

Unwrapping an experience

by BROCK WEIR

If you're a millennial, it will be no surprise to read in this space that you all too often get an undeserved bad rap.

In the midst of the housing crisis where young families and individuals are looking to gain a foothold in the housing market, older generations like to gripe to anyone who will listen that millennials would have no problem buying a split-level if they just made their own coffee every morning rather than going to their drive-thru of choice. Or that giving up avocado toast consumption would somehow foster a generation of property tycoons.

All this, of course, not recognizing ? or choosing not to recognize ? the patently obvious fact that it was much easier for older demos to gain that foothold because, when they were attempting the same, homeownership required significantly less of your monthly and annual income.

But here is a generation being blamed for everything from housing woes to previously stalwart businesses losing their once ironclad market share in any number of industries.

A couple of weeks ago, Buzznet posted a revised list entitled ?These things are disappearing because millennials refuse to pay for them.? The list differed little from similar lists posted by other outlets dating back, as far as I could tell, to the early 2010s, but as far as hoary old chestnuts go, this was reasonably up-to-date.

Among the purchases now seemingly on the chopping block:

Breakfast Cereals ? ?The New York Times reported that 40 percent of millennials surveyed said that the sweet and crunchy morning option ?was an inconvenient breakfast choice because they had to clean up after eating it.' That explains why avocado toast is so in demand now.? (Does it? Who makes avocado toast without having anything to clean up?)

Automobiles ? ?Cars are slowly becoming less of a necessity and more of a burden. The car industry is suffering in this modern age for a few reasons. One interesting stat is that millennials are waiting longer than ever to get their licenses, something automakers are entirely shocked to discover. Another and more obvious reason is Uber! Throw public transportation in the mix as well as ride sharing, and young urban adults are finding out that owning a car isn't worth it. Urban-based young people might give in and eventually buy a car.? (I'm getting the impression that this list wasn't compiled by people from suburban and urban-adjacent communities like ours.)

Soap ? ?The name of the game now is body wash. Bars of soap are almost obsolete, even when your bathtub might have a built-in soap dish. Chances are, younger folks haven't used that dish at all, and there's a good reason beyond that. A MarketWatch report said that 60 per cent of adults 18-24 think that soap bars become covered with germs after using it. That's alarming, but that explains why body wash is so popular now. Rest in peace to soap bars everywhere.? (I don't get the sense that the good people at Ivory or Dove are hurting, do you?)

Napkins ? ?When eating at home, there's a four in ten chance you're going to use a napkin. 15 years ago, that ratio was at six in ten. The decline is thanks to millennials, who are more likely to use a paper towel in place of a napkin. It works just as well, if not better, and it's one less thing to buy. A marketing director also pointed out that the younger generation is less likely to eat around a table?is the dining table next on the list? (No.)

Others on the list: fabric softener, ocean cruises, cable tv, dining in restaurants, diamonds, lottery tickets, irons and ironing boards, door bells, golf, home phones, beef, designer clothes, playing the stock market, bulk grocery shopping, wine with corks, mayonnaise, postcards, dairy milk, canned tuna, televised football, stiletto heels, bottled water, and on and on it goes.

As exhaustive as it is exhausting.

In many of these cases, however, it seems the alternative is less tangible than the product in peril.

Despite many now seeing the drawbacks to relying on streaming services for your favourite tv shows and movies ? i.e.: you really own nothing and are at the whim of the service provider keeping your entertainments online and at your fingertips ? and a resulting surge back towards physical media, I do see the wisdom of shifting away from the tangible in some areas.

As the holidays approach this year, our family is in the midst of moving and I'm writing this surrounded by ?things? that need to be boxed up, the privilege of which I am well aware.

There are ?things? that are newer and have been in everyday use for as long as I can remember. There are others that have been recently brought back to light after languishing in the basement for two decades ready to be rediscovered. There are others still for which there must have been a rhyme or reason for keeping them, or, at the very least, a since-forgotten memory attached to it, that are now mysteries more than anything else.

Then there are a few things that seem to have followed me from place to place, for one reason or another. A half-full Simba-shaped bottle of bubble bath, a stocking stuffer from when the original Lion King was all the rage. A collection of loose soaps in the shape of animals that were once in a long-missing attractive box.

Perhaps most mysterious of all, a paper stub emblazoned with ?KEEP THIS TICKET? but no indication of why. Of course, as soon as I throw out the stub, I'll either remember what it was for or my ship will come in pending proof of purchase. No, I don't think I've already won. There seems to be little danger these days of Alex Trebek or Ed McMahon arriving on my porch with an oversized Publishers Clearing House novelty cheque ? but if that ticket has any chance of winning me a Ouija board, it could be anyone's game!

Going through all this at Christmas, a season of giving, tangible or otherwise, has put a lot of this in perspective. While it is always nice to receive gifts, and so much of what has collected through the years was heartfelt, enjoyed and loved, I think going forward it wouldn't hurt to focus less on things and more on experiences of some kind ? receiving, giving or facilitating.

Maybe it's the millennial in me, maybe it's 30-something practicality kicking in, or maybe it's simply being overwhelmed with stuff to organize!

They don't have to be extravagant experiences like an ocean voyage (apparently outmoded, according to the clickbait), but it could be a ticket to a live show locally or further afield, a day trip, or some time outside in an area less explored.

If you could put one experience on your holiday list this year, what would it be? Send your thoughts to brock@lpcmedia.ca.

Mine might be an afternoon with Bewitched's Samantha Stephens. Hey, if that Ouija board is coming my way, a few well-placed nose twitches will greatly expedite this move!