



# Including CX at Each Stop on the Customer Journey

As travelers reengage with the world,  
getting CX right is all important

**ATENTO**

WHITE PAPER

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## Introduction: Time to Go Big or Stay Home

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It's hard to imagine another industry (save healthcare) that felt the **impacts of the global coronavirus pandemic** more acutely than the travel and hospitality industry. Seemingly overnight, business and personal travel came to a screeching halt. It didn't help matters that one of the first and most public outbreaks of the crisis happened on a cruise ship.

But the world keeps turning. Humans are incredibly adaptable, resilient and ever optimistic. After more than two years of being grounded, travel is resuming. We are planning and taking bigger, longer and more expensive trips — sometimes with the work laptop in tow. We're also traveling for business again as we've learned there's simply no substitute for face-to-face interactions.

As travel and hospitality companies prepare to handle renewed demand, they **must evaluate their current customer experience (CX) framework** to make sure it's ready to provide rewarding experiences. Additionally, they should also focus on generating demand from market segments that are still on the fence about going back to traveling. Capturing these potential customers in the moments that matter is key for securing market share and long-term loyalty.

All this occurs in a backdrop of unprecedented workforce challenges that stress brands' ability to deliver the levels of customer service required to secure market share and win long-term loyalty.

To illustrate the challenges and opportunities that await the industry, join us as **we follow Anna as she returns to travel**. In five short chapters, we'll follow her through each of the customer journey touchpoints: trip planning, booking, pre-trip preparations, travel, and post-trip. Her story helps illustrate CX's outsized importance in the travel and hospitality industry. We'll wrap up with a recap of what Anna's travel partner did right and how those actions can translate to other travel and hospitality companies as they recognize it's time to go big with CX or stay home.



Chapter 1:

## Planning the Trip



**Meet Anna.** Anna's bucket list, trip-of-a-lifetime Mediterranean cruise was canceled due to the pandemic. Now, in 2022, Anna is tired of being at home. She's fully vaccinated and has been saving up cash and travel miles for her first post-pandemic trip. Like **68% of Americans**, she plans to go **big on her next trip this year**, and like **40% of us**, she's willing to **spend more money doing it**. Anna's considering a longer trip than originally planned, with perhaps a few days in Milan or Paris bookending her cruise. Fittingly, Expedia is calling this new "no-regrets" style of travel the "GOAT" (Greatest of All Trips) mindset.

**Anna is feeling** something being termed **revenge travel**.<sup>1</sup> It refers to a mindset where **people are more eager to travel** and less willing to cancel their vacation plans this year after the shutdowns. As a result, revenge travelers are more likely to try a more exotic location, extend their trips by combining pleasure and work, and spend more money on travel. Revenge travel represents an enormous opportunity to the travel and hospitality industry — more travelers taking longer trips and willing to spend more.

However, travelers' expectations for service and response times have only increased during their vacation hiatuses. More than ever, Anna **expects fast answers to her questions, rapid responses to their concerns, and exceptional service at every touchpoint**. Will she get it? We'll find out the coming chapters.



**96%**

of business travelers surveyed across 25 global markets say they're excited to travel again<sup>2</sup>



**TWO-THIRDS**

of travelers are planning "their next big" trip for 2022 to travel again<sup>3</sup>



**70%**

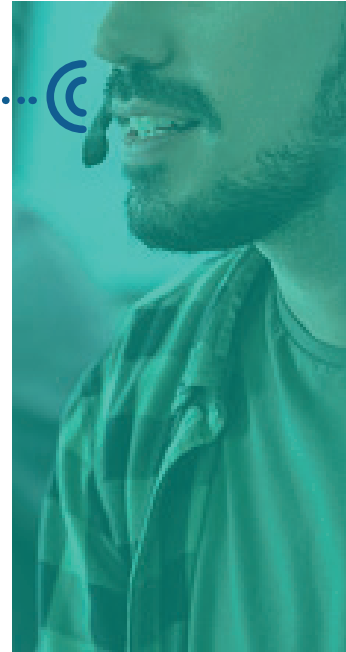
of leisure travelers expect and plan to spend more money on travel in 2022 than they have in the past five years<sup>4</sup>

