odigo

Sun, sand & CCaaS –
How tourism's recovery must
begin in the contact centre

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Introduction

Many businesses are still reeling from the effects of COVID-19, and none more so than those from the travel and tourism industries. Uncertainty stretches on, and changing government restrictions are forcing companies to seek innovative ways of coping in rapidly changing conditions. As the travel industry seeks to promote a more future-proof model, the importance of customer experience (CX) in tourism has never been higher.

In the UK, accommodation and travel agencies saw the sharpest decline of any industry segment, with the Office For National Statistics estimating a 90.7% drop in turnover between February and May 2020. Since then, further lockdowns have contributed to ongoing uncertainty in the industry, with travel and tourism businesses seeing a higher percentage of workers remaining on furlough through January 2021 than most other sectors. New infection outbreaks and rolling lockdowns have further impacted, to the extent of a global loss of around 42% in revenue for the entire tourism industry.

The world openness score – a measure of open travel between countries – by the Passport Index, found that international mobility decreased by 65% due to COVID-19, taking that measure to historical lows.

These numbers are stark. Make no mistake: tourism has been brought to its knees by COVID-19, on a domestic and international scale. However, now that vaccination programmes are being rolled out across the world, bringing with them vaccination passports, there is a growing sense of cautious optimism that the industry could gain momentum through 2021.

Indeed, McKinsey acknowledges that the sector has demonstrated strong leadership to keep companies above water:

> "Many players have acted quickly to retain customer goodwill, tap new sources of liquidity, and work effectively with unions to agree on voluntary redundancy programs. We have also seen innovation and a focus on CX. These examples illustrate the travel industry's strength that will help it chart a way forward through these challenging times."
>
> **McKinsey, September 2020**

In the face of almost overwhelming economic challenges, the tourism industry has shown tenacity. However, for tourism to rebuild effectively, it must invest in accelerating digital transformation programs that encourage sustainability and greater customer-centricity in equal measure. Sustainability is a vital key when looking to the future; the short term has been all about reacting to the pandemic, but climate change remains an overriding long-term priority for customers. This means investing in greener travel and service provisions must also be a key priority for businesses.

Predicting the further impacts of this crisis and continual changes in travel trends makes recovery all-the-more challenging. The unpredictability of this situation means that gathering data in real-time is essential for travel and tourism organisations of all kinds, from airlines to accommodation providers and agents on the front line fielding questions from disgruntled customers.

This doesn't make comforting reading for travel and tourism businesses, and will increase caution amongst travellers. As well as the need to recover from these drop-offs, businesses are now finding customer expectations altered dramatically in other ways too.

As restrictions are eased, travellers are on the move again, determined to enjoy some return to normality after almost a year confined largely to their homes. With this fresh in their minds consumers are craving clarity and improved communication to inspire the confidence to start travelling again. It is conceivable that these stop-start travel cycles will continue and necessitate increased agility and scalability in contact centre operations, enabling tourism businesses to manage peaks and troughs in demand.

Customers who do begin to travel again in 2021 will be conscious of changing control measures in destination countries, and in the UK the changing status of so-called green list countries will impact consumer decisions, driving up demand for staycations and domestic travel. This offers something of a silver lining in the context of sustainability, with shorter and less carbon-intensive travel, in the short term. However, there is still a need for organisations to respond to the urgency of climate change by investing in more efficient systems in the long run. In the 2021 Gartner CEO Survey, 45% of the respondents reported a significant impact from climate change mitigation on their businesses.

The current need for enhanced communication and future expectation for remote and self-service access will see a surge in the importance of customer experience in tourism, specifically omnichannel customer service and the use of analytics to boost forecasting for capacity, in more stable conditions, and in demand destinations.

To meet this new dynamic standard, travel and tourism organisations need to push past legacy system challenges to achieve a digital and analytics transformation. Change can furnish organisations with advanced passenger profiling and CX surveys, which will increase the sophistication of the services and products offered to travellers.

In this context, usage-based IT and operational systems could be an appealing option for travel organisations to maintain proportionate costs and scale when demand does spike. In addition, travel companies should seek to make full use of customer data to understand their customers in microsegments, rather than monoliths, and broaden their view of what the customer journey involves.

This practical guide collates the latest insights into how the tourism industry has suffered through the COVID-19 pandemic, mining the numbers to reveal how contact centres can become key value drivers on tourism's road to recovery. It finishes with 3 solutions to improve CX in tourism which are: automating key processes, introducing bots into the CX mix and developing personalised solutions for both companies and customers.

Travel is, after all, a deeply personal thing, and the more companies can provide flexible channel-less interactions to better cater to and identify customer preferences, the more successful they will be.

