

Audience Generations: Millennials, “Becomers,” and Beyond

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A notable characteristics attributed to the Millennial Generation is its being the most racially diverse in U.S. history with 43% identifying as non-white. The growing presence of Latin@s has greatly contributed to this diversity. Responding to this demographic shift, The Fusion Network (originally a partnership between Univision and ABC News/ Disney) launched in 2013 as a “multiplatform” network specifically targeted to a diverse millennial audience. Yet, in spite of its large corporate investment and recruitment of top talent particularly in journalism, Fusion has met with difficulties gaining a substantial audience. A possible line of inquiry regarding Fusion entails how the network has sought to define its audience with a focus on its framing of news relating to social justice keeping in mind that the network functions within a corporate structure and brand identity. On the corporate side, ABC News and more recently Disney have pulled out of the venture, citing a lack of profitability. Univision remains its only backer for good reason. While the network has a large and loyal viewership, it has consistently failed to lure young Latin@s who tend to be English dominant. Fusion was designed to capture this large demographic as well as broaden the audience to include non-Latin@s. So why has it failed or at best fallen short? Is it based on content or perhaps the construction of Millennials, Latin@ Millennials, or POC Millennials as target demographic blocks?

In terms of content, Fusion's programming runs the gamut from the irreverent and absurdist comedy of "No, You Shut Up!" hosted by Paul F. Tompkins to the more in keeping with its parent company's brand "America with Jorge Ramos." Its webpage content similarly aims for a broader audience within the Millennial generation while also aiming for a hip, socially conscious audience engaged with identity politics. Its webpage menu offers sections such as the

expected "Pop and Culture" and "Sex and Life" as well as the more politicized "Justice" and "Voices" sections. The "Justice" section is sub-headed "Stories about the way we treat each other" while the "Voices" section is sub-headed "Commentary, art, and personal narratives from a diverse America." Within these sections, content is focused on issues such as police brutality and the Black Lives Matter Movement, transgender rights, and educational inequality highlighting the intersectional dimensions of conceptualizations of "Justice" and "Voice."

So then, what can explain Fusion's inability to connect with its intended audience? Here I offer some possibilities to explore with the intent of perhaps getting to broader points regarding the limits of assigning terms such as "Millennial" generation or audience: Are Millennials, suspicious of institutions more broadly and corporate media specifically, wise to Fusion's corporate ties and therefore rejecting it? Will the upcoming paradoxical partnership between Fusion and left-leaning, anti-corporate media news and political commentary program "Young Turks" work toward giving Fusion anti-corporate credibility? Are audiences so segmented and social media use as news gathering source so prevalent that networks, even multi-platform ones, are destined to fail? Are other models such as BuzzFeed doing a better job of reaching this target audience or are Millennial POCs an afterthought for such sites? Are competing sites such as Remezcla, which focuses more sharply on Latin@ (or Latinx) Millennials more successful due to limiting their reach as well as remaining a website and not a network? Or perhaps this target audience that Fusion seeks to capture is illusory? Perhaps, the explanation is simply that the content itself, if taken in pieces may appeal to different segments of a Millennial audience but the network as a whole has little appeal. Or lastly, maybe the *Cosmopolatino* (Cosmopolitan, Postmodern, Latino) coined by poet Urayoan Noel will always be out of the reach of media conglomerates like Univision.