

# DRIVING CHANGE IN THE TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

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How customer needs are shaping  
the future customer experience in travel



# FIND THE GAP

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Travel is getting much more tech-savvy, but some brands still have a long journey ahead. With airlines facing massive turbulence on the customer experience front, and thousands of hotels and tour providers struggling to differentiate at a time when loyalty is dead, what can travel brands do to make customers want to come back?

The BIO Agency has recently surveyed over 1000 holidaymakers to identify the drivers for change. We found that modern travellers know where they want to go, are well-prepared and expect mobile to add significant value to their journey.

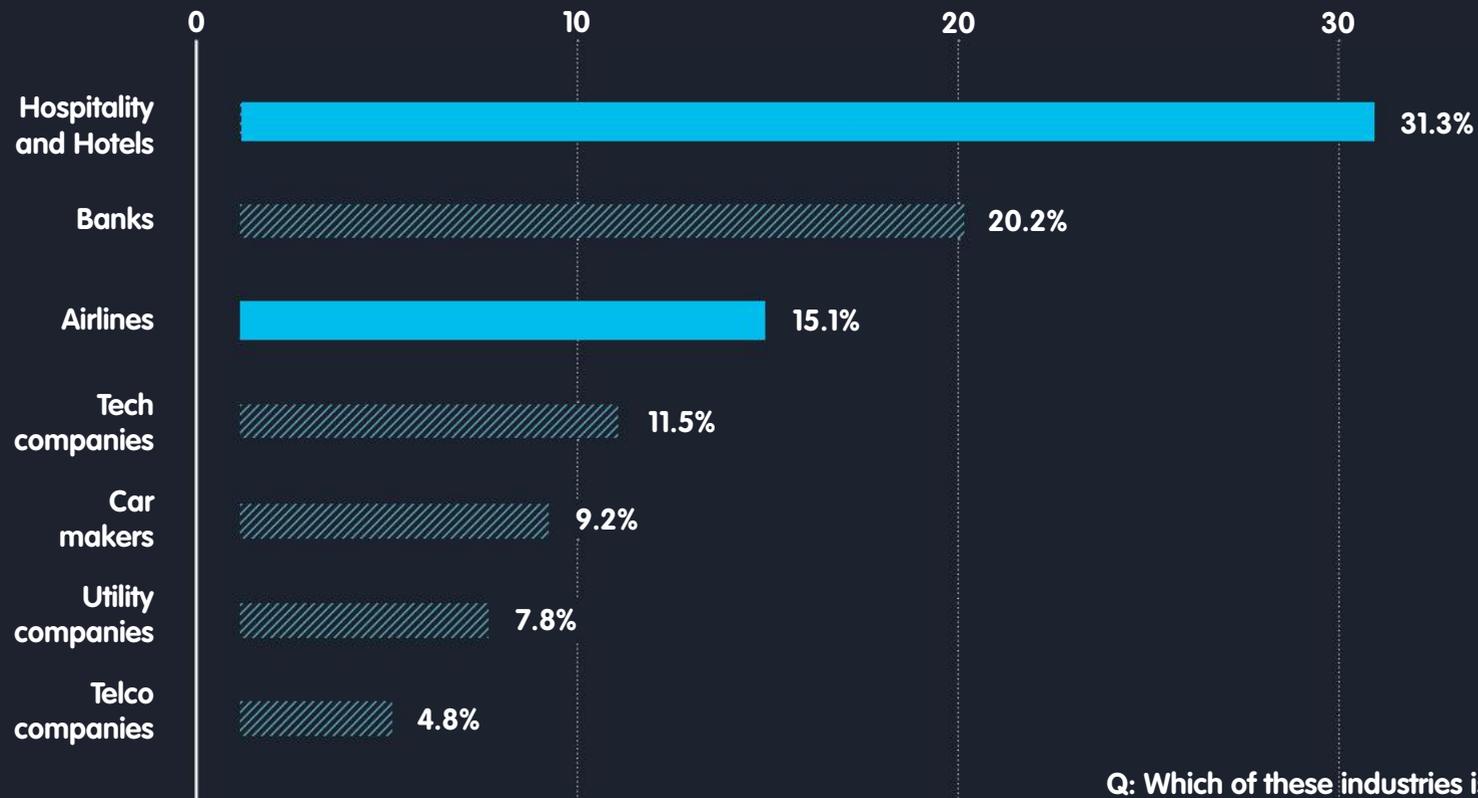
Not only that, but today's connected travellers want brands to add meaning to their travels and make the journey feel less fragmented. Because for travellers, their holiday is not just a series of data points, it's something they're eagerly anticipating and have worked hard for.