How tourism can utilise Contact Centre as a Service solutions to build back better

COVID-19 has increased the importance and need for an online business presence and customer services, a shift which has been underway for years now, with high street travel agents becoming all but redundant, and tourism joining the e-commerce revolution. Travellers are now looking to book with more flexibility. The convenience we now see in many other aspects of life – such as contactless retail and food delivery – is coming to be expected in tourism too, with shorter booking lead times and a growth in machine check-in systems and contactless touchpoints.

The trend towards contact centres as value drivers and contributors to strategic business objectives has been underway for some time, as this 2015 report from Deloitte indicates. However, COVID-19 has accelerated what had been the gradual erosion of face-to-face touchpoints.

The ubiquity of technology has given rise to a growing digitally native population and the proliferation of contact channels. This places contact centres at the heart of many industries, which are no longer the phone banks of old, but spaces to provide vital, omnichannel touchpoints crucial to enhancing customer experiences. Four-fifths of customers place the same value of flawless engagement as they do on product quality.

Customer service in tourism and hospitality helps drive future business and this starts at the browsing and booking stage. Solutions which make use of rising technology can expand a contact centre's role into a full CX hub, giving agents access to the full customer journey, from beginning to end, however they have made contact. Throughout the diverse value chain of tourism, including small to medium enterprises (SMEs) this consolidation of customer data helps to instil business readiness and value into the relationship between the customer and business. This value is further enhanced when considering how this can be utilised to shape outbound marketing campaigns targeting customers with the right messages about sustainability and the future of travel.

It's also not just travellers who benefit from extra contact points. For example, food and fuel suppliers, who typically work alongside airlines and hotels, have also experienced significant disruptions. Individual business flexibility in each area, and more communication channels, would benefit other symbiotic parts within the sector.

The desire to adapt, and customer service flaws highlighted by the pressures of COVID-19, have led to a surge in the popularity of cloud-based CCaaS solutions. Gartner predicts that after proving itself in uncertain times, upcoming wireless communications advances will push cloud adoption further towards ubiquitous usage. With this progression the global CCaaS market size is projected to reach £7.7billion by 2027[1] exhibiting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 16.1% during the forecast period.

In the present, with face-to-face interactions still limited and the need for hybrid or remote working remaining, many features of CCaaS solutions are now crucial to businesses in the tourism sector. Particularly relevant are the omnichannel customer contact touchpoints and integrated workforce management software.

[1] Original figure given in USD, exchange rate correct at time of writing.

CX culture is changing in multiple ways beyond those imposed by the pandemic, transformed by the need for speed, agility and ease of access, to keep up with technological advances. Customers are increasingly adopting outsourced concierge services to handle disputes and complaints, and securing refunds. In addition, customers are more likely to abandon calls and no longer purchase from an organisation if they are passed around too much, or if issues take too long to resolve. This paints a picture of dissatisfaction with CX of old and an expectation in-line with instant messaging for more rapid responses. This is emphasised in recent reports that have found more customers are adopting social media platforms like Snapchat and Instagram to make complaints and offer feedback. In a 2020 Salesforce survey 42% of people reported not to trust companies to tell the truth, but 78% agreed with the statement that they would "forgive a company for its mistake after receiving excellent service". Customer service and communication are key factors for customer satisfaction (CSAT).

People are growing ever more accustomed to using digital customer support services, 76% of customers prefer different channels depending on the context of their query. New-style contact centres and the CCaaS technology underpinning it will help businesses in the travel sector connect with customers and build the trust needed to encourage them to travel again.

The rise of video chat also points to the future when travellers will increasingly expect integrated customer contact touchpoints, which will drive expectations for more unified customer conversations. In 2020, 52% of customers described most service interactions as fragmented and without care this could well get worse. As a result, contact centres will take a greater role in ensuring CX and CSAT for travellers. Driving all of this will be CCaaS solutions built on intelligent automation (IA), machine learning (ML) and other artificial intelligence (AI) technology, facilitating more effective, informed communication between all stakeholders, including agents, travellers and hospitality providers.

With customers relying heavily on contact centres to provide real-time information to plan their holidays and agile communication to get the most out of their services, tourism needs to invest in contact centres to drive value through experience-enhancing interactions. These interactions include, but are not limited to, real-time translation and the provision of accurate, controlled information (e.g., regarding regional variations in COVID-19 regulations and restrictions).

The sophisticated IT infrastructure behind CCaaS solutions will deliver tailored services and give contact centres a bigger role to play, not just in tourism's customer relationship strategies, but in the overall marketing plan to reconnect with travellers and reignite the industry as it seeks to recover from what has undoubtedly been its toughest year to date.

