

Giftgiving

for Millennials

WHAT DO
MILLENNIALS
CONSIDER THE
OPTIMAL GIFTING
EXPERIENCE?





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Gifting for Millennials

Millennials engage in the gifting experience differently than other generations. We narrowed the most influential key points to price, social media involvement, availability, ethics/value system, customization, durability, and intention.

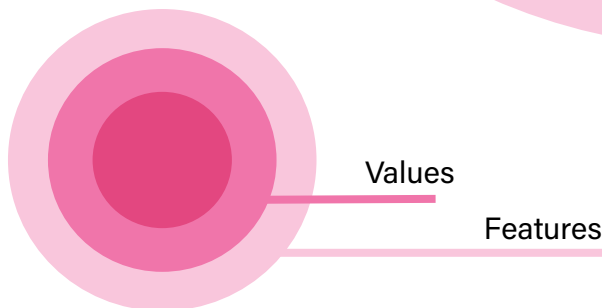
With these parameters in mind, our primary research consisted of interviewing millennials through surveys, in-depth interviews, cultural probes, and sensory cues exercises such as image sorting surveys to collect a sample of data and develop a solution.

We also combined secondary research on how companies in brick-and-mortar locations and e-commerce present the optimal customer experience for millennials. This data helped us link what millennials are exposed to when shopping and what pain points we can tackle.

This compilation of research following the Lextant framework helped us map the ideal emotional and practical journey a millennial expects from a gifting experience. As a result, we have information that could help companies in the gifting industry better allocate resources to the millennial target demographic and psychographics.

FRAMEWORK

Ideal gifting experience for millennials



I feel happy...

The main emotional trigger that pushed our survey sample to engage in gifting within their close circle of friends was the satisfaction of exchanging gifts that bring happiness to all participants. Whether intergenerational, social media driven, or online/offline, a key link was the positive intention behind being a gifter and a giftee.

As we conducted in-depth interviews, we asked if the emotional trigger shifted when the gifting experience moved outside the participant's inner circle. Our findings suggest that while the intention may change, the inherent happiness of the experience wasn't too affected.

Gifts for Millennials

I WANT CONNECTION

Intergenerational gaps during the gifting experience manifest themselves with tangible and intangible gifts. The gift is seen less as a product and more as a way to strengthen the bond between the giver and the giftee. As a result, experiential gifting tied to quality time is often sought out.

I WANT CONSCIOUS GIFTING

Gifts are an extension of the participants' belief system. The gifting exchange can show values important to the participants. Participants responded positively to multifunctional and durable gifts as it tied to their conscious consumption beliefs. An example would be that an eco-conscious consumer is more likely to gift and receive objects/experiences related to sustainability.



VALUES

I WANT AFFORDABILITY

Price is the most significant defining factor for millennials engaging in gifting experiences. It also connects with our research's key points, especially regarding durability and customization. Participants want the option for quality and customizable options at reasonable prices. All participants expressed a priority during their consumer journey: having the early stages of the exchange be convenient. While the initial emotional trigger is happiness, anxiety about how accessible and overwhelming the experience could be was a close second.

I WANT OPTIONS

Millennials prefer to shop through e-commerce as it offers faster access to options than brick-and-mortar shops. E-commerce offered faster options and a clearer perception of inventory and suggestions. We followed this closely when developing a solution as we believe we can optimize both shopping experiences by combining aspects of online and offline shopping into one consumer-centric approach.

This is integral to the ideal gifting experience as it ties to the initial emotional trigger of happiness and accessibility that push millennials to engage in gifting opportunities.

Satisfaction

Gifters and giftees experience satisfaction from engaging in thoughtful exchanges. Our sensory cues interviews linked respect as an essential emotion during intergenerational gift exchanges. Results didn't change as the participants left their inner circle of relationships.

Experiential

As experiential gifts are more popular with millennials, our in-depth interviews showed a mutual compromise between millennials and older generations where the experiential gift was tied to a tangible object. Oftentimes, the tangible gift represented the desire for quality time and the satisfaction of strengthening their connection through a gifting experience. Our results show cultural influences affect the degree of compromise each participant is willing to engage in.

Quality Time

Quality time was the central goal for intergenerational gifters and giftees. The results show that this was more prevalent in the participant's close social circle. However, quality time was viewed as more time-consuming and less optimal if there wasn't a strong emotional incentive to participate. As the participants left their inner social circle, with or without intergenerational participants, quality time became less of a central goal. The cultural probe worksheet showed that participants showed the same resistance to price points as the gifting exchange expanded outside of their inner social circle.