Brands looking to rise above their rivals need a new wave of innovation. One that increases their relevance throughout the entire journey – from initial research to returning home.

*- Peter Veash, CEO at The BIO Agency*

# FIRST, THE GOOD NEWS

Travel is still rated as one of the top sectors for delivering services customers expect



Q: Which of these industries is the best at delivering a service that meets your needs?

\* 848 respondents

BUT DESPITE THE POSITIVE OUTLOOK...

60%

of customers claim they would **always shop around** for different hotels\*

How do you

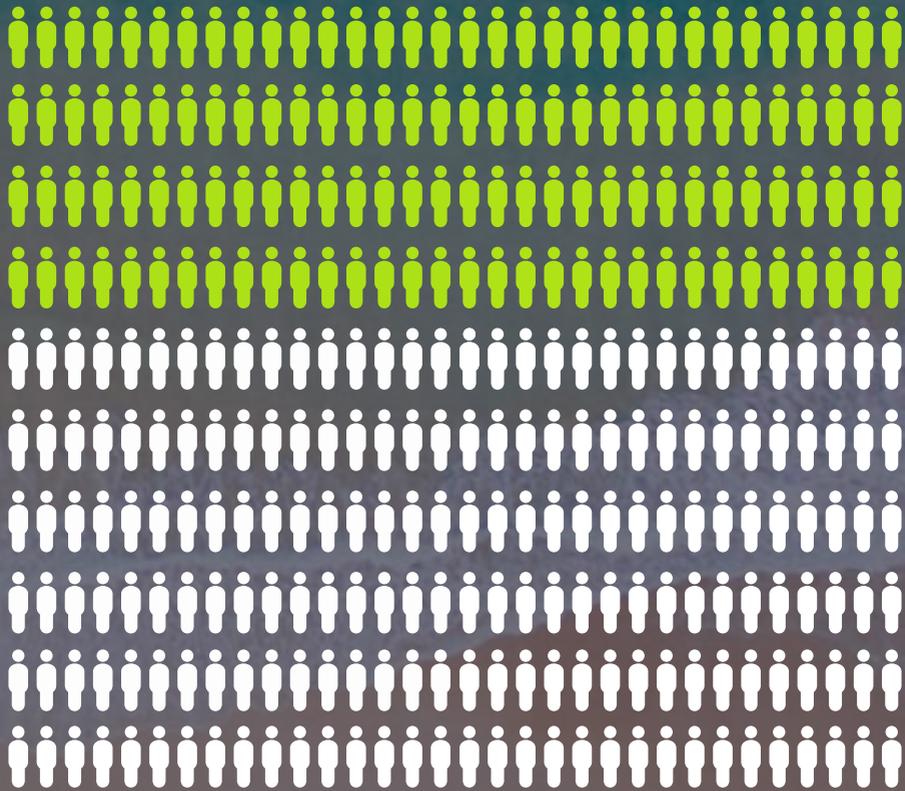
# CREATE LOYALTY ?

in a  
fragmented world



## SOME THINGS STAY THE SAME...

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# 40%

of holidaymakers said a traditional **beach break** is still their top choice

# ...AND PRICE IS STILL THE KEY DETERMINER



1 in 3 customers says **price** is the most important factor when buying their trip



## BUT EXPECTATIONS ARE GROWING EVEN BEFORE THE TRIP COMMENCES

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As many as

59%

already have a few destinations in mind for their next trip

Yet, only

15%

plan their day-by-day itinerary, leaving big scope for brands to support the pre-planning stage and fix choice paralysis

