

Table of Contents

Cover

	xecutive Summary	1
2	Dbservations	2
	Introduction	2
	Objectives, Scope, and Methodology	2
	How Millennials Perceive and Engage with the Postal Service	4
	Brand Perception and Engagement	5
	First-Class Mail	
	Marketing Mail	
	Parcels	8
	Ideation: What Millennials Want	9
	Convenience and Immediacy	
	Self Service	
	Advanced Knowledge and Control	12
	Other Ways to Improve Convenience	13
	Customization	
	Loyalty Rewards Program	15

Customizable Card Services16
Other Ways to Customize USPS17
Areas for Further Exploration18
Millennials Have Diverse Living Arrangements
Living Arrangement Matters20
Primary Mail Handler and Gender21
Appendices
Appendix A: Survey Methodology24
Data Quality24
Quota Sampling and Weighting24
Statistical Testing
Appendix B: Online Discussion Board Methodology26
Value of Employing a Discussion Board Approach
Appendix C: Millennial Living Arrangement Data Analysis.27
Methodology27
How to Interpret Results
Appendix D: Management's Comments
Contact Information

Executive Summary

Meet John. His mom turns 50 next week. John ordered a gift yesterday — free two-day shipping, thank goodness! — and was disappointed he couldn't also just order a card online at the same time. He remembered to pick one out when he was at the grocery store, but now that he's home, he finds that his roommate used the last stamp. He wants to get the card in the mail tonight, so it will get there on time, but he can't remember if the closest post office has a stamp vending machine, and he certainly doesn't want to stand in line. If only there was an app for that!

John is a Millennial, defined in this paper as an adult aged 18 to 34. He interacts with the Postal Service as part of daily life, but he wants those interactions to be effortless. As far as he is concerned, the less time he puts into using postal services, the better. How can the Postal Service appeal to customers like John? The increasing purchasing power of digitally native consumers makes it critical for the Postal Service to recognize their wants and needs and ensure its continued relevance in years to come. To understand Millennials' relationship with mail, the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) drew insights from survey research and online discussion boards, probing Millennials for thoughts on the USPS brand, how they use mail and parcels, and ways to improve their postal experience.

The OIG found that while Millennials check their mail less frequently than older generations, their overall satisfaction with the Postal Service is similar to older age cohorts. They generally want more convenience and customization, suggesting that USPS provide more self service, advance knowledge of mail and parcel deliveries, and customer loyalty and benefits programs. Many of their suggestions intersect with existing products or services, such as Informed Delivery, Self-Service Kiosks, and Package Pickup. The overlap shows that USPS is on the right track with innovations that meet Millennials' desires, and new efforts to improve awareness are paramount.

One wrinkle in analyzing Millennials as a cohort is that age alone may not be as strong a predictor of mail use as with past generations. Our research showed that engagement with USPS varies according to household living arrangement. Those living with a partner, and especially those with a child, are generally more engaged and interested in new services than those living with their parents, alone, or with roommates. Continuing to monitor shifts in living arrangements and catering products and services to meet the needs of these distinct segments could prove valuable for USPS. By strategically focusing product development on convenience and customization, and building awareness with the right Millennials, at the right time, USPS can ensure relevance with the next generation of consumers.

Observations

Introduction

A Google search for "What do Millennials like?" shows how much ink this topic gets with more than 43 million hits. As this new generation of consumers comes into their economic prime, businesses are trying to figure out what appeals to and motivates them.¹ The Postal Service is no different. Identifying how Millennials will use mail in the decades to come and the ways to best serve their needs can ensure the continued relevance of the Postal Service in their lives.

This is especially important in the face of ongoing declines in mail volume. Among adults aged 18 to 34, the amount of mail received per week fell from 17 mailpieces in 2001 to 10 mailpieces in 2017.² The Postal Service needs to take advantage of opportunities to encourage mail use with young adults. To this end, the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted qualitative and quantitative research to provide a more comprehensive view of Millennials' engagement with the Postal Service. In the first section of the paper, we describe how they perceive and engage with USPS. In the second part of the paper, we focus on what Millennials say they want from USPS.

The OIG found that Millennials and older generations are similarly satisfied with the Postal Service. Our research indicates there are two opportunities to appeal to young consumers: enhancing convenience and increasing customization. Millennials desire more convenient postal interactions, including more self-service options and advance knowledge of mail and parcel deliveries. Interestingly, many of their suggestions intersect with existing products or services, such as Self-Service Kiosks and Informed Delivery. Millennials also expressed interest in customized concepts like personalized card services and customer loyalty programs. Many of these ideas are already offered in some way, shape, or form by USPS or its partners. However, awareness may be an issue, suggesting that promoting existing products is paramount.

The paper concludes with suggestions for future research. In particular, the OIG found that living arrangements may be a more important predictor of postal interactions than age alone, which could influence marketing strategies to bolster Millennial engagement.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The OIG conducted qualitative and quantitative analysis to complement the Postal Service's existing knowledge and research on Millennials. For the purposes of this paper, Millennials are defined as adults between the ages of 18 and 34, which matches the age range commonly used in the market research field.³

The primary objectives guiding this research were to:

- 1. Understand Millennials' perceptions of USPS as a brand;
- 2. Understand Millennials' usage of postal products as compared with previous generations; and
- 3. Explore what products and services USPS could offer to better cater to Millennials' needs.

As a part of its research, the OIG investigated differences between Millennials who live alone or with roommates, who live with their parents, or who live with a spouse and/or child. We discovered that living arrangements were a vital predictor of Millennials' engagement with the Postal Service. This research could help inform future USPS product development and marketing strategies.

¹ John Gapper, "How millennials became the world's most powerful consumers," Financial Times, June 6, 2018, https://www.ft.com/content/194cd1c8-6583-11e8-a39d-4df188287fff.

² Figures include First-Class Mail and all Commercial and Nonprofit Marketing Mail received, based on the OIG's analysis of RCF Economics and Financial Consulting analysis of U.S. Postal Service, Household Diary Study (HDS) reports, FY 2001 to 2017. Conversely, First-Class Mail and Marketing Mail received for households in the 65+ age cohort declined from 27 mailpieces per week in 2001 to 21 mailpieces in 2017.

³ There is no official or universally-accepted definition for the birth years of the Millennial generation.