I want connection...

Intergenerational gaps during the gifting experience manifest themselves with tangible and intangible gifts. The gift is seen less as a product and more as a way to strengthen the bond between the gifter and the giftee. As a result, experiential gifting tied to quality time is often sought out way to strengthen the bond between the gifter and the giftee. As a result, experiential gifting tied to quality time is often sought out.



I want conscious gifting...

Gifts are an extension of the participants' belief system. The gifting exchange can show values important to the participants. Participants responded positively to multifunctional and durable gifts as they were tied to their conscious consumption beliefs.

Sustainable

In the image sorting survey portion of our sensory cues interview, when it came to discussion ethics, both participants preferred the object with labels indicating it was sustainable. One participant expressed sustainability as an added layer of thoughtfulness that enriches the experiences, even if they didn't actively engage in eco-friendly living. Another participant mentioned that regardless of who else participates in the exchange, they would always pick sustainable options as they strictly practiced conscious consumption. The instances represent both sides of the spectrum when people are given a chance to be sustainable; either they are indifferent and still choose it or actively seek it. Regardless of the reason, both participants agreed that if available, they would go with a sustainable option during a gifting experience.

Ethically Sourced

Expanding on conscious gifting, the follow-up questions for the sensory cues interviews suggested that consumers who prioritize conscious gifting see ethically sourced/executed products and experiences as a requirement. All these segments complement each other and oftentimes work together.

Durable

For tangible gifts, shelf-life is a key component of conscious gifting. One of our survey questions asked participants if the negative effects of consumerism, i.e., over-consumption, affect their overall gifting experience. The results suggested the presence of a moral obligation dictated by negative societal perceptions of consumerism. When linked to durability, our research shows an intersection of ethical values, peer pressure, and conscious gifting. For example, the frowned-upon practice of buying several cheaply made objects instead of one quality item to reduce purchases.

However, our research revealed that durability loses importance for non-tangible gifts, such as experiences, unless it enriches the overall activity. It connected to our second round of sensory cues interviews because the object's durability didn't matter if it was a means to enforce quality time in intergenerational gifting opportunities. For example, a young participant gifted their grandparent a blanket with photos of family travels. The central focus of that gift wasn't the quality of the blanket but the intention behind reminiscing memories.

Transparency

From a gifter and giftee perspective, transparency touches on the emotional and convenient aspects of gifting experiences. We developed this segment during our insight consolidation in both affinitization processes. When brainstorming solutions, we also considered how to translate this into online and brick-and-mortar points of purchase.

Our in-depth interviews and sensory cues interviews revealed that transparency in terms of cultural influences majorly affected the overall gifting experience. For example, a participant made the connection that a gift given from someone in an older generation who follows traditionalist values, will hold higher transparency i.e. no hidden meaning compared to someone the participant doesn't know very well. This discovery ties to our research data point that gifts are an extension of the person's belief and ethics system.

When looking into an affordability lens, transparency becomes a subject needed during the shopping portion of the gifting experience. Our survey questionnaire and secondary research recorded that people prefer e-commerce over brick-and-mortar because of how readily available the inventory is. Therefore, the fact of having a close estimate of how many items are in stock, is a form of transparency that alleviates the shopper's anxieties.

Convenience

Anxiety due to having either too many options or not enough was a big emotional trigger we found both in online and brick-and-mortar shopping experiences during the beginning of the gifting process. Our journey and empathy maps identified these frustrations in the preliminary research. We were proven correct when participants across all interviews expressed indecisiveness and stress when deciding on an item or experience to purchase. When we finished our affinitization processes and looked at solutions, it was evident that convenience was a pain point we had to relieve.

Multifunctional

One of the participants on our cultural probe kit mentioned what a different participant defined during the image sorting survey; multifunctional items, regardless of the point of purchase, fit into a general category of universally acceptable gifts. We found this link also connects to a trend that showed how participants prioritized convenience as a top priority during the entirety of a gifting experience.



I want affordability...

On our cultural probe interviews, we centered our hypothesis on how much price influences our gifting experiences inside our inner social circles.. Participants were given one-hundred dollars and were given a series of grouped items to choose from. At the end, they had to answer questions to justify their decisions. Although for different reasons such as ethics and social media influences, all three participants proved our hypothesis correct.

Availability

Many e-commerce websites offer information on how many items are in stock to facilitate the buying process for customers. Our research showed across all participants that accessibility and convenience is a priority in a gifting opportunity. Tying our results with this online perk helped us during the solution process as we see it as a way to ease participant's anxieties when trying to pick the perfect gift.