WITH THE TRAVELLER JOURNEY FRAGMENTED,  
DISCOVERY HAS BECOME THE MAJOR PAIN POINT

And

27%

1 in 3

find choosing the right  
accommodation the  
most difficult thing when  
travelling

struggle to discover  
places to eat/drink and  
find relevant excursions  
and activities

# TRAVELLERS ARE HUNGRY FOR MORE...

MOBILE PA:

# 23%

The highest number of respondents chose **on-the-go access** to booking info as the tech they're most excited about for their trip

ON-TRIP LANGUAGE SUPPORT:

# 20%

of travellers would like hotels to provide them with **real-time mobile language translation** tools

THERE'S ROOM FOR HI-TECH:

# 18%

want to **use mobile to control** their hotel room settings. The same percentage would like to receive **real-time mobile information** to aid city discovery

...AND WANT SOLUTIONS THAT MAKE THEIR JOURNEY FEEL  
A LITTLE BIT MORE SEAMLESS

END-TO-END BAGGAGE DELIVERY:

26%

of respondents want  
airlines to **deliver their  
baggage** straight to their  
hotel and back home

BAGGAGE TRACKING:

20%

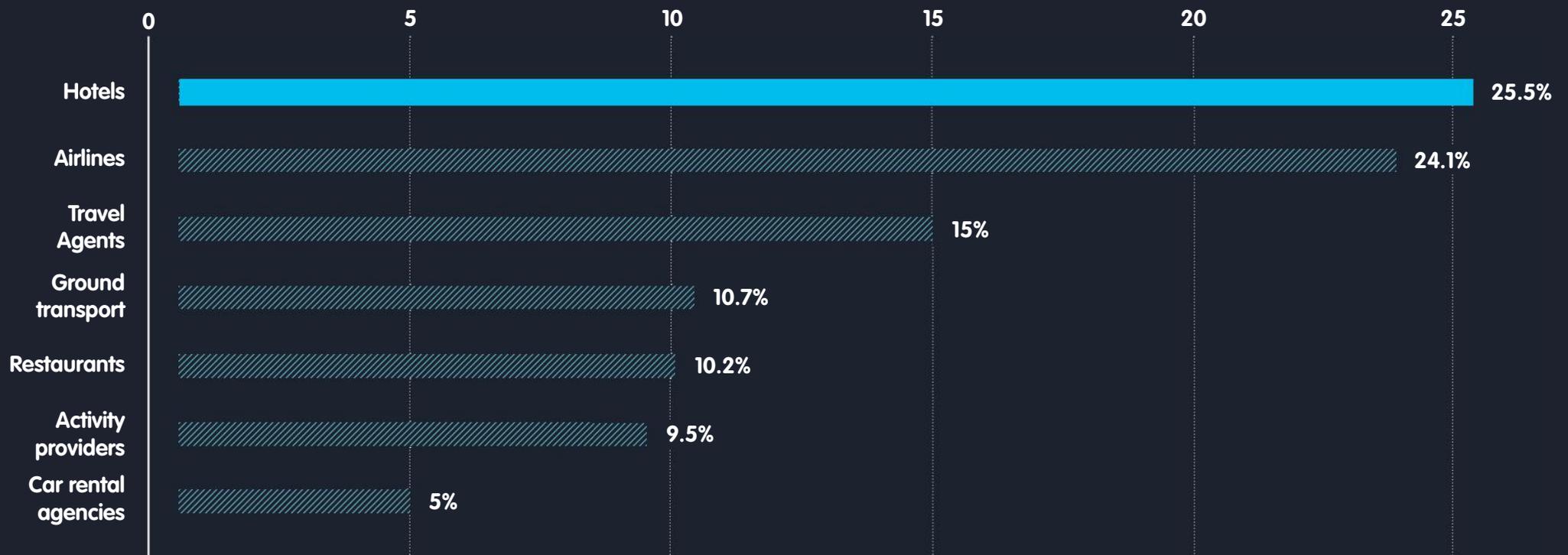
of travellers want to be able to **track** the  
current location of their baggage at any  
stage of their journey

MOBILE PA FOR FLIGHTS:

17%

would value **on-the-go access** to flight  
information and airport updates

# REGARDLESS OF HOW YOUR MARKET RANKS IN PROVIDING THE BEST DIGITAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES...



