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What Compels Millennial Parents to Buy Books for Their Children?

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Portland State University

Book Publishing MA

**What Compels Millennial Parents to Buy Books for
Their Children?**

By Emma Wolf

May 2021

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Research question: What are the elements that millennial parents prioritize when buying books for their children, and how can publishers best meet those needs?

Abstract:

Millennials (those born between 1981-1996) make up the largest generation in U.S. history, and due to their relatively recent entrance into parenthood, there is little preexisting information available about their purchasing habits, which differ greatly from those of previous generations (McGee). Now that millennials are becoming parents, companies targeting the children of this generation—including those in the book publishing industry—would benefit from a better understanding of how and why this demographic chooses products; this paper focuses on how they buy books for their children. Through academic research and a survey of 150 participants, several indicators were discovered regarding how millennial parents purchase books for their kids. Three main themes highlighted in this paper are the variability of reading platforms available (print, Ebook, and audiobook most notably), and how parents versus their children prefer to engage with reading; the desire to see increased diversity presented in children’s books; and the influential nature of online product reviews, and more specifically, positive reviews and word-of-mouth.

Introduction:

According to the PEW Research Center, as of 2016, 50% of U.S. children have millennial parents (Tyson), and 1.3 million U.S. millennials became moms in 2015 (Livingston). Due to their relatively recent entrance into parenthood, there is little research available regarding the buying habits and practices of this generation of parents. However, the millennial generation is now the largest in U.S. history, and as they’re reaching prime working and spending years, their impact on the economy is significant (McGee). Millennials came of age during a time of massive technological and social change, globalization, and economic disruption, and therefore have distinctly different purchasing patterns than previous generations. Furthermore, now that so many millennials are

parents themselves, companies targeting the children of this generation—including those in the book publishing industry—would benefit from having a better understanding of the individuals in this demographic and how they prioritize and purchase products for their children. Incorporating input from existing research and parents themselves, I will create a clearer picture of this generation of shoppers, as well as the criteria they use when making book selections for their children. Based on this research, several elements appear to weigh more heavily on the selection process, including the entertainment and educational value of the books, the life lessons and values inherent in the stories, and how the books are reviewed.

An online survey of millennial parents conducted earlier this year helped humanize and augment these findings. Having a greater understanding of what drives the purchasing decisions of this audience can enhance how book publishers themselves choose and deliver content, and engage with and foster loyalty from their target customers.

Methods:

To understand what criteria millennial parents use when purchasing books for their kids, two main methods were used. The first was analysis of existing scholarly research and overall findings via online sources. The second method was to solicit direct input from millennial parents through an online survey. Parents were asked to respond to 21 questions, 2 of which required long-form responses, with the remainder being multiple choice or short-answer. The survey was disseminated via local parenting groups such as the MOMS Club Portland chapter and the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland. It was also shared on Facebook, both to general feeds and a couple of local parent support pages. This paper presents a blend of both methods to highlight key findings.

Limitations:

There are two primary limitations to the survey data collected for this research: demographics and the method used. The demographic breakdown for this survey is fairly

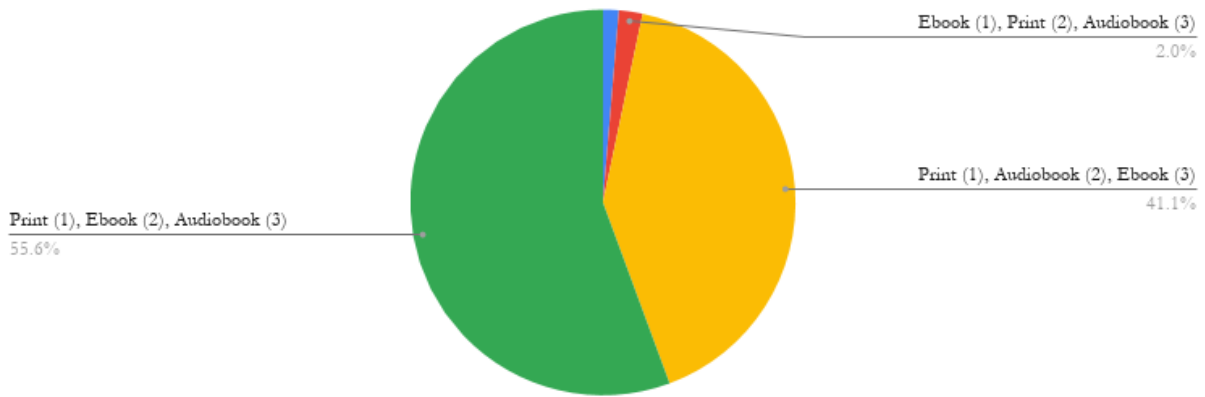
homogenous—85.3% of respondents live in Oregon, 94.7% of respondents identify as female, and 87.3% identify as European American/white. If this study were to be repeated, it would be valuable to gather data from a more diverse pool of respondents across all demographics. The second limitation derives from the nature of a self-reported survey. The use of this data assumes honesty, proper interpretation of each question, and objective, unbiased reporting. As the researcher, I have worked to limit these risks by intentionally wording each question and having various people read through them for coherency and clarity, as well as providing a detailed statement of consent at the beginning of the survey, ensuring respondents that their responses are confidential and anonymous, and that they could stop the survey at any time. This topic lends itself to further research in the future.

