



Profiling The Needs and Wants of Millennials in The Tourism Industry: Implications for Zimbabwe

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Research Article

Abstract

Purpose: The main purpose of the paper is to profile the needs and wants of millennials in the tourism industry and their implications for tourism operators in Zimbabwe.

Methods: The study adopted a qualitative design approach with document analysis being the data collection method. Data were analyzed thematically.

Results: The major finding was that millennials desire authentic and memorable experiences, they are highly knowledgeable, have strong digital skills, they are social media creatures and are permanently connected online, they are particular and question everything, they prefer leisure and recreational activities, they prefer hotel facilities with health-oriented facilities like fitness centers and they practice volunteer tourism. Millennials are different, they think and act differently, and their travel choices and preferences are different from the generations before them.

Implications: Tourism operators including hotels should adapt their service delivery systems to the needs and wants of millennials to achieve superior business performance. There is a need for the adoption of proactive marketing strategies as well as taking full advantage of the opportunities presented by millennials in the tourism industry in Zimbabwe.

Keywords: Millennials, Tourism industry, Generation, Marketing

1. Introduction

For decades tourist destinations have focused on the Baby Boomers as an essential market for the tourism industry worldwide (Hamed, 2017). However, the focus has been shifted to a new generation of travelers known as "Millennials". Millennials are persons born between the years 1980 and 2000 (Howe & Strauss, 2002; Hamed, 2017). The term 'millennials' was coined by Neil Howe and William Strauss in their book *Millennials Rising* (2002) who defined this generation as individuals born between 1980 and 1999. This generation forms the core customers for the tourism industry within the next fifty years as they are more interested in traveling abroad than their older counterparts and are expected to surpass them in their overall travel spending globally by the

year 2020 (Barton, Haywood, Jhunhunwala & Bhatia, 2013). This is an important market segment worth giving due attention as the millennials are already changing the face of the tourism industry. Millennials are forming perceptions and developing travel habits and preferences such that any destination that does not try to understand and provide for their unique needs will be left out (Barton et al., 2013; Machado, 2014).

Sahivaara (2015) pointed out that the hospitality industry is already facing constant changes mainly because of this segment and encourages tourism industry operators to reconsider their old service habits with regards to these new consumers who are highly affected by globalization, individualism, and personalization (Machado, 2014; Mhlanga, 2018). Thus if the tourism industry wants to prepare for the future by designing future proof products and services it has to take this generation into account. Millennials think differently, act differently, and most definitely travel differently (Deloitte, 2018) than any other generation before them. An understanding of the key differences in the way this millennials generation approaches travel is imperative to engage them with success in the tourism industry. Therefore this study profiles millennials as a tourism market segment and implications on the tourism industry in Zimbabwe with the view to better equip operators with valuable information that can help in strategic marketing management for better business performance. The objectives of the study are to profile the millennials as a market segment in the tourism industry in Zimbabwe, and to identify the implications of millennials for Zimbabwe as a tourism destination.

2. Problem Statement

The baby boomers and the traditionalists have been the key market segments for tourism destinations for several decades, providing the much-needed clientele for the different tourism industry operators. However, the changing times have brought a new market segment called the millennials. Therefore there is a need to have an in-depth understanding of this new market segment through profiling this new generation of customers for the good of the tourism industry. Without an in-depth understanding of the millennials, a mismatch is likely to happen between what the tourism product suppliers offer and expect versus the needs and expectations of millennials as customers.

3. Significance of the study

This study provides a profile of a new generation of customers called the millennials for the tourism industry. The profile attempts to unravel the unique characteristics of millennials as a market segment and their implications for operators in the tourism industry in Zimbabwe. The study helps to add knowledge on millennials for the benefit of industry practitioners, academics, students, the private and public sector for the growth and development of the tourism industry in Zimbabwe.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Who are the Millennials?

