

**TOURISM IN 2015:  
1 TRAVELLER x 1.1 BILLION TRAVEL  
DREAMS**

**DATE :                    JANUARY 2015**

A new year is upon us! Across the globe, millions of people are busy putting pen to paper (or clicks to keys), composing their new year's resolutions, thinking through their bucket lists. One common theme across these millions of personal wish lists? Travel, travel, travel.

As pressures of 2014 lift, 2015 hopes are high: currencies strengthen, fuel prices drop, confidence rises, visa policies loosen- the excitement for travel grows. For both business and leisure, travel in 2015 is looking to continue its upward climb, sustaining its inspired and inspiring year-end momentum.

Even before the 2014 came to a close, with the year's rise in tourism activity at a strong 4.7%, the UNWTO was projecting that "*International tourism was on track to end with record numbers*", looking to reach over 1.1 billion by the time the clock struck midnight on December 31<sup>st</sup>. Dr Taleb Rifai, Secretary General of the UNWTO, once again reinforced the strength and resilience of the sector, expressing:

*"These are remarkable results considering that different parts of the world continue to face significant geopolitical and health challenges, while the global economic recovery remains rather fragile and uneven."*

With a year of new travel searches, bookings and adventures ahead, what are travellers looking for? The quest is clear: authenticity, personal, meaningful, experiential. Especially for you.

Which means the travel industry needs to look at not fulfilling the wishes of over 1.1 billion travellers. Success in 2015 and beyond will be about satisfying the wishes, wants and whims of one traveller, over 1.1 billion times, taking each and every traveller personally.

Across the travel experience chain, from airports to airlines, hotels, resorts and attractions, festivals and other places of visitor fanfare, the ability to respond to the needs of individual travellers has become not just a competitive advantage, it has become a business imperative. Especially when it comes to the next generation of travellers who expect that "*it's all about me.*" Millennials may be massive in their numbers, but they are not one homogeneous group of needs. They, like Boomers, like Gen X, like Gen Y, and like future generations tagged with generic names, are individuals. They may share a period of birth years, but they are individuals, every single one of their millions.

So, how is unique, personalised travel experience delivery possible when having to deal with literally thousands of guests at once? And, as an added twist, how can it work when working in a limited space, with limited staff, and limited areas for little nuances of guest experience differentiation? Many businesses in the hospitality sector would feel completely out at sea in such a situation. For others, this is exactly when- and where- they deliver at their best.

### **TREAT EACH GUEST ROYALLY**

The challenge of treating each and every guest personally, doing all possible to fulfill individual wishes of a long awaited, excitedly anticipated, carefully budgeted holiday, is a regular part of the voyage when it comes to the cruise industry. All-inclusive travel, with holiday makers happily having made the investment into their time to rest and play, presents a unique challenge. Why? Simply this - guests certainly do not expect all-inclusive to mean all-get-the-same. Especially

travellers booked on a Royal Caribbean International cruise- which is why the world's second largest cruise company works to ensure each of their over 64,000 guests across their 22 ships, travelling to 235 ports in 69 countries over 6 continents in 2014, feels that their holiday is tailored just for her.

As made clear by João Mendonça, Hotel Director of RCI's Oasis of the Seas cruise ship, the world's largest passenger cruise liner able to host 6500 guests for journeys of over one week, this is no easy task. But it is a must if RCI is to enjoy continued success in serving not only new travellers, but repeat guests.

*“For us as leaders in the cruising industry, it is vital to ensure everyone feels welcomed and valued. The large ship experience must not reflect on the overall service. Our objective is to ultimately provide experiences without the "mass" feeling, focusing on the details that differentiate us from the competition.”*

The corporate theory is solid, but bringing it to life is ultimately up to Oasis' crew 2394 strong, representing over 70 different nationalities. Across the diverse spectrum of roles required to offer cruise experience excellence for thousands of guests, guests representing numerous ages, generations, nationalities, and areas of interest, the 'how' of crew role fulfillment is as important as the 'what'.

*“Our message to the Crew is to treat passengers as Guests, as individuals being personally hosted. This makes a huge difference right there. Our forte is to deliver fantastic personalized service by ensuring Crew is listening to Guest needs, ensuring the execution of the product is done to its highest standards, whilst at the same time supporting them with any needs they may have, and of course assisting them overcome challenges. Here Managers play a fundamental role.”*

For RCI, anticipating the needs of guests starts long before passengers board. Analysis of guest wishes begins months before, based on cruise profiling. Different cruise itineraries at different times of the year will attract different types of passengers – families, couples, individuals - all with very different requirements as far as drinking, dining, entertainment, activities and general rest and relaxation times are concerned. Scheduling and stocking will need to be adjusted.

And, of course, there are special occasion cruises that need to be taken into account – Thanksgiving, Easter, Christmas, New Year. Some require more turkey, some more champagne, some more chocolate! Some of the world's finest planners of guest operations are making plans well in advance – it is the only way to ensure smooth sailing in meeting the expectations of each new group of cruise passengers, with flexibility still available for individual guest wishes.

A fine balance is required, managing guest needs by the thousand as though one guest at a time. Especially when one guest's wishes turn to wants, now! As explained by Mendonça:

*“Treating guests individually, finding out what their needs actually are, listening to concerns before making rash judgments, taking it case by case. On the other hand, have a solid structure in place and have options and choices available so that guests can decide what activities they want to engage, and when. Most of the time they are wowed by the hardware on Oasis of the Seas – the ship and all of its innovative facilities. In many cases all they need is a little guidance and assistance with choices, or someone to just listen when they want to vent.”*



## COMPASS – Insights into Tourism Branding

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In the end, whether it is one of RCI's over 64,000 guests, or one of the world's over 1.1 billion international travellers, the travel dream of each and every traveller matters.

As shared by Mendonça, sometimes all it takes to reinforce why we work in service to the global travel and tourism industry, is the pure delight of seeing that travel dream fulfilled.

*"Some times doing the little things that may seem irrelevant to us are a HUGE deal, and have a tremendous positive impact on guests. One that stands out is a family from Texas that has sailed with me since 1992 - I was their Waiter, Head Waiter, Maitre'd, F&B Manager, F&B Director and recently on Oasis (2013) I was their Hotel Director. It was truly amazing how they still remembered that I would bring them 2 pieces of lemon for their ice tea with not too much ice. When they found out I was on Oasis, they brought me a T-shirt saying, again little things that make the difference and I will never forget it..."*

*"Oasis of the Seas building: \$1.4 Billion Dollars*

*7.500 pieces of art work: \$7.5 Million Dollars*

*Hotel Director remembering that we like ice tea with 2 pieces of lemon: priceless!"*

2015 is the year for the global travel and tourism community to deliver the travel dream, 1.1 billion times.

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