Main Finding 1: Difference between parents and kids in how they prefer to engage with reading.

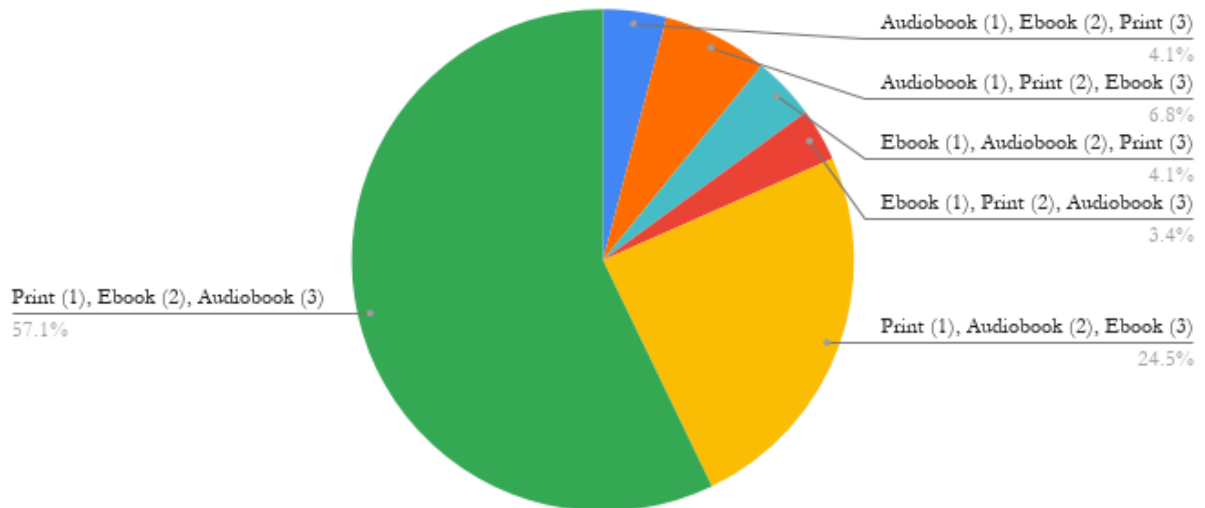
The numbers

In the online survey, parents were asked to rank, from most preferred to least preferred, their desired format (print, Ebook, or audiobook) when reading to their children. Of 150 responses, 84 respondents (56.6%) ranked in order of preference print, Ebook, and then audiobook; 62 respondents (41.1%) preferred print, audiobook, and then Ebook; 3 respondents (2%) preferred Ebook, print, and then audiobook; and 2 respondents (1.3%) preferred audiobook, Ebook, and then print. However, when these same parents were asked how they believe their own children would rank desired formats for reading, the answers were a bit more varied. Of 146 responses, 84 respondents (57.1%) indicated their children would prefer print, Ebook, and then audiobook; 36 respondents (24.5%) indicated their children's order of preference as print, audiobook, and then Ebook; 10 respondents (6.8%) preferred audiobook, print, and then Ebook; 6 respondents (4.1%) preferred Ebook, audiobook, and then print; 6 respondents (4.1%) preferred audiobook, Ebook, and then print; and 5 respondents (3.4%) preferred Ebook, print, and then audiobook.

Parents: From most preferred (1) to least preferred (3), how would you rank your desired format (print, Ebook, audiobook) when reading with your kid(s)?



From most preferred (1) to least preferred (3), how would your kid(s) rank desired formats (print, Ebook, audiobook) when reading independently?



What does it mean?

While the data collected indicates print books as a strong preference for both parents and children, in an increasingly digital world, platforms to engage with material beyond the traditional print format continue to emerge. According to the Association of American Publishers, Ebook

revenue increased 15.2% in 2020, coming in at \$1 billion for the first eleven months of 2020, while revenue from physical audiobooks jumped 30% to \$4.1 million (Anderson). The variety of available platforms makes reading more widely accessible, and research indicates that using Ebooks or audiobooks in conjunction with print books benefits children. In her piece “Click, Swipe, and Read: Sharing e-Books with Toddlers and Preschoolers,” professor and regional literacy specialist Jessica Hoffman highlights how Ebooks create engaging and enjoyable learning experiences for both adults and toddlers, and how by functioning differently from printed texts they can also teach children new literacy and development skills (Hoffman et al.) She argues society will continue to become more digitized, so introducing children to Ebooks at a young age simultaneously introduces them to this ever-expanding reality. Her research specifically explores how shared reading—when the adult facilitates how a child derives meaning from texts—can be beneficial in the context of using Ebooks.

