.

Interviewed: Good point, but it still served as reference, and to know the difference helps me to make a better decision later.

Although finding good prices is an important element to Millennials due to the economic constraints, the shopping experience is about more than prices, it is related to deeply understanding the shoppers feelings toward the purchase process. Millennial consumers have access to information and are able to interact with other customers, making them feel empowered. One good example of how information empowers Millennial consumers can be seen when they describe not having access to their MID's. 60% of the participants are frequently travelers to the United States to shop in malls and outlets. When traveling abroad if they don't have access to Wi-Fi or roaming services they don't feel comfortable while shopping.

Interviewed: It has happened to me before and it is very uncomfortable I feel it's not convenient to shop this way, also it makes me move to other stores to make a comparison and it is possible that I won't find what I am looking for, it is very uncomfortable. The price is an important component, but it's not the most important thing when it comes to quality. You see a brand that you like, and you want to see the feedback on the internet, the feedback from consumers would tell you if the product is durable or not, it is frustrating when you do not have the information in hand. I prefer to postpone the purchase until I feel safe.

Apparently for the participants going shopping without previous research feels like they are doing something wrong. They dislike purchasing something without investigating it and some of them even get upset when find it cheaper later in another place or website. When this happens the feeling of frustration or guilt affects them. For them doing research through their MID's is part of the process. If they decide for some reason to skip this step of the process, later

on, they legitimatize or confirm their actions using their MID's to confirm they made the right

decision. For others it is about getting rid of the sense of guilt for not researching the product

before buying it. In other words, as stated by Spaid and Flint: "Whichever lens is used to

scrutinize consumers' roles or explain their behaviors, it is clear the consumer is not a passive

player. The power he or she holds is real, and to some it is seen as an obligation" (Spaid & Flint,

2014, p. 84). In order to describe the consumer empowerment element let's consider Rosaury's

response:

> *Interviewer: That feeling of being in control as a consumer, what does it make you feel?*
>
> *Interviewed: Being subscribed to the application of Forever 21 they send me mail messages, so that I can take advantage of the opportunities they offer, I feel that I receive preferential treatment, although it is a standard service for others.*
>
> *Interviewer: In the store the salesperson can help you with your purchase decision, why do you prefer to consult the web before consulting the seller?*
>
> *Interviewed: Because maybe, you do not have a clear idea and by seeing the variety the internet offers you I can find what I want, but if I am looking for something very specific, I search for it at the store.*
>
> *Interviewer: The seller presents the variety of product he has, why do you still prefer to look online?*
>
> *Interviewed: Because the seller will not give me the information of cost of the product in the web, it will give me the price they have in the store. Do you think he would advise me the convenient way to buy?*
>
> *Interviewer: Would you trust the seller more than the web criteria?*
>
> *Interviewed: No. I would trust the Web, because I can find the opinions of other consumers and the vendor it is only interested on selling his product.*

Price for consumers is a crucial factor due to economic constraints. The collapse of the US housing market exacerbated the uncertainty for emerging economies like the Dominican Republic (Banco Central de la República Dominicana, June, 2008). Given the Great Recession, prices are an important component which Dominican shoppers take into consideration when they purchase through their MID's. 56% of participants, when asked to give an experience of what motivates them to buy through their MID's, reported how price was a critical determinant in their shopping decision. Having the information of price in their hands through MID's reassures them that they are getting a good deal. An example was the interview with Estephania when she said:

> *"I bought a purse two weeks ago and I felt satisfied with the shopping experience because I could compare the price between the store in the mall and the Web, I found a significant difference that made me feel that I was saving money and it was worth it to buy through MID's. If I had bought the purse at the mall and then realized it was cheaper on the Web, I would have felt very annoyed, almost like if they had made fraud on me."*

In another interview, a participant named Albert stated:

> *"Here in the Dominican Republic, stores owners are not reliable because they overprice products when they sell to customers. I always validate the prices and information of things that I am buying. It makes me feel good to save money in this difficult time. I always check the money I have to spend and based on that I look for the low cost option and usually I find it on the Web".*

These examples demonstrate how having the information of price make shoppers feel empowered and secure. It is remarkable that these shoppers are motivated to buy using their MID's because when they verify the best price It is what makes them feel they've found a good deal.

7. Conclusion

The outcomes of the research results and previous literature review are gathered in this chapter.   First the purpose of this study is explained. The next section concentrates on describing the similarities and differences between the literature and the information gathered through the interview process within the context of the research question. Next, the significance of the study it is presented, followed by the limitations to the research and recommendations for further research.

The main objective of this study was to explore the elements Millennials in Dominican Republic value the most when purchasing using their Mobile Internet Devices (MID's) or using the MID's as a support in their purchase decision process. However, as previously stated, the focus of this study was to contrast and to compare the two themes selected from Spaid & Flint study: "Social Management" and "Consumer Empowerment" with an audience of Millennials from Dominican Republic.

As described in this study, Social Management is defined as the activities in which the shoppers seek other's opinions to make their purchase decisions through the use of their MID's. As found in the Spaid & Flint study, not only it is important for the face to face interactions or reading blogs and opinions on Web Sites, but also the use of MID's for social connections and opinion seeking is a strong factor that becomes an immediate influencer for shoppers. As described by the authors: "The real-time assessment of normative behaviors seems to affect shopping decisions immediately" (Spaid & Flint, 2014, p. 79).

A common ground between Spaid & Flint and this study is that most Millennials before their purchase, spend time sharing and validating information, and reading reviews through social networks in order to seek for other's opinions that does impact on their final purchase decision.