To gather data for our analysis, the OIG followed a three-step methodology:

- Analyzing the OIG's Postal Omnibus Survey. The inaugural field of this nationally representative annual survey was conducted in Summer 2017 and included 3,391 respondents. The OIG analyzed the survey results to uncover differences and similarities in responses between age groups and between those who reported varying living arrangements within those age groups. See Appendix A for more information on the Postal Omnibus Survey and its methodology.
- Hosting a moderated online discussion board. In February 2018, the OIG engaged 69 Millennial respondents in an in-depth conversation designed to explore the initial insights garnered from the Postal Omnibus Survey. Moderators posted a predetermined set of questions on an online forum. Participants responded to those questions and then interacted with both the

moderator and other participants based on the answers that they and others provided. The OIG used discussion boards because they are well suited for gleaning insights from Millennials, who are very comfortable with online platforms and digital media. See Appendix B for more specifics on the OIG's qualitative research methodology.

3. Fielding a general population survey of Millennials. Conducted in April 2018, this survey engaged 2,447 respondents to probe on issues and ideas that had been raised in both the Postal Omnibus Survey and on the discussion board. The survey explored Millennials' perceptions of the USPS brand, and their usage and liking of Postal Service products. The OIG also tested the most popular product concepts that emerged from the discussion boards, including some concepts that already exist. We followed the Millennial survey research approach outlined in Appendix A.

How Millennials Perceive and Engage with the Postal Service

Are Millennials similar to Gen X and Baby Boomers in how they perceive and engage with the Postal Service? This section explores broad measures of brand perception and engagement across generations before diving into First-Class Mail, Marketing Mail, and parcels.

Brand Perception and Engagement	5
First-Class Mail	6
Marketing Mail	7
Parcels	8

Brand Perception and Engagement

The OIG's Postal Omnibus Survey reveals interesting ways that Millennials' engagement with the Postal Service compares with older generations.⁴



Different age cohorts have similar perceptions of the brand

Millennials, Gen X, and Boomers all reported comparable levels of satisfaction with the Postal Service; around 80 percent of each generation said they were either somewhat or very satisfied with USPS.

Age cohorts similarly rated various aspects of their interaction with the Postal Service, such as customer service, value for the money, and the quality, reliability, and security of products and services.

Millennials check their mailbox less frequently, but are more digitally engaged

Millennials reported receiving fewer mailpieces than older generations, which corroborates existing research that mail volume is correlated with age.⁵ The OIG also found that Millennials pick up their mail and review it less frequently than older generations.

	Pick up mail at least 6 days a week	Review, read, or sort at least 6 days a week
Millennials	44%	41%
Gen X	60%	57%
Boomers	73%	72%

Millennials are also much less likely to identify as a household's "primary mail handler" — or the person who brings in the mail and sorts it. This could be a result of Millennials living in more diverse household arrangements. This finding is noteworthy because the OIG's analysis indicates that primary mail handlers are more engaged with Postal Service products and have more favorable perceptions of the brand.

On the other hand, the Postal Service's digital platforms seem to be attracting younger customers. Millennials and Gen X were more likely than Boomers to say they have visited USPS.com and to have a USPS.com account. More Millennials (25 percent) reported using the USPS Mobile application than Gen X (17 percent) or Boomers (6 percent). Interestingly, Millennials (59 percent) agreed that USPS was an innovative organization, slightly more than Gen X (54 percent) or Boomers (50 percent).

⁴ All figures cited on this slide are from the 2017 Postal Omnibus Survey.

⁵ The Postal Service's Household Diary Study demonstrates that increasing age, along with higher education and income levels, are traditionally correlated with greater household mail volumes.

First-Class Mail

Millennials have strong preferences for electronic alternatives to mailed correspondence and bill payment.⁶ However, they still see value in the personal touch of mail.



"I like to receive all my bills online. I like the way most businesses are now sending everything paperless, it saves me time and it's more convenient."

Mail can add a personal touch

Millennials embrace social media for its immediacy and convenience. In the discussion board, many said sending mail was conceptually easy, but the process can be laborious.

At the same time, many Millennials still delight in receiving personalized notes or cards around holidays, birthdays, and other special occasions. Therefore, addressing the relative burden of mail to make it easier to send meaningful, personalized notes should be a priority in the Postal Service's efforts to appeal to Millennials (see Convenience section).

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75 percent of Millennials said that receiving personal mail (i.e., mail from friends or family) makes them feel special.⁷

Millennials prefer online bill payment

Millennials have strong preferences for online payment, again, for its immediacy and convenience. Survey data indicated that they receive and pay bills through the mail at lower rates than Gen X and Baby Boomers.⁸ While some said that they like to receive paper bills, sentiments regarding the superior convenience of online bill payment were nearly unanimous. Building seamless links between mailed bill statements and online payment methods, through Informed Delivery, could be key to enhancing transactional mail's value with young consumers.

•••	\sum	Typically received bills through the mail	Typically pay bills through the mail
Millennials		62%	22%
Gen X		72%	29%
Boomers		77%	40%

6

"I would say with my busy schedule I can't find time [to write to] my family and friends[...]"

"I would send a letter or card opposed to another communication method if I wanted it to have more of a personal and deep meaning to it."

^{6 2018} Millennial Discussion Board.

^{7 2018} Millennials Survey.

^{8 2017} Postal Omnibus Survey.

Marketing Mail

Preferences for mailed advertisements vary widely, but Millennials are very engaged with certain types of Marketing Mail. Coupons, in particular, are quite popular.

> "Usually I'll keep ads with good coupons and other stuff I think I might use again."

Millennials are responsive to Marketing Mail

Despite checking their mail less frequently, Millennials are surprisingly responsive to Marketing Mail compared to older generations. For example, 62 percent of Millennials said they had visited a store in the past month based on information received in the mail, compared to 55 percent of Gen X and 52 percent of Boomers.⁹

When relevant, Marketing Mail can be appreciated – especially coupons

When discussing mailed advertisements in the abstract, Millennials said ads are less enjoyable than other types of mail. Indeed, only 38 percent of Millennials said they enjoy receiving mailed ads.¹⁰ But their liking varied widely by specific types of content, and they appreciate ad mail when it is relevant in their lives.

Millennials are enthusiastic coupon clippers. Many participants in the discussion board said they strongly appreciate receiving coupons in the mail. This was corroborated in the follow-up survey of Millennials, in which coupons were liked more than any other type of mailed advertising.¹



69% of Millennials somewhat or very much like mailed coupons for local restaurants.

"[C]oupons and deals if they are relevant to me and will save money are important. If they are for something I don't want or need they become junk."

Millennial liking/disliking of mailed ads		7 1
Coupons for restaurants	69%	9%
Coupons for retail businesses	65%	11%
Ads for restaurants	53%	18%
Ads for retail businesses	50%	19%
Newsletters/mail from orgs not seeking donations	38%	28%
Orgs seeking donations (charities, colleges, etc.)	33%	32%

2017 Postal Omnibus Survey.
2018 Millennials Survey.

11 2017 Postal Omnibus Survey.

