NAMP 2019: Orlando as a case study for arts participation and social media engagement among millennials

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Session Overview

This presentation, the result of a recently published mixed methods research study, focuses on arts engagement and the millennial generation, social media as a catalyst for potent arts participation, and Central Florida as a region demonstrating significant innovations and opportunities for growth in the arts. Findings from a survey completed by Central Florida millennials in 2018 (including select replicated questions from the 2016 Americans for the Arts National Arts Engagement survey), will be shared, along with data from interviews that were conducted with six executive directors of Central Florida non-profit arts organizations. This presentation will highlight the resulting synthesis of perspectives and a strategic action plan for arts organizations seeking to further arts engagement with millennials via social media.

During this session, attendees will:

1. Gain an overview of the discourse surrounding arts engagement, participatory culture, and the millennial generation.
2. Receive resources and a framework for conducting a localized mixed methods research study.
3. Learn 5 recommended actions to further engage millennials via social media.

Story arcs

1. The self: personal, professional, Central Florida, Texts & Technology research interests
2. The room: generations, professions, perceptions
3. The inspiration: scholarly heroes, cultural heroes, local heroes, and your reading list
4. The project: partners, surveys, questions, and process
5. The data: millennials, arts execs, AFTA, and synthesis (quiz time!)
6. The conclusions: strategic action plan, limitations, and suggestions for future work
7. The room (reprise) – questions, suggestions, how can I help?

Generations at a glance (as stated in dissertation and updated in March of 2018 by Pew Research):

Generation Z (the “iGen”) born 1997 (age 0 - 22)
Baby Boomers born 1946 – 1964 (age 55 - 73)
The Silent Generation born 1928 – 1945 (age 74 - 91)
Research questions

- How is technology democratizing, augmenting, and/or limiting opportunities for arts engagement?
- What are the social media best practices used by non-profit arts organizations to engage with patrons and promote participation?
- Can the online interactions between non-profit arts organizations and millennials translate into engagement in face to face arts settings?
- What types of communication strategies work best for engaging millennials in the arts?
- How do Central Florida millennials view social media and other digital technologies as a means of engaging with non-profit arts organizations in their community?
- How do Central Florida non-profit arts administrators view social media and other digital technologies as a means of engaging with millennials?
- What micro movements, i.e., smaller or singular actions, events, or initiatives, exist in the arts and how are these micro movements impacting Central Florida?

"The currency of arts organizations, which traditionally has been measured in terms of tickets sold to live events or visitors served at a museum has broadened to include impact and engagement - two ideals that can be challenging to measure. However, it could be argued that amidst the 21st century digital landscape, authentic arts engagement that yields personal and community impact as well as sustainability for the future, two goals that are often perceived to be difficult goals for non-profit arts organizations to achieve and measure, are more attainable now than ever and should be viewed as tremendous opportunities instead of unattainable challenges. It stands to reason that the characteristics of participatory culture and democratization brought on by the evolution of emerging digital entertainment and social media communications technology, coupled with the power of the millennial generation, the first generation with access to digital technologies since birth, as well as the largest generation present in the American workforce today, are not only two forces that can be non-profit arts organizations' biggest resources but are two forces that are already inherently at play within the DNA of the arts" (Fry).” - Givoglu, "Curating Culture"

Key ideas from literature review

Arts engagement in the 21st century (including philanthropy)
Ivey & Tepper (“curatorial me” and definitions of engagement/participation)
Connor (trajectory of theatre, the arts, engagement; theatre in its roots was participatory)
Jenkins (“transmedia narrative”)
Jenkins & Bertozzi (mentorship, apprenticeship, passing down of knowledge in the arts)
Arts engagement in the 21st century (including philanthropy) – cont.
Brown et al ("Intrinsic impact")
Dilenschneider (use of data; Know Your Bone blog)
Americans for the Arts, State & Federal data sources, United Arts of Central Florida

Social Media, Millennials, Central Florida
Pew Research Center (generational boundaries)
"Xennials"
Bolton et al ("generation me" vs "generation we")
Scholarship on brand loyalty
Orlando Economic Development Commission (median age of Orlando – just below 37; the youngest in the State)
Accolades for/against Orlando

Research Design
Saldaña – Qualitative research, grounded theory

Data brief

Quantitative
97% of the Central Florida millennials agree to some extent that “a vibrant arts and culture scene is important (to them) when considering in what city (they) will live,” compared to 52% of the AFTA millennials from 2015 survey.

