

Social Media Customer Service in the Travel Industry

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The possibility for customers to reach brands through multiple touch points has grown with technology. Social media has evolved to become another platform to provide customer service. Increasingly, brands are adapting by structuring their teams and departments to deal with volumes of inquiries in a personalized way that recognizes the growing impact of social interactions.

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Executive summary

Customer service is a race towards personalization. Since Facebook and Twitter launched in the mid-2000s, consumers and businesses have had two excellent tools to learn more about each other through online and offline behavior. Brands are doing the heavy lifting on their end to provide quality customer service that extends itself into a richer customer experience across these new platforms. As technology and innovation progress, the needs of customers become greater and brands need to be present, responsive and consistent in new online communities. The days of three-person social media teams will be phased out.

The need to structure larger teams to prioritize engagement posts and deal with customer service inquiries has grown, and companies are looking for new ways to further differentiate themselves from the competition. Offering consumers a nearly one-on-one relationship online is supplemented by the visibility of large volumes of social conversations. As consumers and businesses continue to interact, they are building relationships that are becoming mutually beneficial due both to the solutions provided to the customer and the public examples the brands leave behind on social media for future customers to see.

Introduction

In the last 50 years, the rise of technology allowed customer touch points to widen. The in-person, one-on-one interaction with travel and hospitality providers was supplemented by voice during the switchboard days and matured in the advent of call centers and interactive voice responses (IRV) during the 1960s and 1970s.

As the effects of globalization became more widespread in the 1980s and 1990s, the need to scale large call volumes after business hours was met with outsourcing call centers to countries like India and the Philippines. During this period, technology enabled live representatives to prioritize callers with help of an automated system that provided answers to frequently asked questions and fielded types of inquiries that needed further assistance.

When the National Science Foundation approved the Internet for commercial use in 1991, it gave way to self-service tools like websites, portals, and blogs. Companies published pertinent information about their business, services, locations, and contact information. In addition to a phone number, companies could now be contacted via e-mail or a live chat. The speed at which messages and information were sent and received increased with the development of fiber-optics.

The evolution of the Internet disrupted the business-to-consumer model with the proliferation of online travel communities. Information was produced and exchanged publicly (and at times anonymously) through message boards and commenting tools on sites such as Flyertalk, Lonely Planet, and TripAdvisor. People voiced their opinions, learned and related to other travelers. Moreover, brands no longer became the only trusted source.

After two decades of online communication, consumers became more digitally conscious of technology, themselves and their peers. They began to shape their online personalities and share their personal lives on new networks through images and text with their immediate communities, most notably on Facebook. Simultaneously, companies were positioning themselves to digitally co-exist with consumers in the late 2000s.

Moreover, as the rate of communication accelerated, a way to quickly transmit thoughts in a new network emerged. Twitter introduced its 140-character personal yet public exchanges two years after Facebook’s launch in 2004. Primarily, these two online communities proliferated the growth of digital content and facilitated conversations among consumers, influencers, and companies.¹

The world population is currently around 7.2 billion with a third of it coming from China’s 1.4 billion and India’s 1.2 billion; U.S. Population 318 million and U.K. 63.7 million, as ranked by United States Census Bureau (2014).

“In 2010, only 5 percent of organizations took advantage of social/ collaborative customer action to improve service processes; however, customer demand and heightened business awareness is making this a top issue among customer service managers,” says Drew Kraus, Research Vice President at Gartner.¹

Although consumers prefer to contact companies directly through phone, email, and live chat, social media counts for a nominal percentage in comparison to the traditional and early digital channels. The need for companies to further integrate social media in its multi-channel customer service system is great given the size and usage of the audience.

CUSTOMER’S PREFERRED CHANNEL OF SEEKING CUSTOMER SERVICE?

Phone	43%
Email	22%
Live Chat	18%
In Person	7%
Portal	7%
Social	2%
Community	1%

SOURCE: “2014 State of Multichannel Customer Service Survey,” Parature²

This year, Facebook celebrated its 10th year with 1.28 billion Monthly Active Users (MAUs) in the first quarter while Twitter reported an average 255 million MAUs. To put these numbers in perspective, Facebook’s active user base is the size of India’s population. Time and frequency increased on these online platforms because of the ubiquity of

smartphones and app development. Indeed, mobile has become the dominant form of interaction with these services: Both sites reported that nearly 80% of their respective audiences arrive on mobile devices.

