

BRIGHT
YOUNG THINGS:
THE GREAT
REBRANDING
OF AN
INDUSTRY



THE START OF A NEW ERA

As the new generations arrive into adulthood and bring with them new technology, the luxury travel industry finds itself facing a strange new world with strange new threats, the foremost of which remains the sharing economy, from AirBnB to OTAs to TripAdvisor.

According to a recent Topdeck travel study, almost three-quarters of those surveyed do their own travel reservations and planning, with only 18% making their plans through travel advisors. The modern consumer is prioritising ease and independence over expertise and reliability, hence the prioritisation of “All-in-One” websites that book the hotel, plane, and car while giving advice. The modern travel advisor must do everything in their power to show that they can go above and beyond what these websites are capable of through their service and knowledge.

Bright Young Things is an event series for smart young agents in London and New York. Facilitated by ILTM’s range of experts, 40+ up and coming young travel advisors are asked the following questions:

1. How do we dispel the myths about luxury travel agents in order to convince a generation of people who are used to booking travel at the click of a button?
2. How do we authentically showcase that only luxury travel experts can provide the insider, transformative experiences of a lifetime?
3. How do we increase awareness of our expertise, on-the-ground experience, hard-fought skills and customised services in order to come together to win back market share?

This report is a record of that day, and the simple steps we discovered we can take together as a community to stay relevant in this ever-changing market place. As in life, sometimes all it takes is a face-lift and a new outlook!



“The definition of luxurious in itself can have a wide variety of meanings depending on the client, their expectations, their budget parameters, their interests etc”

says Amy Hellman,
Travel Consultant at JBS
World Travel Consultants



Millennials, also known as generation Y, are entirely different to the generations of the past, and they demand unique things from their luxury travel experience. An overwhelming 95% of Virtuoso travel specialists say they have seen active, adventure and specialty travel sales rise within the past 12 months.

“25% of millennials believe they will be millionaires one day,” says Amy Ogden, from award winning agency J. Public Relations, “so even if they don’t have the money at the moment they spend like they do.”

Travellers crave authenticity, picking immersive, educational experiences over typical sightseeing trips. They want to maintain their lifestyles while away from home, they want to indulge personal passions. As storytelling expert S.J. Murray from Story Rhetoric says;

“Millennials are conscious consumers. They care about their impact and they care about their experience.”

While any website can tell you how to find the most mainstream hotels and adventures, a travel advisor’s strength comes from authentic, inside advice, allowing any tourist to travel like a local.

Another common mistake when examining millennial’s travel habits is to forget about generation Z, their kids, their little siblings, the up-and comers of travel. Born from the mid-90s to 2010, they pack serious purchasing power through gift cards and parental persuasion. More so, they have the ability to impact brands via social like no generation before.

“From a spending perspective [teens] are millennials on steroids,” Marcie Merriman, Executive Director of Growth Strategy and Retail Innovation at Ernst & Young, told Business Insider.

Generation Z isn’t just frugal — they’re out to find the best value. Merriman said:

“They look beyond just what the price says it is to what you’re going to get for it — are you going to get free delivery? What other services come along with it?”

They lack their parents brand loyalty, meaning they are constantly looking for something better. As with millennials, traditional advertising isn’t likely to be as effective with generation Z. They will turn to online reviews, bloggers, and product experts to learn about products. This shift in trusted sources has had a direct impact on the luxury travel industry, which leans heavily on traditional media to validate their products.

The added value of a travel agency is hugely important. Karen Magee, Director of Leisure & Hotel Services at Tzell Travel Group, points to the *“exclusive experiences and concierge level service,”* while Amy Hellman emphasises the *“accessibility, added value amenities, knowledge, and networking.”*

All in all, an advisor is capable of making a run of the mill experience into one that lasts a lifetime. Yet, millennials still chose to “cut out the middleman” and turn to untested sources.

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Generation Z isn’t just frugal — they’re out to find the best value.

“Millennials will pay good money for a personal trainer or a private chef, so why not a travel adviser? Would you attempt to cut your own hair? NO! There has been a shift in mind-set to ‘why would I do it myself if someone will do it so much better than me?’, so, as an industry, we need to communicate the value of the experience travel advisors bring to the equation and that it doesn’t necessarily come with an extra cost,”

says Amy Ogden of J. Public Relations

So what can be done? With this new generation in mind, travel advisors must engage with social media in a genuine way, stand out as interesting and human, find interesting sponsorships and partnerships, and go above and beyond for their clients in order to stay relevant. At the ILTM’s Bright Young Things workshop in New York this last August, numerous young professionals in the field spoke on this very topic, dissecting the appropriate responses and actions to the industry’s undeniable shift.