92% of the Central Florida millennials agree to some extent that “the arts improve the image and identity of (their) community,” compared to 67% of the AFTA millennials.

26% of the Central Florida millennials agree to some extent that, “Everyone in my community has equal access to the arts,” compared to 46% of the AFTA millennials.

Does Central Florida have a vibrant cultural scene?

49% yes
47% somewhat
4% no

Facebook (99%), Instagram (77%), and YouTube (51%) were the top 3 social media platforms used by cohort.

86% of survey respondents agreed to some extent that they are more exposed to arts and culture through social media with 61% reporting that they share information about local arts happenings on their personal social media pages.
Respondents who indicated that they had arts exposure in their K-12 years (through going to events and/or after school lessons/experiences) indicated higher rates of:
- Posting/liking/sharing social media posts about arts and cultural happenings
- Attendance of arts events – biggest differentials in Opera and Art Museums
- Attendance of events at a performing arts center
- Attendance of festivals
- Donating to arts organizations as adults
- Purchasing art

Survey respondents self-described as:
- Interested in social causes and “doing good” (96%)
- Optimistic (89%)
- Interested in volunteering for organizations in need (87%)
- Loyal to my brands, i.e., business that I like, companies that I support (83%)

82% of donors share information about arts happenings on social media (compared to 61% of entire sample) and “attended” arts events on a social media site at a higher rate than the entire sample (biggest differences in Jazz, Film Festivals, and Classical Music).

Qualitative

Key Themes from Executive Directors (Opera Orlando, Central Florida Community Arts, the Downtown Arts District, Orlando Frirge, Creative City Project, and the Garden Theatre)

- Executive directors embody millennial characteristics.
- For these executive directors and their respective arts organizations, social media, while communicating their organizations' mission, is: a hub/portal for artists, a multi-media news site, a relationship builder, a means of conducting business, and a buzz/transmedia story platform.
- The executive directors experience generational tensions and trends.
- Executive directors perceive that millennials want: mentoring, easy-to-find and timely information, the opportunity to give feedback, cause-based programs, a lack of pretense, and affordability.
- The executive directors believe that social media allows for: sustaining participation and human connections in the digital world beyond the “live” event in the physical world, creating digital content through videos and livestreaming, and curating patrons for the organization. However, there are pros and cons of breaking down the fourth wall.

“Is mentoring the new marketing?” – W. Givoglu
Quiz

How do you think the millennial cohort ranked the following in terms of what would make them more likely to attend an arts event (1-10)?*

_____ The cost - if it was lower

_____ The opportunity to help my community through attending the event

The opportunity to give input on programming (ex. art to display, plays to perform, musical selections, etc.)

_____ The opportunity to meet the cast, performers, or artists

_____ The knowledge of where my ticket or admission money is going

_____ The time of day - if there were more options (not just Friday and Saturday nights and Sunday matinees or Monday-Friday 5-5 hours of operations

_____ More information - if I knew the backstory of the performance or art

_____ The cost - if it was free

_____ Knowing people in the cast or knowing the performers/artists

_____ The opportunity to mingle with other people my age

*consider how donors answered this question too!

Executive directors know that millennials want easy to find and timely information; millennials reported that knowing the cast and/or knowing more about the backstory of an arts event would motivate them to participate; parallels data from intrinsic value of the arts (Brown et al).

**Recommended Action Plan for non-profit arts organizations seeking to further arts engagement with millennials:**

1. *Tell the stories of all – artists, impact, jobs, art, patrons, people, and place – start and share the transmedia story.*

2. *Consider and share how the arts create and convene around causes.*

3. *Understand, program, and communicate with consideration of the life cycles and interests of millennials.*

4. *Consider diversity and cultural equity in the arts, and use social media to share examples of best practices.*

5. *Create and sustain experiences that define engagement in the digital and physical worlds.*
Limitations of the study and future research in the field

Limitations
- Snowball sampling = homogenized data set
- Study doesn’t represent the traditional “anchors” of the arts

Future research
- Gen Z
- Millennial artists and mentoring
- Promote more scholarship and advocacy through research in the field

Access the full dissertation (bookmarked .pdf) for free at:

Thank you!