There is no question that the race to provide social customer service has begun. According to Aberdeen Group, “The adoption of social customer care programs increased by approximately five-fold between 2010 and 2013 (12% in 2010 vs. 59% in 2013)³.” Which company gets to the finish line and stays on top will depend on its continuous ability to scale, personalize, and make good time.

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About Skift

Skift is a travel intelligence company that offers news, data, and services to professionals in travel and professional travelers, to help them make smart decisions about travel.

Skift is the business of travel.

The social landscape of customer service



Source:
Flickr, Matthew Hurst

Since Facebook and Twitter provide unique experiences to its respective communities they have a tendency to attract different demographics. There are 10% more women on Facebook than men, whereas on Twitter, men skewed slightly higher. The Millennials -- born between 1980 and 2000 -- and the urban set are more likely to engage on Facebook on Twitter⁴ than other social media channels.

In 2012, close to half of social media users sought out customer service on social media. When asked to compare which channel is best to contact a brand, on social or the phone, a third voted for social⁵. Given the growing user base on these platforms, there are more users today who are making contact by commenting, posting and mentioning brands on both company and personal accounts.

Consumers reached out to businesses directly on their Facebook Pages more often than contacting them via Twitter. Interestingly, they visit company blogs slightly more than Twitter⁶. Whether or not the pattern of behavior happens in the order of Facebook, company site, to Twitter is not clear, but what is important to note is that consumers are seeking resources on multiple channels and brands are increasing their efforts at being present to assist customers.

Airlines and hotels have the most brand presence based on number of Facebook and Twitter accounts, due to the nature of their businesses and social media strategy. These two sectors have more multiple accounts in comparison to the other sectors because they serve both global and local markets; and differentiate themselves by providing dedicated accounts for customer care, discounts and rewards programs, as well as language and region.

For example, KLM flies to 107 destinations, has one Facebook account and 31 Twitter accounts; Hilton Hotels is a hotel parent and brand that has two Facebook accounts, one for its brand and another for its reward program Hilton Honors, as well as a matching set of accounts on Twitter, plus another 184 property accounts (this represents less than half of its 436 locations worldwide).

Travel is time-based, in that there is a departure and arrival time and a check-in and check-out time. During transit, weather patterns and air traffic control can result in delays and cancellations and, depending on the season, to overbooking too. At destinations, accommodations may not be in a satisfactory location, condition, or temperature. Any changes with confirmed plans trigger travelers to contact the company

CHANNELS SOCIAL MEDIA USERS ARE LIKELY TO USE TO COMMENT ON OR ASK A QUESTION ABOUT A COMPANY'S PRODUCT OR SERVICE

		% OF SOCIAL MEDIA USERS	MALE	FEMALE
FACEBOOK	Company	29%	26%	31%
	Personal	28%	25%	31%
	Company Blog	15%	14%	15%
TWITTER	Personal	14%	15%	13%
	Company	13%	14%	13%
YOUTUBE	Company	12%	14%	10%
	Personal	11%	12%	9%
	Non-Company Blog	11%	14%	9%

Source: Soul of Brands

immediately for assistance.

The sense of urgency leads social customers to the channel that can provide the quickest and clearest response. Twitter's 140-character limitation has enabled customers to @mention a brand to quickly get its attention about changes in flight schedules or accommodations that do not meet their expectations.

In 2012 an Oracle study cited, "More than half of consumers on Facebook expect a same-day response to questions and posts while 52% of consumers using Twitter expect a company to respond to within two hours. 30% of Twitter users expect a response within 30 minutes, 22% expect a response within two hours and 29% expect a same-day response⁷."

During the dreaming and planning phase of travel, brands utilize both Facebook and Twitter to appeal to their audience on a personal level by publishing content that is timely, relevant, and relates to their tendencies. This content also generates a form of service that is useful in that it provides information about destinations, deals, and activities. On Facebook, there isn't a character limitation, so there isn't a pressure to be succinct.

The line between what is customer service on social media is being blurred because the content has become more curated. Social

media teams are becoming more empowered and proactive in their approach to resolve issues efficiently. Not only do these teams create conversations, they find and join in them, to ultimately increase brand awareness and deepen connections.

We interviewed decision makers in these two travel sectors that oversee social customer care to glean insights about how their respective brands provide customer service on Facebook and Twitter to enrich customer experience.