For tourism to rebuild successfully for a sustainable, post-COVID future, it must handle 3 distinct challenges:

- Businesses must provide vital support and communication to travellers to help them stay safe and compliant with regional COVID-19 regulations – such as mandatory quarantine periods, potential vaccine passports and travel corridors,
- The sector must adapt to provide the kind of intuitive, digital-led service consumers are used to seeing in other sectors,
- Travel organisations across the value chain must leverage new technologies to accelerate sustainability initiatives and tackle climate change.
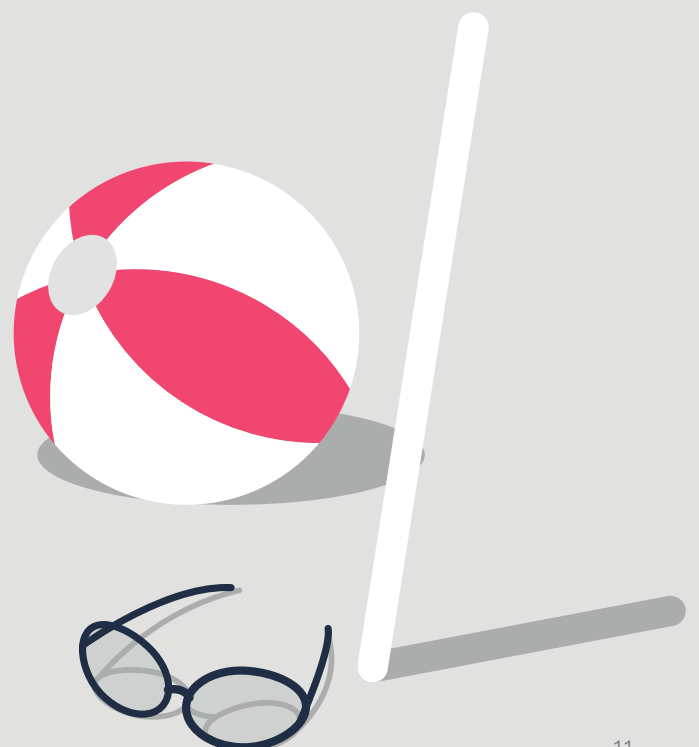
CCaaS solutions can be equipped with the tools and expertise, in the form of support services, necessary to address these challenges and facilitate the transition to a new working model. This new digital paradigm has seen business leaders re-evaluate their communications and technology strategies to meet the demand for omnichannel services and cater to the rise of hybrid or remote workforces.

The cloud-based solutions underpinned by IA could furnish CCaaS agents with up-to-the-minute data relating to travel restrictions around the world. This will enable contact centres to become the one-stop-shop for crucial information as the pandemic situation continues to evolve.

Businesses able to provide this service to travellers – from airlines and travel agents to accommodation providers – will undoubtedly experience greater levels of CSAT and loyalty. If the reaction to the pandemic has taught business leaders one thing – whether in tourism or elsewhere – it's that people value organisations that put empathy before profit.

There must also be a broader transformation within the travel sector towards a smarter, analytics-driven form of customer service. This transformation looks beyond the period of COVID-19 recovery towards long-term resilience and agility in customer operations across the travel and tourism industry. This is why the contact centre will be perfectly positioned to play a vital role in communicating a message of sustainability to eco-conscious travellers. In March 2021, a Deloitte survey showed that nearly 1 in 3 consumers claimed to have stopped purchasing certain brands or products because they had ethical or sustainability related concerns about them.

