

Smartphones and app mania – how hotels can tap into the millennial market

Posted September 24th, 2014



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Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, email, even banking apps have long made their way onto our smartphones and we love it. Millennials, in fact, love it even more.

The global average of apps installed (<http://mashable.com/2013/09/05/most-apps-download-countries/>) on one single smartphone at a time is as much as 25. For millennials (<http://www.siteminder.com/blog/catering-to-the-sophisticated-traveller-part-one/>), it's about having their whole lives right at their fingertips, from group chats and photo editing to their favourite store and music library; it's all right there in our hands. Millennials love apps that make their lives easier and help them make decisions on the go.

What should I wear to the work event on Friday?

Where can I find the best cocktails in the CBD?

Which movies are out this week and where should I stay on my next weekend trip?

The millennial traveller

According to a report from Millennial Media, 83% of mobile travellers (<http://mobilemarketingmagazine.com/67-per-cent-hotel-bookings-smartphone-millennial/>) use their smartphones to research hotels and 67% use them to make a booking. Expedia states that 52% of millennial business travellers book on mobile devices, and more than 60% of mobile hotel bookings happen within 24 hours of a stay, according to Orbitz and Travelocity.

When it comes to mobile bookings, 18 to 34-year-olds dominate the market. Fast paced as they are, they usually make their bookings on the way to work. After checking about 10 different pages, comparing deals and analysing reviews across meta-search engines and booking sites, it's all go-go-go to book the trip and find the best local restaurants, bars and attractions.

What millennials want

When looking to capitalise on the hip millennial generation with their increasing purchasing power, various factors come into play: speed, mobile optimisation and the app trend.

Having grown up with smartphones and tablets, millennials are used to getting the information they want, when they want it and that's usually on the go. So, in order to get your hotel on par with their expectations, you need to invest in a fast-loading, easy-

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to-use and modern-looking website. And not just that, responsive design is key. If your website can't automatically adjust to any mobile device, you are, no doubt, losing a big chunk of customers.

According to the 2014 Google Travel Study (http://www.tnooz.com/article/google-research-travel-marketers-traveler-shopping-behavior/#utm_source=Tnooz+Mailing+List&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=182acad95c-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_term=0_c691357c44-182acad95c-137296397), 75% of leisure travellers and 87% of business travellers switch between devices to conduct the same travel-related planning or booking activity for all types of travel. In other words, your potential guests want to be able to view your hotel website on a variety of devices and it's up to you to cater to them. It's up to you to invest in the right design and investigate the right technology such as online booking tools and channel managers (*./../channel-manager/*) that can speed up processes for you and your potential guests.

Glued to their phones, as they are, millennials also enjoy a variety of techy features, and this is where hotel apps come in. It's not just about OTAs (<http://www.siteminder.com/distribution-channels/>) offering quick search and booking options, it's about what your hotel, itself, can offer directly, and on the move.

The rise of the white-label app

Developing, testing and optimising an app can be costly. As a cost-effective measure, technology firms such as CheckMate and Intely offer white-label apps for hotels to brand and use as their own.

CheckMate is a mobile tool for hotels to digitise and monetise the process of guests checking in, while Intely powers a pre-check-in functionality (<http://www.tnooz.com/article/intelitys-white-label-apps-hotels-now-include-mobile-check/>), letting guests submit expected arrival times and a location-based feature that allows hotels to use geofencing technology and location-based marketing. Intely is also about to roll out a keyless room entry function, which will revolutionise the hotel game completely. In order to create even more innovative features, such as mobile-to-TV streaming, Intely partners with other technology providers such as Guest-tek.

A powerful app (<http://www.tnooz.com/article/intelitys-white-label-apps-hotels-now-include-mobile-check/>), with at least some of these features in place, can really add to a guest's hotel experience, gain you more exposure, and help increase direct bookings (<http://www.siteminder.com/blog/driving-more-direct-business-to-your-hotel-website-with-tripconnect/>). Intely believes hotels want their guests to use their apps constantly as a way to build customer loyalty and to offer upsells.

What the future holds

With a generation that lives through the apps on their smartphones, it is only a matter of time until all hotels will have to introduce mobile components to their services. While a few years ago, rooms featuring a tablet with integrated room service function was an exciting novelty, an array of other technologies have long taken over and are challenging those negligent to the mobile trend to jump on the band wagon.

To survive in today's mobile, fast-paced world, ruled by texting and Instagramming one's every step, hotels must recognise that millennials have a lot of purchasing power, especially when it comes to last minute splurges, so they need to up the ante in terms of their technological and mobile capabilities. After all, millennials love a bit of extra tech-chic. Do you?

If you'd like to learn more about how you can master the mobile revolution, click here. (<http://www.siteminder.com/blog/3-tips-to-master-the-mobile-revolution/>)



(<http://sm.siteminder.com/AtoZSiteMinder.html>)

