How do you help the GenNext Consumer Create an Ideal Travel Experience?

The Importance of the Right Offer at the Right Channel at the Right Time

- A WNS Perspective

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Baby Boomers, Gen X to Millennials … three core segments that make up the overall 'traveling customer' base, each demonstrating diverse consumer behavior patterns. Travel and leisure brands have had a long relationship with Baby Boomers and with the older group of the Gen X segment. Hence, they pretty much have a grip on the choices, preferences and behavior patterns of this segment of traveling consumers. The segment that remains elusive and indecipherable is the one that represents the younger Gen X consumers and of course the Millennials!

Young Gen X consumers and Millennials that constitute the GenNext segment, are a complete deviation from their Baby Boomer or older Gen X counterparts. The older generations liked things planned, were easy-to-please, had fewer demands and also demonstrated brand loyalty. GenNext (Gen Y / Millennials) and young Gen X) consumers are impulsive, contradictory in choices and behavior patterns, super tech-savvy, difficult to decipher and even more difficult to please. These are the two groups that make up a large chunk of the 'traveling customer base' currently and will become the largest consumer segment in the near future.

Travel and leisure companies must keep pace with this phenomenal transformation in the consumer segment, the consumer psyche, choices, behaviors and preferences, if they want to remain ahead of the curve and have a larger market share.

For GenNext …
It's all About the Experience …

For long, the romantic description of a traveler was someone who made wish lists on his wall, and lovingly planned every aspect of a holiday. Not anymore …

What do you think travelers would be found doing in an airport terminal?

While a consumer of the older generations would be surfing through a bookstore for a good read or checking his passport and boarding pass a number of times, the GenNext traveler would be up to something completely different.

Tech-savvy to the hilt, these new generation globetrotters would be using social media platforms to co-create trips (after all who wants to travel alone?), upgrading into business class through a kiosk, almost on impulse (yes! there's suddenly been a change of heart and decision to travel Business Class!), using their mobile devices to source information on-the-go, again on impulse (booking a better hotel that a friend mentioned on Facebook, and cancelling the old booking in the value-for-money hotel), and remain connected 24/7 (looking for best offers, reviews and products on the go). Sharing pictures online is their way of feeling valued and they are extremely brand and value savvy, not to mention the extremes in behavior patterns they demonstrate.