Every generation is unique in terms of its values, beliefs, attitudes, and overall behavior. A generation can be described as a group of persons identifiable by their year of birth, age, location,

and significant events that create their personality (Guha, 2010; Kim *et al.*, 2015). Major technological changes, wars, economic cycles, and natural disasters are some of the events that play a key role in shaping the characteristics, that is, personalities, values, and expectations of a certain generation (Hauw and Vos, 2010). Kaifi, Nafe & Khanfar (2012) posited that three generations have dominated the marketplace, namely the Baby boomers, Generation X, and the Millennials. Baby boomers are persons born immediately after World War 2, which is from 1945 to 1969. Generation X consists of persons born between 1970 and 1979 and the millennials are persons born between 1980 and 2000. Millennials are a generation reaching adulthood in the 21st century and are also known as Generation Y or the "Net" Generation (Tanner, 2010; Valentine & Powers, 2013; Gardiner *et al.*, 2015).

Moreover, Kaifi *et al* (2012) indicate that millennials are called by such a name because of being born close to the new millennium and being raised in a period of rapid changes in technological developments, more conveniently termed the digital age. Millennials display similar characteristics in general though there may be some small variation from one individual to another. Millennials' behavior has been influenced by their families, technology, and the uncertain economic and political times during their growing up (Tanner, 2010; Benardi, 2018). Millennials are considered to be sociable, optimistic, talented, well educated, collaborative, open-minded, outgoing, influential, achievement orientated, they have a high demand for the latest technology, they are confident and feel needed and think they are indispensable, they like social media and have an intense appetite for information (Raines, 2002).

Millennials' behavior has been shaped more by technological advances to the extent that the internet has greatly shaped their world view; millennials are permanently connected online 24/7 with high school mates and friends made throughout the world (Tanner, 2010; Benardi, 2018; Robinson, 2019). In terms of communication, Millennials now prefer cell phones to landlines and texting to talking (Holland, 2019). Millennials are better at multi-tasking, are quick to get bored, and have very short attention spans (Deloitte, 2018; Holland, 2019). Millennials generation's behaviors, attitudes, values, beliefs, and preferences are rubbing on to older generations such that the older baby boomer generation is adopting and exhibiting the traits of millennials, thus making it an important tourism market segment worth paying due consideration and attention.

Robison (2019) contends that millennials are not only relevant for their present impact on tourism per se but this segment is the tourist of the future. The millennial travelers already make up over one-third of the world's hotel guests, with predictions that they will reach over 50% by 2020 (Tanner, 2019). Furthermore, millennials are depicted as natural travelers with over 60% of them considering travel as a part of life making 4-5 trips per year and are expected to keep looking for tourism experiences as they grow older (Barton *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, this market segment will gradually move upward through the population pyramid replacing the older generation, that is, the baby boomers and generation X.

Table 1: Millennial generational trait by Howe and Strauss (2003)

Special	Sense of entitlement; here to solve the world's problems
Sheltered	Parents advocated for and spared them from unpleasant experiences
Confident	Motivated, goal-oriented, optimistic
Team oriented	Tight-knit, group-oriented rather than individualists. Egalitarian, not hierarchical
Pressured	Tightly scheduled as children; struggle with own time management. The pressure to succeed.
Conventional	Respectful, civic-minded, fear non-conforming. Support social rules; connected to parents.

4.2 Millennials in the tourism industry: Key trends

The Boston Consulting Group (2012) and the Deloitte (2018) reports on millennials identified key trends that are worth noting for the tourism industry, which among them include;

- Millennials are twice as likely to share travel photos on social media,
- 80% of millennials log on to social media daily,
- 57% of millennials update social media networks at least once a day when traveling,
- 9 out of 10 millennials own a personal electronic mobile device,
- 48% of millennials say word of mouth is more influential than TV adverts,
- 75% of millennials use travel apps in comparison to 47% of non-millennials,
- 4 out of 5 of millennials' daily activities involve the use of technology,
- 40% of millennials would feel like 'part of me was missing' if they could not constantly check their smartphones,
- Millennials are very important to both the present and future of the tourism industry,
- Millennials are influenced by peer power mainly via social media networks,
- Social media networks are the holy grail of marketing for millennials,
- Millennials have high expectations of service and they know what they want,
- Millennials are impacting both leisure and business travel,
- Millennials are digital natives

5. Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative design approach. Document analysis was the data collection method for the study. This data collection method involved searching, identifying, examining, and analyzing academic, institutional, and trade literature for purposes of profiling millennials as a new market segment for the tourism industry in Zimbabwe. The search for relevant scientific journal articles and other relevant documents was conducted on Google Scholar focusing on the

field of tourism and hospitality industry management. The keywords which were used during the search were 'millennials in the tourism industry in Zimbabwe', 'profiling the needs and wants of millennials in the tourism industry', 'millennials as employees and as tourists in Zimbabwe'. These keywords were used as they were considered relevant and commonly used in literature. This methodology was used following Veiga, Santos, Aguas, and Santos (2017)'s study which adopted the same research design. Data were analyzed thematically following dominant themes.

6. Findings and Discussion

6.1 Profile of millennials as a market segment/guests/customer in the tourism industry

The presentation below outlines the profile of millennials as guests, customers, or clients in the tourism industry. These traits have far-reaching implications for the tourism industry now and beyond and among them include;

6.1.1 Millennials are the new generation

Millennials are known as the 'new generation' (Lee, 2013) and demand immediate gratification and flexible service when traveling and during a hotel stay. They are obsessed with speed. Millennials are impatient and not loyal generally (Appel-Meulenbroek, Vosters, Kemperman, & Arentze, 2019). Millennials demand instant gratification, satisfaction, efficiency, and convenience (Mhlanga, 2018). As a generation that has grown up with technology they expect to access information instantly thus, they expect that hotels will provide comprehensive material on their websites. Failure to provide for this need by operators results in millennials getting such information on Google and other sites such as TripAdvisor from which the operators lack content control (Ibid). Millennials expect and demand speed, efficiency, and convenience (Lenoir, 2013; Roth and Fishbin, 2014; Mhlanga, 2018). As an example, they would prefer a fast food restaurant that allows them the flexibility to move in and out quickly with the desired product being fast, good food than table service (Lee, 2013). With the advent of Twitter or other apps, millennials can ask hotel employees or "local experts" through their phones about the best restaurants than spend time making a conversation with an individual.

6.1.2 Millennials need real-time information

Millennials are digital savvies (Gardiner et al, 2013) known by their "always connected" obsession (Lee, 2013). Technology is used during all the stages of the trip including the planning stage, checking out the best travel and hotel prices, bookings, searching for reviews and interactive maps during their trip, and finally documenting their travel experience through sharing opinions, photos, and videos on social media (Gotardi *et al.*, 2015; Gardiner *et al.*, 2013; Piriz, 2015; Fung, 2015; Kim *et al.*, 2015). With the advent of social media, millennials expect real-time reporting and communication so that they feel well involved in the thick of things. Most millennials are persistent online autobiographers who document their life experiences through social media focusing on unique content and authenticity (National Chamber Foundation, 2012; Travel Rave, 2013). Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram are an integral part

and parcel of their lives. They have an overarching tendency to share their lives online via social media hence the need to upload evidence all the time (Lee, 2013).

6.1.3 Millennials are social creatures

Millennials are considered sociable online and offline (Mhlanga, 2018). In as much as they place less importance on face-to-face contact than prior generations, they have a strong desire to be actively social through telecommunication (Hamed, 2017). They are masters of social media (Mhlanga, 2018). The use of social media to bond with others also feeds into the "fear of missing out" where millennials feel the need to share their current location, activities, and opinions with others and this becomes their method of interaction (Lee, 2013; Hamed, 2017; Mhlanga, 2018; Robinson, 2019). Social media enables them to validate the fun they are having by their peers' approval through a "like" on their Facebook status which gives them a much broader reach than previous generations who would have to make a phone call to a friend about a great hotel stay. Millennials are also considered sociable offline because they are influenced by their friends when it comes to travel and also enjoy traveling with others in organized groups even if they do not know them previously (Powers, 2013; Roth & Fishbin, 2014; Sight, 2015).