Parcels

Trust that a package will arrive in a timely manner is essential for Millennials when choosing between shipping companies.



Trust is essential for package senders

The OIG's Millennial survey asked them to rate the importance of 17 factors when choosing a shipper. "Trust that the package won't be lost" was the single most important factor, followed by "price" and "trust that the package will be delivered as scheduled." Ease and simplicity of shipping, package tracking though a website and the quality of customer service were also highly rated as priorities. These findings aligned with the online discussion board, in which cost, trustworthiness, and convenience were the most prominent factors Millennials said they consider in choosing between shippers. Millennials, in the survey, rated USPS and other shippers similarly in terms of trust and value for money.

Millennials believe the Postal Service has more conveniently located retail locations than other shipping competitors. Yet, interestingly, fewer Millennials said they go to a physical post office (56 percent) to send a package than Gen X (66 percent) and Boomers (77 percent).¹² If more Millennials are seeking out alternative ways to send packages, improving awareness and convenience of all available options — such as scheduling a package pickup by a carrier — is essential. Further research could also explore what prevents Millennials from coming to retail locations.

Millennials prefer USPS for sending and receiving small packages

Some Millennials in the discussion board and the survey said they prefer the Postal Service over competitors for sending and receiving small packages but may choose a competitor for sending and receiving larger packages. This was corroborated in survey results.¹³

Small vs. Large Packages

Small	48% of Millennials prefer USPS for <i>sending <u>small</u></i> packages	
Packages	40% of Millennials prefer USPS for <i>receiving <u>small</u></i> packages	
Large	23% of Millennials prefer USPS for sending large packages	
Packages	19% of Millennials prefer USPS for <i>receiving <u>large</u></i> packages	

"If the package is bigger than a large priority mailbox, I will definitely go elsewhere. I feel USPS [charges] way too much for anything bigger than those[...]If the USPS even offered a cheaper, slower version for larger packages, I wouldn't go elsewhere."

Ideation: What Millennials Want

What do Millennials want from the Postal Service? During the online discussion board, Millennials shared many thoughts on ways to improve their engagement with the agency, many of which the OIG further tested in its follow-up survey of Millennials. Several of the ideas suggested are similar to products and services that already exist — a fact that was unknown to most participants.

Millennials' ideas on potential new products and services centered around two major themes: convenience and customization. Millennials thought that self-service options and advanced knowledge and control of mail and parcel delivery were promising ways to make their interactions with the Postal Service more convenient. Their ideas to enhance customization included customizable card services and customer loyalty programs.

Convenience and Immediacy	10
Self Service	11
Advanced Knowledge and Control	12
Other Ways to Improve Convenience	13
Customization	14
Loyalty Rewards Program	15
Customizable Card Services	16
Other Ways to Customize USPS	17

Convenience and Immediacy

Convenience and immediacy are key opportunities for the Postal Service to better meet Millennial wants and needs.

"Really it's convenience and habit that keep me going [to USPS]."

> "I usually just lean towards the more convenient option... because they are next to my place of work."

"Flexibility is the main thing I would like, having the ability to set what time my mail or package is delivered would be nice, and much more convenient to me."

A World of Convenience

A wealth of research shows Millennials prize convenience and instant gratification. They expect immediate access to information and services, and they embrace using technology to improve their experience. This is manifest in the marketplace. Companies are doing whatever they can to give customers more control over their experience and transactions. Retail is embracing self check out. Mortgage applications can be completed through cell phones. Online trackers show customers each stage of their pizza's preparation and delivery. Across the economy, the standard for customer convenience is constantly being raised.

This desire for convenience was evident in the OIG's discussion boards. Many of the Millennials' selfgenerated ideas minimized the burden of sending mail or a trip to the post office. Increasing self service was one commonly discussed way the participants thought USPS could be more convenient. Millennials also wanted more immediate awareness and control over mail and parcel tracking as well as delivery. They thought technology could give them instant access to information on what is coming to their house, and when, or where the carrier is in their neighborhood.

Convenience could be an asset for the Postal Service. In fact, "convenient" was among the top words in the discussion boards Millennials associated with the Postal Service, primarily in appreciation of post office location. Making greater customer control and immediacy a focal point of all strategic initiatives will be key to cultivating Millennial satisfaction.

On the Right Track — Awareness is Needed



Many of the concepts Millennials discussed are similar to existing products — but the participants were simply not aware of them. Most prominently, ideas similar to Informed Delivery, Self-Service Kiosks, and carrier Package Pickup were very popular. This indicates that USPS is likely on the right track with recent initiatives but could work on promoting these services to Millennials. Continued research could lead to other ways to cater these services to young consumers.

Self Service

Self service is top of mind for Millennials. They believe it can ease the burdens of sending mail and shipping packages.

"Kiosk[s] or machines to process sending packages without going to the post office, waiting in line and dealing with their employee. I want it to be like the vending machine where I can drop small or large packages, weigh and scan it automatically, and give you the amount to pay and print out the receipt. Quick and easy transaction."

What They Said

Millennials in the discussion board suggested that the Postal Service create kiosks and drop boxes where they can send mail and packages. They said the kiosks could also be "vending machines" where customers can purchase stamps and print shipping or return labels, making them a one-stop shop for all the steps required to send mail and packages.

Millennials expect that self service could allow them to skip the line, or avoid having to visit the post office at all. To that end, they also suggested locations beyond post offices where they would like to see kiosks, including grocery stores, school campuses, near public transportation, and in various types of retailers.

In fact, the Postal Service already has more than 2,800 Self-Service Kiosks (SSKs) deployed in post offices across the country that offer many of these services. The Postal Service has even tested a fully-automated 24-7 post office. Yet, most of the participants in the discussion boards weren't aware of these efforts.

Survey Says...

A large percentage of surveyed Millennials had not heard of SSKs.

- 21 percent said they had used an SSK.
- 39 percent said they had heard of the concept but had not used one.
- 40 percent said they had not previously seen or heard about the concept.¹⁴

Millennials said grocery stores and post offices would be the most convenient locations for SSKs.

SSKs garnered the highest interest of all the concepts that the OIG tested in its survey.



"I think the automated kiosks would actually go a long way towards increasing the convenience factor."

Note: The remaining 22 percent were either not sure, or neither interested, nor uninterested.

"I would like...vending machines that sell stamps located in popular shopping establishments like grocery stores and discount retailers."

