

Keeping up with the iGenners: Reinventing travel for Gen Z

By [Odette Faling](#)

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Whether you love or loathe the selfies, the "wokeness" and general thrust of Generation Z culture, the ideas, technologies and resultant change this vibrant populace of our era has ushered in, cannot be overstated.

Many before me have penned their definitions of the "iGeneration" so I'm not going to bore you with another shot at unpacking a generational stereotype and what makes them tick... it's just too complex a group. That said, for the purpose of this story the "Gen Z" label does help frame things.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

In 2019, some Gen Z-ers are grown up. Many of them have entered the Gig Economy and are starting to generate their own income – at over two billion individuals, they are the most populous generational cluster of our time. The life of a typical Gen Z-er is and always has been Internet-dominated.

Human identity is tightly woven with devices and apps and if streaming Netflix on a laptop while ordering dinner from Uber Eats and browsing the latest fashion deals on Zando is not your cup of matcha-infused tea, for most of Gen Z, it is the acceptable norm. Instant gratification served up by the platform businesses of our time!



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In travel, Gen Z's proclivity to explore, experience and share it all with friends and followers online is underscored by their relentless connectedness.

Elevating online standings

Influencers are the vaunted fountains of inspiration and recommendations canvassed in real time are the only validation one seeks in the buying journey. Whether they're checking into Dubai Airport on the way to Bali or risking their neck to capture

the Instagram that will be the envy of their followers, so many Gen Z-ers travel to share their stories and elevate their social standing.

In their highly digitised reality, it's no surprise that Gen Z values access to products and services on demand in nearly every part of their existence. Online booking is no different and in the business of travel, you ignore this behaviour at your peril.



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Even though Gen Z is often described as "the generation that won't sit still", these young people face several challenges that can keep them in one place for longer than they'd prefer.

In South Africa, such challenges consist of a tough job market, high tertiary education costs, more restrictions on cross-border movement than ever before and a harsh economic climate with a temperamental exchange rate.

Against the background of a burning desire to travel and explore, these inhibitors make globetrotting a luxury for most people, Gen Z and other cohorts included. If you're in the habit of passing their challenges off as "whingey" then think about this – in South Africa, the unemployment rate for those aged 15-24 is about 57%!

Shaping product experiences

Importantly, brands and companies must create experiences that cater to the financial burdens of a cash-strapped Gen Z while fitting their expectation that exchanges of value happen at warp speed.

As a brand, it is crucial to look at how you can bring sustainable discounts to your niche. It is increasingly evident that giving people the power to shape their own products and experiences can result in substantial savings passed on to customers. If you can do this without asking your target group to pick up the phone or send an email you have a much better chance of finding your place in the hearts of Generation Z.

By now, you might be wondering what the path is to achieve this? For most connected businesses, the answers lie in a big investment in data, analysis and automation. Successful platform businesses are nearly always supported by a deep understanding of who their customers are so that they can make transactions as frictionless as possible. This means being consistent across devices, using data to personalise interactions and staying in tune with the instant gratification Gen Z demands.



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In travel, online travel platforms who wish to resonate with Gen Z share a common mandate: lessen the financial burden on Gen Z travellers by bringing sustainable discounts and smart technology to the market.

We acknowledge that the current reality is not a passing fad and we resolve to make a lasting impression by saving people time, money and improving their lives. The question here is where our attention is best targeted to deliver optimal results for customers and businesses.

As travel spend moves increasingly from offline to online, we believe the answer is less about appealing to Gen Z to get up and globetrot (we'll leave that to the influencers) as it is about making travel booking as easy as streaming a series, ordering a takeaway or calling a taxi.

Online booking platforms need to shift priorities and deploy an experience that fits with what Generation Z values most in the digital products they choose, which at a basic level comes down to "things must just work".

ABOUT ODETTE FALING

Odette Faling is the CEO of South Africa's newest online travel agency, Travelcheck.co.za. After 12 years in ecommerce she has gained deep knowledge in developing partnerships and marketing strategies to help companies grow.

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