When a child reads with an adult in her life, there is often outside communication between adult and child that augments what’s written on the page, which Hoffman calls “comprehensible input.” This can include gestures, facial expressions, or references to illustrations. She writes that when comprehensible input is “woven in real shared reading contexts [these strategies] appear as natural conversations... and help the child make meaning of the text,” (381). Engaging in shared reading with an Ebook provides the opportunity to further enhance these interactions given the additional features of digital books. Overall, Hoffman recommends that the Ebook reading experience not replace child-adult reading interactions, but that engaging with Ebooks is good for young children, and best done with adult mediation that enhances the new form and context for children to develop literacy skills.

In her study “Print Books vs. E-books,” Cynthia Chiong and her colleagues found similar results regarding parent-child reading engagement with Ebooks. In a sample of 32 sets of parents

with 3-to-6-year-old children, participants read both a print book and an Ebook; the Ebook was either basic or enhanced with extra multimedia elements. They found that enhanced Ebooks encouraged more non-content-related interactions, while children recalled more details with a basic versus an enhanced Ebook (Chiong et al.). Chiong writes, “The print books were more advantageous for literacy building [in shared reading], whereas the Ebooks, particularly the enhanced Ebook, were more advantageous for engaging children and prompting physical interaction,” (2). While enhanced Ebooks can distract from the story and encourage conversation away from the content, they “may be valued for their ability to prompt less motivated young readers toward engagement when they might otherwise avoid text altogether,” (2).

Audiobooks present a similar opportunity for children. In her article “Audiobooks vs. Reading: Is Listening to Books as Useful for Kids?” Emily Kelleher lays out several ways audiobooks offer alternative reading experiences for children. She says they help children with the “process of identifying words” by listening to people model their pronunciation and usage, as well as help motivate “struggling readers” by showing them how fun it can be to read (Kelleher). When children are first learning to read via a print book, they simultaneously try to make meaning from the collection of symbols on a page while attempting to retain the narrative; audiobooks do the extra work of the former so children can enjoy the process of the latter. Audiobooks can also introduce children to books above their grade level. Regan McMahon, deputy books editor at Common Sense Media, says, “A lot of times [the classics] have old-fashioned language, and that kind of stops kids on the page. Whereas if you’re listening to... any kind of talented narrator, the sophisticated language is not a barrier (Kelleher).”

Similar to Chiong’s and Hoffman’s recommendations, Kelleher also asserts audiobooks should be paired with a print reading experience. Children still need to learn how to decode words on a page, and evidence suggests a combined experience yields greater reading success for children.

In a study of 20 children with reading disabilities, some received print books while others received print and audio combined—success was measured in how many words students could read per minute after an eight-week period. The kids who read only print could read four more words per minute, while students engaged in the combined method could read seventeen more words per minute (Kelleher). Kelleher’s key recommendation is that for shared reading, parents should sit with their kids while they listen to a book and follow along with their finger in the print version. Dr. Michael Rich, Associate Professor of Pediatrics at Harvard Medical School says, “If the parent is modeling enjoying reading and sharing this experience with the child, it makes reading something that is thought of and felt positively (Kelleher).”

Key takeaway: Print continues to be the dominant choice for both parents and children, but these findings suggest that children have varied preferences in how they engage with their reading.

Publishers can support this endeavor in a couple of ways. First, understanding that adults and kids may prefer different reading platforms allows the opportunity to diversify how one book is produced and sold. In her research, Margret Beditz highlights one of the key complications in marketing children’s books: there are always two target markets. She writes, “You must market to both the child who will be at the library picking out his or her book and the adult who will ultimately be the one to buy the book for the child,” (Beditz, 159). Publishers can take advantage of this unique condition by publishing in several formats, such as print, Ebook, and/or audio, and bundling reading experiences to appeal to the multiple platform-using household.

Second, publishers can produce Ebooks that allow greater parental control, increasing a parent’s comfort level in allowing her child to read digitally. A major recommendation Hoffman makes in a shared reading Ebook experience is to turn the narration off and still read aloud, especially where there are extended portions of text that can prevent adults from engaging in supplementary input conversations (Hoffman, 383). Publishers can use this information to create

Ebooks that allow parents more control over extraneous elements that may cause distraction, while children who feel more comfortable reading from an Ebook can engage with their preferred platform.