From voice assistants and conversational agents to augmented reality features, there are several technological options available to enrich traveller experiences. Meanwhile, contact centres can make use of video streaming technology to provide the face-to-face services often missing from customer support. These solutions can then integrate video chats with other communication channels producing more rewarding interactions for the contact centre and traveller combined.
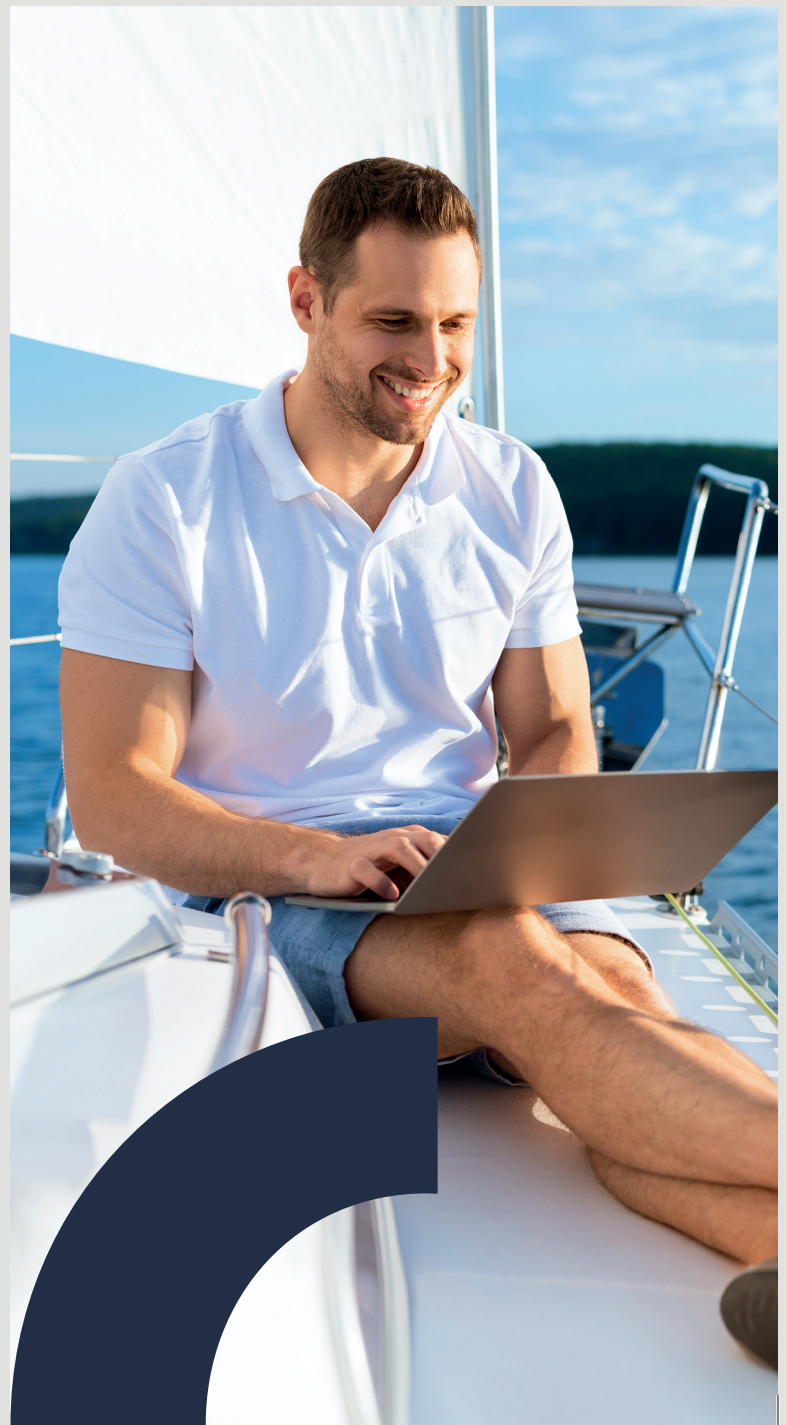
Businesses opting for CCaaS contact centre solutions will also benefit from the efficiencies of these solutions such as integrated reporting and analytics capabilities. The valuable data that can be collected across the channels can provide the insights for both customer interactions, marketing focuses and workforce management.

Many businesses are already making this transformation. A leading online booking application implemented staff load balancing, which enabled them to scale support operations and exceed the client's service levels by 102%. As part of a broader focus on improving their CX, they also delivered cost reduction seminars to help agents develop negotiation skills. This programme saw 94% of customers who called in asking for a cash refund leaving instead with credits, which encouraged them to continue using the app.

These initiatives demonstrate the importance of effective communication, helping to change trust into loyalty, even when problems arise. Specifically, given the value of close connection with customers in the travel sector, using analytics and upskilling will give contact centre agents the tools necessary to deliver great customer service. Greater customer insights can empower CCaaS agents to offer the kind of personalised solutions and best-in-class loyalty programmes that drive excellent experiences and keep customers coming back for more. These bonded customers will be vital during the rebuilding of the market especially when competition is fierce and the simplicity of online reviews can create negative publicity quickly.

The changes to the working environment sparked by COVID-19 are likely here to stay to some degree. 188 agents were moved by VOO to remote work in a single week. As a result, the cloud based solution absenteeism dropped from 62% to 5% and daily calls per team showed a 38% increase in productivity. Going forward into a future of hybrid and remote workforces, travel and tourism businesses will have to decide on whether they will choose a multi-tenant public cloud solution or host their solution in a private cloud depending on several factors, including data privacy, security, tolerance for risk, and often other vertical market-specific requirements.

The business case for cloud based CCaaS solutions is strong. However, across an industry as varied and broad as tourism, it can be difficult to know how exactly these solutions can be best applied. The next section of this guide will provide some practical tips on specific solutions and how to apply them across different segments of the tourism industry.

3 ways to improve customer experience in tourism

1.   Automation

The tourism industry has typically lagged behind in the adoption of automation and data analytics, leading to a lack of robust, comparable, timely and granular data for use in quickly-evolving situations. However, there is now an urgent need to address this, as reliable and consistent performance indicators are critical to informing policy and business decisions.

Automation enhanced customer service channels and tools have gone beyond something good to have to become an essential feature of optimised customer experiences, whether in travel or tourism, or other industries. Powered by AI and ML, intelligent automation can be applied to a range of different customer interaction scenarios, including:

- **Service customers, 24/7**: Enhancing service levels by using automation to establish around the clock conversational self-service, with an intelligent customer assistant that delivers the answers customers need, whenever they need them while intelligently escalating complex issues to live agents. This can enable businesses in the travel sector to handle the whole customer journey, from preliminary qualification to issue resolution, at any time of day or night.