What Airlines Are Doing Now

For airlines, the bulk of their social customer service efforts are on Twitter. The types of inbound messages vary from negative to positive, relating to reservations, lost luggage, and in-transit experiences. The goal is to simplify the customer experience in order to prioritize flight complaints and swiftly respond with the appropriate brand voice that extends compassion or resolves the issue with grace.

When customers look for help, American Airlines made a deliberate decision to host its engagement content and customer service on one account on each platform. "We want to make sure our customers can easily find us and be able to go to one page on Facebook and Twitter to ask for help," says Annette Hernan-



Source: Flickr, NEC Corporation of America

dez, Manager, Social Customer Experience. JetBlue has a similar strategy but they have a separate account on Twitter that features deals. The volume of @mentions, brand hashtags, and direct messages on Twitter are 5,000 per normal day, as compared to 2,000 posts and comments on Facebook per normal week. It can significantly increase depending on the weather. America Airlines' team aims to respond to 50 to 70 percent of inbound messages. Currently they are making good time, clocking in at 12 minutes per reply, beating its 15 minute goal. Resolution time is the same as their response time, but it can vary based on complexity.

JetBlue also has the same goals for response and resolve times but the percentage of responses are much lower. Its team responds to as many of the questions that they see, but only 15% of the comments get a reply. "Most of the time, it's customers sharing stories with their communities, they aren't necessarily looking for a response from us. We don't want to add more noise. We want to engage smartly with our customers. We're very careful to respond to customers who would benefit from a response from us, not just to be heard," says Morgan Johnston, Manager Corporate Communications Social Media Strategist.

Both American Airlines and JetBlue have their own social media teams, not staffed by agencies specialized in social media.

American Airlines has 22 people and JetBlue has 25 people working on its teams who are in close connection with the reservations teams and sit with corporate communications. Both brands staffed their groups from existing employees in in reservations and customer relations departments. Also, they have put a lead in customer service within their respective social media teams.

Laurie Meacham, Leader of JetBlue's Social Media and Customer Commitment Team, explained how it valued a diverse team with superior communication skills that understand JetBlue's values. "We are all about inspiring humanity, and that is what we are looking for in our candidates."

What Hotels Are Doing Now

The social care goals of hotels are similar to airlines. What differentiates these two industries is that it is less affected by weather and the blurring of lines between engagement and service-related inbound and outbound messaging. Hotels are responding more proactively as opposed to reactively when compared against airlines. There is less urgency in the nature of the requests and time allows them the luxury to surprise and delight their guests. Currently, most hotel brands have the response goal of 30 minutes on social and resolve time of 48 hours at the most.

The largest hotel brands are comprised of

multiple signature hotel brands. From our research, having more than one account for the brand, its loyalty program, and corporate news, is common on Facebook and on Twitter. Many also have matching accounts in addition to separate support and localized accounts. Since each of the brands are so distinct yet part of one umbrella, sometimes a third party is involved to provide content strategy and execution on its respective social media channels.

Marriott International has 18 hotel brands and most of its social media care teams are in collaboration with its marketing department and an agency, with the exception of Marriott Hotels and The Ritz-Carlton. The agencies have been key in ramping up content and pushing community management efforts. But in the three entities aforementioned, Keith Picthall Director of Social Media explained, "We're turning over full moderation, in that our customer care team has evolved into our customer advocacy team. They are now managing negative, positive and neutral messages."

Similarly, Hilton Worldwide has its corporate,

parent hotel account. In addition, it has a separate rewards program page for Facebook and Twitter and a dedicated support account for the latter. Its 4,000 properties with social media pages are being managed by response teams at the brand and local levels. To further integrate its brands' distinct and personal voices in one Twitter account, it created @hiltonsuggests. Vanessa Sain-Dieiguez, Director, Social Media Planning & Integration says, "our hub-and-spoke model empowers many groups within the organization to engage with travelers, such as our employee advocates."

For all of Starwood's nine properties, its corporate and customer rewards social media accounts, all care is handled in-house, albeit in ten locations around the world. When asked about how they react and maintain the brand voice across all brands, Mike English, Vice President, Customer Contact Center and Electronic Distribution says, "because we have 3,000 people in our customer contact center and 30 members in our elite social media team, we are able to hand pick people who are very adaptable and very fast in responding to needs."

Challenges of scalability and personalization



Source:
Wikimedia Commons

When brands are busy handling large volumes of questions and deflecting negative comments, this presents a challenge of responding in a timely manner, while knowing as much about the inquiry and customer before responding with a personal touch.

