

Meeting the Millennial Traveler's Expectations



By Ann Fishman, President, Author, [Marketing to the Millennial Woman](#)

Millennials are something else. They are unique, different, and baffling. Who are they and how do you get to know them, reach them, and motivate them? Knowing the answer to this one question will give you a decisive marketing edge with this generation that is influencing every aspect of American business. The Millennial Generation is the name given to those Americans born between 1982 and 2000. That makes their current ages 15 to 33. There are about 80 million, which makes them America's largest generation ever.

Millennials make up one-fourth of the U.S. population! There are more of them than there are French, British, Spaniards or Italians. Getting to know this particular generation will help you understand just what makes them tick, and will give you the advantage of knowing what they expect from a travel experience.

TIP #1

Millennials need access to high-speed Internet connections. They are accustomed to texting, tweeting, emailing, and posting. They have a strong, almost compulsive need to share information with their friends, their families, almost anyone. If they're traveling to remote places, they need to know, in advance, when and where there will be opportunities to connect.

TIP #2

Millennials want to experience something different and authentic to tweet about. Courtyard by Marriott is very sensitive to this need. Their hotels may offer unique amenities and experiences such as locally made potato chips and beer in the minibar, artwork by locals on the walls, a Swedish deejay spinning on the hotel's rooftop bar, and a local underground wine bar with a secret entrance.

TIP #3

Millennials expect you to know they are group-oriented. Hotels offering bistro lobbies with pod seating to encourage socializing are appealing to them. Discounts for bringing friends along are an added plus. This characteristic is very strong. Thomson Safaris, a Massachusetts-based travel agency specializing in tours to Africa, hired a generational marketing specialist to speak to their well-traveled employees about generational attitudes. Employees were asked to submit their favorite travel photos, and every photo submitted by a millennial featured a group – a group of animals, a group of people, or a mix of animals and people. Always a group.

TIP #4

Millennials need you to understand their real lives. Kimpton Hotels wants to make the single female business traveler feel right at home. Their "Women in Touch" program includes complementary tote bags containing yoga equipment to aid guests wanting to follow along on its yoga TV channel. They also provide eye makeup remover pads and hand-held clothing steamers. The hotel chain welcomes pets, a millennial favorite, as well as digital access to a performance coach and wellness experts. There's also a special menu created just for women.

TIP #5

Millennials expect you to communicate in their language. Tweets and text messages are concise communications. Because millennials are the product of growing up in a digital world, they will tune out if you bore them by writing or speaking too long. In addition, your website has to be clean, easy-to-navigate, and interactive. Millennials want good visuals and little copy. Too many sales are lost by poor, unappealing websites. Millennials think: "If they don't understand how to create a good website, how can they possibly understand me?" Beware the company with the dated website.

TIP #6

Millennials feel fully engaged when they receive and give something. For example, one family with millennial children took a trip to several countries in Africa. They stayed in a luxury safari camp, complete with a well-outfitted tent and butler. The next leg of the trip involved working for an organization helping people in need. That was an unforgettable travel moment. This generation wants to contribute to society and give back, especially when it comes to helping people, the planet, and animals.

TIP #7

Millennial travelers want to be taken very seriously. They want to become your press agents. All those tweets and selfies sent from their trips means free advertising for your company. One good experience can influence travel decisions by many friends, families and colleagues. One bad experience and you become a viral video – and not a good one!

TIP #8

Millennials need to be offered what's current and what's hot. They are globally sophisticated. They have contacts around the world, some as friends, and some as modern-day pen pals with whom they interact on chat boards. They absorb other cultures through their TV shows, such as *The Bachelor/Bachelorette* and

The Amazing Race. They shop internationally via the Internet. A four-hour bus tour of city highlights won't cut it with this savvy group.

TIP #9

Millennials women are fashionistas. The TV series *Sex and the City* may have been more about the clothes than the sex. No matter where they go, they will be on the lookout for the latest trends.

TIP #10

Millennials are grasshopper-minded. They can't live without constant change. They grew up in a 500-channel universe, using computers and cellphones, so, not surprisingly, they can handle many different tasks at the same time. To hold their interest, give them plenty of choices.

Keeping current, and understanding this distinctive generation of consumers requires revisiting how to capture them. But then, 80 million millennials are a coveted market. It pays to get to know them.

About the Author: Ann A. Fishman was awarded four U.S. Senate Research Fellowships to study generational trends and taught generational marketing at New York University. She is president of *Generational Targeted Marketing, LLC*, a specialized marketing firm providing insights into the preferences, trends, and buying habits of each of America's six generations. Her book, *"Marketing to the Millennial Woman,"* was recently published.