

Airlines changing with the trends, taking flight with millennials

By [Pumla Luhabe](#)

21 Sep 2017

Millennials have taken flight and are pioneering a new path to enrich their lives through travel. Aged between 18 and 34, millennials have become an increasingly important generation which poses several opportunities for organisations, including airlines, to cater for their very particular needs.



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According to a report by Nielsen titled [Young and ready to travel](#), millennials are traveling more often than their predecessors. Previous generations travelled primarily for work and special occasions, but millennials travel to enrich their lives with personal experiences.

The report indicates that the global travel retail market accounts for \$63.5bn (approximately R837bn), with millennials making up to 50% of that spend.

Major airlines starting to take note

Millennials have become so important that major airlines, including Mango, have started taking note and are offering specialised experiences to attract millennials. For example, Air France recently announced that they are launching a new airline in September, called Joon, specifically catering to millennials. Its flight crew will be clad in “trendy-casual and Instagrammable outfits”, creating a completely different onboard experience than the traditional *je ne sais quoi* Air France flights.

Hipmunk, in the USA, surveyed more than 8,500 people in 24 countries with some interesting findings:

- Millennials want onboard bars with free booze and themed flights with seasonal goodies
- 24% of millennials would pay more to be on a child-free flight
- Not surprisingly, electronics matter supremely to those born in the 1980s. The survey found 45% of millennials want to e-chat or play games with other passengers, while only 36% of Gen-Xers wanted to do so
- And some offbeat ideas got a thumbs up too. For example, 70% of millennials would sit near the restrooms and 28% would stand if it meant saving money on airfares, according to the survey

Millennials show how the industry is shifting, it is not only about what the flight costs and what routes the airline flies, but tech-savvy travellers want an in-flight experience.

Other airlines have also introduced 'quirky' ways to attract this younger traveller. Delta Airlines has become famous for their humorous safety videos, while other airlines such as Southwest Airlines, are known for their pilots who take selfies with onboard customers before each flight takes off.

The in-flight experience with Mango

Locally, Mango Airlines offers its guests an affordable yet enjoyable experience on every flight. A relentless pursuit of excellence is what drives Mango and forms a fundamental part of our culture. Over the years Mango has perfected our customer experience, from tongue-in-cheek humour to excellent guest service.

We have hosted innovative experiences on our flights to better relate to our younger and trendy customers. For example, in 2012 we hosted local artists, Mi Casa, to perform on one of our flights between Johannesburg and Cape Town. More recently, Mango took part in the viral Running Man Challenge, which saw Mango Team members do variations of the popular 'Running Man' dance to an old '90s hit song called "My Boo" by Ghost Town DJ's. Mango also had the honour of being one of the first airlines in Africa to use bio-fuel – which would appeal to the millennials who are a generation that cares about causes

Fluent in all things digital

Millennials are also extremely technologically savvy and they expect their service providers to be equally fluent in all things digital. Mango has pioneered the domestic aviation industry across several technological touch points, from being the first to develop a mobile App for booking and payment to being the only carrier globally to accept store charge cards such as Edgars and Jet cards as a method of payment.

Mango is also the first airline in Africa to retail through supermarkets, with our partnerships with Pick 'n Pay, Edgars, Checkers and various other notable brands. This greatly increases the ease with which millennials can plan their next trip to our eight destinations around South Africa and to Zanzibar.

Although Mango is quirky and fun it takes operational efficiency seriously; for example, 88% of our flights arrived on time in the first fortnight in September.

Appealing to the millennials would be our Sunday Times 'Generation Next Survey' where Mango has been voted the "Coolest Low-Cost Airline" several times. If I were to answer what makes Mango "cool" my list would include our social media platforms that give our guests an added platform to engage with us, our comfortable seats and room to work on your laptop while onboard, our self-check-in facility, and our awesome partners.

Changing with the trends

There is no doubt that travel patterns will change from one generation to the next and at Mango, we want to change with the trends. We are not an airline that 'arrives' we are continuously on a journey to be relevant, and appeal to our guests. We are in our 11th year and we look forward to continuing to offer South African millennials and other generational travellers the perfect way to enrich their lives through travel.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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