- **Intelligent query routing**: Route the right call to the right agent, ensuring that every query goes straight to the person best qualified to handle it, improving CX, response rates and first contact resolution rates, while reducing call handling time and unnecessary frustrations for both customers and agents.

- **Routine query automation**: Streamline service delivery by automating responses to repetitive questions that don't require human judgement to resolve. This allows agents to focus on issues that require a human touch and provides quicker resolution of customer issues, eliminates mundane tasks and enhances focus on providing personalised service that leads to better business outcomes.

- **Expert agents**: Free agents from repetitive customer issues, and engage them to become specialists in disarming complex issues and creating great service moments, thereby improving agent engagement, boosting first contact resolution and reducing staff turnover.

- **Seamless channel switching**: Allow customers to freely move between self- or agent-assisted service based on their needs. If something is too complex or needs a human touch, it can be passed to a live agent. The agent receives all the necessary context and details from the automated chat, meaning customers can choose their own journey, without having to repeat information.
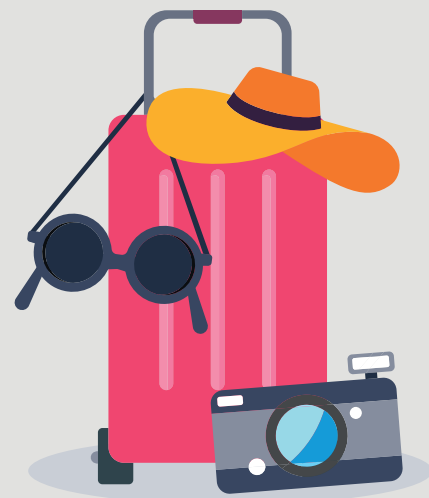
This is not an exhaustive list of the potential applications of automation, but it goes to show the breadth of possibilities open to those operating at the intersection of the contact centre and tourism. Focusing on automating in these areas can drive internal efficiencies as well as greater access to support for customers.

For tourism organisations to successfully bring automation into their CX design, they must think in terms of automation experience design (AXD), as McKinsey terms it, mapping the end-to-end customer journey to fully comprehend priority areas for automation.

> **"**
> To incorporate effective automation products you should view automation from the perspective of the end-to-end customer journey. Seeing the journey through a holistic lens allows automation to be properly integrated through an approach we call automation experience design (AXD), which combines human-centred design and automation."
>
> McKinsey 2020

As such, decision-makers in the tourism sector should think about the aspects of travel that contact centre agents or customers currently find the most difficult or complex to deal with. For example, automation can be used to simplify booking and checking-in processes for travellers by producing automated itineraries and one-click confirmations. 38% of travellers say researching flights and accommodation bookings is the biggest source of stress during the travel experience. Therefore, improving these

aspects of the customer journey will impact CSAT levels and also contribute to sustainability goals by improving resource efficiency.

For agents, automation can be used to speed up integrated data processing and analytics, providing them with real-time CX data that empowers better business decision-making. Increasingly hotels, for example, now use AI to send out and sort through customer feedback surveys to rapidly build a clear picture of public opinions, enabling those who interact with customers to adjust the experiences they deliver as required.

Airlines, booking companies, tour companies and other businesses from across the spectrum of tourism can all benefit from automation too. Whether it's generating automated transactional documents or sending context-appropriate recommendations, every business has key activities where customer contact could be improved through the strengths of automation which can facilitate quicker, more accurate interactions, enabling a scalable customer service approach.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of real-time analytics is increasingly important, with passenger profiling and the need to assist test and trace systems. Solutions that integrate this data and that from customer experience feedback surveys will be crucial in helping to build systems and services that cater to the market now not as it was. Information is also key to making people feel safe to travel again, updates, advice and itineraries that can be predictably delivered with the help of automation.

A Skift Research study from September 2020, produced in partnership with McKinsey, emphasised the importance of making automation a strategic priority for travel and tourism businesses: "Many travel organisations will need to rapidly reinvent processes that previously required physical touchpoints or documents, to support contactless servicing capabilities. The goal will be to rethink an outcome that eliminates at least 30% of error-prone, bothersome, low-value manual interventions from hundreds of day-to-day processes by relying on automation and digitisation."

The Salesforce 2020 State of Service survey showed that 77% of agents said automating routine tasks allowed them to focus on more complex work. In addition, the July 2021 The UK Customer Satisfaction Index (UKCSI) found that 14.9% of customers experienced a problem, the highest rate since 2009. Despite this satisfaction with complaint handling had its highest level shining light on the fact that 50% of recorded customer experiences are now digital. Add to that the expectation for seamless, omnichannel contact points, and there is an obligation on businesses within this sector to up their game when it comes to digitising customer service.

By-and-large the sector has recognised this obligation. The same Skift Research study also reports that use of automation within tourism is growing; just before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, two-thirds of organisations were piloting the automation of business processes. As the industry looks to recover from the pandemic, organisations can ill afford to lose out on the benefits of automation as it becomes more widespread.