62%

of millennials are brand loyal if a company is able to engage them on social media

64%

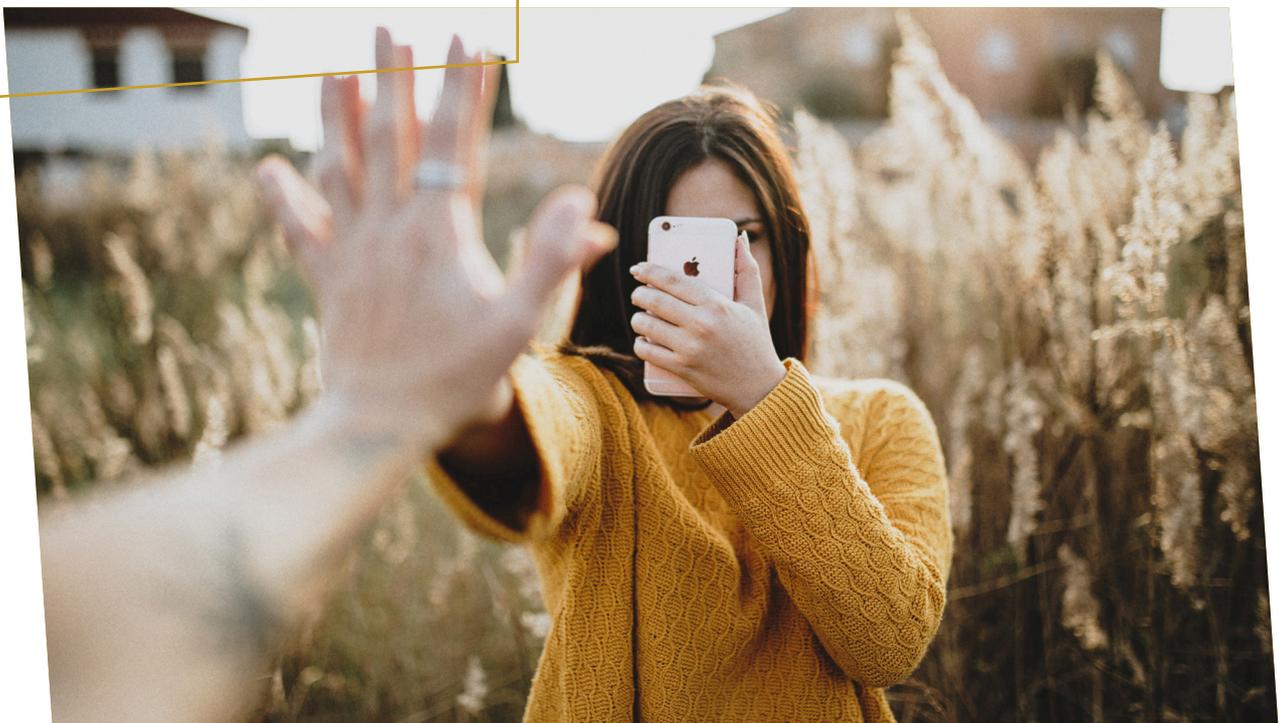
of millennials say companies should offer more ways to share their opinions online

94%

of people used Facebook while travelling

71%

used Instagram while travelling





Crafting the right story for your brand with social media

With the rise of sway power coming from “influencers” and social media, having an active channel of communication to the consumer is key to generating trust. The modern travel advisor must do everything in their power to show that they can go above and beyond what these websites are capable of through their service and knowledge.

“With technology, travellers have become smarter, empowered and more demanding – yet they have also begun to place their trust and purchasing potential in the hands of influencers.” And Jeremy Jauncey, Founder of Beautiful Destinations, warns, “If you’re not talking on those channels, you’re not where consumer attention is.”

This means being active on Facebook (used by 94% of people while travelling), Instagram (71%), Trip Advisor, WhatsApp, and so on for them to be able to engage with you. If you can successfully engage with millennials on social media, that’s big: 62% of millennials are brand loyal if a company is able to do so.

“Building your following on Instagram and Snapchat accounts will generate leads,” says Mallory Bankson, Leisure Travel Advisor at Valerie Wilson Travel.