6.1.4 Millennials are digital natives

Millennials grew up surrounded by technology and cannot relate to a time where the internet and cell phones did not exist (Robinson, 2019). They are described as digital natives (Holland, 2019). Millennials grew up in the fastest and most complex era of technology (Byrne, 2007; Brusilow, 2008), as such they are called by so many names such as wizards of the web, techno-wizards, and media-savvy and technologically savvy. This generation is unique in that they were raised with technology such as email, laptops, internet from the day they were born (Zemke *et al.*, 2013). Mhlanga (2018:2) argues that millennials "are online customers, masters of social media and demand a hotel experience tailored to their needs" hence hotel referrals are made via online interactions. Their mobile devices are essential and an integral part of their travel experience. These tiny smart devices perform an array of activities from discovery, booking, mobile check-ins, mobile check-out, geo-locations, special discounts checks, payments, and travel reviews (Machado, 2014). As such brand websites, content combined with mobile-optimized web pages and apps are mandatory to enable the millennials to view the product on their mobile devices (Lee, 2013). Millennials spend their lives online and rarely does a minute pass by without them checking on their mobile devices.

6.1.5 Millennials depend on peer review

Millennials are peer affirmation seekers who rely on online surveys (Deloitte, 2018; Robinson, 2019; Holland, 2019). Lee (2013) asserts that millennials grew up bombarded by advertising and are too sophisticated to be tricked by marketers hence they turn to their peers for "expert" opinion. As such they are more likely to research social media and review sites like Trip Advisor before booking a trip to a certain destination or choosing a certain service (Kumar and Lim, 2008; Valentine and Powers, 2013, Shi, 2014, Fung 2015).

6.1.6 Millennials as business travelers

Millennials are predicted to spend more on business travel over the next five to ten years taking an average of four to five trips per year (Lee, 2013). Of particular note to the industry is that millennials tend to extend those business trips into personal vacations thus presenting hotels with an opportunity to earn more from their business (Chua, Chiu, and Bool, 2019). On the other hand, millennials are social creatures who value group work and feedback, hence they prefer to work in the hotel lobby as compared to the older generation who expected room desks so that they can work from their rooms (Hamed, 2017).

6.1.7 Millennials require personalized, unique, and meaningful experiences

Millennials are on the constant lookout for authentic, personalized, and meaningful travel experiences that provide a platform for learning new things (Mhlanga, 2018; Robinson, 2019). Millennials are very much enthusiastic and seek the best hotel service possible (Hein, 2015). They are considered "curious learners" who are interested only in destinations that provide an opportunity for them to learn something new and integrate them into the local culture (Forest, 2014). They seek experiences that are interactive and help them understand the customs and traditions of the place and its local community (Holland, 2019; Machado, 2014; Amster, 2013). They also have a sense of adventure which manifests itself in their interest in exotic cultures, ethnic cuisines, and novel activities in remote or off-the-beaten-track places (Forest, 2014; Machado, 2014). Millennials prefer hotels that have a homely environment, with Wi-Fi connectivity, and they like to be involved and be part of the experience including a digital experience (Robinson, 2019; Mhlanga & Tichaawa, 2016 Hein, 2015).

6.1.8 Millennials travelers are activists

Millennials believe that the journeys they undertake are a way to promote social responsibility as such they do not want to just view new sites and local communities but rather they hope to contribute to the community and the world at large (Veiga, Santos, Aguas, Santos. (2017). Millennials practice volunteer tourism (Blumenfeld, 2019). They believe that their travel spending supports a cause to make the world a better place (Supanti & Butcher, 2019). During their travel, they are willing to engage in sustainable practices and care about environmental issues thus they prefer spaces that are eco-friendly and environmentally friendly too (Shi, 2014; Crown Verity, 2015; Supanti and Butcher, 2019).

