



Gen Xers and Hospitality

(Part I)

I'm at the tail of Generation X, a cohort that loves to travel with its family but also enjoys getting away from its frantic life and relaxing a bit 😊. Let's explore this segment of the population and its relationship with the hospitality industry.

Who is Generation X?^{1,2,3,4}

Generation X or Gen X, born roughly between 1965 and 1980, is the cohort following Baby Boomers and preceding Millennials. In the U.S. they number around 65 million individuals. The letter "X" refers to an unknown variable (as in mathematics), or to the generation's desire not to be defined.

The use of 'Generation X' to characterize this cohort was popularized by Douglas Coupland, a Canadian journalist and novelist. In 1987, he used the expression in the *Vancouver Magazine*. He later said that he had taken it from *A Guide Through the American Status System* by Paul Fussell (1983). Fussell used X to refer to people who wanted to distance themselves from the social struggle for class status and professional glory. The term was further popularized by Coupland's 1991 novel, *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*.

History^{5,6,7}

Known as the "latchkey" or "lost" generation, Gen Xers grew up at a time when societal values shifted, with many children home alone after school and an increase in divorce rates. *Kramer vs. Kramer*, a 1979 American movie, embodied the struggle for child custody and the demise of the traditional nuclear family.

Gen Xers were the first generation to grow up with personal computers to some extent, thus becoming tech savvy. They were also the first to have cable television widely available. MTV, the network that initially broadcasted videos 24 hours a day, was rolled out in 1981 and was embraced by so many Gen Xers that *MTV Generation* has also been used to describe them.

Gen Xers came of age during the emergence of the deadly AIDS epidemic in the 1980s. They lived the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_X

² <https://www.bamboohr.com/resources/hr-glossary/generation-x>

³ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Generation-X>

⁴ <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/generation-x-genx.asp#:~:text=Notable%20members%20of%20Generation%20X,and%20the%20late%20Kurt%20Cobain.>

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_X

⁶ <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/generation-x-genx.asp>

⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Generation-X>

of the Soviet Union in 1991. They witnessed the first successful space shuttle flight in 1981 as well as the explosion of Challenger five years later. They also lived during the height of the U.S. government's War on Drugs, and through the 1970s and '80s energy crises. As children and young adults, they experienced shaky economic times, enduring the recessions of the 1970s, '80s, and '90s.

Fun Facts^{8,9,10,11}

- The two wealthiest Americans, Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos, are members of Gen X as are many of the biggest names in Silicon Valley. Gen Xers are an entrepreneurial group that owns most small businesses and startups in the US.
- Mark Zuckerberg, perhaps one of the most famous millennials, grew *Facebook* from a college directory into a powerful and influential social networking website over the course of 10 years. Other millennial innovators include *Instagram* founders Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger and *TikTok* developer Zhang Yiming.
- Gen Xers pioneered blogging before the practice even had a name. In 1994, college student Justin Hall (a.k.a. the "founding father" of blogging) started a personal site, Links.net, where he shared links and wrote about his family, his travels, and his love life. Other Gen Xers, and some Boomers, rolled out blogs of their own, helping to popularize the medium.
- Generation X produced some of the biggest celebrities in Hollywood. For instance, Leonardo DiCaprio (turning 50 in a few days) walked his first red carpet in 1993 for his film "What's Eating Gilbert Grape." Other famous Gen X actors include Jennifer Aniston, Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, Will Smith, Robert Downey Jr., Winona Ryder, etc.

⁸ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Generation-X>

⁹ <https://www.businessinsider.com/photos-gen-x-celebrities-first-most-recent-red-carpet-photos-2023-11>

¹⁰ <https://www.nonprofitpro.com/post/dont-forget-about-gen-x-in-fundraising/#:~:text=The%20facts%20are%20clear%3A%20The,companies%20in%20the%20Fortune%20500.>

¹¹ <https://extramile.thehartford.com/lifestyle/generation-x-contributions/>

Travel Habits and Trends^{12,13,14}

Gen X travelers carry substantial weight in the hospitality and travel industries. Below are some habits and trends shaping their behavior and preferences.

- A significant portion of Gen Xers have children at home, leading to a strong preference for family trips. Family packages and discounts, as well as kid-centric activities and amenities, are particularly appealing to this demographic.
- Gen X travelers value trips that lend to unique learning opportunities for themselves and their children such as visiting museums and historical sites and participating in their destination's local life.
- Gen X tend to travel less frequently than other generations. When they do travel, however, they take longer periods off. On average, Gen Xers take 26 vacation days per year — with nearly half of their holidays lasting more than seven days.
- Gen X travelers tend to outspend other generations, often due to traveling with larger family groups. They value quality and are willing to pay for high-end accommodation and experiences.
- A primary motivation for Gen X travel is to rest and de-stress - 68% of Gen Xers list rest as their main reason for travel, more than any other generation. They seek destinations that offer a break from their hectic lives and promote work-life balance.
- Generation Xers are technologically competent, and value amenities that use the latest tech in online booking, self-check-in, smart rooms, etc.

For Generation X, being able to relax when traveling is essential, therefore the importance of offering them clean, comfortable lodgings.

Unfortunately, staff shortage is the number one issue in the hotel industry. This is why it makes sense to adopt an electronic tipping solution like

¹² <https://www.blueprintrf.com/generation-x-travel/#:~:text=Tapping%20Into%20Generation%20X%20Travel%20Trends&text=Hotels%20can%20achieve%20this%20by,and%20other%20technology%2Ddriven%20amenities.>

¹³ <https://www.blueprintrf.com/generation-x-travel/>

¹⁴ <https://webrezpro.com/travel-trends-and-guest-expectations-by-generation/>

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