> "[T]he kiosk idea is a really great one."

"I think vending

stamps is a

great idea!"

machines with

¹⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all figures cited in the ideation slides are from the 2018 Survey of Millennials.

Advanced Knowledge and Control

Millennials overwhelmingly want to know what types of mail or parcels are coming, and when.

As with most of the concepts covered in the discussion boards, participants were not prompted with information about existing services — such as Informed Delivery, Package Intercept, or other USPS.com capabilities — and the majority of participants were not aware such services existed.

"I think they could offer a service where they notify you on what type of mail you will be receiving each day. Maybe they could start a system that scans mail and emails you a list every morning."

What They Said

Millennials told the OIG that they would like a service that notifies them of the mail that they will be receiving that day, before it is delivered. Their descriptions were very similar to Informed Delivery — a service that USPS recently created which sends customers pictures of what is arriving each day.

Equally as important, Millennials wanted more information and control over parcel deliveries, including what is coming, when, and where it is in the process. They also desired more compelling visualizations for delivery status.

Survey Says...

Based on the frequency of suggestions for concepts similar to Informed Delivery, the OIG measured awareness and interest in Informed Delivery in the Millennial survey. After reading a description of how Informed Delivery works: "I think having a picture of the mail that is on your way would be interesting. For example, a machine with a camera could automatically scan all the mail that is coming through and just send/email you a picture of the front. This way, you know exactly who is sending what."

- 19 percent of Millennials said they had used or tried the service;
- 19 percent said they had heard of the concept, but had not used it;
- 5 percent knew the name and understood the concept, but had not tried the service;
- 13 percent knew the name, but not what it involved;
- 43 percent said they had not previously seen or heard about the concept.

The majority of Millennials were interested in Informed Delivery.



Note: The remaining 31 percent were either not sure or neither interested, nor uninterested.

Other Ways to Improve Convenience

Millennials suggested other ways the Postal Service could be more convenient. Many of their ideas used technology to get instant access to delivery information.



Engaging Tracking Technology

Millennials discussed how online/mobile platforms could provide instant access to information on mail and parcel deliveries, some of which are currently available via a USPS.com account.

- A more engaging online platform for tracking packages. Millennials want more detailed tracking information and thought the information could be presented in a more interesting and convenient format. For example, the Domino's pizza tracker was cited as a compelling way of displaying tracking information. Many participants also said it would be convenient to visualize the mail truck on a map, showing them where the mail is in their neighborhood or where their package is in its journey.
- Text and email notifications. Participants in the discussion board were not aware that USPS.com account holders can receive text notifications of tracking information. In our follow-up survey, 75 percent of Millennials said text notifications are somewhat or very important in choosing a shipper, but only 49 percent were aware they are offered by USPS. It may be prudent, then, to promote awareness of text tracking to Millennials.
- Integrated technology tools for package/delivery information. Participants in the discussion board were asked to react to a video of an augmented reality (AR)-enabled mailpiece. Their responses largely focused on how it could be a convenient and engaging way to give the recipient a sneak peek of what is inside the package and link them to product information. The Postal Service could actively promote integrated technology for parcel packaging, as it already does with Marketing Mail, and integrate these technologies into its mobile platforms.¹⁵

Package Pickup

Millennials suggested that USPS postal carriers pick up their packages on demand, at a time they specify, so that they don't need to make a trip to the post office — another suggestion to offer an existing service. Our follow-up survey indicated just 53 percent of Millennials believe they can have a package picked up by a carrier from their residence.

Transparent Pricing

Millennials want to know the cost of sending a package before leaving their homes, perhaps to compare pricing with other shippers. Our discussion board indicated that simple, transparent pricing was important to Millennials and made the shipping process more convenient.

¹⁵ The OIG discussed a number of potential parcel innovations in its 2017 report *Thinking Outside and Inside the Box*. U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General, *Thinking Outside and Inside the Box*, Report No. RARC-WP-17-007, April 24, 2017, https://www.uspsoig.gov/sites/default/files/document-library-files/2017/RARC-WP-17-007.pdf.

Customization

Millennials appreciate companies that speak directly to them and offer a personalized experience to show they value their business. Millennials in the discussion board suggested that the Postal Service consider creating customizable products and services and offer customers benefits for loyal, repeat business.



Creating a Personalized Experience

Millennials want personalized consumer experiences and want to be rewarded for loyalty. This came through loud and clear when we asked participants to give their thoughts on what would make them more likely to use USPS products.

Millennials suggested a variety of ways they might like to customize postal products — from being able to choose interesting and colorful envelopes and packaging designs to embedding personalized messages via AR on packages they send to friends. Millennials also suggested that a loyalty rewards program might inspire them to send more mail or choose USPS for shipping.

"USPS could keep introducing new fun themed stamp collections. They could also develop an online program to design your own stamps with pictures, images, etc.[...]They could allow you to make customizable boxes and cards/postcards as well!"

"[USPS] could make it more fun by offering loyal customers rewards for using their products."

Millennials may be willing to pay a premium for customization options that make the mail more fun and useful. The Postal Omnibus Survey asked about the cost of a Forever Stamp. More Millennials thought the price was inexpensive, compared to Gen X and Boomers.¹⁶

	Forever Stamps are	Inexpensive	Expensive	Neither
Millennials		50%	18%	32%
Gen X		39%	25%	36%
Boomers		35%	26%	39%

¹⁶ Note: When the OIG conducted the 2017 Postal Omnibus Survey, the price of the Forever Stamp was \$0.49. The price has since risen to \$0.50.

Millennials and the Mail

Report Number RARC-WP-18-011

Loyalty Rewards Program

Loyalty rewards programs are designed to generate repeat business and build brand loyalty. Millennials might be encouraged to use the Postal Service more frequently if such a program existed. This could be a powerful way for the Postal Service to show its appreciation to reliable customers and encourage them to keep using USPS.

"It would be fun and interesting to have reward points whenever I send mail . . . it will encourage us to send and use more USPS . . . "

> *"I love the rewards idea! I ship and spend so much money with USPS that a reward would be nice."*

What They Said

Discussion board participants gave a number of ways they would like to engage in a loyalty rewards program.

- Members could earn points and choose to redeem them for discounts on shipping or gift cards at retailers.
- Customers could be eligible to participate in games or giveaways, such as being entered into a lottery for a special prize following a transaction.
- Member benefits could be seasonal and feature unique incentives during the holidays.
- *"I like the idea of postal rewards. Maybe gaining rewards when purchasing stamps or mailing out packages. Or even something like send two packages and send the third free."*
- The program could provide benefits or incentives to specific segments, such as students, low-income customers, or small businesses.

