

# Young travelers changing hospitality industry

By Janet Morrissey, New York Times

The hotel industry, struggling to recover from the depths of the recession, has begun to contemplate a group of travelers it sees as crucial to its economic growth – those in their 20s to mid-30s who are obsessed with technology, social media and design.

Many hotel owners and operators are remodeling existing hotels or introducing new ones that offer free hotelwide Wi-Fi connections; large, welcoming lobbies with plush, comfortable furnishings; state-of-the-art fitness areas; in-room power consoles to plug in iPads, laptops and other devices; and stylish bars that spill into the lobby.

Some are also scheduling nightly social events, like happy hours and free wine tastings, aimed at luring the iPhone-toting generation to their hotels.

“All of the major brands – Hilton, Starwood, Marriott, InterContinental – have developed hip products that are targeted at the younger traveler,” said Chris Klauda, a vice president at D.K. Shifflet & Associates, a travel and hospitality market research company.

Travel spending by these younger travelers rose 20 percent in 2010, making them the fastest-growing age segment, according to American Express Business Insights, though they still lag the baby boom generation in overall spending.

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