The 87% of interviews the participants demonstrated they need at least one interaction (influencer) to seek information or opinion. 88% of them explained they usually interact with more than one channel including Whatsapp, Website, Instagram, Facebook, among others and all of them responded that without this interaction they wouldn't make a purchase decision. Also relevant literature and reviews presented in this study demonstrate how social media affects the purchase decision for Millennials, 60% of them use social media to interact with brands and business; and over 50% of Millennials feel social media affects their opinions about offerings (products/services) (Mohapatra, 2013).

67% of participants responded that they were influenced by other user reviews affecting their final purchase decision. Some of them reported feeling more secure about their purchase due to the number of positive comments and reviews found on social media and website. Others reported when they purchase through their MID's, they select the products/services that have the highest score in reviews. 33% of the interviewees reported that reading reviews don't affect their purchase decision, instead they prefer to validate information with a friend or relative through MID's.

The nature of this study was to explore Millennials Generation and the change they introduced to business with the revolution of technology. The relevant literature review showed that 28% of Millennials prefer shopping online rather than in store (Research Mintel Database, 2014). In the interviews presented, the majority of the participants report that they preferred shopping online or at least to validate the information of the product on the web before they buy it in the store. This is an important outcome that shows a trend and behavior of Millennials Generation in Dominican Republic.

Consumer Empowerment is the analysis of product information (including price) that consumer do in order to feel trusted with their purchase decision. In the Spaid & Flint study, they concluded with the revolution of the use of MID's, Millennials seek product information to purchase products/services and it is an obligation for them not only to ensure the legitimacy of the price but also the quality and usage of the product.

90% of participants in this study reported they spend time comparing prices of the products/services they purchased through their MID's or in a store. Dominican Millennials focused their purchase research on price. About 56% of participants mentioned their shopping decision is based on their budget to purchase a product and most of them reported validating price information when they purchase in store through their MID's. Also, from the interviews participants mentioned the importance of analyzing prices taking in consideration the Exchange Rate (US Dollars to Dominican Pesos), Shipping and handling charge, taxes from the Dominican Government and the fee the freight forwarder charges to bring the product to the Dominican Republic and deliver it to your door.

"Social Management" and "Consumer Empowerment" selected from the Gestalt Framework by Spaid & Flint (2014) proved an effective approach within the research environment in the Dominican Republic. The outcomes of the research exposed trends and behaviors among Dominican Millennial consumers to purchase products and services through their Mobile Internet Devices (MID's) or using them as a support.

7.1 Significance of the findings

As there is no sources related to the Millennials Generation and their shopping behavior through MID's in Dominican Republic, this study opens the path as a reference to other researchers who want to continue understanding the Millennials phenomenon in the Dominican Republic and how they use their MID's for shopping activities.

In Dominican Republic, most of the companies interact with customers through traditional channels (Call Centers, TV Ads, Newspapers, Magazines, and Radio) and have a limited presence on social media. With the outcome of this study, companies could explore the benefits of interacting with Millennials through their MID's. As shown in the results, Millennials in the Dominican Republic expressed that Social Management and Consumer Empowerment are two important themes that companies can develop tools and solutions to interact with these young consumers.

As found in this study, Millennials consumers have more information and control of their purchase decision, since they are now an active player in the purchase process. Reading reviews, sharing information, and comparing products are common activities of Millennials in

their purchase decisions, therefore future researchers and companies would like to target Millennials consumers in the Dominican Republic need to recognize this trend and adapt their business to connect with the behaviors and patterns of the Millennials.

7.2 Limitations of the study

Data about companies targeting Millennials through use of their MID's in the Dominican Republic was not available. The research approach used in this study explored the elements of what Millennials value in their shopping experience using an interview technique but this does not provide an understanding of the full effects on businesses of the use of MID's.

The purpose of using Phenomenological Interviews was to capture the lived experience of Millennials using MID's, but the approach has its limitations due to researcher bias that can affect the reliability and generalization of the outcomes. Also, despite the fact the interviewer tried to maintain a neutral zone for the interviews, allowing the participants to express their ideas and thoughts, one-to-one interviews as a method can enhance the risk of participant bias and the constraint of revealing personal information.

Phenomenological methodology does not involve large sample of the phenomenon being studied, the size of the sample was determined by the principle of saturation that describes as the point in data collection when no new or relevant information emerges (Manson, 2010). If the sample is too large data becomes repetitive. Therefore, larger numbers

will not necessarily produce more insight in to the experience of a phenomenon but to generalize the outcomes in the Dominican Republic, this study is limited by the sample size and the geographic distribution to those who use their MID's to search for pricing and on-line shopping.

7.3 Recommendation for further research

The phenomenon of the use of MID's indicates that Social Management and Consumer Empowerment shape the purchase decision of Millennials buying online or in store. Validating the full effect of the use of MID's, merits further investigation. A recommendation for other researchers is to implement in-company activities including reviews on their Web page and Interactions with consumers using social media to evaluate the further impact.

Another recommendation is to investigate the preferences of Millennials in Dominican Republic to purchase through their MID's when abroad. It is worth investigating if lack of availability to access MID's results in no purchases due to price or other issues related to consumer empowerment presented in this research.

Some of the participants indicated they prefer shopping online because they enjoy the end-to-end process of purchasing through their MID's. First, they do an initial search about the product specifications, reviews, and prices. Then they purchase the products/services selected, and finally they consider the reception of the product/service. As described by the participants they enjoy the purchase process using these three steps. A proposal for further research includes exploring this behavior to determine if this could be a trend in Dominican Republic.

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