A USPS loyalty rewards program could drive brand loyalty and repeat business. It would also encourage customers to create a USPS.com account, exposing them to other products and services, such as Informed Delivery, Package Pickup, Package Intercept, or customizable card services.

A loyalty program would also provide the Postal Service with valuable opt-in customer data to better understand customers and improve services. USPS would need to ensure that data is collected within the acceptable legal parameters.

Survey Says...

A majority of surveyed Millennials were interested in a loyalty rewards program.

In fact, after SSKs, a loyalty reward program garnered the highest level of interest of the concepts included in the OIG Millennials Survey.

Millennials are interested in a loyalty rewards program.



Note: The remainder were either not sure or neither interested, nor uninterested.

Customizable Card Services

Sharing photos is one of Millennials' favorite things about social media. Think selfies. Yet, greeting cards and mailed notes still have a personal touch that they believe is hard to replicate online. Increasing awareness of services to easily send customizable cards could allow Millennials to better express themselves in their correspondence, while also easing the relative burden of sending mail.

"I send cards for holidays. I send them for Easter, Birthdays, Christmas. I like to make the picture cards with my son on them mainly. I feel like photo cards make things more memorable."

"Agree that photo cards are the best! Feels so warm, personal, and welcoming."

> "I love photo cards so much! I feel like there is so much more meaning."

What They Said

Millennials told the OIG that they enjoy mailed correspondence and cards as long as they are relevant. They are sentimental about personalized cards, such as those with a photo or a unique design. However, sending mail is quite burdensome compared to electronic alternatives. Online card customization services could be an ideal way to take advantage of the special value that a physical card conveys while also alleviating the burden of sending mail.

Customers can use these services to select predesigned or create custom postcards and greeting cards, through the company's website. The company then prints and sends the card to the intended recipients. This is an easy way to put a unique touch into a card without having to leave home to buy cards and postage or to send the card.

Options for creating customizable cards already exist, but it may be worth exploring ways to build more awareness with Millennials. The Postal Service could drive awareness through its own marketing collateral and by partnering with online card providers or social media platforms to encourage sharing moments and making special occasions personal. If USPS pursued a customer loyalty program, as suggested previously, this could also be an opportunity to point customers to customizable card services.

Survey Says...

A large percentage of surveyed Millennials have not tried or were unaware of these services.

- 17 percent said they have used one of these services.
- 40 percent have not used one of these services, but have seen or heard at least something about them.
- 34 percent have not seen or heard about them.

Pricing is key for online customizable card services.

If the service cost about the same as a card purchased from a physical store	Interested Uninterested 15%	55%
If the service cost slightly less than purchasing a card in the store	Interested Uninterested 12%	60%

Note: The remainder were either not sure or neither interested, nor uninterested.

Other Ways to Customize USPS

Ideas for making mail and packages more fun were as simple as offering more colorful packaging materials. Other participants envisioned using technology to send a video message with a mailpiece or parcel.



Engaging Mailing and Shipping Materials

Millennials said that using the Postal Service could be more enjoyable if a wide variety of mailing and shipping materials were available. They wanted fun, seasonal, and kid-friendly stamps and colorful envelopes and parcel packaging with interesting designs. For instance, some participants thought that customizable stamps would make mail more fun. They wanted to create stamps with a unique design, an uploaded photo, or with their initials.

Millennials also wanted environmentally-friendly materials for mail and packages. While the environmental practices of each shipper was not a top factor in deciding between them, 70 percent of respondents in the Millennial Survey said it was somewhat or very important.

Personalizing Mail with Technology

Iillennial Survey said it was boxes, etc.) made with recycled materials."

Millennials in the discussion board were amazed by the demonstration of AR technology and speculated about ways technology could create a more personalized experience.

- The sender could use AR to record and send a video message to the recipient of a package, greeting card, or postcard.
- Some participants thought traditional elements of the mailpiece, such as the stamp or the sender's address, could be made digitally interactive.
- Ecommerce companies could incorporate AR or virtual reality (VR) features into packaging, which displays an ad or visualizes how a product would look in a customer's home. It was also noted that VR could be particularly effective for travel advertising.

"[I]f there was a way to make postcards or actual cards have an augmented reality like that I would consider using the USPS much more often. I would look forward to receiving advertisements in the mail from companies that would use that."

"I could see friends designing a personalized virtual message to send to another friend as a special mail."

"For me, I think they can sell a

special paper and envelope

a different colors, style or a

scented paper."

with designs. Like cards with

"I also would like to see more

products (envelopes.

Areas for Further Exploration

How should the Postal Service market itself to Millennials, a decidedly non-homogenous group? Our research indicates there are important distinctions within the age cohort that drive perception and engagement. The Postal Service could use segmentation to better understand Millennial customers and give mailers better information about how they engage with the mail.

Millennials Have Diverse Living Arrangements	19
Living Arrangement Matters	20
Primary Mail Handler and Gender	21

Further Exploration

Millennials Have Diverse Living Arrangements

Living arrangement is one of the most significant ways that Millennials are unique from prior generations. Millennials are more likely to live with their parents than with a partner or spouse, which has not been the case for prior generations of young adults. Millennials have delayed both marriage and child-rearing.



Shifting Living Arrangements are Important for USPS

Living arrangements frequently reflect life stage and economic activity. Someone who is married with kids likely has different purchasing behaviors and economic security than someone the same age who lives alone. Living arrangement and life stage is likewise important when it comes to mail usage.¹⁷ Thus, significant generational shifts in living arrangements and household characteristics in the U.S. over the past 40+ years are important for the Postal Service to monitor.

Since 1975, U.S. household characteristics and living arrangements have shifted in many ways for young adults, aged 18 to 34:

- Millennials are delaying marriage and child rearing. Millennials are getting married later in life, and fewer live with a spouse, although some are trading marriage for cohabitation. Millennials are also delaying child rearing. For instance, 69 percent of women between the ages of 25 and 29 had given birth to a child in 1976; in 2014, just 50 percent.
- More of today's young adults live with their parents than in any other living arrangement. Thirty-one percent of people between the ages of 18 and 34 lived with their parents in 2016, up from 26 percent in 1975.
- Millennials are living with a relative, roommate, or alone at higher rates than prior generations of young adults. Twenty-one percent of people between the ages of 18 and 34 lived with a relative or roommate in 2016, up from 11 percent in 1975. More young adults live alone than in prior generations: Eight percent of 18 to 34-year-olds lived alone in 2016, up from 5 percent in 1975.¹⁸

18 to 34 year olds	1975	2016
Living with a married spouse	57%	27%
Living with an unmarried partner	<1%	12%

Shifting household characteristics could affect the "typical" young adult's engagement with the Postal Service. A household with young children, for example, may receive *Parents* magazine, Pampers coupons, bills from the pediatrician, and mailers from local toy stores, none of which would land in the mailbox of a group house. Young adults still living with parents — the most common living arrangement for the Millennial generation — may not receive any bills addressed to them but may still have frequent and meaningful engagement with the Postal Service through parcel delivery. If the percentage of young people living with parents or with roommates continues to grow, it could also slow the nationwide growth of delivery points served by the Postal Service.