6.1.9 Millennials are smart spenders

Millennials are considered smart spenders because they are value-conscious when it comes to spending which is driven by access to more information and services (Travel Rave, 2013; Roth & Fishbin, 2014; Mhlanga, 2018). Millennials are sensitive to price and want more for less. Millennials know what they want to give their all-time exposure to information. They look for essentials in a hotel being a clean bed, hot water, and free WI-FI (Lee, 2013; Hamed, 2017). They search for the "cool factor" and individualistic aspect in their travels and want a story to share

when they go home or better share a photo on social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram (Crown Verity, 2015). To them if the property has no element of uniqueness then why stay there.

6.1.10 Millennials are last-minute decision-makers

Millennials are considered last-minute decision-makers and the trend is reinforced by their constant access to the internet via tablets and mobile phones (Robinson, 2019). They even book a tourist service once they have seen the deal on it (Forrest, 2014; Fung 2015; Kim et al., 2015). This implies that operators do need to reconfigure their booking systems to allow for last-minute booking to serving millennials well.

6.1.11 Millennials are a diverse generation

According to Hobbs (2017), Watkins & Neil (2015) the millennial generation has been exposed to far more cultures, people, travel opportunities, information, and goods compared to previous generations. This exposure has not only made them the most tolerant of diversity, but also the most likely to seek it, especially in the workplace. Besides globalization, this generation is diverse hence its openness to all cultures and tolerance to other races (Zemke et al., 2013). They have not been affected by stereotypes and prejudices as previous generations. Instead, this cohort is very inclusive of others who are different from themselves (Bannon et al., 2011; Watkins & Neal, 2015). As a whole, millennials have a more global perspective than generations before them because of their access to technology throughout their entire lives and their ability to use it (Watkins & Neal, 2015). Millennials have developed world views without cultural boundaries that previous generations were unable to accomplish (Watkins & Neal, 2015). In short, this generation values diversity much more than previous generations (Bannon et al., 2011; Watkins & Neal, 2015).

6.2 Millennials implications to the tourism industry in Zimbabwe

Given that the millennials already make up more than one-third of the world's total number of guests and are predicted to grow and reach over 50% in the next few years tourism operators must know what this segment is looking for when they travel to tailor-make the brands to suit the needs of this tech-savvy generation. Tourism industry operators can adapt their offering based on the already discussed characteristics and adopt the following:

6.2.1 Quick or fast service

Millennials prefer fast to friendliness therefore tourism operators ought to make it easy for them to book online and ensure that the web pages can be easily navigated using a mobile phone. For example, hotels can consider a check-in kiosk in the hotel lobby rather than make them wait in line for a clerk at a desk. Provide them with offers that can be redeemed within the same day.

6.2.2 Ensure there is a platform for online bookings

Tourism operators need to have well-functioning online booking platforms. For example, hoteliers need to use booking engines such as Hotel booking .com, AirBnB to show their availability. It is mandatory to provide brand websites content combined with mobile-optimized

webpages and apps given that many millennials will be viewing that material on various devices. Mobile websites and apps should be designed to provide the same quality of content, along with ease of navigation and booking based on its change in interaction.

6.2.3 Provide mobile websites

As the millennials are avid mobile users who are connected all the time it is imperative to have mobile-friendly websites, enable mobile bookings and payments, convenient mobile charging stations, and always provide free, consistent, and reliable access to fast internet.

6.2.4 Be sensitive to their budget

Given that millennials have less spending power in comparison with the older generation and cost plays an important role in their travel choices (Mhlanga, 2018), tourism operators need to appeal to their instinct for bargaining through price incentives, offer them basic instead of luxury accommodation, and extend free upgrades and amenities such as Wi-Fi and loyalty programs. Secondly, millennials will only get involved in travel experiences that matter to them hence the need to sell travel services separately such as flight, hotel stay, tours, or even use pay as you go systems where customers pay for extra services separately instead of selling as a package. Loyalty programs also work well with this group.