Brands need to be mindful that on social, “A single negative customer experience posted in public can wipe out the effect of up to five positive customer messages.”⁶ When reviewing hundreds of threads of replies, mentions and comments, it is apparent that negativity breeds negativity and that the converse is also true.

According to American Express Global Customer Service Barometer⁸, brands will lose their business to competitors if customers encounter a discourteous representative, another representative in addition to their first point of contact, further troubleshooting on an unresolved issue, and a longer wait time.

The availability of multiple touch points for customers to reach brands have grown with technology. Having the ability to greet clients and inform them that your brands is aware of their history to personalize the experience

is not easy. The back-end of reservations, customer care, and social media need to be integrated to be accomplished.

Hilton Worldwide, Marriott International, and American Airlines are some of the brands that have a system like this in place. Their choice of third-party vendors does not only focus on social care capabilities, but it has the ability to merge other department systems to connect the dots of the consumer journey. Vendors sometimes partner in the development of proprietary systems in order to best fit a brand’s customer service map.

“Each tweet to our global portfolio of brands is read, processed, and triaged by our social media response team – ensuring the guest receives the assistance they need. Each social complaint is documented in the same manner we process complaints via phone and email, ensuring consistency across channels and allowing us to include social feedback in all insights reporting,” says Vanessa Sain-Diequez of Hilton Worldwide.

For Marriott International, Jay Hamilton, Head of Digital Corporate Communications and Keith Picthall Director of Social Media

both explained how they recently launched a proprietary tool that is connected to a Guest Satisfaction Survey (GSS) in order to scale and learn from what its customers are saying. Additionally, they are able to better position their brand with Millennials and hire this demographic to their team.

Getting data and interacting with customers is no longer a barrier. With vendors like Conversocial, Sprinklr, and Spredfast, brands can have one platform where all the conversations can be seen, prioritized, and analyzed. At American Airlines, its internal platform is integrated with its reservation and customer relations department. Regardless of the amount of data, capturing sentiment is still not at its top performance. They have an analytics team that is dedicated to this task and they report on the listening efforts.

“83% of all organizations don’t analyze the demo or profiles of their customers on social media.”⁹

With all this information available to social care teams, the order of escalation and delegation of outbound messaging is key. Teams that are localized and are away from customer center hubs and corporate may have some difficulties in providing the appropriate information because they are not fully integrated.

Karen Dawson, Vice President, Global Digital Strategy at Hyatt shared its “communication cascade” that corresponds to its fairly new initiative to welcome and connect with their

guests proactively. Hyatt reported that its Twitter response time was at 12 minutes, as quick as American Airlines. This hotel has three control rooms, situated in Omaha, Nebraska; Mainz, Germany; and Melbourne, Australia that provides customer service 24-hours a day.

The integrated efforts of Hyatt’s control room was successful. In the first half of 2014, “more than 75% of brand mentions on Twitter and Facebook was positive, while only 20% was negative. We have seen that for the service-related issues that arise, The Control Room has special training to be able to quickly step in and offer a real-time resolution offline if needed. This often turns a negative conversation to a positive one,” says Dan Moriarty, Director of Digital Strategy.

Transforming the customer service aspect of social care into customer experience is tricky, given the format of Facebook and Twitter. Brands like Starwood have separate accounts to connect with brand advocates in a more personal way. Its rewards program, Starwood Preferred Guest (SPG) has its own presence on these two platforms. It’s the place where it can easily join in on conversations that are brand appropriate and be more proactive about reaching out to its customers.

Brands like Hyatt and Starwood that intermingle its concierge resource with customer service enable it to narrow the difference in offline and online conversation and to truly make it a one-to-one relationship.

Social customer service metrics

AIRLINES WITH QUICKEST RESPONSE TIME ON TWITTER

COMPANY	RESPONSE TIME (MINUTES)	REPLIES-TO-TWEETS RATIO	TOTAL TWEETS
American Airlines	12	98%	619,098
JetBlue Airways	14	97%	187,332
Delta Assist	19	97%	305,627
Volaris	29	16%	12,978
US Airways	32	98%	118,328
IndiGo	33	85%	16,233
PT Garuda Indonesia	37	77%	48,316
Air Canada	40	95%	112,315
Philippine Airlines	49	92%	41,614
Ryanair	57	89%	17,200
Southwest Airlines	57	68%	23,270
SpiceJet	80	77%	18,716
Lufthansa	80	85%	18,048
Virgin Australia	80	96%	45,578
Alaska Airlines	81	97%	36,668
Air Serbia	88	49%	873
KLM	91	94%	359,530
Air New Zealand	99	81%	30,328
Virgin America	113	95%	61,755
easyJet	122	97%	44,892

Reply time is calculated by subtracting the time from inquiries that were responded to and averaged for the life of the Twitter account. This figure excludes @mentions, direct messages and brand hashtags.