¹⁷ Royal Mail, The Life Stages of Mail, June 2016, https://www.royalmail.com/business/sites/default/files/The_Life_Stages_of_Mail_Full_Report.pdf.

¹⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, The Changing Economics and Demographics of Young Adulthood: 1975-2016, April 2017, https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2017/demo/p20-579.pdf, pp 5-6.

Further Exploration

Living Arrangement Matters

Living arrangement is an important indicator of Millennials' perception and level of engagement with the Postal Service.

> "My household receives a lot more mail since living with my husband. And we receive/ship a lot more mail/packages since having children."



Millennials Living with Children are Particularly Engaged

Millennials in the OIG's discussion boards who lived with a spouse or child were particularly familiar and engaged with USPS products and services. The presence of a child appears to be especially important. This finding turned out to be true nearly across the board in the OIG's Millennials Survey. The following are some noteworthy areas where living arrangement matters:

- Frequency of sending mail. Living arrangement significantly affects how often Millennials send mail. For instance, living with a spouse or living with their child increases Millennials' likelihood of sending personal correspondence at least several times a year by 44 and 57 percent, respectively.
- Enjoyment of mail. Millennials living with their child were more likely to enjoy receiving and sending mail. For example, Millennials living with their child were 66 percent more likely to enjoy receiving mailed advertisements versus those not in that living arrangement. Conversely, Millennials living alone/with roommates were 36 percent less likely to enjoy receiving mail.
- Perception of USPS. Millennials living with their child were more satisfied with the Postal Service overall and were more likely to rate the Postal Service higher on attributes of the brand (innovation and customer service) than those Millennials not living with their child.
- USPS's relevance in their lives. Those living with a spouse or their child were 59 and 44 percent more likely to agree that USPS will be relevant to them in the future than those not living with their spouse or child, respectively. Those living alone or with roommates were 28 percent less likely to agree that USPS will be relevant to them in the future.¹⁹

Consider Living Arrangement in Future Research

The OIG's statistical analysis revealed that living arrangement significantly increases the likelihood of high-engagement with the Postal Service for the factors listed above (see Appendix C). Millennials' age – 28 or older, or younger than 28 – did not affect the likelihood of engagement for these factors. This is noteworthy for the Postal Service. If today's young adults are simply delaying marriage and having children, this could have a less severe effect on interactions with USPS than if they forgo these life changes altogether. Therefore, monitoring these trends would be prudent.

The Postal Service could use the lens of living arrangement to identify ways to build a brand connection with consumers earlier in life, including with young people living alone or with roommates. Integrating customer living arrangement or life stage concepts into marketing strategies and future research efforts could help maintain and bolster Millennial engagement.

¹⁹ All figures in this slide are from the 2018 Millennials Survey.

Further Exploration

Primary Mail Handler and Gender

Millennial men and women have similar views on the Postal Service's brand. However, there were some areas where men and women responded differently. Notably, men were more likely to identify as the "primary mail handler" and "head of household" — categories that are important for mail usage and may warrant further research.



Ider Head of Household and Primary Mail Handler

The "head of household" is the primary person who manages a household's income and expenses, and the "primary mail handler" is the person who brings the mail into the household, sorts it, and leaves it out for other residents. Throughout the Millennials Survey, heads of household and primary mail handlers exhibited consistently greater usage and more favorable perceptions of USPS. Millennial men were more likely to say they are the head of household and primary mail handler.

Higher levels of identification as head of household or primary mail handler among men could be related to or drive some noteworthy gender differences the OIG observed in the survey.

- Men said they send mail more frequently than women. This was true across all types of mail from personal letters, to letters for work, to greeting cards — as well as for packages.
- In general, men were more likely to enjoy receiving mailed ads. Forty-two percent of men said they enjoy receiving mailed ads compared with 33 percent of women. For specific types of ads, men were more favorable towards credit card offers, newsletters, and outreach from other organizations, whereas there were small or no gender differences for other types of ads, such as coupons and ads for local businesses and restaurants.
- Women were slightly more likely to enjoy receiving mail generally, especially personal mail. This aligned with the OIG's discussion boards, in which women seemed generally more excited to check the mail on a regular basis.²⁰

Opportunities for Actionable Research

The Postal Service could conduct further research to identify the key drivers of mail engagement and find ways to cater postal solutions to distinct, actionable segments. For instance, finer Millennial segmentation insights could empower the Postal Service to help advertisers better target the key decision makers in a home. Advertisers could use such research to target calls to action or brand messages to reduce mass mailing costs and clutter, making Marketing Mail more effective and relevant to consumers.

²⁰ All figures in this slide are from the 2018 Millennials Survey.

Strategies to Engage Millennials

Millennials' attitudes and expectations for improving the postal experience generally center around convenience and customization. However, Millennials are by no means a homogenous group when it comes to how they use the mail. To make the Postal Service appealing and useful to this generation, the key will be to develop and promote convenient, customizable products and services based on sound research.

Continue Research Efforts

To identify the key drivers of mail engagement and find ways to cater postal solutions to this generation, further Millennials research could include:

- Awareness of current services and identification of enhanced features, price, placement, and availability to encourage use;
- Further analysis delving into demographic differences, living arrangement significance, identification as head of household or primary mail handler, or how different personality types perceive and engage with the Postal Service;

- Concept testing or focus groups with Millennial sub-segments to understand their unique needs and wants; and
- Identification of which concepts highlighted in this paper would be the most popular, will most improve the customer experience, and could have the most revenue potential.

Promote and Integrate Services that Appeal to Millennials

The OIG found that Millennials are interested in a number of products and services that are already available. The Postal Service should ensure these products and services are visible and accessible to its younger customers. One tactic could include partnerships to get the appropriate products in front of Millennials at the right moment. For example, there may be more opportunities to connect them with services for sending unique and customizable mail. Partnerships with widely used platforms for wedding services could present custom stamps and packaging materials at the right point in the purchase journey. Moreover, having SSKs in the places that Millennials go, during the hours they need them, is essential. The strategy for location and communication rollout can be just as important as the features available.