This segment also helped us outline the key differences between online and brick-and-mortar journey maps as we wanted to cover all narratives. In our final solution, access to inventory information is crucial for success.

Inventory

One of the participants on our cultural probe kit mentioned what a different participant defined during the image sorting survey; multifunctional items, regardless of the point of purchase, fit into a general category of universally acceptable gifts. We found this link also connects to a trend that showed how participants prioritized convenience as a top priority during the entirety of a gifting experience.

Online/Offline

Intergenerational gaps found in gifting experiences manifested themselves when we factored social media influence. Our research showed younger audiences more connected to social media influences and therefore preferring to shop strictly e-commerce. However, during our in-depth and sensory cues interviews we found millennials willing to compromise in their gifting expectations if it meant including all older participants who aren't affected by social media influence and shop mostly at brick-and-mortar.

Categorizing older generations with tangible, brick-and-mortar choices and younger generations with experiential and e-commerce choices helped us link what is optimal for millennials who may want a broader approach to their optimal gifting experience.



I want options...

This is integral to the ideal gifting experience as it ties to the initial emotional trigger of happiness and accessibility that push millennials to engage in gifting opportunities.

Image Sorting Survey

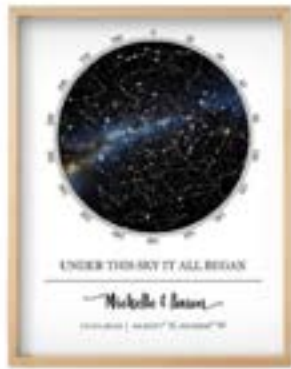
1.-



2.-



3.-



4.-



Let's apply these features to Millennials including what they had to say...

During our sensory cues interviews, we gave participants an image-sorting survey to record how they responded to visual stimuli. The survey consisted of twenty-four photos divided into six questions. Each question asked them to pick the photo that best represented their gifting experiences when associating price, ethics, intention, availability, durability, and customization. We asked them to expand on the initial emotional responses each answer gave them.

After we analyzed the data, we returned to the participants and did a second interview round. We asked participants to factor inter-generational members for their gifting experiences and if that consideration changed their initial answers. The second interview prompted more familial anecdotes and qualitative data as it was done with a conversational approach. Both interviews helped us develop links with our final framework.



Participated in Sensory Cue
Smiti Patni

Age 24 | Student at SCAD

- Gifting Experiences over tangible objects especially towards older generations
- She prefer to receive gift experiences as well

Motivation: Experience, Quality Time, Durability

Participated in Sensory Cue
Christen Spehr

Age 26 | Student at SCAD

- Durability and Experiences when receiving and giving gifts
- Heavily influenced by Cultural background
- Importance to Passing down family heirlooms

Motivation: Options, Affordability, Quality Time



Participated in Cultural Probe Worksheet
Ellen Tippow

Age 29

- Gifted to Sibling
- Heavily relies on social media to purchase gifts and find inspiration for her gifting needs

Motivation: Price, Availability, Intention



Smiti Patni



Patni's central intention when gifting falls into the framework's **I want conscious gifting** value. She recalled that even with non-tangible objects, her best gifting exchanges involved forms of conscious gifting. Patni's interview focused on the three main features of conscious gifting, **sustainability, ethically sourced, and durability.**

Our insight into gifts being an extension of the participant's belief system proved accurate, as Patni's best gifting memory was when her grandmother gave her a pot with seeds to start



a family garden. The experiential gift tied to a tangible object remained constant with intergenerational gifting and permeated into our framework's **I want connection** value and **quality time** feature.



Received a trip to her destination of choice from her parents after graduation because they wanted to show how proud they were of her. The experience was more meaningful than any other material gift she received for the occasion.

Interviewees (features applied)

including what they had to say...

