

THE SOFT SPOTS OF MILLENNIALS

REVEALED BY TEN THOUSAND OF THEM WORLDWIDE



Since a decade I conduct [one of the biggest future forecasting research projects worldwide](#). Involved are over fifty universities and polytechnics and ten thousand Millennial-students. Name of the project: the International Cool City Hunt project. Together we go hunting for what strikes a chord with Millennials and how they perceive the future. The methodology is everywhere the same. Our Millennials go hunting for tiny Seeds of what they consider ‘Cool’ –attractive and inspiring—with future growth potential. In protected ‘science of the time’-workspaces all students blog about the Cool Seeds they have hunted. In these blogs they must not only come up with their vision on Millennials-Cool, but also deliver arguments what exactly is so attractive and inspiring about their hunted Cool Seeds. Also they must give arguments why exactly their Cool Seed has future growth potential—and for what specific part of the Millennial-generation: lower or higher educated, males or females or both, tech-aficionados or not, Chinese, Brazilian, European et cetera. Last but not least, they rate and vote for each other’s Cool Seeds. What are the Coolest of them all? What Cool Seeds have the biggest future growth potential? And for what reasons? Especially the highest rated Cool Seeds are worth analyzing. They reveal what moves and motivates Millennials. They reveal what their soft spots are.

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In 2012 one Cool Seeds blog peaked internationally above all the other ones. You see a young guy in jeans. At the jeans crotch a keyboard is applied. So the guy can rattle on the type keys in his crotch and the Internet opens for him. How to explain the ravishing wow-enthusiasm this Cool Seed generated with our Millennials? What collective desire lies behind this key-board enriched pair of jeans? We asked our Cool-hunting Millennials themselves and the answer came loud and clear and consistent: “I want to be connected 24/7/365”. Every product or service that fulfills this desire, will certainly have hit potential. The jeans themselves never became a success. But, mind you, this was 2012, and the smart phone started its conquering march over our planet.

“I want to be connected 24/7/365”

It facilitates the “I want to be connected 24/7/365”—adagio spectacularly better than whatever jeans could have managed. In retrospect I regret that I didn’t take the outcomes of my own future forecasting research more seriously and brought it to the stock market in order to invest in the smartphone industry. (Apple stocks back then: 80 dollars, now: 180). But, well, I am happy anyway.



In 2015 another Cool Seeds blog left all the others behind. It shows the plates on which a Tel Aviv restaurant is serving its food. Banal, you might think. However, these plates come with an innovative slot. The slot is designed to fit your mobile phone in—this in order to make the perfect picture of your food. And: post it on Instagram. I am not a Millennial so I simply eat what is on my plate. But Millennials prefer Instagrammable food. (One of the reasons why avocados enjoy such popularity, is that they make quite colorful impressions on Instagram).

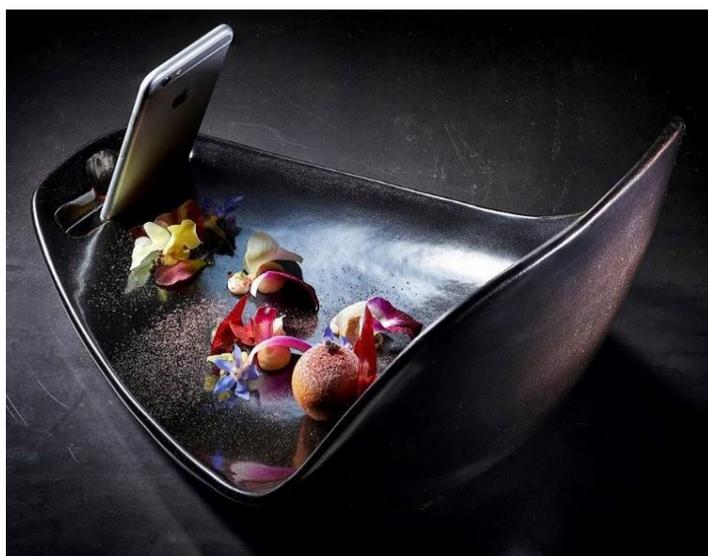
Millennials attach a tremendous importance to Online Impression Management.



