

Many millennials came of age years ago: has the hospitality industry taken note?

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They'll change. They just need to grow-up. That's how many perceive the millennial generation, not least many hoteliers when it comes to explaining why many young people shun hotels. But is it millennials or the hotels that need to grow-up? If you believe the customer is always right, then perhaps you already know the answer.

It was a pleasure to attend the biggest travel forum in Spain recently. Madrid hosted the annual **Hosteltur Forum**, organized by the widely-read travel trade publication by the same name, and our **Executive Chairman Joan Vilà** was interviewed live on stage.

Joan spoke about the exciting times our company is going through and captured the audience's attention with his views on hot travel industry topics.

One of the key topics on the table was how hoteliers should adapt to the growing group of individuals known as millennials. No longer penniless students, what does our sector need to do to gain access to their wallets?

Also known as generation me, generation Y, digital natives and echo boomers, millennials have been criticized as being impatient, disloyal, tight-fisted, selfish and overly dependent on their parents. However, they've also been praised as smart, perceptive, civic-minded, entrepreneurial, adventurous, tolerant and progressive.

This generation is not just a passing fad. Within a few years, millennials will represent more than 50% of working adults worldwide. Hoteliers now need to consider this demographic as employee material for both junior and senior roles, and increasingly more as business travellers and even travellers accompanied by children

Joan Vilà highlighted that millennial brand loyalty is almost non-existent, this segment is open to other products. Hoteliers should adapt to millennials' requests and offer experiences and adapt to their demands. If they don't do so there will be a full generation that has never set foot in hotels and will instead prefer to stay in apartments which offer more flexible services.

Vilà pointed out that more flexible services are key for this segment, if a hotel only allows to do the check-in from 12 onwards, they are prioritizing housekeeping over guests. Some minor changes should be made to adapt to the changing needs of consumers and place them at the top of a hotel's priorities.

When it comes to hotel rooms for millennials it's all about free WiFi and plenty of plugs to charge electronics, plus glass walls and large windows that are perfectly Instagrammable. Young guests want innovative technology that enables them to quickly and easily get the service or information they desire; in particular they crave features that are integral to their hotel experience, such as a simplified check-in and check-out process or keyless room access.

As with any big demographic shift, changes can be made gradually, but need to be made. Companies that don't adapt will start to look very old, very quickly. We might all dream of staying in a grand old hotel - but it's the building you want to be old fashioned, not the experience.

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