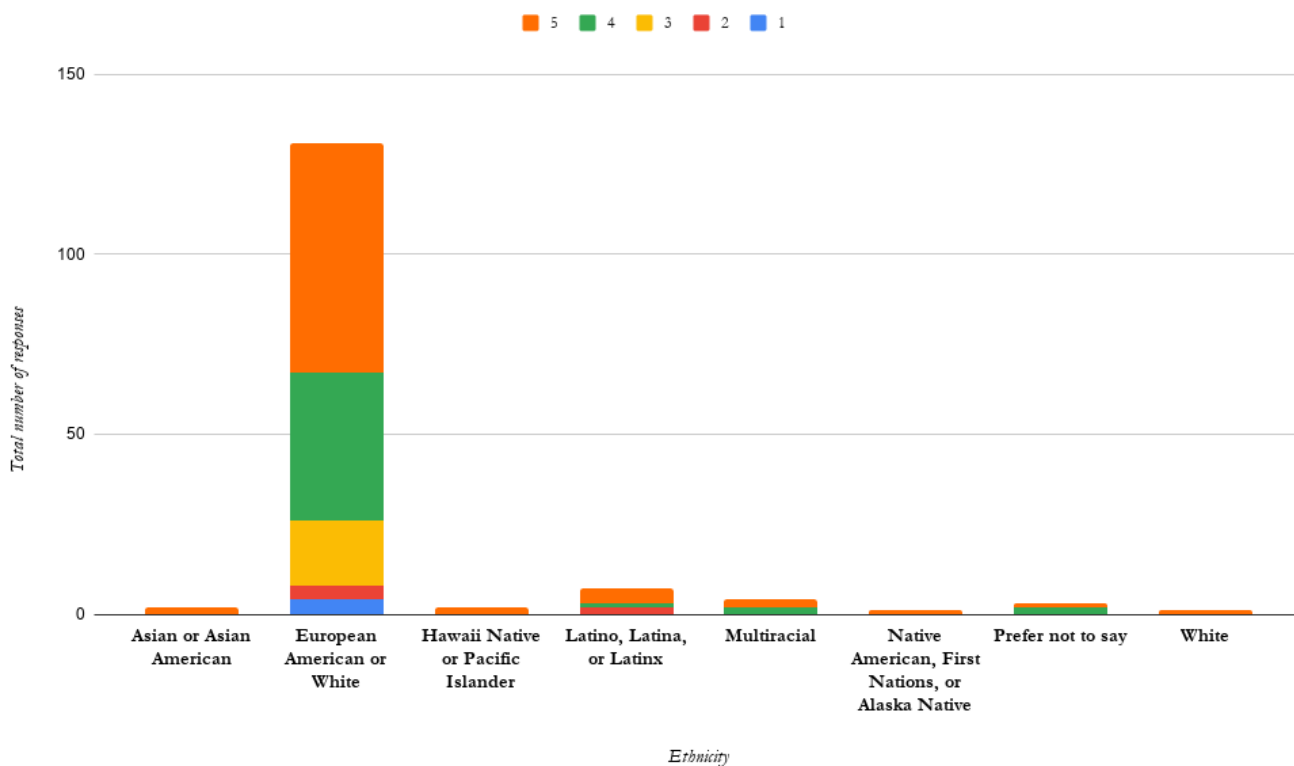
Main finding 2: The desire for diverse character experience.

The numbers

In the online survey, parents were also asked to rank how important it is that books incorporate diverse characters. The chart below illustrates the responses broken down by demographic information. Respondents were instructed to rank the importance of this attribute on a scale from 1-5, with 1 being the least important, and 5 being the most important. Of the largest demographic represented, 65 of 131 (49.2%) European American/White respondents ranked character diversity as a 5 (most important). Of the smaller respondent groups, 100% of Asian/Asian American parents (2 of 2), Hawaii Native/Pacific Islander parents (2 of 2), and Native American/First Nations/Alaska Native parents (1 of 1) also ranked this attribute as a 5, while 4 of 7 (57%) Latino/Latina/Latinx parents and 2 of 4 multiracial parents (50%) did the same. Notably, only 4 respondents to the survey ranked diversity in lived experience as a 1 (least important).

How important is it that books demonstrate diversity in characters and/or lived experience?

Rank the importance from 1 (the lowest) to 5 (the highest).



What does it mean?

Scholastic provides reports that analyze what kids and parents are reading and what they value about these books. A key observation in the current Scholastic report details the growing desire for more diversity in children’s books. Andrea Davis-Pinkney, Vice President and Executive Editor for Scholastic Trade Books, elaborates on the importance of diverse books for children. When kids of different races, backgrounds, abilities, etc., see themselves reflected in the books they read, “[those children] become empowered to read more, which has a direct impact on how they view their place in the world.” (Tarshis) Allowing the reader to dive into stories with alternative perspectives helps children develop empathy and open-mindedness. Davis-Pinkney adds, “Conversely, when kids don’t see books that reflect diverse experiences, they’re not emboldened to

expand their thinking.” (16) According to the report, about 6 in 10 parents identify diversity as extremely or very important in the books their child reads (58%), while 4 in 10 kids say likewise (38%). Of the parents who want to see more books with diverse representation, 64% are Hispanic, 75% are Black, and 55% are Multiple race, Asian, or other. The report states, “Notably, finding these diversity-related characteristics is just as important to parents of Black children as finding books that help their child imagine and understand other people’s lives, make their child think and feel, as well as books that inspire kids to do something good or make them laugh.” (20) This finding is crucial because it highlights that parents of non-white children not only seek content that provides declarative statements about racial differences, but more importantly they seek content that also portray characters that look like their children living out their normal lives.