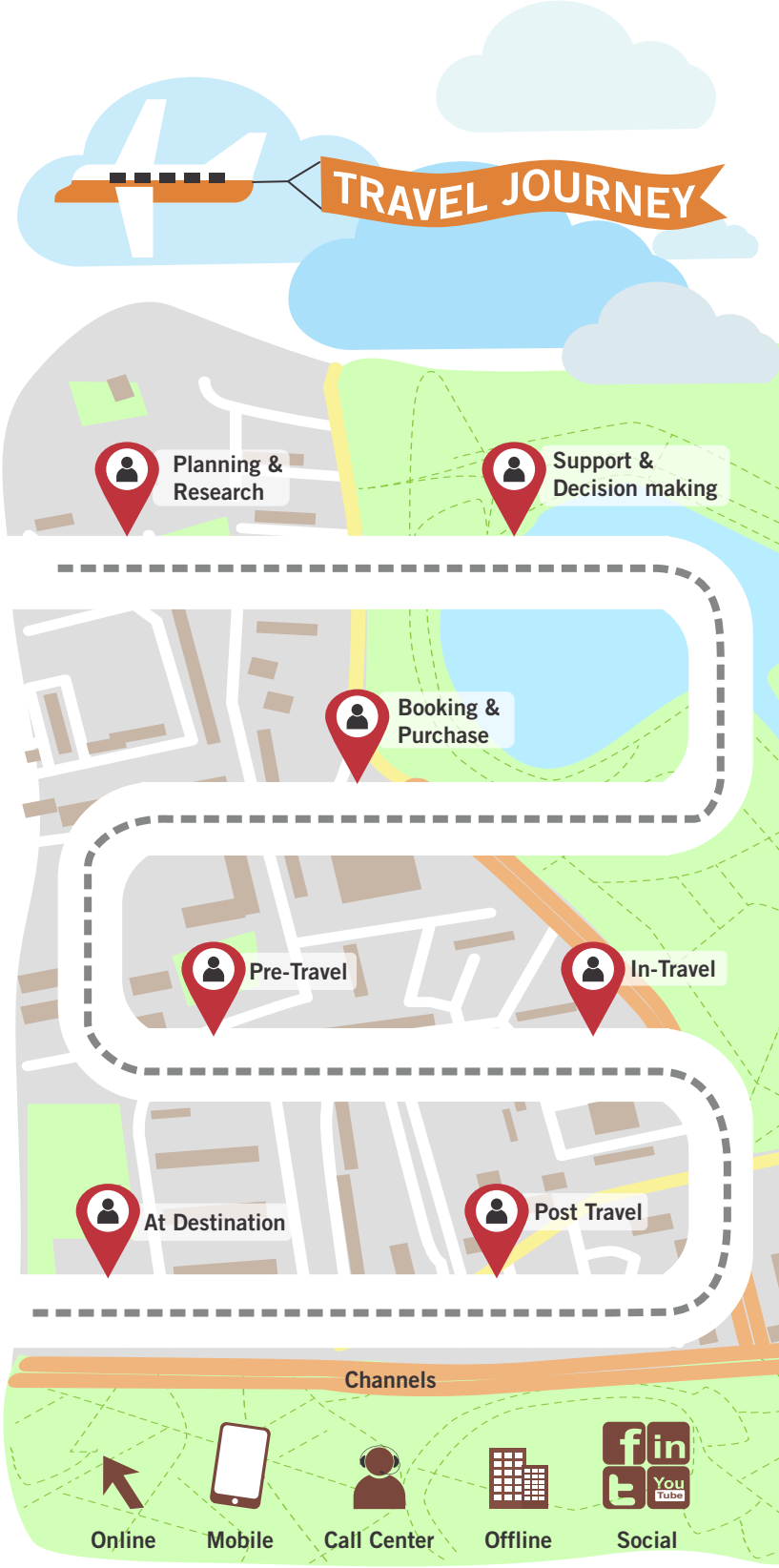

Fig. 1: The GenNext Customer dabbles with multiple channels on the go to self-create the ultimate travel experience.

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What really defines this segment of GenNext traveling customers is their adventurous side, their restlessness and their propensity to change decisions till they are assured of an unforgettable travel experience. And this experience, they prefer to create on their own. The only thing they look for are products and offers that can help them create such a 'self-created experience on the go'.

What Drove this Change?

GenNext consumers have literally grown up on the Internet and Mobility. Technology has seeped into every aspect of their life - from talking in SMS lingo to finding love online, this new breed of consumers live life as a virtual reality.

From the perspective of travel, technology (smart phones, Internet, social media) has liberated this segment of consumers from conventional and pre-planned travel itineraries and ushered in the possibility of 'self-created experiences on the go'.

With technology, the access to information has also become easy – both online and offline. GenNext consumers expect instant information on online and offline channels. Gone are the days when customer service relied on the good old Interactive Voice Response (IVR) machine. The GenNext consumer's attention span is too short for recorded messages to get over. Impatience and instant solutions define the attitude of the GenNext traveler.

The reasons to travel for the GenNext travelers are anything but conventional. Where once people traveled for work or study, today it is common to see someone take a year off and go backpacking. New lexicon describes the reasons for travel in today's world - voluntourism, glamping, WWOOFing, staycations, geo-tourism ... the trends never seem to settle.

The GenNext traveler is also a thrill seeker, constantly trying to break boundaries and seek newer travel experiences. Whether it is because no place on earth is hidden from them anymore or because they want to own the travel crown among friends and online followers is hard to say.

Irrespective of the triggers to explore the world, travelers today are adept at creating their own tour itineraries. The GenNext traveler is a niche unto himself; breaking conventional customer segments and creating new definitions.

Benchmark of Travel Experience for GenNext

The GenNext traveler is finicky, impulsive and demanding.

