

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Luxury hotels can leverage social clout to attract young affluents

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Ritz-Carlton's Kapalua location posts local landscapes along with beverage offerings. Image credit: Ritz-Carlton Kapalua

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

While affluent travelers are not using social media to make decisions based on destinations, hotels' owned media pages are an integral part of engaging the younger luxury tourist.

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Social media continues to be an embedded portion of millennial and Gen Z affluent consumers' daily lives, and this includes travel. According to findings from YouGov's Affluent Perspective study, while 42 percent of the global affluent audience look to travel review sites for information, 20 percent rely on social media.

"Social media ad spending continues to steadily rise," said Cara David, managing partner at YouGov. "By 2020, social networks are expected to command \$37 billion in advertising revenue.

"It's no surprise, then, that hotel social media accounts have staked their claim as an important resource for many of the global affluent, especially younger individuals," she said. "Social media represents another avenue to attract attention for a travel brand and to communicate with affluent travelers."

Traveling in luxury

Luxury hotel brands have a unique opportunity to tap into not only the aesthetically pleasing aspects of their own locations but also high quality content from their local culture.

Affluent consumers who love to travel often look to these accounts for information and inspiration.

[View this post on Instagram](#)

A beautiful image of the Mother City by @craighowes #Repost @craighowes Run wild run free.
@cityofcapetown

A post shared by Belmond Mount Nelson Hotel (@belmondmountnelsonhotel) on May 1, 2019 at 9:17am PDT

Ritz-Carlton showcases local content from travelers

Millennials and Gen Zers dominate as the top groups who use social media for travel information, at a respective 33 and 35 percent, compared to 15, 10 and 7 percent of Gen X, boomers and matures, respectively.

Information from the social media accounts of hotels holds an equal 9 percent influence to that from friends and family accounts when it comes to consumers deciding where to stay. Social media advertising is even less influential at 7 percent.

However, when looking only at Gen Z responses, hotel branded social media pages see more users coming to them for information at 21 percent, followed by social advertising at 16 percent and friends and family at 11 percent.

For those using social to pick a destination, Facebook is the most favored platform.

More than half of all luxury travelers have cited using Facebook at some time to choose somewhere to go. YouTube follows Facebook at 38 percent, Instagram at 32 percent, Twitter at 28 percent and WhatsApp at 19 percent.

While these findings are promising for hotel brands looking to connect with younger audiences, the media landscape is always shifting. YouGov also revealed that 20 percent of affluents have reported to have stopped using an individual social site within the past year, which is a reminder to luxury brands to constantly monitor the platforms working best for them.

Traveling through social

Luxury hotel brands have learned to leverage the social media trend in many ways.

Hospitality group Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts has looked to inspire consumers to take time out of their busy lives and embrace new experiences with a new global brand initiative.

"Take Your Time" includes a new set of property experiences that require little time commitment, as well as an emotive collection of campaign films via social. Time itself is becoming a luxury commodity as today's affluents

are increasingly time poor and constantly connected ([see story](#)).

However, there can be downfalls when it comes to social media.

For instance, hotel chain Dorchester Collection closed the social accounts for its properties as consumers voice their dissent for the group's owner.

Dorchester is owned by the Sultan of Brunei, who has put into place one of the harshest versions of Sharia Law in his small monarchy in which citizens believed to be gay will be stoned and whipped to death. After experiencing backlash on social media, Dorchester decided to pull the accounts for its collection of hotels ([see story](#)).

"Affluent Gen Z and Millennial consumers are more likely to rely on social media accounts to gain information relevant to hotel booking," Ms. David said. "But, by and large, Gen X and Boomer audiences haven't adopted the practice in the same way."

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