HOTELS WITH QUICKEST RESPONSE TIME ON TWITTER

COMPANY	RESPONSE TIME (MINUTES)	REPLIES-TO-TWEETS RATIO	TOTAL TWEETS
St. Regis	19	34%	169
Hyatt Hotels	27	99%	80,345
Starwood	48	74%	22,710
Westin Hotels	53	77%	6,593
Sheraton	57	81%	9,775
DoubleTree by Hilton	70	63%	13,656
Hilton Help	78	96%	13,288
Le Meridien	80	25%	789
W Hotels	113	36%	6,271
Omni Hotels	221	22%	13,422
Aloft	248	53%	2,769
Sandals Resorts	258	30%	5,190
Vail	266	39%	5,778
Motel 6	276	58%	2,001
Hilton HHonors	290	71%	12,128
Ritz-Carlton	298	44%	38,671
Shangri-La	301	23%	4,181
James Hotels	322	81%	5,785
Thompson Hotels	340	59%	6,449
Affinia	341	88%	13,785

Reply time is calculated by subtracting the time from inquiries that were responded to and averaged for the life of the Twitter account. This figure excludes @mentions, direct messages and brand hashtags.

AIRLINES WITH THE MOST FACEBOOK POSTS PER DAY

COMPANY	POSTS (30-DAY AVERAGE)	ORIGINAL POSTS (30-DAY AVERAGE)	PAGE LIKES
KLM	353.82	7.59	6,294,390
Air France FR	85.93	2.28	4,253,894
United	73.81	2.54	730,969
Southwest Airlines	52.93	1.93	4,344,462
Azul	52.79	2.38	3,457,883
Lufthansa	43.49	1.98	1,691,212
Delta	42.87	1.49	1,325,630
American Airlines	42.05	1.82	1,702,352
TAP Portugal	40.29	3.47	733,993
Volaris	39.55	5.26	1,035,224
US Airways	37.65	1.29	162,246
Jetstar Airways	36.29	1.68	341,050
Iberia	35.73	2.87	704,566
JetBlue Airways	33.12	2.02	950,892
Alitalia	32.64	2.34	1,208,751
easyJet	31.36	1.94	268,449
Frontier Airlines	31.26	1.77	138,572
Cebu Pacific Air	30.62	3.85	1,537,812
Vueling Airlines	30.14	2.28	548,352
airberlin	27.81	1.62	261,496

HOTELS WITH THE MOST FACEBOOK POSTS PER DAY

COMPANY	POSTS (30-DAY AVERAGE)	ORIGINAL POSTS (30-DAY AVERAGE)	PAGE LIKES
Motel 6	10.79	1.29	56,285
Hilton Hotels	7.14	1.89	1,214,473
Marriott	6.48	1.92	1,477,017
Hard Rock Hotels	5.34	2.21	3,503,080
La Quinta Inns & Suites	5.10	1.55	101,956
Best Western	5.00	2.15	1,062,709
Sofitel	4.63	0.95	1,020,099
Choice Hotels	4.18	2.20	274,852
Holiday Inn Express	3.55	2.16	680,642
Holiday Inn	3.50	2.27	619,220
Starwood Preferred Guest	3.17	1.39	222,766
DoubleTree by Hilton	2.83	1.73	254,435
Eurostars Hotels	2.49	1.13	33,100
Wyndham	2.40	0.92	75,878
Hampton Hotels	2.32	1.81	354,810
Radisson	2.21	1.45	96,997
Sheraton	1.97	1.43	319,360
Barcelo Hotels	1.91	1.05	124,728
Four Seasons Hotels	1.86	1.62	248,792
Renaissance Hotels	1.76	1.20	958,509

Source: Skift IQ Dashboard

The future of social media customer service



Source: Flickr, University of Salford Press Office

Customer touchpoints will continue to widen with further integration of social messaging and mobile-friendly apps that are more conducive to real-time feedback through alerts and push notifications and an on-call customer care specialist dedicated to fulfilling holiday travel wishes and personal milestones. This capability goes beyond logging into Facebook and Twitter on a mobile device.

