

# Travel services for younger audiences are all about Y...and not enough about Z

Submitted by Antonia Aguilo on Tue, 19/02/2019 - 10:07

Do you remember the excitement of the Barcelona Olympics in 1992? I don't, I wasn't born for another three years. But I can relive the opening ceremony via Snapchat on my smart phone. That's because I am from generation Z, also known as *Zillennials*.

Don't confuse us with the those millennial oldies, born before 1994, who might have watched the Barcelona Olympics or the fall of the Berlin Wall live on TV from the comfort of their mother's arms. We are authentic digital natives for whom Facebook or even Instagram was our first ever interaction with the wider world.

Nowadays, many travel companies are focusing and investigating the habits of the millennial generation, which is of course a big social transformation. But are we prepared for the great change that is already occurring as generation Z now start to spend travel dollars?

Generation Z does not conceive of a world without interconnected devices. We almost have our own language, with a philosophy of #YOLO (You Only Live Once). We're less 'mobile first' and more 'do I really need a computer?'. Multitasking through many screens doesn't *seem* normal, *it is* normal.

All of this makes us, generation Z, really a different breed from millennials. They seem to me to simply have adapted to modern life quite well, but it's not in their DNA. So what should travel industry leaders, many of whom were born way before even the millennials, be doing to adapt to this new demographic?

In fairness, the tourism sector has been one of the pioneers in adapting. But there is always room for improvement and travel companies looking to attract audiences under the age of 25 need to consider some of the following points.

First of all, the importance of social media cannot be emphasized enough. When it comes to travelling, social media and blogs are the first tool for inspiration, to learn more about the destination, and to know about the culture. YouTube, Instagram and Pinterest are the most used amongst my friends; Facebook and Twitter come a very clear second.

We also generally use the web as a resource for researching and planning all the logistics of a potential trip: budgets, seasonal variations, schedules and more - and we don't rely on any one channel or resource.

There are also some important considerations when picking a destination or in-destination activity. We search for destinations where there is a good internet connection: no internet, no trip! We look for places where there is not much crowding so that photographs can be taken, again for sharing. We look for destinations with cultural richness. Many of us are concerned by the environmental impact of our trip too. And we look for couch-surfing opportunities too, not just Airbnb but any opportunity either save money or avoid impersonal hotels.

The habits and trends once we are in the destination are also quite different. We like to get involved in a destination, perhaps by asking for recommendations from the residents themselves. Or maybe doing some voluntary activities. We use of Google Maps and other navigational applications on our mobile to get around - and don't rely on guides or even public signs, that's why the importance of having good internet connections is essential.

We only do ground transportation or other activities that are available via the collaborative economy, creating an added value to the travel experience – but also just making it easier: your phone does all the work for you.

And, needless to say, we photograph, video record, and then post on social media absolutely every aspect of the experience. This is important as this approach shapes the way we wish to experience something – if there's not automatic Instagram friendly photo opportunity along the way, many of us will be disappointed no matter how great the experience itself. Equally, for the providers of these travel experiences they need to consider the potential for free marketing offered by all these generation Z customers.

Perhaps more than any other generation, the Gen Z, has a traveling spirit. We want to know new places, have jobs where we are allowed to travel, live new experiences and meet new people. Given the wide gap between millennials and generation Z, and the enormous distance between baby boomers and generation Z, travel industry companies should place much more importance on knowing what they do, how they communicate and where they go.

Maybe consider inviting this age group to come and experience your brand and provide feedback? In some cases, some brands might find that there are no willing participants for even a free experience: concerns about sustainability issues or political objections to the destination are not uncommon amongst some. Now that would be quite revealing, wouldn't it?

Whilst Z might be the last letter in the alphabet, clearly further generations will come after us. But the moment we are, quite literally, the future. Make your journey our journey and we'll be happy customers. But if you don't, we'll find our own way to travel.

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