## Chapter 2:

# Booking the Trip



**As Anna is home** formulating ideas for her trip and researching cruises and hotels, she gets a call from the original cruise line she booked with back in 2019. The friendly agent tells her cruise ships are back sailing and offers to tell her about some amazing deals the cruise line is offering. Equipped with Anna's original reservation details, the agent is informed and professional. The agent knows Anna originally booked an outside room and asks if she'd like to hear about special pricing on outside cabins, sharing options about upgrading her original cabin selection or extending the cruise an extra week to see additional sights. **The agent has quick answers to Anna's questions**, outlines additional precautions the cruise line is taking to ensure passenger safety, and helpfully explains costs, options, and upgrades available so Anna can make the most informed decisions.



**Anna doesn't book that day;** she needs some time to think and do some research. Like the vast majority (81%) of other travelers, Anna plans to **read some reviews before she books**. She will even reach out on social media channels to see what opinions others have. The reviews she finds are helpful — many including thoughtful responses from the cruise line. Anna's confidence grows knowing that the cruise line listens to its customers and responds to concerns.



## Chapter 2:

# Booking the Trip

**A week later**, when an agent from the cruise line follows up, ready with all the details Anna and the previous agent discussed, **Anna is on board, booking her next cruise**. While she could have completed the booking online, **Anna appreciated the connection with the agent and found the experience simple, seamless, and pleasant**. In addition, following her research, she felt confident enough to choose an outside cabin and additional amenities.



**83%**

of travel and hospitality consumers place CX within their top three decision-making factors <sup>5</sup>



**57%**

of US travelers feel that brands should tailor their information based on personal preferences or past behaviors <sup>6</sup>



**FOUR-OUT-OF-FIVE**

customers look at ratings and reviews before booking accommodation <sup>7</sup>

## Chapter 3: Pre-Trip Communications

**In the weeks leading up to Anna's trip**, she receives several informational emails from the cruise ship company. One details her itinerary and allows her to easily share the information with friends and family. Others promoted day excursions and side trips available to passengers with quick signups. Finally, others previewed some of the attractions she'd see, with links to learn more about the places and experiences.

**Closer to the trip**, Anna hears some news about changing health regulations in one of the cruise ship destinations. Concerned, she calls the cruise line. **The interactive voice response (IVR)** guide recognizes Anna's phone number, greeting her by name and routing her to a customer care professional specializing in health and compliance concerns. Quickly, **Anna is connected with a live agent** who patiently acknowledged Anna's concerns and addresses each with up-to-date answers.



Customers interacting with  
**A PERSON**  
during the booking process  
tend to spend more money  
than customers who merely  
booked online<sup>8</sup>



**93%**  
of consumers see real-time help  
as beneficial during their online  
customer journey, whether it's  
before, during or after their  
purchase process<sup>9</sup>

**51%**  
stated that they were more likely  
to purchase from a website if they  
could get answers via live chat<sup>9</sup>

## Chapter 4: The Trip

**Anna's big day has arrived**, and as she prepares to depart for her trip, she receives a text from the cruise line anticipating her arrival and reminding her to sign up for the company's reward program. The cruise line understands that **76% of travelers share pictures and reviews of their journey on social media**, so the text playfully offers up some hashtags Anna can use in her posts. It's all intended to create an experience that delights, and it's working already as Anna shares her first post tagging the cruise line.

On her way to the airport, Anna has a question about what she's allowed to bring aboard the cruise ship. **She visits the company website** from her mobile phone and scans the customer-facing knowledge base. Still a bit uncertain, **Anna engages with the chatbot on the website** where she's able to ask and get an answer to her question.





Chapter 4:  
**The Trip**

**During her trip**, Anna frequently shares photos of the fun she's having, often including the hashtags the cruise line suggested. One such post even got a "Like" and a positive, personalized comment from the cruise line, making Anna smile.



Loyalty members  
are loyal

**80%**

of members choose and  
recommend the brand<sup>10</sup>



**GLOBAL**

consumers actively  
review three or  
more channels when  
shopping<sup>11</sup>



More than

**75%**

of consumers expect CX  
reps to have visibility into  
previous interactions<sup>13</sup>

## Chapter 5: Post Trip

**Anna arrives home**, relaxed and happy. She smiles as she reads a friendly email from the cruise ship company recapping the itinerary, offering links to view a photo album of the trip, and directing her to a site where Anna could write a review of her trip. Over the coming weeks, Anna receives additional email messages from the cruise line announcing upcoming cruises and promotions. Anna does review her trip, perhaps encouraging one of the 83% of digital natives that say reviews play an important part of their booking decisions to choose the same cruise ship company.