CCaaS solutions can support the future of the tourism industry in a number of ways. These include intelligent integrated workforce management systems that enable agents to work with insight and confidence regardless of location. In addition to omnichannel customer contact touch points which encourage customers to travel by keeping them informed and safe, for example. Whatever it is, cloud-based CCaaS solutions can deliver experience-enhancing interactions, pre, during and post-trip.

2. Bots and artificial intelligence

As a subset of automation, bots, nonetheless deserve their own discussion. A bot is an AI-driven program that communicates through voice (voicebot), text (chatbot) or over the phone (callbot). They have gone from a novelty viewed with hesitancy to a staple of great customer service over the last few years, not least within travel and tourism. The Salesforce 2020 State of Service Survey suggests COVID-19 has accelerated this further with 78% of decision makers reporting that the pandemic has triggered them to invest in new tech.

Powered by sophisticated ML models, natural language processing (NLP), and AI, they can provide a conversational tool which can pick out content and context from interactions with customers. This offers companies a resource-light method of customer contact handling, while also functioning as a useful query-filtering tool to redirect customers to the most appropriate human agent channel if necessary.

The general business benefits of bots include:

  • Simplifying data acquisition,

  • Turning web page engagement into leads,

  • Providing one-click lead capturing,

  • Reducing operational costs,

  • Generating higher return on investment (ROI) on ad spend,

  • Providing instant customer query responses,

  • Improving CSAT through speed and accessibility.

Consumers have grown increasingly used to using bots when interacting with brands. They can be applied across the travel and tourism sector by travel agents, hotels and airlines to provide 24/7 access to information and support for travellers. Crucially, the ability to automatically handle or better route queries through bot-enhanced services ensures that agents can remain focused on delivering uniquely human services, dealing with complex or emotive issues. Meanwhile, customers can enjoy efficient and seamless handling of routine, common queries without the need to be held in call queues.

Time zones and travel timetables can give rise to time-sensitive queries. Bots can provide rapid responses regardless of working hours and periods of high call volume. Almost instantaneous access to advice and the provision of up-to-date information give support and reassurance to travellers.

The provision of real-time translation allows travellers to converse with customer service agents or chatbots in their native language to stay up to date with changing regulations, reducing the burden on contact centre agents to retrieve and convey accurate information. This improves overall speed and efficiency and offers a greater ROI for businesses. Enhanced data collection and analytics also enable more targeted and effective marketing and communications, from personalised accommodation adverts to automated reminders and itineraries.

The benefits of bots are clear then. However, how does an organisation go about integrating these conversational agents into their existing customer service infrastructure?

The success of bot implementation still relies on the human touch though, in the form of strong project management. The project manager – and their project team – must define the role of the bots, their scope of intervention, their way of interacting with other devices, and the customer journeys the chatbot could be involved in. This is important as they will be responsible for measuring all KPIs related to the success of the bot and for identifying the customer interventions best suited to a chatbot.

Key things a bot needs to do or have to be successful are:

- The ability to find the relevant information it needs and process it at volume.

- The know-how to query the correct databases, for example integrating with customer relationship management (CRM) and third-party knowledge bases.

- The technology to stay relevant when compared against the development of other IT projects within the infrastructure.

- The ability to showcase excellent user experience (UX) features that make the customer's interaction as pleasant and seamless as possible, duplicating chatbot interactions over multiple channels.

- The experience of a bot persona, developed by a combination of copywriters, designers and linguists, which sets the chatbot up to represent the brand in the most appropriate way.

This last point is crucial. In the financial industry, a bot should be austere, serious and factual. However, travel and tourism organisations could adopt a slightly more conversational persona for their bots. A hotel, for example, should want its bot to interact with customers the same way their reception staff do. While an airline might want a conversational agent to maintain a straightforward tone that focuses on relaying information with clarity and speed.

CCaaS solutions feature built-in facilities for providing bot and other AI-driven services such as personalised routing (see next section). Project management and implementation strategy experience should come as standard, given that CCaaS providers regularly have to work out how to integrate their technology with existing systems. IT infrastructure is optimised for a channel-less approach provided by omnichannel services, and agents have the ability to ensure customer journeys that switch over from automated responses to human interactions can do so seamlessly. This offers better experiences for travellers and contact centre agents alike.

3. Personalisation

There has long been a received wisdom within the tourism industry that there is no loyalty; customers do not see themselves as attached to an airline, travel agent or accommodation provider. Price has always been the leading indicator for most demographics, but that no longer holds quite as true. Now, inspired by increasing levels of personalised service in other industries, customer service and experience are held in increasingly high regard. As such, it's vital that travel businesses fully utilise the data at hand to produce actionable insights into their customers' values as a whole and on a more individual level.