Brooke Lavery, of Local Foreigner adds, *“We take Instagram very seriously, and our millennial audience is tuned in. Not only do we*

have current clients who ring up and admit to harbouring a crush on something we posted two weeks back, but we’ve also had new clients from around the world find us through this channel. One of our biggest trips of 2015 came from a Saudi family, whose 27-year old daughter plans their travel and found us through a friend on Insta.”

But it is not enough to just generate content. *“Sharing is what matters,”* S.J. Murray points out. Millennials prefer speaking for the brand rather than being spoken to. 64% of millennials say companies should offer more ways to share their opinions online. Since millennials were young, they’ve had access to interactive forms of entertainment and education. They’re used to being heard. That expectation extends to brands. So providing more ways for your fans to express themselves – through social contests, user-generated content, or customer care channels – will help you build relationships with this vocal group.

If you’re not talking on those channels, you’re not where consumer attention is.

Sharing is what matters.

Humanise your personal brand to convert business

Next, humanise your social media, personalise your brand. Become the popular guy or girl, the one everyone wants to be friends with and wants to be. That means not only having your finger on the pulse of things, but also being honest, being generous and altruistic, and being useful. With Google's endless supply of competition, for a company to rise to the top they must stand out. In this industry, being boring is the same as not being there at all. Instead of classical brand messaging, try strategies that engage the consumer, from rewards to contests to voting to point systems. There are infinite ways to be unique.

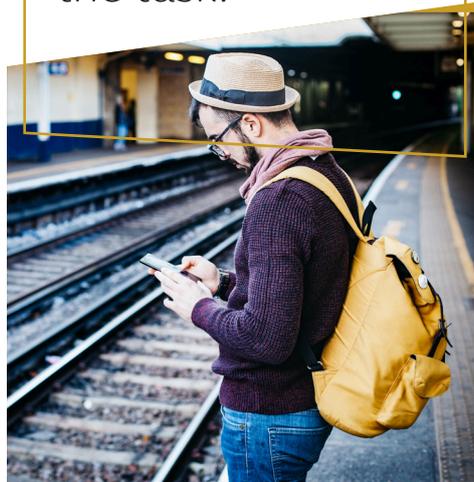
"Social media is allowing our clients to see more and more images of places they want to explore," says advisor Josh Gellar, Luxury Travel Advisor at Elite Travel International, "it's our job to make sure they experience it as luxuriously as possible."

In addition, classic techniques such as sponsorships and partnerships have to be re-examined. Creating the right partnerships and joint ventures allows you to scale. Anything is possible when the right people work together in the right ways, and your business will adopt the characteristics of the people and organisations you partner with. Partnerships don't need to be with corporations, but instead, real human beings. By harnessing people who love your brand, and encouraging or incentivising them to share their opinions online, you'll provide a source of authentic information that millennials and generation Z are likelier to trust. There is also the matter of sponsored content. Research shows us that millennials are more into browsing than buying. That puts the onus on retailers to move them down the path to purchase. Strategies such as targeted Facebook advertising and on-site social curation tools can give the push this group needs to close the sale.

But when it comes down to it, what helps any company create good business is a willingness to go above and beyond for their clients. What makes a travel advisor truly relevant is their ability to look out for a client, complete a task they do not have the time or desire to do.

"Nowadays, people don't buy, because they can't do it themselves, they buy because they don't have time or don't want to do the task." Amy Ogden, Vice President of Brand Development at J Public Relations, affirms.

Nowadays, people buy because they don't have time or don't want to do the task.



Furthermore, a travel advisor should make the impossible possible, be it booking a sold out hotel or making sure there's a bottle of champagne ready for an anniversary.

"[Making the impossible possible] could be something as simple as getting seats cleared for the client through our sales contacts so the couple can sit together on their honeymoon or arranging a birthday cake to be delivered to the plane for a surprise birthday trip to Hawaii," Amy Hellman says.

Josh Gellman explains that making an experience magical just comes from simply knowing your clients, *"While the most lavish rooms and dining experiences are important to some, a fantastic and knowledgeable jungle guide are just as important to others,"* he says. *"It's providing your clients with the best service possible and giving them that 'once in a lifetime' experience."*

Though the expectations of modern travellers and the ways of communicating with them have changed drastically in this new world of ours, honesty, accessibility, and hard work can take a travel agency far in securing their future success.

THE FUTURE OF THE TRAVEL ADVISOR

Contact

For more information about ILTM Bright Young Things events or more info on how to make the connections you need to grow your business, please visit view.ilm.com or email us at viewilm@reedexpo.co.uk.

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This report was written for ILTM by Michaela Guzy of ohthepeopleyoumeet.com

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