In a podcast episode of Hybrid Pub Scout, host Emily Einolander discusses these same ideas with Brian and Josie Parker, publishers for Portland-based Believe in Wonder. Brian emphasizes the importance of not making diversity a “preachy” thing, but rather naturally incorporating it into the narrative: “[Diversity] really does just infuse into your subconscious without you even really working hard for it. You learn the stuff through being entertained.” (Einolander) Mirroring the earlier findings in Scholastic about the importance of fiction as a tool for understanding the world, non-white children don’t see themselves nearly as frequently as white children as the protagonists of those formative, entertaining tales. Brian emphasizes this by saying, “When you’re reading stories, they unlock a part of your brain that says, ‘I can do these things. I can be these things’... So, when a young person of color or an LGBTQ youth is picking up a book and they don’t see themselves represented as a hero, as a king, as a queen, as a powerful wizard... when they don’t see themselves in those roles, they don’t get the opportunity to unlock that potential in their brain.” Children are emboldened to challenge themselves and envision themselves in heroic roles when people like them appear as the heroes in the media they consume. Therefore, Brian and Josie strive to teach kids from

a young age that people of color deserve a title role in the books made readily available for children: “What’s the best way to break somebody out of that [bias] loop? Show them representation of other people being amazing in other ways.”

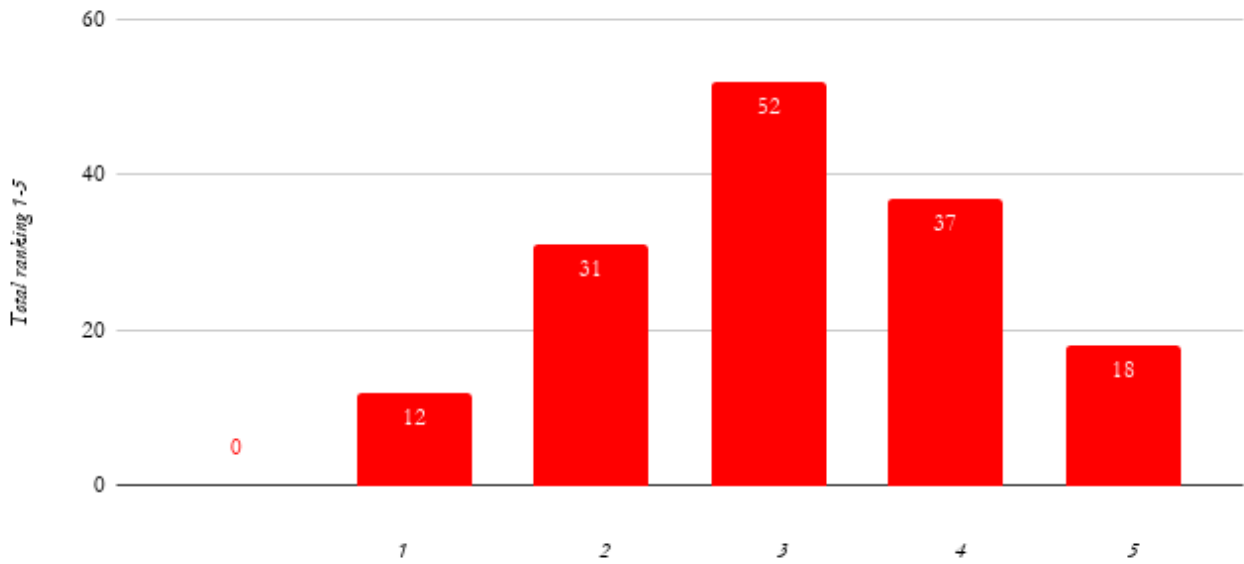
Key takeaway: A majority of parents are looking for books that reflect diverse experience, and having these titles available is especially crucial for children of diverse backgrounds. Publishers can promote this process by producing books by people of color and those with a diverse background, as well as making sure the content is varied and empowers those other than the white, able-bodied, heterosexual default.

Main finding 3: Both positive and negative reviews influence parents, but positive reviews influence parents more.