Also this hugely popular ‘Instagrammable-food’ Cool Seed is worth analyzing. How can a trivial plate raise such enthusiasm with Millennials? What is behind it? The international answer: “I want to share an original and distinctive image of myself online”. Shorter: It is all about Online Impression Management. Millennials attach a tremendous importance to Online Impression Management. And put an equally tremendous effort to realizing it. Of course, looking back

from the threshold of 2018 this may not be an all too surprising insight. But back to 2015 the insight about Online Impression Management was fresh—and we validated it by measuring the popularity of this ‘simple’ Cool Seed. (We did more to validate, but that’s another story.) It solidly forecasted and explained the upcoming success of Snapchat. Nothing helps Millennials better than Snapchat does, to produce an enticing, attention-grabbing image of themselves, and throw it off to their online-assembled insatiable peer group.

To produce an enticing, attention-grabbing image of themselves



At the same time Snapchat avoids continuous embarrassment because the produced images quickly fade into the void of oblivion. Only to be immediately replaced by the next try. Online Impression Management was one of the validated key insight we derived from our 2015 round of future forecasting research. In the 2017 collection of Cool Seeds we see the Instagrammable take-on-life blossoming further and crossing over to other sectors: Instagrammable fashion, Instagrammable luxury, Instagrammable shops and Instagrammable hotels.

Though we are still exploring the 2017 reservoir of Cool Seeds, we have already a firm idea of the top five of the most appreciated 2017 Cool Seeds. A New York wall sponsored by Delta Airlines is in it. The wall shows a series of the most appreciated world tourist destinations, neatly separated from each other by some meters. Here you find Dutch windmills next to the Eiffel Tower, the Acropolis and some Aztec temples from Mexico, to



mention a few. The wall empowers Millennials to make selfies of themselves in front of all their preferred destinations. The wall facilitates you to present yourself as an experienced worldwide traveler. Don't forget that **“Worldwide Travelers are more likely to be swiped right on Tinder”**, the wall happily proclaims. I am still not sure whether this proclamation is tongue-in-cheek or seriously meant—probably it is both.

FOMO, the Fear of Missing Out.

Also now we asked our international armies of Millennials—from Shanghai, Sao Paulo, Barcelona, Amsterdam and Milan—what is ‘behind’ this Cool Seed of the perfect selfies wall? What makes it so standing out in appeal and popularity? The answer is the same all over the planet (though with intercultural nuance differences): “The world is big. You cannot be everywhere at the same time. But at least with this wall you can suggest that you are or have been.”



I asked my Millennials whether this isn't quite a ‘fake’ suggestion. They agree, but don't seem to bother that much about. “It is still Cool and fun”. “And it works with Tinder”, several admit without any reluctance. Here we find the 2015 theme of Online Impression Management taken to the next level. This time it is combined with another Millennials-preoccupation: **FOMO, the Fear of Missing Out**. Millennials, as we know, are born on the Internet.

FOMO is deeply intensified and multiplied by the Internet and its tsunamis of opportunities, possibilities and events that will never materialize themselves in our lives. The wall offers a symbolic antidote.

“The world is big. You cannot be everywhere at the same time. But at least with this wall you can suggest that you are or have been.”

What does this rather complex 2017 insight mean when it comes to predicting the next generation of ultimately successful products and services? Basically it teaches us that everything and everyone, every product and service that has the ability to create order in the immense chaos of our online lives, will be extremely successful. We can add, beyond the Cool Seed of the perfect selfies wall, one condition to it: that **the order must function seamlessly**. Therefore it must be based on credible expertise and authority plus the power to customize. Think Virtual Personal Assistants like *Cortana*, *Alexis* and *Siri*. Millennials are going to embrace them with surprising strength, just like they did with the smart phone and with everything that is Instagrammable. As long as they serve Millennials seamlessly. Also think the blossoming kaleidoscope of tinier virtual assistants who intimately help you to create order in the more specific worlds of your fashion desires, your travel ambitions or your psychological peculiarities.

Intimate knowledge of who you are will be their basis, will give them reliability and credibility. We already see the first 2017 Cool Seeds flocking around this new Cool theme: **Order My Online Life**. It is happening in fashion, cosmetics, perfumes, luxury and hospitality. Our Cool Seeds collection 2017 proves it.

[We are Science of the Time.](#)



Science of the Time

About the author:

[Prof. Dr. Carl C. Rohde](#) is a worldwide reputed trend watcher and cultural sociologist who distinguishes himself by his academic depth and by the broad scope of his empirical research projects. Rohde gives lectures and presentations all over the world—both in the academic circuit and in the business circuit.

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