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5 'New-Gen'
Hotel Brands

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5 hip & stylish hotel brands

By Adrienne Bowen



Are your attendees part of the X and Y generations? Are they hip and stylish?

If you've seen the movie "Hitch," imagine the character Alex Hitchens, played by Will Smith, who helps his clients score in love. He's a stylish Gen Xer who likes high-tech gadgetry, adventure and chic nightclubs.

Now that you have Hitchins in mind, visualize the type of hotel where members of the X and Y generations would want to be "seen."



NYLO bar

Cutting-edge technology, increased amenities, modern décor, an emphasis on social atmospheres and a customized approach where individual needs are accounted for are some of the aspects that define the hospitality needs of the Gen Xers, according to Laurence Geller, chairman/CEO of Strategic Hotel Capital LLC.

"Today, Gen Xers are driving much of our business," Geller said. "It's the Gen Xers who will actually drive leisure. They spend more, travel more with their children—often with nannies—and they go on 'togetherness' trips more. These trips are where groups of friends or families vacation together just to find time to meet."

Geller added, "The needs of Gen Xers and Yers will increasingly revolve around customization, amenities and services. Technology will not only have to be the great enabler but it will also have to be updated constantly—almost instantly. And those updates will have to be leading edge to satisfy the speed at which societal demands change."

While hotels across the South are meeting the demand of the younger generations

with service and amenity enhancements, the hospitality industry is taking it a step further. In the past several years, hotel companies have introduced brands that have specific qualities that target the "young and hip." Here's an overview of five "new-

gen" brands, a quick peak at their trendy offerings and some of the destinations in the South where you can find them:

aloft: A Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide Inc. brand, aloft incorporates urban-influenced design elements, accessible technology and a social atmosphere, according to Brian McGuinness, vice president of aloft and Element hotels worldwide. Guest rooms are spacious with loft-styled nine-foot ceilings, oversized windows and large bathrooms with walk-in showers. In-room technology includes a plug and play system with multiple connectivity outlets for various electronic gadgetry such as PDAs, cell phones, MP3 players and laptops—all linked to a large flat-panel TV.

Several hotels are currently under construction, including aloft Aventura (Fla.). This hotel will offer 215 rooms and 5,000 square feet of meeting space. "With its urban chic and lively social atmosphere, aloft Aventura will provide a fresh, new lodging alternative for both business and leisure travelers to the Miami area," McGuinness said, adding that the hotel is set to open in 2010.

Officials are opening alofts in all types of destinations and have properties open or set to open soon in Atlanta, Charleston, S.C., Charlotte, N.C., Franklin, Tenn., Greenville, S.C., Orlando, Fla., Richmond, Va., Rogers, Ark., and Houston.



Hyatt Place guest room

Cambria Suites: "The appeal of Cambria Suites is that it more than satisfies the needs of traditional travelers while also catering to multi-tasking, active, experimental travelers who will appreciate the brand's contemporary styling and its functional attributes," said Charles Ledsinger Jr., president/CEO of Choice Hotels, which recently launched the Cambria Suites brand.

Each property is an all-suite hotel with rooms 25 percent larger than industry standard and showcasing luxury bedding and linens; refrigerators and microwaves; and movable, ergonomic desks. Among its offerings for the tech-savvy are USB memory sticks available to guests.

Cambria Suites Savannah (Ga.) Airport, one of the first of the brand to open and the first in the South, began accepting reservations in April. On site there are 97 guest rooms, more than 1,000 square feet of event space and a business center.

Hyatt Place: "Hyatt Place was designed to be a next generation hotel experience and, based on the overwhelmingly positive guest feedback we've received to date, we succeeded in giving travelers a hotel where they can easily accomplish personal and professional tasks like they would at home," said Jim Abrahamson, Hyatt's senior vice president of real estate and development for the Americas.

So what makes it a "new-gen" hotel? Guest

rooms feature various upgraded amenities, including a 42-inch, flat-panel TV and a Hyatt Plug Panel that allows guests to utilize their own entertainment media.

Personalized service is offered through the Gallery, a welcoming arrival area where guests are personally greeted by the Gallery Host. The space also includes a self-registration kiosk, a coffee and wine café, a bakery, complimentary wireless Internet access, a TV den, and an e-room with complimentary access to a computer.

Louisiana became home to the Hyatt Place Baton Rouge/I-10 last December. The property has 126 guest rooms and 1,200 square feet of meeting space. Other locations include Atlanta; Dallas and San Antonio, Texas; Louisville, Ky.; Nashville and Memphis, Tenn.; and Orlando, Fla.

Hotel Indigo: InterContinental Hotels Group opened its first Hotel Indigo in Atlanta in 2004. Since then, the boutique-styled hotel brand has opened 14 other properties with more than 60 currently under development, according to Jim Anhut, senior vice president of brand management for Hotel Indigo.

Noteworthy are the hotel's public spaces, which are transformed seasonally through changing artwork, music, flora, murals and directional signage.

Expect summer 2009 to bring a Hotel Indigo to Asheville, N.C. Plans call for 89 guest rooms and 11 suites as well as a 24-hour business center and 465 square feet of meeting space. "The branded boutique concept of Hotel Indigo will allow us to reflect the city's 'eclecticism' and combine it with the refreshing brand elements that have made Hotel Indigo an attractive alternative for travelers," Anhut said.

Other locations include Atlanta; Dallas and Houston; Nashville, Tenn.; and Sarasota, Fla.

NYLO: NYLO Hotels is a brand new hotel company with strictly the Gen Xer in mind. The company opened its first hotel in Plano, Texas, last December. According to hotel officials, NYLO Plano at Legacy offers 176 guest rooms, 45 allergy-friendly designed guest rooms, 1,800 square feet of meeting space, a 6,000-square-foot courtyard with a grill, and an outdoor stage with a D.J. hookup.

The Loft is the hotel's common area, featuring a restaurant with table service, grab-and-go fare, and 24-hour food availability. Other features include the NYLO Boutique store with products such as music CDs and trendy apparel. ■

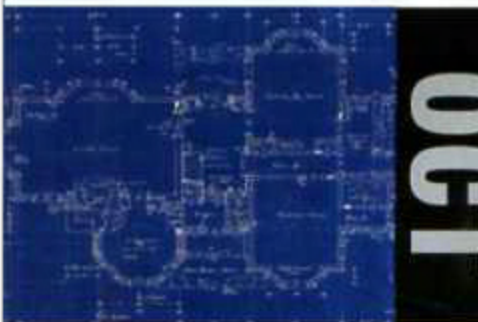
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