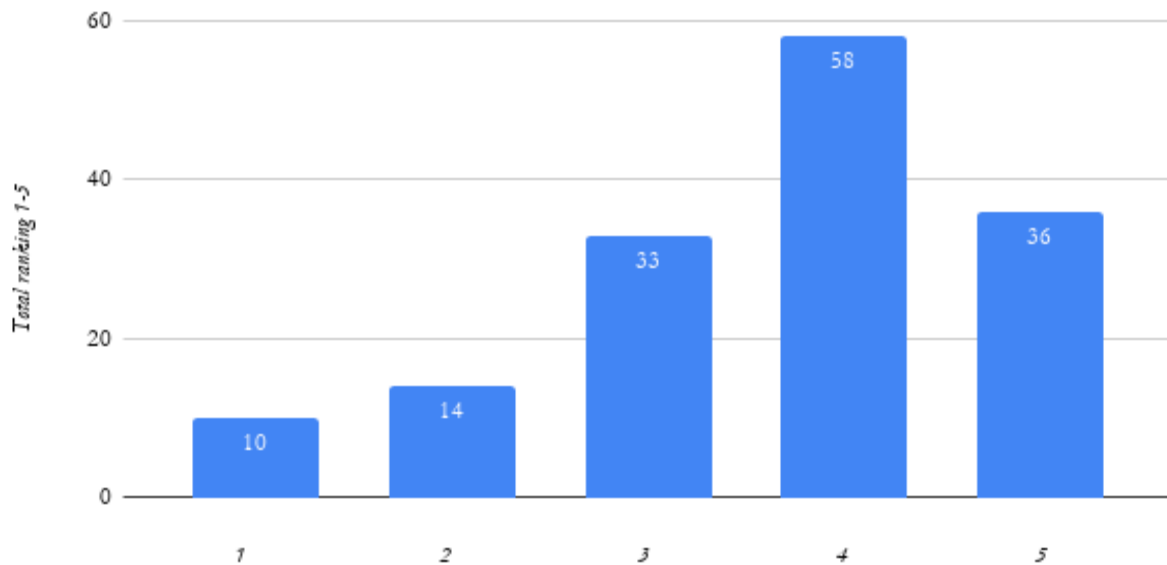
The numbers

The online survey asked parents to rank how important both negative and positive reviews are when choosing books for their children, and the two graphs below illustrate those responses. Respondents were instructed to rank the importance on a scale from 1-5, with 1 being the least, and 5 being the most important. Out of 151 respondents, 52 parents (34.4%) ranked negative reviews at a 3, 37 parents (24.5%) ranked them at a 4, and 18 parents (11.9%) ranked them at a 5. However, for positive reviews, 33 parents (21.8%) ranked them at a 3, 58 parents (38.4%) ranked them at a 4, and 36 parents (23.8%) ranked them at a 5.

How important are negative reviews from other readers and/or parents when choosing books for your kid(s)?



How important are positive reviews from other readers and/or parents when choosing books for your kid(s)?



What does this mean?

A vast majority of people use the internet to determine whether a product or service is worth their time, and positive, high-quality ratings prove to be an important consideration. According to the National Retail Federation (NRF), the convenience factor of technology allows working millennial parents to research and purchase products for their families without the added time of commuting to several stores per week. In the NRF Spring 2018 quarterly report, which focused on millennial parents, the research highlighted that a hallmark of millennial parent shopping habits is the reliance on mobile devices for every phase of the purchasing process (National Retail Federation). According to the NRF report nearly three-quarters of millennials use their phones to purchase products, whether researching specific product features and/or reviews, paying for or placing the order from their mobile devices, or even elements of the post-purchase process—71% use their devices to leave reviews, process returns, or chat with customer service. In an NRF podcast, Artemis Berry, the NRF's vice president of member engagement who is also a millennial parent, details how her lifestyle compares to the findings published in the report. Berry confirms the important role technology plays in her purchasing choices for her daughter, even before the child was born. After giving birth to her daughter, she appreciated the benefit of using her mobile device for research. She says, "There was a lot out there, and as a parent I was able to [research] from my couch when I got home from work after a long commute."

The influence of positive reviews on younger adults is explored in assistant professor Bettina von Helversen's article, "Influence of consumer reviews on online purchasing decisions in older and younger adults." von Helversen found that generally, positive reviews increase sales, but other contributing factors include review exposure, the characteristics of the reviewer, and the source of the reviewer (von Helversen et al.). In a study involving two distinct adult age groups, participants were presented with several products which had different kinds of reviews attached. When no individual customer review was present, younger adults chose the better average rated product 80%

of the time, while older adults selected it 58% of the time (5). Overall, younger adults were more influenced by average consumer ratings and positive affect-rich reviews (positive reviews with strong, encouraging language), which weren't as important to older adults. von Helversen writes, "These results highlight important age differences in consumer behavior, raising questions about the utility of consumer reviews... as well as how consumer reviews should be presented," (9).

The importance of reviews was echoed in several of the short answer responses collected via the survey. One parent wrote she follows "a lot of parenting accounts on Instagram that teach ways to read with your child," and that they have "great recommendations for books." Another parent wrote that she gets some books from buy-nothing groups on Facebook, made up of other parents, and gets further recommendations from other book-related Facebook groups, such as Read Aloud Revival. While positive reviews are important from any corner of the internet, several respondents reported that personal recommendations from people in their own circles are some of the most influential in confirming purchasing choices. One parent wrote, "My kids get into books because their friends are into them too," while another parent expressed that "peer recommendations always win." Another parent expressed reliance on a combination of these approaches, by getting "lots of ideas from friends, blogs, and Facebook mom groups." Both the numbers and the qualitative data demonstrate the influence of reviews and peer recommendations when millennials purchase books for their children.

Key takeaway: David Court and his colleagues, in "The Consumer Decision Journey," elaborate on how the exponential growth of the digital age necessarily impacts how marketers capture loyal customers. The explosion of media and variation of products requires marketers to find new ways to get their brands included in the initial consideration (first phase) of the customer journey. The new process he envisions is more like a circle, emphasizing the continuous journey with a loyal customer, and this journey has four phases: initial consideration, active evaluation, closure, and postpurchase.