Millennial customers are in an age range where they are likely to move from their parents' house to a group house, from a dorm to an apartment, or from a starter house to one with more room for kids. These living arrangement and life stage transitions could be important for their interaction with the mail, and an opportunity for the Postal Service.

For example, USPS has done a great job leveraging its change of address service to promote Informed Delivery. Customers are prompted to sign up for Informed Delivery when they submit a change of address request, which in turn can boost the visibility and effectiveness of mailed offers for these new households. Similar integration tactics could be implemented for other products and services that would appeal to Millennials. The change of address request could also trigger an information campaign about a postal loyalty program and could steer the customer to create a USPS.com account to schedule package pickup and receive text notifications. Through this engagement with USPS, customers could even opt in to receive mailed content that is particularly relevant for their current station in life. By strategically linking products and services that are popular with Millennials, USPS could boost engagement with new generations of consumers.

Appendices

Click on the appendix title below to navigate to the section content.

Appendix A: Survey Methodology	24
Data Quality	24
Quota Sampling and Weighting	24
Statistical Testing	25
Appendix B: Online Discussion Board Methodology	26
Value of Employing a Discussion Board Approach	26
Appendix C: Millennial Living Arrangement Data Analysis.	27
Methodology	.27
How to Interpret Results	27
Appendix D: Management's Comments	29

Appendix A: Survey Methodology

Overview

This paper reports data from two surveys conducted by the OIG.

- OIG's nationally representative "Postal Omnibus Survey" conducted in the Summer of 2017, which reached 3,391 U.S. residents, including 1,130 Millennials. This survey asked a broad set of questions concerning respondents' usage and perceptions of the Postal Service.
- An online survey of 2,447 Millennials conducted in April 2018 that targeted a nationally representative sample of 18 to 34-year-old U.S. residents.

The questionnaires and sampling plans were developed by an OIG survey research expert, and then reviewed prior to field by an external expert in survey methods.²¹ The OIG researchers employed extensive design elements aimed at achieving optimal results when implementing the methodology used for these surveys. Nevertheless, the findings of survey research projects can be affected by varying factors whose effects are not easy to quantify, including the wording of questions, answer choices, and the order of questions asked to respondents.

Research in the public opinion field also demonstrates that point estimates can vary across survey modes (online, in person, by phone, etc.) based on both how respondents interact with those modes, and on the degree to which each mode is able to achieve a representative sample of data for analysis.

Data Quality

Prior to analysis, steps were taken to improve the quality of all of the data analyzed for this report. While collecting responses, the surveys employed "attention check" questions that assessed whether respondents were paying attention while answering. Then, prior to analysis the data was cleaned to remove partial responses, responses by "straight liners" who did not provide high quality data, "speeders" who completed the survey unrealistically quickly, inattentive respondents, unqualified respondents, terminated respondents, and partial responses.

Sampling Approach: Details and Limitations

The OIG completed this research using non-probability online survey panels of Survey Sampling International (SSI) and Research Now SSI, who solicited and compensated respondents using their standard procedures.

Online surveys completed with non-probability panels are limited in that not all members of the population being studied — in this case, residents of the United States — are eligible for selection. For example, not all residents of the United States are online, nor are they all members of the panel used for the research. The extent to which population members can not be reached through the sample frame used for the study leads to a phenomenon known as coverage error.

Additionally, for all survey research there exists the possibility that those who fail to respond to a survey solicitation might be different than those who do respond, which, if present, leads to an effect known as nonresponse bias.

Finally, respondents acquired through online panels "opt in" to research. If those who choose to participate in online surveys are different than those who do not choose to participate in online surveys, then the opinions collected might not reflect those of the population of interest — a phenomenon known as self-selection bias.

Quota Sampling and Weighting

This research attempts to adjust for the effects of coverage error, nonresponse bias, and self-selection bias through employing: (1) quota sampling, where responses from different demographic groups are collected until their proportionate representation in the sample matches the population, and (2) the application of weights that take into account each respondent's demographic characteristics in proportion to the population of interest when calculating statistics for analysis and reporting.

²¹ External review provided by Chase H. Harrison, Associate Director of the Program on Survey Research and Preceptor in Survey Research Methods at Harvard University. Institutional affiliation provided for identification purposes only.

For the Postal Omnibus Survey, quotas were employed on age, gender, nativity within ethnicity, race, and geographic region, and prior to analysis the data were weighted to census estimates on all quota variables, as well as on income, education and employment status. For the Millennials Survey, quotas were employed on age, gender, ethnicity, race, and geographic region, and prior to analysis the data were weighted to census estimates on all quota variables, as well as on living arrangement, education and employment status. Data for both surveys were also weighted to reflect a national probability general population telephone survey's results regarding the proportion of Americans that had purchased something online in the previous month. Weighting was performed through iterative proportion fitting, also known as "rim weighting."

This "model-based" approach to sampling and weighting requires that the underlying data is representative enough of the population to be effectively responsive to the adjustments completed. Further, the approach requires that sound assumptions be made regarding the relationship between the variables chosen for setting quotas or weights and respondents' attitudes towards the subject being investigated. Consequently, point estimates reported here may or may not vary from those collected using alternate methods of survey design and implementation.

Statistical Testing

There is some controversy regarding the statistical testing of data derived from online "opt-in" panel research, and the literature on the topic is rapidly evolving.

Survey data cited in this report were based on findings that were statistically different at the 95 percent confidence level, which is commonly used in academic and government survey research. The statistical testing used in analysis was performed per standard industry approach. While it is still possible that the differences between two tested numbers could be due to chance, differences of opinion between groups whose results are "significantly different" meet a higher, more credible standard than differences that do not pass significance testing.

Appendix B: Online Discussion Board Methodology

Overview

The online discussion boards for this study were conducted from February 6 to 10, 2018 with 69 Millennials. The OIG worked with the Fors Marsh Group to conduct the research, which was completed in an online mode similar to traditional focus groups or guided interviews. Participants were required to answer all predetermined questions, and to participate for a minimum of 90 minutes over three days to receive a monetary incentive. Participants were recruited for a mix of gender, age, race/ethnicity, location, and rurality. To investigate the importance of living arrangement for Millennials' perception and use of mail, the discussion boards were split into three groups: Millennials living with their parents, Millennials living alone or with roommates, and Millennials living with a spouse or both a spouse and a child. Participants could only see the posts of other people in the same living arrangement group, which helped the OIG gauge the responses of these groups independently while also fostering relevant discussion between the respondents.