Anna's cruise experience was positive, from start to finish. The cruise ship line **provided an exceptional omnichannel customer experience**, personalizing it to Anna at every touchpoint.

By capturing customer data from multiple channels, including email, website, chat, messaging, voice, and social media, the company leveraged an omnichannel approach that delivered a seamless experience. When Anna wanted to find answers independently, she found self-service options that empowered her. When she wanted reassurance on critical issues, she was able to easily connect with live, informed, friendly, and helpful agents that addressed and resolved her concerns.



**80%**

of American consumers say that knowledgeable help and friendly customer service are among the most important elements of positive CX<sup>11</sup>



**83%**

of digital natives say that reviews play an important or very important role in making a booking decision<sup>12</sup>



Only about  
**32%**

of hotels respond to reviews and 70% of negative reviewers hope to receive a response<sup>15</sup>

## Doing CX Right

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Anna's cruise line won her loyalty by **delivering a true and seamless omnichannel experience**, by leveraging advanced data and analytics and by solving for the workforce challenges all travel and hospitality companies are currently facing.

### Delivering an Omnichannel Experience

Anna's cruise line understands travelers are searching for answers and support for their trips in a variety of ways, so they recognize **the importance of an easy transition of customer care requests between those channels**. The company deployed its customer experience across multiple channels, including chatbots, voicebots, IVRs, knowledge bases, and social media monitoring to provide both self-service and guided live experiences that engaged customers at each stage of their journey.

However, brand experiences extend beyond a company's website, voice and chat channels. It's already common practice for customers to voice their complaints (or sing their praises) about travel companies in social media channels and review sites. Travel companies need to be proactive in identifying customer sentiment on these channels, translating these insights into action. Business process outsourcers (BPO) specialize in combining technology and human interaction that allow travel industry companies like Anna's cruise line to provide a seamless customer experience across every channel and every interaction.

### Leveraging Data and Analytics

As Anna's story illustrates, **today's travelers demand personalized experiences**, with sales journeys that feel as though they were built specifically for them. Fortunately, travel brands can build and access advanced technologies and enormous data sets that allow for a better and more thorough understanding of consumer attitudes and desires. To win back travelers, travel and hospitality customer experience departments must combine these insights to create predictive analytics allowing trained agents to strategically anticipate customers' needs and offer the right mix of products and services.

Anna's cruise line, for example, partnered with a BPO who leverages behavioral insights and predictive analytics to inform agents of the next best action to engage potential customers and up-sell current customers. By empowering their agents with propensity models and intuitive knowledge bases, the cruise line is also increasing revenue through complementary value-added offers.

## Solving for Workforce Challenges

The cruise line Anna traveled with weathered the pandemic storm better than most of its competitors. The company understood **the importance of CX and had invested in technology and BPO providers to amplify its CX**. By outsourcing, the cruise line was spared bad press of laying off its CX staff, while keeping a workforce that's passionate for their brand and experienced in Omnichannel CX.

As travel sparks to life, the company is able to scale quickly to meet demand without trying to hire, train, and retain a new set of agents.

This is a time when travelers depend on reliable customer care more than ever. Having a qualified team of live CX experts who can provide timely answers and solutions will be a defining factor in building brand loyalty.

Travel and hospitality brands that **invest in the tools, technologies and BPO partnerships** that allow them to provide an omnichannel experience, leverage decision-making data, and assemble a team knowledgeable and engaged contact center brand ambassadors, will be the brands rewarded with customer experience levels that drive revenue growth and brand loyalty. ●



Social media posts influence the purchase decisions of

**83%**

of US online shoppers <sup>13</sup>



A PwC study found that consumers are willing to pay a premium for a great customer experience

**14%**

premium for a hotel stay and

**10%**

premium for an airline ticket <sup>14</sup>



**90%**

of those polled in a recent survey indicated that ratings on a review site played an essential role in their booking decision <sup>15</sup>

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