An important consideration with this circular journey is how customer interaction plays into the overall purchasing decision. Court writes that two-thirds of the touch points during the active evaluation phase “involve consumer-driven marketing activities, such as Internet reviews and word-of-mouth recommendations from friends and families.” (Court et al.) Positive experiences make people more likely to be loyal, repeat customers, which generates positive word-of-mouth, and this exposure is key for increasing the likelihood of one’s product making it into the vast initial consideration set.

In their article “The New Consumer Decision Journey,” David Edelman and Marc Singer elaborate further on the new customer loyalty loop. They recognize that inherent to this new model is shoppers actively taking advantage of technology to evaluate products, creating “feedback loops.” They write that “customers [keep] evaluating products and services after purchase, pressuring products to perform and brands to deliver a superior experience on an ongoing basis.” (Edelman and Singer) This ongoing, internet-based conversation is how consumers are more likely to decide which products to take a chance on, and once they have, brands now have a responsibility to continuously show consumers made the right choice.

Reviews and word-of-mouth are powerful influencers, and positive reviews are more influential than negative reviews with millennial parents. Diving into the ongoing, online conversations regarding how customers feel about, and experience, certain products allow companies to create personalized experiences that encourage brand loyalty.

Other Key Findings

In analyzing the survey data, two additional themes worth noting came up repeatedly. One, parents want books for their children that can provide silliness and fun, as well as teach them important things about being human; and two, millennial parents find significant value in using subscription services, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finding: Parents seek a balance of silliness and character-building in the books they select for their children.

According to the previously referenced Scholastic report, the primary attributes children look for in their reading material are humor (up 10 points this year to 52%); help with exploring new worlds (up 9 points to 40%); and assistance with learning new topics (up 7 points to 26%) (Tarshis, 12). Further, 74% of children agree that reading fiction and nonfiction helps them understand the world, with a similar percentage (73%) agreeing that reading about current events makes it easier to talk about or understand them (13). These findings demonstrate that children not only turn to books for joy and entertainment but are increasingly utilizing books to make better sense of the world around them. The report also indicates that parents look for similar attributes in their kids' books, in addition to seeking out books that help their children learn about the lives of others (up 12 points to 48%), as well as books that make their children think and feel (up 9 points to 51%) (14). Children express interest in learning more about other people and places, and parents want to provide these valuable insights via books. The report details the qualities parents want their children to develop as they grow, prioritizing responsibility, self-confidence, honesty, respectfulness, and kindness; 95% agree that "characters in books can help their children develop these positive qualities." (22) This suggests that beyond understanding new perspectives and people, parents and children both place immense value on a book's ability to teach children about desirable character traits. Children value protagonists who they relate to and who show them how to conquer difficult situations, while parents turn to beloved leading characters to teach their children the kinds of behaviors and personality traits they hope their kids will emulate as they develop.

Several parents echoed these findings in the online survey responses. One parent wrote, "Our boys love silly chapter graphic novels that do not offer any educational benefit, except they learn to get lost in the words and pages of the book. [We also purchase] educational books and

books that build character, [which] teach us so many life lessons and really bring books to life.”

Another parent expressed that they will purchase “any story that teaches [kids] to be who they are no matter what, despite pressure from others. Essentially,” he wrote, “books I wish were available when I was a kid.” Yet another parent wrote, “I’m much more likely to purchase books that I want them to read over and over, and I’m more inclined to choose books that have messages on mental health, kindness, patience, strength, and just plain silly books for laughs.”

Finding: Millennial parents value product subscription services.

According to CouponFollow’s recent assessment, the subscription service market is valued at roughly \$15 billion (Couponfollow). Currently, there are 18.5 million subscription box shoppers in the US, and 35% of these active shoppers subscribe to three or more services (Forte). Chris George, co-founder of Subscription Trade Association (SUBTA), says, “Subscriptions have become more appealing for brands... they allow the consumer to engage in a relationship with the brands. In many cases, they also save the consumer money...” (Forte). George further elaborates that ecommerce giants (like Amazon) can sell things cheaper and deliver quicker than almost anywhere, so other brands need to build consumer loyalty in order to compete; personalized, efficient subscription services are a way to establish that loyalty with millennials.

In the NRF Retail Gets Real podcast episode, Artemis Berry explains she uses subscription services for both herself and her daughter. She uses a few retail subscriptions to make sure she always has the products she needs in her house, but also subscribes to some of her daughter’s niche interests (Cullen). For example, Berry wants to provide alternative toys to the typical girl-gendered options and gets a STEM-related toy sent to her house each month. Berry also emphasizes that she appreciates subscription services that provide a discount, are consistently replenished, and that retailers know when she’s going to need more of the product; the SUBTA findings mirror this perception. They found that 70% of millennials use at least one subscription, and some of the most

valuable aspects to the subscription boxes are flexibility to increase, decrease, or pause a subscription at any time, the ability to change products, and receiving discounts. Subscription services free up time that millennial parents would otherwise spend shopping and researching for new products; Berry says, “The conveniences I need in my life is a part of it. I need that time.”

