TRAVEL 2022

THE GREAT REVIVAL;
5 STRATEGIES TO ACCELERATE RECOVERY

acxiom

AGILITY, INSIGHTS, AND STRATEGY WILL WIN THE DAY IN 2022 AND BEYOND

The travel landscape for the next 12 to 18 months will be filled with twists and turns. Recovery will likely continue to be uneven, with some sectors recovering faster and stronger than others. After an extended period with little or no travel, many customers' loyalty is up for grabs. Still, travel brands that use data and tools to understand the landscape to prioritize where to invest time and resources—and use customer-level data to identify and meet changing needs—will recover faster. Customer insight and knowledge will be the fuel to drive accelerated recovery.

Travel brands cannot make assumptions about their customers based on pre-COVID-19 travel habits. Instead, they must know who their customers are, understand what they need, and meet those needs with relevant, timely messages and offers. Travel brands that do this will experience the fastest recovery. To accelerate that, travel brands must focus on identification, insights, audiences, campaign logistics, and loyalty to develop a strategic advantage, speeding their path to profitability and helping them lead the new traveler experience.

HERE ARE FIVE STEPS TO PUT THE INSIGHTS INTO ACTION:

STEP 1

Know your customer.

Truly understanding customers will be the key to recovery. Brands that use identity management to accurately know and understand their customers will be better positioned to succeed as the pandemic recovery accelerates.

Travel brands that go beyond the basic name and address information they capture during booking or check-in will have an advantage. With many people at different stages of comfort in resuming travel, customer experience and personalization will be key. Who they are, how they have been impacted, what is their new normal? Travel marketers should ask themselves: how connected is your adtech and martech stack? Can you accurately identify a person across channels and devices?

To connect personally, brands need a reliable identity resolution and management process, so they know who the person is across channels and devices—understanding how to best engage with a customer in an appropriate and thoughtful way. As we head toward recovery, people are looking for brands that know them and help rebuild their confidence and brand trust.

STEP 2

Develop better insights.

Travel brands must create a focus on data quality, completeness, and enrichment. Data collected from every point of interaction, combined with artificial intelligence and machine learning, provides individual and behavioral insights to help brands know what the traveler wants, prefers, or needs. Further, as potential buyers conduct online searches, visit travel sites, book trips, etc., machine learning can identify those needs and then use that knowledge to create the best customer experience and thus attract more in-market travel buyers.

Quality data is essential to segmenting customers so travel brands can prioritize which customers are more likely to be ready to travel now and predict which destinations they are more likely to be interested in. What customers looked and acted like previously may be very different today—especially as leisure and "bleisure" travel outpace the recovery in business travel. Current and accurate insights can be a game changer in how customer segmentation and communication should look today.

STEP 3

Activate better digital audiences.

Building better digital and media audiences helps focus marketing messages and engagement strategies on those travelers who are ready to get back out there. Travel brands can create addressable high-value audiences and activate them in the right channels. This step allows travel brands to discover insights and behaviors that help them better understand the customer and act on those insights. When brands leverage customer level data to power their media outreach to get a seamless alignment across channels, they also detect buying signals and get customer-level data that doesn't exist in most companies. Finding in-market travelers through search or other segmentation tools and then targeting those where the message will be the most relevant will be key.

STEP 4

Create more personalized campaigns/messaging/offers.

Travel brands must show customers they understand their concerns with a more personal, contextual and authentic messaging. Brands must maintain the delicate balance of messages of empathy with ones of "it's time to get back to business." Soon after the initial shutdown from COVID-19, multiple brands came out with the "we care" message. Now, the goal for travel brands is to show they genuinely care and understand their customers at an individual level. Personalization and contextual relevance will be needed more than ever since it's very easy to convey the wrong tone. Brands need to get personal and more human to earn people's trust.

One way Acxiom is helping brands succeed is through data analysis of the impacts of COVID-19 at a geographic level, including unemployment, health impact, consumer sentiment and confidence. We are beginning to utilize these new data sources to model and target based on those insights, and they are now available for brands to apply in their marketing efforts. It is imperative to talk to the consumer as an individual. One-size-fits-all messaging won't work as people return to travel as the pandemic subsides. Campaigns must be much more hyper-segmented. Understanding which drivers will cause a person to engage, such as age/generation (due to risks), health, economy, and of course travel needs and wants will help brands know what levers to pull for each segment.

STEP 5

Encourage better loyalty.

People have not been able to earn and burn loyalty rewards during the pandemic in the same ways and at the same velocity as pre-COVID. Building on this idea of contextual personalization, loyalty programs must evolve to become more relevant and experiential. This is a golden opportunity for brands to hit the reset button for their loyalty program. One size does not fit all anymore. Customers have changed and brands need a loyalty program that builds engagement and loyalty based on customers' evolving needs. Travel brands should highlight areas where they are working to keep their loyalty program engaging and relevant even for customers who are traveling less. Increasing their partner network to offer more (and more frequent) accrual and redemption options is a key example of how travel brands can drive more success.

They also should use partner collaboration to better understand their most loyal customers' new behaviors and work together to create connected travel journeys that enable a seamless travel experience. One example is travel brands partnering with each other, such as a ride share company and an airline partnering to have a car waiting as soon as the flight lands to help alleviate travel stress for their most loyal customers.

WHY ACXIOM

Acxiom is the customer intelligence company that provides data-driven solutions to create business growth, delivering actionable insights to create better traveler experiences and drive incremental revenue. Our data and insights help travel brands acquire customers in both offline and digital channels. We enable travel companies to recognize a single view of their customers and prospects across all internal silos while our clean-room environment allows brands to uncover unique partner marketing opportunities.

A leader in identity resolution and the ethical use of data for more than 50 years, Acxiom helps thousands of brands connect data at the individual level, reduce marketing waste, improve insight and customer experience while measuring the effectiveness of offline and digital marketing campaigns. Our unique capabilities help brands, agencies and their technology partners harness data to improve every customer interaction. Acxiom is a registered trademark of Acxiom LLC and is part of The Interpublic Group of Companies (IPG). To learn more visit **acxiom.com/travel**.

acXIOM