They usually set very high benchmarks for their experiences, expect high quality of service across all touch points and use all the online and offline channels at their disposal to find such services. For most travelers, the flight is just a means of transportation from one destination to another. What really counts is the overall travel experience. Such consumers tend to be cost-conscious when it comes to a flight ticket, but will rummage through websites to find the best offers and activities that will heighten their travel experience, even if it means paying a premium price for the overall experience.

They expect to find such services that just seem right for their whole experience. They are happy when they find the right flight, the right hotel, and the right luxury and entertainment package at the right time. However, should their expectations be hit by unpleasant services or poor engagement levels from providers, the same consumers are quick to pour their experiences (read scathing online review) on multiple online channels to tarnish the provider's reputation multiple times!

Creating the Ideal Experience = Right Offer at the Right Time at the Right Place

Change is always good, and in the travel industry, the GenNext consumer has been the harbinger of that change. It is time that industry players took note that the 'one size fits all' approach does not work anymore. If you thought that a travel package that the Baby Boomer executive lapped up happily can be re-packaged and sold off to the adventurous GenNext traveler, think again!

Impulse, adventure, restlessness and an insatiable appetite for the good things in life define the attitude of the GenNext traveler. So they aren't settling down for run-of-the mill offers. They are always on the lookout for creating an experience of a lifetime, every time they travel.

Creating an ideal experience for this segment requires travel businesses to make an attempt to analyze and understand consumer behavior closely. It also involves personalization to the most granular level. It means making the right offer to the right consumer on the right channel at the right time.

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Creating the Ideal Experience with the Sales CoE Framework

Getting up so close and personal with the consumer may sound like a distant reality; making him the right offer at the right time and the right place – an even more arduous task.

Not anymore.

The Multi-Channel **"Sales Center of Excellence (CoE) Framework"** equips brands with the power to make the right offer to the right consumer, through the right channel, at the right time, and at the right point of journey!

So how does the Sales CoE framework work?

The Sales COE framework analyzes all the metrics that are core to the brand and customer relationship – the customer journey, customer channels and customer behavior. For the travel brand, the framework also analyzes competition, sales force metrics, sales processes and technology integration.

The analytics step is followed by benchmarking the current maturity levels across these key attributes in a pre-determined scale.

The next step involves implementation of pilot solutions that are low-risk and assure the brand of improved performance across the attributes identified in the first two steps. By implementing these solutions the brand is assured of improved engagement with its customers. The chances of cross-selling or up-selling increase drastically.

The Sales CoE is a consultative approach that helps brands get close to their customers and enhance their customer engagement and revenue generation attributes. This framework helps create a continuous improvement loop that eventually leads to the creation of a Center of Excellence.

The approach is focused on creating incremental revenue for the brand while creating a personalized and top-notch experience for the traveler and positively impacting the Customer Life Time Value.