6.2.5 Connect with a cause

Be known for something which brings a change to the society for example have an inclination to the green theme or make your property eco-friendly and create a buzz about it. Given their preference for volunteer tourism activities and initiatives operators need to incorporate responsible tourism and corporate social responsibility. Operators need to measure their performance based on the sustainability triple bottom line of the economy, society, and environment.

6.2.6 Be unique but authentic

Accommodation providers need to deliver authentic local cultural experiences such as the provision of information on local dining establishments, accommodation designed to highlight local unique features or organizing events in partnership with local community and activity centers as these will enable the millennials to immerse themselves in the local culture. To provide a "cool factor" a hotel can consider the provision of special amenities in their rooms on a complimentary basis such as a local beer, local potato crisps, or distinctive local artwork in each room.

6.2.7 Connect them

As a generation that craves human interaction, tourism operators need to create gathering spaces, events, or opportunities where they can mix and mingle with other guests. This can range from weekly themed nights, live music events, wine/beer/gin tasting as long as millennials are involved in the local culture, they will feel emotionally connected to the local community. A hotelier can

also make them connect with others on social media by encouraging them to share their experiences of the hotel with others online. Social media sharing is the millennials' version of word-of-mouth advertising. Operators can also provide group promotions and services to allow for easier group or small event planning and booking via websites and social media.

6.2.8 Monitor your reputation on the line

Given that millennials if unhappy with the experience or service provided by a hotel they are most likely to complain online. It is therefore imperative to monitor such sites like TripAdvisor and Yelp to acknowledge and encourage positive reviews while mitigating the damage from negative reviews. Operators need to take internet marketing seriously, even if it means employing digital tourism marketers to remain relevant and competitive. Millennials spend their time online and to capture their interest and attention, operators have to spend much time online.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, millennials are different, they think and act differently, and their travel choices and preferences are different from the generations before them. The generation of millennials is here to stay; it is growing and has immense travel potential. In terms of their profile millennials are; the new generation, need real-time information, are social digital natives, they depend on peer review, they are smart spenders, they need unique but authentic experiences, they are a diverse generation and they are last-minute decision-makers. Therefore tourism operators must acquaint themselves with these characteristics of this millennial generation so that they can adapt their products and services to the changing nature of the new generation. Millennial profile implications to the tourism industry in Zimbabwe include; tourism operators should ensure quick or fast service, create online booking platforms, be sensitive to their budgets, connect with a cause, and monitor your reputation online. Failure to create new or modify current concepts may result in a decrease in patronage as this generation does not fear to try new products and utilize new ways of bookings. For example, International brands such as Starwood and Marriott have introduced new brands in the form of MOXY hotels which have a low price range, without sacrificing design and have all the necessary amenities such as free Wi-Fi, social lobby, self-check-in, smart kiosk, and smart technology.

8. Implications for the Operators in the Tourism Industry

Tourism industry operators including hotels should adapt their service delivery systems to the needs and wants of millennials to achieve superior business performance. Tourism industry operators adopt proactive and adaptive marketing management strategies as well as taking full advantage of the opportunities presented by millennials in the tourism industry in Zimbabwe. When marketing to the millennials the tour operators should take note of the following.

- Be visible on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, etc.
- When talking to them keep the message informal and speak to them as a friend.
- Interact with them; they do not like being talked to but they prefer to be engaged which can be done by asking them to highlight what they like about your property or that they would like to change.

- When marketing to millennials inspires them than sell to them. Ensure that you sell the overall experience to them and how it will change their lives. Give them the spiritual satisfaction of traveling than pressing emphasis on the actual product. Emphasize how the service can help create memories worth sharing with friends.
- Keep the message consistent across the various devices that they use to access information despite the need to optimize the experience for different devices to ensure the underlying message about your property remains consistent whether delivered via smartphone, tablet, or on-site at your property.
- Make them loyal by finding out what rewards millennials appreciate and make these easy to earn, flexible, and quick to redeem.
- Encourage repeat business and long-time loyalty by providing consistent and quality experiences according to their terms not that of the hotel.

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