In the online survey many parents shared similar sentiments from their own experiences. Several parents referenced many of the same services, such as Epic, Literati, Libby, and Bookshelf. Parents also noted a change in digital reading and reliance on subscription services in conjunction with COVID-19 and moving to a distance learning format. Couponfollow found that while 21% of consumers surveyed said they would cancel their current subscription services during COVID-19 due to financial hardship, around 20% of people started new subscription boxes in order to consistently have the products they really need. One parent wrote, “At the beginning of remote learning, I purchased a subscription to Epic and had two kids reading Kindles. I showed them how to check out Ebooks using Libby.” Another parent wrote, “My kids have used Epic Books for Ebooks significantly more than I would ever have allowed prior to quarantine.” Millennial parents appreciate the efficiency and consistency of subscriptions, and their reliance on them to provide reading material for their children has only increased with the introduction and prolonged nature of the pandemic and remote learning.

Conclusion

The millennial generation is driving change across the social and economic landscape, and the publishing industry is not immune. As discussed throughout this research, practically every aspect of book publishing is being impacted as these new parents come of age, including content creation, character development, where and how books are procured, and the platforms on which they are consumed. Compounding this evolution is the role of social media and online feedback in shaping consumer sentiment. Dealing with such transformation may seem daunting at first, but if

done right book publishers can actually leverage this change to their advantage to develop a loyal, millennial parent base.

1. Publishers need to become versed in the technologies impacting their industry, especially regarding the various digital reading platforms. The data indicates parents and kids can be two potential markets for children's books, and publishers can jump on this by publishing in several formats—including print, Ebook, and audio—and bundling reading experiences to appeal to the multi-platform-using household. Second, publishers can produce Ebooks that allow for greater parental control, increasing a parent's comfort level with digital reading.
2. Publishers also must become tuned to the social dynamics influencing what consumers want to read. Publishers can increase the access of material reflecting diverse experience by producing books by people of color and those with a diverse background, as well as making sure the content is varied and empowers those other than the white, able-bodied, heterosexual default.
3. Publishers must also engage millennial parents on the platforms they are most comfortable with. Online reviews and word-of-mouth are powerful influencers, and positive versus negative reviews are most influential. Diving into the already ongoing, online conversations regarding product satisfaction will only aid companies in being able to create personalized experiences that encourage brand loyalty.

This generation of parents is increasingly becoming a more powerful consumer base. Understanding their consumer preferences and those of their children will only aid publishers in meeting the needs of millennial parents, and the future independent readers they are raising.

Appendix 1: Survey questions

A link to the Google survey form for this research can be accessed [here](#). The survey questions included:

Identity-based questions

1. Age (making sure the subject falls in the millennial range)
 - a. 18-24 years old
 - b. 25-34 years old
 - c. 35-44 years old
 - d. 45-54 years old
 - e. 55-64 years old
 - f. 65-74 years old
 - g. 75 years or older
2. Residence
 - a. I live in Portland or surrounding areas
 - b. I live outside of Portland but in Oregon
 - c. I live outside of Oregon but in the USA (specify city, state)
 - d. I live outside the USA (specify region)
3. With which gender do you most identify
 - a. Female
 - b. Gender variant/non-conforming
 - c. Male
 - d. Prefer not to say
4. Ethnicity
 - a. African American or Black

- b. Asian or Asian American
 - c. European American or White
 - d. Hawaii Native or Pacific Islander
 - e. Latino, Latina, or Latinx
 - f. Middle Eastern or North African
 - g. Multiracial
 - h. Native American, First Nations, or Alaska Native
 - i. Prefer not to say
 - j. Other
5. Number of children
6. Age of children

Questions about books themselves (utilizing a scale of 1-5 for quantitative data)

How important is...

- 1. Content that is entertaining for children
- 2. Content that is informative or educational for children
- 3. Content that has a good moral of the story/life lesson for children
- 4. Content that demonstrates diversity in characters and/or lived
- 5. Content that features high design quality
- 6. Content that includes illustrations
- 7. Content that reflects the values of the company or founder
- 8. Content that was dissuaded by negative reviews from other readers/parents
- 9. Content that was encouraged by positive reviews from other readers/parents

Questions about preferred platform

How do you prefer to read books with your kid(s)? Rank in order from most often (1) to least often (3):

1. Print (paperback/hardcover)
2. Ebook
3. Audiobook

Questions about distance learning

1. Are your children currently enrolled in either a completely remote or hybridized educational experience? (Y/N)
2. If so, has distance learning impacted the way you pick and purchase books? (Y/N)
3. If so, please leave any comments here elaborating on that experience (open-ended response)

Is there anything else you'd like me to know about how and why you purchase books for your children? (open-ended response)

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