This shift begins, of course, in the contact centre. In the past, when a customer called into the contact centre, generic messages were delivered which took no account of who that customer was, what their history with that company had been or what someone of their demographic might prefer. A classic example of this is 'Press 1 if you are calling about an existing booking'. Using the sophisticated analytical capabilities of CCaaS solutions, travel businesses can move beyond this impersonal presentation to deliver a more familiar, friendly experience to travellers who call in to their contact centres; if someone has already booked with them a contact number is likely connected to that booking. This can then be recognised so that when that customer calls in, NLP could be used to greet and also direct calls by responding to the customers verbal cues in a much more personalised way than standard generic options.

Taking this one step further, by using analytical solutions to segment existing or previous customers by age profile, for example, organisations can help to route calls more appropriately. Let's say a caller has previously booked with an airline, and the information the airline holds can flag up that this caller is in their early 20s. Research suggests that customers in this age bracket tend to prefer using apps or other self-serve channels than live calls. In this instance, the airline could prompt the caller to confirm their mobile number and send a push notification to that phone with a link to download the app.

These kinds of personal touches leverage the power of AI to deliver a better experience to customers, aiding retention and rebooking. Customers like to be recognised for who they are and for their previous buying habits – one only has to look at the success of Amazon's personalised shopping experience to recognise this fact.

While travel companies like Ryanair have built successful businesses with a 'no frills' approach based solely on the promise of cheap travel, the backlash to Ryanair's refund policy during the early stages of COVID-19 pandemic shows that tourism organisations can no longer hinge their reputation on price alone.

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As a report from Oliver Wyman on tourism's recovery from COVID-19 put it:

> **"**
> An accelerated digital environment is fertile ground for innovation in business and better personalisation for travellers. Upon consent, traveller data can be utilised for customisation, potentially powered by AI. It will also be essential for providers to use digital channels to create connected experiences both online and offline. Businesses that successfully marry digitisation with the industry's long-standing reputation for customer service and connection will achieve lasting customer loyalty across generations and segments."
>
> **Oliver Wyman, September 2020**

By starting with the integration of IA, tourism businesses can build chatbots and personalised services to deliver on the heightened customer expectations for seamless, empathetic and tailored services, wherever they're travelling to.

Cloud-based CCaaS solutions are more flexible with levels of integration and personalisation that often hold them above their on-premise contact centre counterparts. The upshot of this is that CCaaS can offer businesses in the tourism sector greater consumer insight through intelligent analytics, enabling the use of experience-enhancing personalisation.
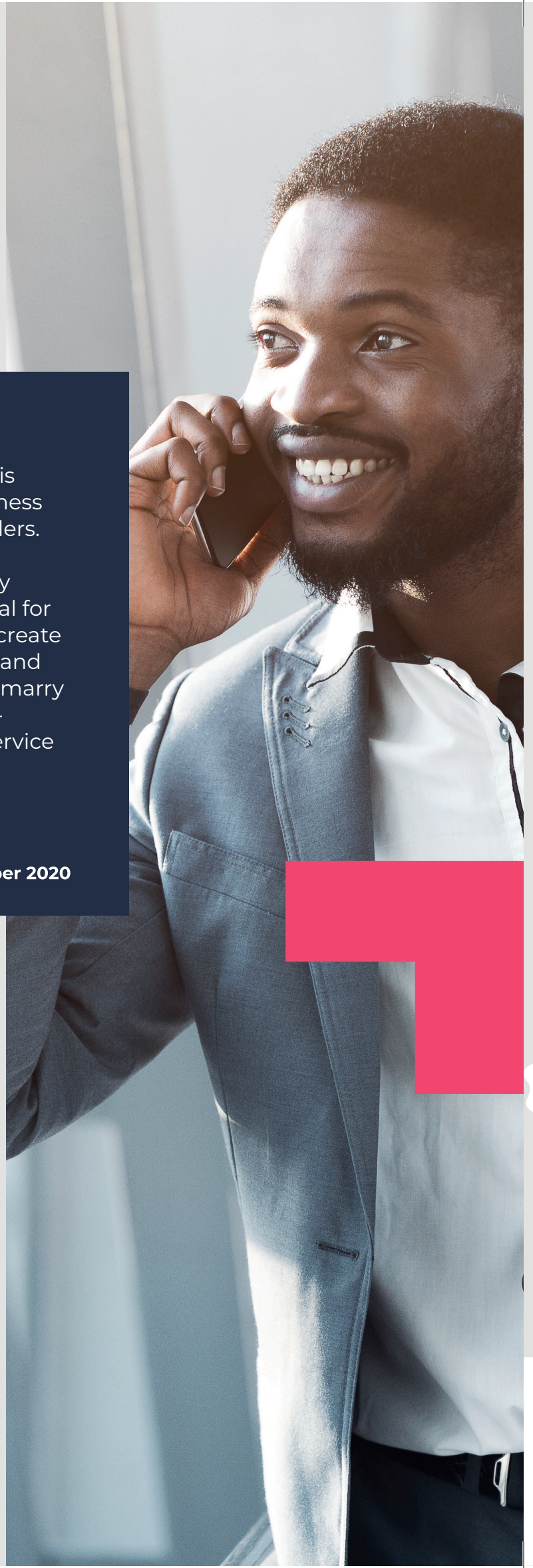
Conclusion

It's been a tough time for the tourism industry, from the airlines that make travel possible to the accommodation and hospitality providers that bring it to life. The road to recovery may be long, and as the pandemic continues to evolve, it might be rocky, too.