Image Sorting Survey

Christen Spehr



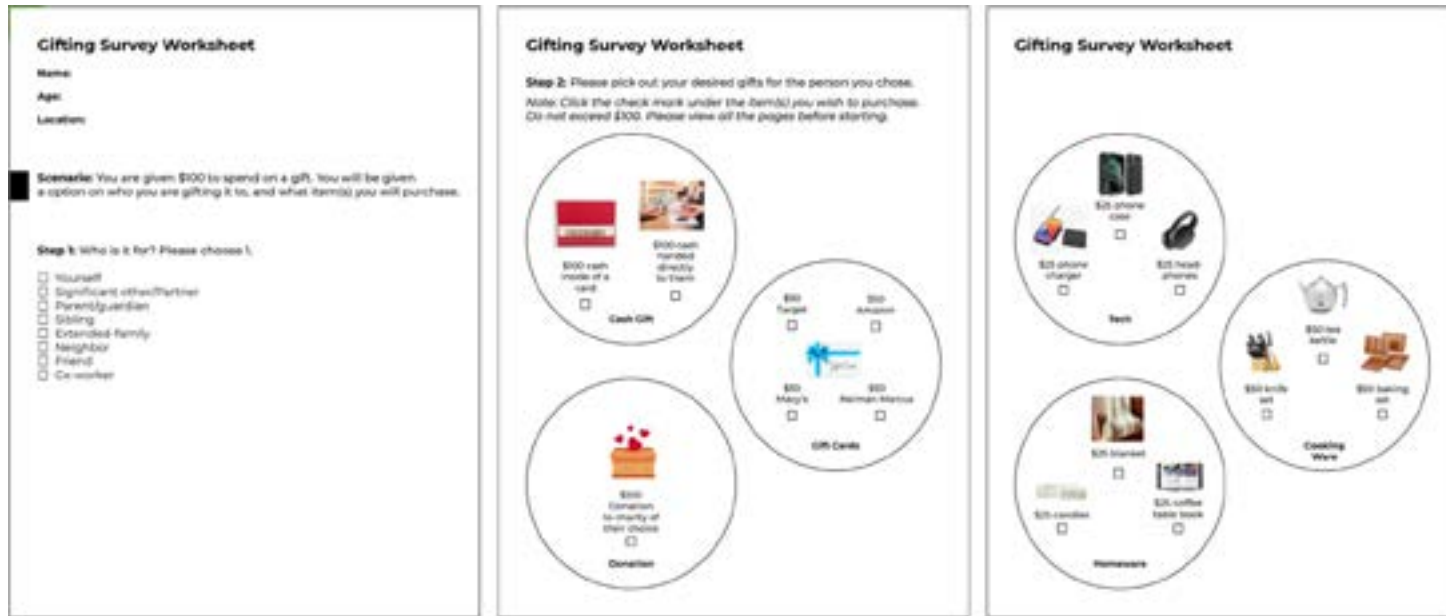
Spehr's main intentions when gifting fall into the **I want connection** value through **options** and **affordability.** For her, quality time counted as an experiential gift and was preferred compared to a gifting exchange with tangible objects. Spehr's interview showed little interest in conscious gifting and more in optimizing quality time.

Because the quality time feature was integral in her results, throughout the interview, she revealed that if she chose a tangible object, she **needed enough affordable options** to pick from to find and convey her intentions of connecting with all participants.

Value quality time as a viable gifting experience. However, if availability was a pressing factor, they would choose gifts that align with their personal beliefs.



Cultural Probe Worksheet



We created a cultural probe worksheet kit to go along with our hypothesis that millennials prioritize spending more money on gifting experiences for their inner social circles than outer social circles. This hypothesis helped us explore our questionnaire result on how out of all the parameters we chose, price was the most important for millennials. Our results proved our hypothesis to be true and helped us collect more data to move into the next steps. The worksheet guided participants through a scenario where they had \$100 to spend for a gift, and they could pick items from different clustered areas.

Sundeeep



Participated in Cultural Probe Worksheet
Age 25 | Student at Hong Kong University

Sundeeep chose to keep the \$100 for herself and not spend it on anything. Her reasoning is that she doesn't participate in gifting opportunities because it creates expectations. Her result ties to our parameter involving intention and how it varies from giftee to gifter. Her answer still fits into our hypothesis.

Rosan Rinoaz



Participated in Cultural Probe Worksheet
Age 25 | Student at UT Austin

Motivation: Affordability, Durability, Quality Time

Rinoaz split the \$100 into tech, homeware, and personal care. They chose to give everything to their significant other as they were the last person they had recently spent quality time with. Connecting this to our framework, the initial benefit was I want connection; however, when asked to expand on his choices, I want options, and I want affordability to help them make a decision. Ultimately, they chose those gifts for someone in their inner circle, but still, price and durability kept the central focus behind his decision.

Participated in Cultural Probe Worksheet
Age 29

Motivation: Price, Availability, Intention

Tippow chose to give their sibling and split the \$100 evenly into personal care and products trending on TikTok/social media. They decided on their sibling because their birthday is coming up, and they share similar interests. This answer echoed our previous results that gifts are an extension of the participants' beliefs and preferences. Tippow's main benefit fell into the I want connection portion of our framework since the intention behind her choices was that their sister often sees products on social media and purchases them.

Ellen Tippow





Gifting

for Millennials

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