

## Opinions

# How to target today's tech-savvy travelers

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Customer segmentation is an efficient marketing tool, but it won't deliver long-term sales results. Capturing attention and share of wallet from today's tech-savvy travelers requires a more personalized approach.



By Mary Dogan Winslow

There is universal agreement across the hospitality industry that customer segmentation is an efficient and resourceful way to market to guests.

Regardless of how you label your individual segments—corporate, leisure, meeting, bleisure, etc.—looking at guests based on usage habits, demographics and transactional data is a baseline of your sales and marketing strategy. No doubt you also track preferences, past behaviors, social media engagement, et al. to inform who you target with what message.

It's a good approach, but it won't deliver long-term results that impact sales.

Capturing the attention of today's tech-savvy travelers requires a more dynamic, personalized approach. Right message plus right time plus right channel needs to be informed by the right data points. Just as mobile and voice technology have reshaped your guest's decision-making journey, the data coming in from those sources needs to reframe the way you think about and communicate with traditional market segments. Digging deeper to uncover need states, interests and preferences—and layering that on top of demographics, behavior and engagement data—will give you the information you need to intercept guests at precise micro moments that influence their purchase decisions.

Google reports that 72% of travelers who research with their smartphones are looking for the most relevant information, regardless of the source. In other words, they're more loyal to their need than to a particular hotel brand. This means you need to continuously earn your guests' consideration in those key micro moments.

Reframing your targeting to meet guests on their terms will not only drive consideration, it will increase conversion by demonstrating how relevant you are to their needs. Here are four ways to enhance your data-driven approach.

### Customize

Identify the micro moments from your data that uniquely fit your business, then leverage platforms such as Hulu and Philo to predictively deliver a relevant and impactful experience for your guests. Use of contextual marketing for audiences interacting with streaming TV content is a powerful way to deliver alternative creative, enticing users to click and view additional video content on your site.

### Localize

Help win hearts and minds of guests by inspiring them to get more out of their travel experiences. Use technology and geo-specific content when guests are in-market: Send passes to the putt-putt course if it's a cloudy day on the beach; push reminders to book tee times as guests land in the area; or invite them to a local event you know they will enjoy.

### Personalize

Guests today demand solutions that drive their ability to build and control their on-site experiences across all your channels and platforms. In the past few years, this has been widely used to deliver guest preferences ahead of their stay such as pillow offerings or room selection via a mobile app. Millennial travelers view personalized experiences as a baseline expectation when choosing their favorite travel brands. Time to up the game and allow guests to control the temperature in their rooms via an app, or stream content on the in-room TVs.

### Optimize

Leverage your data to enhance and expand your engagement with consumers across channels. Use digital pre-roll, display and paid social to leverage your campaign videos and drive engagement by inviting people to discover their perfect vacation or to choose which vacation type they'd like to see. The data captured will help drive optimization and retargeting as the campaign progresses.

There is nothing more constant in our industry today than change. The seismic shift in how guests plan travel requires a disruptive focus on their decision-making journey and experience. When you start looking at guests as they see themselves—as dynamic, multidimensional travelers, rather than segmented audiences—you will begin to capture the important micro moments that influence purchase decisions.

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