However, by focusing on optimising customer experiences through a switch to CCaaS solutions, travel and tourism organisations can help drive ROI and facilitate better, easier access to services for travellers. Contact centres, as the new CX hubs, look likely to sit at the centre of this effort.

In this practical guide, we've discussed a few of the potential applications of CCaaS technology in building back the tourism industry. There are many more we haven't covered in any great depth – such as live video streaming and the Internet of Things (IoT) – but the picture these few examples draw is clear.

CCaaS solutions are growing in popularity across multiple market segments for their ability to deliver excellent customer service while improving internal efficiency. These are areas that will be vital for tourism businesses to address in the near future, as demand begins to grow again amongst a generation of consumers enthusiastic about travelling again and expectant of omnichannel customer service.

As CX culture continues to change the travel sector organisations must grasp the opportunity to revolutionise contact centre operations in order to position themselves and excel in the new normal.

Therefore, the time is ripe for tourism to invest in developing a more sophisticated form of customer service: one that makes full use of the data and channels available to cater to the microsegments of the market and place CX where it should be, to drive the travel sector into recovery.

Glossary

Agent: In CX, an agent is an employee who communicates directly with customers.

Artificial intelligence (AI): The ability of a computer programme or machine to think, learn and mimic human actions and behaviour.

Automation: The use of equipment or computer programmes to accomplish predictable tasks without human assistance.

Automation Experience Design (AXD): A design and orchestration framework that helps companies keep their automation efforts on-track by mapping customer journeys.

Callbot: A specialised voicebot that handles phone calls and is capable of executing more complex tasks, but within the limited parameter of the phone channel.

Channel: A medium of communication, such as phone, email, text or social messaging.

Channel-less communication: When multiple communication channels are linked into one smooth conversation, making the channels used unimportant. Channel-less communication provides a simpler and more convenient experience for customers.

Chatbot: An AI-driven programme for greeting people, qualifying requests and providing written solutions as a form of self-service.

Contact Centre as a Service(CCaaS) solutions: A cloud-based software deployment model that provides an organisation with the customer experience capabilities of a traditional contact centre. CCaaS solutions provide services according to the Software as a Service (SaaS) model.

Customer experience (CX): How a customer feels when dealing with an organisation; it is the result of one or many interactions over a period of time.

Customer relationship management (CRM): The strategies used to manage a customer's relationship with a company, or a tool that operationalises those strategies. A CRM often involves data management and analysis tools.

Intelligent automation (IA): A combination of robotic process automation (RPA) and AI that drives digital transformations to achieve end-to-end business process automation by adopting tasks traditionally done by humans.

IT infrastructure: Information technology infrastructure is defined broadly as a set of information technology components that are the foundation of an IT service; typically physical components, but also various software and network components.

Machine learning (ML): A key component of AI that enables systems to automatically and independently learn and improve from experience.

Natural language understanding (NLU): A subset of natural language processing that focuses on machine reading comprehension.

Natural language processing (NLP): An AI process that turns text or audio speech into encoded, structured information. NLP lays the groundwork for technologies such as speech recognition, dialogue management, speech synthesis and natural language understanding (NLU).

Omnichannel: The integration of different means of communication (face to face, email, phone, text, social messaging), giving customers more freedom in the way they contact a company.

Omnichannel bot: A conversational agent, or bot, that is not channel-specific. Odigo is a market leader in offering a bot that delivers chatbot, voicebot and callbot options.

Social media marketing: Social media marketing is the use of social media platforms and websites to promote a product or service.

Touchpoint: Any moment across a customer journey in which a company or brand has the potential to make a positive or negative impression on the customer.

Tourism sector: The tourism sector encompasses all businesses that directly provide goods or services to facilitate business, pleasure and leisure activities away from the home environment.

Voicebot: An automated program for greeting, qualifying and providing self-service in the form of voice assistance available on smartphones and smart speakers.

If you are interested in a more extensive glossary of CX terms look here.

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About Odigo

Odigo helps large organisations connect with individuals through world-class, cloud-based contact centre solutions. Its cutting-edge, proprietary technologies enable a seamless, efficient, omnichannel experience for its customers and a satisfying, engaging experience for service agents.

Odigo serves more than 400,000 agents and business users globally. With a 25-year history of industry firsts, Odigo has more than 250 clients around the world.

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Customer experience
as it was meant to be