Q: Which of these travel-related services would you say offer the best digital customer experience?

\* 865 respondents

# BUSINESSES STILL NEED TO EVOLVE.

A staggering

# 45%

of people would stop using the brand due to **bad customer service**

And

# 20%

of people would stop using the brand if they found it **difficult to resolve problems**



// We know the role of travel brands is changing. Smart use of technology and relentless focus on the customer will determine whether established players can remain competitive in a growing, but increasingly saturated market. We live in the era of instant gratification, when the lack of satisfying experiences leads to impatience and frustration. With travellers of almost all ages expecting an ever increasing level of digital innovation, it's imperative to start thinking about the long-term ramifications, and be able to react quickly to the pace set by other industries. In this fragmented market, particularly with such a noticeable difference when it comes to the maturity of digital disruption between various travel verticals, it might be the bigger players that can gain most from the smart tech and CX-focused upgrades to their service. //

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Stuart Whyte, Head of Strategy at The BIO Agency

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# WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

## BUILDING CONSISTENCY WITH INTEGRATED EXPERIENCES

“Digital transformation” has become a shorthand phrase for businesses looking to streamline operations, use data to drive business decisions and create a more satisfying CX. But more often than not, such a short-sighted approach means brands over-emphasise the transformation of digital channels, leaving the quality of physical experience far behind. This results in a ‘two-tier’ service, where the overall brand experience is downgraded by the varying levels of quality users experience in-store and online.

So, instead of focusing on ‘digital-first’, businesses should think experience-first’. What does this mean in practice? Defining the experience principles of your brand (e.g. simple, fast, human) and allowing these to come through in all customer interactions, regardless of the channel.

Travel brands should also consider using digital to boost physical operations – and ultimately the traveller experiences – to make them simple and frictionless. Digital-physical consistency should be key across the following areas:

- ≡ Consistent branding
- ≡ Consistent information
- ≡ Consistent accessibility.

# 2

## CREATING LOYALTY THROUGH REASSURANCE

With so many providers in the travel market, developing loyalty is difficult. How can travel brands build customer advocacy and differentiate in this challenging market? Fostering trust is key – and trust is built on transparency, reassurance and consistency of delivering on expectations.

So, businesses should allow customers to track the key components of the trip like transportation, accommodation, baggage, activities and preferences; and offer proactive updates and supporting insight, regardless of whether these have been booked through their brand or through another provider. Such an approach offers a number of up-selling opportunities, while ensuring a smooth experience that truly supports travellers at every step of their journey. The key elements brands should strive for are:

- ≡ Transparency
- ≡ Real-time data
- ≡ Proactive updates
- ≡ Removing uncertainty by ensuring each user interaction is acknowledged instantaneously.

# 3

## DELIVERING CONTEXT AND RECOMMENDATION

Travellers have come to expect and demand personalised experiences, but are still rather ambivalent about sharing their data. But there is a way to resolve this – focusing on providing contextual and relevant customisation based on explicitly expressed preferences.

Businesses should address the need for more tailored recommendations by finding new ways to interrogate and contextualise data and various criteria (e.g. “middle of school holidays”), to allow for smarter and more human-like suggestions. This means:

- ≡ Being transparent about why you need customer data and how it will impact their experience
- ≡ Removing the ‘creep factor’ by respecting personal boundaries – test and optimise to achieve best results
- ≡ Delivering personalisation that has clear benefits to travellers, whether by saving time, removing the choice paralysis with hyper-relevant recommendations, or suggesting personalised discounts and offers.

# SO, WHAT NOW?

We're a customer-focused digital transformation agency building world-leading experiences for global brands.

We believe customer experience is the key to unlocking growth and delivering value for customers – to ensure today's brands are fit for the future.

We create transformative digital touchpoints, underpinned by technology, that change the way customers engage and buy from today's organisations. We consider every digital interaction – whether it's mobile, tablet, desktop or in-store experiences – to create companies that bring meaning.

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