The question guide for the discussion boards was structured into three themes. The first day of questions focused primarily on investigating participants' preferred methods of communication. The second day of questions centered on the participants' perceptions of the USPS brand, including questions regarding preferences when choosing a shipping provider. The third day of discussion explored ideation of potential improvements to existing Postal Service products and services, and ideas about what the Postal Service could offer in the future.

Value of Employing a Discussion Board Approach

Online discussion boards are well suited for gleaning insights from Millennials, who are very comfortable with online platforms and digital media.

The use of online discussion boards allows for lengthy conversations and engagement between participants. Moderators have time to respond directly to specific participants in order to tease out and clarify their thoughts. Online discussion boards also permit researchers to present participants with video, a capability that the OIG employed in order to present participants with a video of an AR-enabled postcard in order to gauge their reactions and collect their thoughts about useful applications of the technology.

Figure 1: Demographics of Online Discussion Boards



Source: OIG analysis of demographics from online discussion board conducted with the Fors Marsh Group.

Appendix C: Millennial Living Arrangement Data Analysis

Data Background

Census Bureau research indicates that Millennials live with their parents, alone, and with roommates at greater percentages than prior generations. They are also delaying marriage and having children. To examine how shifts in living arrangement might affect Millennial mail engagement, the OIG used statistical techniques to analyze data from the April 2018 OIG survey of Millennials.

Methodology

The OIG used the statistical software R to analyze living arrangement survey data using chi square tests and odds ratios. The OIG used statistical tests to examine how frequently groups in different living arrangements engage with the mail, using a baseline (null hypothesis) that they are the same. For example, one test used a baseline that Millennials living with their parents and those not living with their parents send personal correspondence at the same rates. The OIG then examined whether to reject this baseline, in favor of the alternative hypothesis that the rates are different. The OIG also ran the same tests for age (e.g., how frequently did Millennials in different age groups send personal correspondence). To carry out these tests, the OIG followed a four-step approach:

- 1. Identifying the data of interest:
 - Effects: high mail engagement outcomes, such as frequency of sending and receiving mail.
 - Explanatory: living arrangement measures, including living with parents, living alone or with a roommate, living with their spouse, or living with their child.
- 2. Selecting an additional possible explanatory variable: age, which is commonly viewed as a contributor to high mail engagement.
- Running a chi square test for each of the living arrangements shown in Table 1 (next page), and running the same test against age (Millennials 28 or older vs. Millennials younger than 28). This allows the OIG to compare the relative effects of living arrangement on high mail engagement.
- 4. Calculating the appropriate odds ratios to interpret the significant results.

How to Interpret Results

The OIG interpreted the chi square test results and odds ratios by identifying which factors were significant — shown in Table 1. Although age was tested against each of the mail engagement measures shown, none of those results were significant, and thus are not shown in Table 1. To interpret the table, the odds ratio shows the relative effect of being in a specific living arrangement on a specific mail engagement measure. Odds ratios are another way of presenting the math (i.e., the results) but do not involve additional tests.

Table 1: Results of Living Arrangement Analysis

Mail Engagement Measure ^A	Living Arrangement	Odds Ratio	P-Value
Sending personal correspondence	Not Living with parents***	+68%	<.001
	Living with spouse***	+44%	<.001
	Living with child***	+57%	<.001
Enjoy receiving mail advertisements	Living with child***	+66%	<.001
Enjoy receiving mail	Not living alone or with roommates***	+56%	<.001
	Living with spouse***	+45%	<.001
Enjoy sending mail	Living with child***	+57%	<.001
	Not living alone or with roommates***	+38%	<.001
Perceive USPS as innovative	Living with child***	+50%	<.001
Believe USPS offers excellent customer service	Living with child***	+49%	<.001
Thinks USPS will be relevant future	Living with spouse***	+59%	<.001
	Living with child**	+44%	.001
	Not living alone or with roommates**	+39%	.002

^AThe results shown reflect servey result for each of the mail engagement outcomes and living arrangements shown. Each explanatory variable and effect is a dichotomous variable (e.g., either living with children or not living with children). These results are intended to highlight that living arrangement has significant effects on mail engagement for Millennials. Moreover, although not shown here, age was also analyzed for its potential effects on the same outcomes. However, none of these were significant. Other factors potentially affecting mail engagement were not analyzed.

To read the results, plus signs (+) and larger percentages reflect larger relative impacts on the examined mail engagement measure.

*Significant at the *95%, **99%, or ***>99.9% confidence level for each explanatory variable. For example, Millennials not living with parents are 68% more likely to send personal correspondence, and we are 99.9% confident that this is the case.

Source: OIG Analysis of 2018 Millennials Survey data.

Appendix D: Management's Comments

STEVEN MONTEITH VICE PRESIDENT, MARKETING

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

July 25, 2018

Amanda Martinez, Manager, RARC Central Risk Analysis Reserch Center

SUBJECT: Millenials and the Mail (Project Number 2018RARC007)

After review of the Office of Inspector General's report on Millenials and the Mail we have concluded that it's a good look at how The United States Postal Service engages and influences this very important demographic.

The primary objectives of: Understanding Millenials' perceptions of the brand; Millenials' usage of postal products compared to previous generations; and identifying what products/services USPS could offer to better serve their needs were all addressed and well synthesized. One of the key themes we've seen come out of our own research which was evident here is the need for the Postal Service to be more convenient and provide the customer (specifically Millenial's) with the ability to customize. The reported observations around Informed Delivery (p.12) and USPS Self-Service Kiosks (p.11) is in line with research we have conducted and see an opportunity here to improve and further engage not only Millenials, but other generations as well.

We highlighted the data below as we felt the numbers spoke for themselves and provide a good jump point for us to further dissect and act on. Living arrangements for Millenials was also highlighted and we agree that this demographic in particular can be influenced by who they are or are not living with, for example Millenials who have a partner and/or have a child are generally more engaged with the Postal Service opposed to those living with roommates or relatives/parents.

SSK's

- 39% of millennials said that they have heard of USPS SSK's but not used one
- 40% of millennials said they had NOT previously seen or heard of USPS SSK's
- 71% of millennials said that they are interested in USPS SSK's Q

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Informed Delivery

- 19% of millennials said that they had heard of Informed Delivery but not used it
- 43% of millennials said that they have NOT seen or heard of Informed Delivery concept

- 2 -

• 57% of millennials said that they are interested in Informed Delivery

Sacret for Steven W. Monteith



Contact us via our Hotline and FOIA forms. Follow us on social networks. Stay informed.

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We conducted work for this white paper in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation (January 2012).