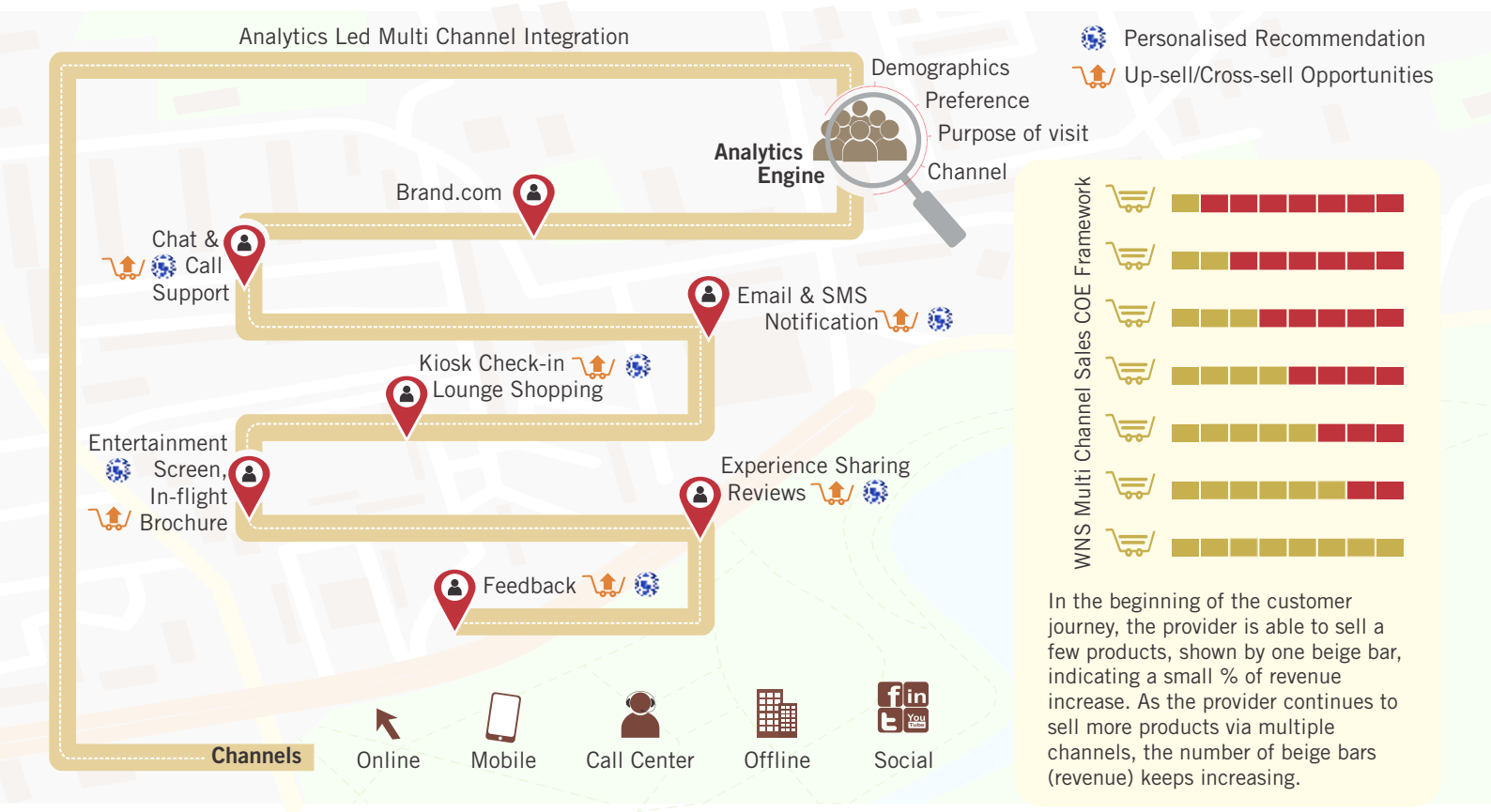

Fig. 2: The Multi-channel Sales COE approach backed by analytics opens up a whole new world of opportunities to up-sell and cross-sell.

The Multi-Channel Sales COE is a force multiplier model, where each touch point opens up the opportunity to up-sell and cross-sell products and offers. At the same time the approach allows brands to remain connected with the consumer always.

If you seek the loyalties of the GenNext customer, you need the Multi-Channel Sales CoE strategy to work for you. It is a proven methodology that many leading global brands are leveraging to create a win-win situation for their businesses and their customers.

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About WNS

WNS is the world's largest travel Business Process Management Company, with a legacy of having started out as a captive for British Airways. Today, WNS is a BPM partner for some of the leading global airlines across the globe. WNS provides the airlines industry with the latest, top-notch solutions to create opportunities from challenges. Whatever the business trend, WNS has a solution for your business.

Our solution suite that can help you ride the new waves in business include:

- Social media management and social customer service
- The WNS Sales Center of Excellence (CoE) that integrates the online and offline channels and adopts a 'sales through service' model to cross-sell and up-sell relevant services based on customer data
- An end-to-end Analytics Solutions suite (including our SM award-winning analytics framework WADE) that leverages a huge team of domain experts and expertise in social media analytics, contact center and speech analytics and revenue model analytics that help you take informed decisions
- Proprietary and industry-leading platforms such as Verifare®, Jade® and SmartPro that help enhance revenue generation for airlines
- Process re-engineering techniques and a team of domain specialists that help airlines comply with industry regulations and standardization directives

Read about our solution here:
http://www.wns.com/Services/Industry-Focused-Solutions/Travel-and-Leisure.aspx

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