American Airlines Advantage provides its Executive Platinum members with access to a more personalized version of its Passbook. It allows high level guests to direct messages to its social care team on Twitter, cutting out the fuss. In addition, these mobile apps cut out an extra step to reach a live representative by phone at the reservations desk at the customer contact center or the hotel itself. Brands are finding innovative ways of integrating their content, support channels and services internally and externally.

Since social media doesn't sleep and someone is always awake on the other side of the world, more brands will organize its team to provide worldwide, 24-hours a day customer service with a diverse multi-lingual team.

These skills will be more sought out in the future as companies continue to leverage its existing talent pool's expertise.

There is still a lot of work to be done in optimizing and benefiting from big data mining and analyzing efforts. As more brands harness the information that already exists in the public, there will be more opportunities to learn from customers and bring those conversations back to the community to further deepen the knowledge of more customers. In addition, these efforts are now being tied to the brand's KPIs.

"We capture social NPS through our customer insights team which is an internal team that analyzes the survey data that we send our customers and any written feedback that we get from them, so the team actually attaches a score to our social media sentiment and they break it down to categories that spans mentions of brand as whole all the way to our crew members," says Laurie Meacham, Leader of JetBlue's Social Media and Customer Commitment Team.

As the volume of social conversations rise and there is more information to track, the

ABOUT NET PROMOTER SCORE (NPS)

Promoter SystemSM's score is based on the fundamental perspective that every company's customers can be divided into three categories. "Promoters" are loyal enthusiasts who keep buying from a company and urge their friends to do the same. "Passives" are satisfied but unenthusiastic customers who can be easily wooed by the competition. And "detractors" are unhappy customers trapped in a bad relationship.

Retrieved at: <http://www.netpromotersystem.com/about/measuring-your-net-promoter-score.aspx>

need to automate the nature of conversations will be more sought out. Specifically, further development in capturing sentiment that unlocks sarcasm, will enable teams to appropriately tag conversations for analysis.

Lastly, deeper inter-departmental collaboration and advocacy efforts will empower each employee to alleviate inefficiencies in handling inquiries and stay human on social.

Insights and strategies

- **Integrate.** Be mindful of all the channels that your brand has online and offline. Customers' preferred method of care is still voice. Make sure that the automated system efficiently directs callers to the appropriate department. For emails, provide a sense of a real person that is there to assist them in any way they need; publish and update frequently asked questions (FAQ) to enable customers to self-service and optimize company blogs to be easily searched for on the web; inform your customers about what to expect in terms of reply and resolution times on social; and lastly, be present and pleasant to greet your customers with a smile and a genuine concern for their experience. By implementing an integrated offline and online approach, your brand will widen opportunities to improve customer satisfaction, brand amplification and revenue.
- **Be human.** Easier said than done on digital. Focus on empowering your team with tools, resources, and kudos. When they are happy, they will exude positive energy and better serve customers in a light and helpful tone. Encourage your team to be themselves and let their hospitable personalities shine through so they can surprise and delight the audience with the appropriate brand voice. Give each other feedback and share stories that other team members can either learn from. Also, share company milestones with your community as they are part of who make it happen. Allow social conversations to flow like real conversations, at the same time be mindful of when to engage and not to engage. Preserve human resources when possible and weather the good and the bad.
- **Know your customer.** This rule will never go away. Social media has allowed consumers and businesses to provide information about themselves. Take a brief moment to look at their profiles online, even if your brand does not have a sophisticated platform that provides customer history and social media information. In this way, you can have a better perspective of their mood, motivation and personality to anticipate what they might need. Leverage the power of big data to archive and analyze interactions and further develop a deeper understanding of your customers that goes beyond their demographic. Lastly, treat data as a guide, it does not provide the whole truth because sentiment tools will never replace human understanding of emotion.

- ♦ **One size does not fit all.** There is no magic bullet. As companies continue to learn how best to service its customers on social media channels, it is important that your technology goals are in line. In the market, vendors offer solutions that funnel social interactions, but with the increasing importance to integrate systems to better quantify and qualify efforts and results, these systems need to be flexible enough to handle new updates from the social platforms as well as your business' needs. Choose wisely and take caution with customization.

About Skift

Skift is a business information company focused on travel intelligence and offers news, data, and services to professionals in travel and professional travelers, to help them make smart decisions about travel.

Founded in 2012 by media entrepreneur Rafat Ali, Skift is based in New York City and backed by Lerer Ventures, Advancit Capital and other marquee media-tech investors.

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