



the social customer journey

HOW STARWOOD MAPS SOCIAL DATA TO CREATE THE ULTIMATE GUEST EXPERIENCE AND DRIVE LOYALTY BEYOND REASON

background

For any business today, social media platforms provide a staggering amount of information about customers and potential customers alike. This information holds vast potential for marketers, but synthesizing and tapping into the value of such large quantities of data—especially for a company like Starwood Hotels & Resorts which operates 3,400 social media accounts across 32 social networks worldwide—is no simple task.

In today's social media landscape, many brands still struggle with harnessing social data to generate business insights and develop marketing strategies.

On the vanguard of this new territory, Starwood's Global Digital and Customer Insights teams harness social media data to understand how guests interact with the company across its many touch points throughout the **Customer Journey**: from (A) Brand **Awareness**, to (B) Purchase **Consideration**, that leads to (C) **Booking** Decisions, which brings them to (D) on-property experiences, and ultimately drives their **Loyalty and Retention**.

When it comes to social media, most companies view each portion of the customer journey in a silo, but Starwood wanted to understand the customer journey through a new lens and sought after a more holistic, guest-focused approach. To improve operational efficiencies with the ultimate goal of better serving guests, the company envisioned a wholly integrated social customer journey model.

challenge

UNLOCKING THE SECRET TO SOCIAL SUCCESS

In 2014, Starwood began to monitor and measure various aspects of the customer journey via social media data. Establishing a global framework to evaluate the process – from social media marketing all the way to guest stays at Starwood properties – was a daunting task for such a large, highly matrixed company, but Starwood determined that the payoff would ultimately result in an improved guest experience.



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Jennifer Yacenda

DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL ANALYTICS
& CHANNEL INTELLIGENCE,
STARWOOD



In order to do this, Starwood needed to create a strong social analytics foundation. The company set out to standardize social measurement across the entire organization in order to establish reliable benchmarks and eliminate data gaps.

Aligning the organization to a global set of KPIs was an ambitious first step, but Starwood saw an opportunity to hone its social media capabilities in a way that could measure and optimize each step of the customer journey throughout its vast hotel network. Starwood also needed the right partner to achieve this goal: as of 2012, Starwood partnered with Sprinklr – a leading enterprise social analytics platform – to setup basic social media measurement and monitoring when those functions were relatively new to large businesses. Then, in 2014, the two companies expanded their relationship to highly customize the Sprinklr platform and enhance Starwood’s social analytics framework. Monitoring for surface-level brand mentions on social media would no longer suffice, nor would relying on siloed teams across the globe to respond to property-level customer inquiries. Starwood, recognized for innovation within the hospitality industry, wanted to further its position as an industry pioneer and bridge the gaps between brand promises on social media and guest experiences on property. Perhaps most importantly, the company wanted to understand guest booking behavior by quantifying social media marketing through revenue.

solution

BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS

Starwood first standardized social KPIs across the company so that different sub-brands and properties could measure their owned channels’ performance with a shared, consistent set of measurements. These first KPIs established companywide benchmarks for areas like channel health, content performance, audience growth and engagement.

With this new measurement system in place, the company began to tackle another critical component of its social analytics foundation: social listening. Starwood overhauled its listening framework to move beyond just recognizing basic brand mentions in order to support each stage of the customer journey – even while on-property and after hotel stays, both on and offline.



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Marcella Nicotera
DIRECTOR OF ESERVICE
& SOCIAL CUSTOMER CARE,
STARWOOD



Through its relationship with Sprinklr, Starwood discovered that many guests voice opinions or share experiences on social media without mentioning a brand directly. This was the case when one unhappy (and in this case, socially influential) Starwood guest commented on Twitter about the puzzling lack of a dresser in his hotel room. Although the guest's Tweet didn't mention Starwood directly, the company's global listening framework enabled Starwood's social team to quickly identify the complaint, pinpoint where the customer was staying, respond to the customer on social, and deliver a beautiful, wooden dresser straight to the guest's door. To personalize the experience and encourage brand advocacy, Starwood went a step further and had the dresser stocked with uniquely patterned socks, one of the guest's personal style trademarks that the social team noted from his social profile.

According to Marcella Nicotera, Starwood's Director of eService & Social Customer Care, part of what makes the company's approach to social media unique is that "[The] Global Social Media Team offers 24/7 support, both listening to and engaging with the voice of our customers. Our guests appreciate our quick response time and personalized interactions for their travel needs, which encourages [guests] to utilize our social channels and share their positive experiences as a result."

Now armed with standardized KPIs and an enhanced listening framework, Starwood had one remaining area to tackle: in early 2016, the company became Sprinklr's first client to integrate third-party digital analytics data, enabling Starwood to connect social media marketing efforts to social referral traffic, bookings, and most important, revenue. Starwood successfully plugged in the last piece of the puzzle, which resulted in measurable ROI for which social media initiatives drive revenue for each brand, region and hotel, and how this varies by audience segment.



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Alex Stein

**SOCIAL MEDIA &
BRAND INTELLIGENCE MANAGER,
STARWOOD**



With these enhancements to its social media analytics platform, Starwood and Sprinklr created a single, holistic picture of the Social Customer Journey by integrating three previously disparate measurement areas – Owned Channel Performance, Social Listening, and Referral Data. These metrics are typically analyzed separately, limiting a company's ability to assess only one factor at a time. With an integrated Social Customer Journey, Starwood can use “big picture” insights to improve how it serves customers across the globe.

results

GAINING A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE STARWOOD CUSTOMER

Starwood's customized Sprinklr report suite helps the company's internal marketing teams interpret social data and better understand their guests, travel decisions, brand affinities and on-property experiences. With a fully integrated platform, Starwood has identified social media KPIs that align with each phase of the Customer Journey and inform new ways to improve the guest lifecycle – both through social media and offline.

“By fully leveraging Sprinklr's measurement and listening framework to match our global needs, and finally incorporating our own booking and revenue data, we have filled in all the puzzle pieces,” said Alex Stein, Starwood's Social Media & Brand Intelligence Manager. “We can quickly learn what impacts different aspects of the customer experience and travel purchases on social.”

The company is now able to assess brand awareness, consideration, booking and loyalty drivers in a much more comprehensive way—enabling decision-makers throughout Starwood to see when social media conversations and interactions lead to web visits, which convert into bookings and generate revenue-based ROI data, down to the SPG membership level of guests engaging with brands. In a hyper-competitive digital landscape, Starwood can now easily and systematically determine which social tactics are effective and can be tweaked to better align with guest needs, exceed expectations, and drive more business and loyalty.

from big data to real experiences and the future of social

By partnering with Sprinklr and leveraging the platform in an entirely new way, Starwood was able to reinvent its social analytics approach, tackle organizational complexities, and generate social media insights that are user-friendly, easy to distribute, and reflective of real company operations and guest experiences. As Starwood continues its partnership with Sprinklr, they are committed to improving guest experiences through social media insights.

“It has been a true success story where we've leveraged a platform and a partnership to execute scalable measurement and insights across our matrixed organization,” said Jennifer Yacenda, Director of Digital Analytics & Channel Intelligence at Starwood. “Alex and the Sprinklr team delivered against an extensive list of enhancements to bring a vision for social analytics to life. We are excited to see where else it will take us as the social media and the hospitality industry continue to evolve in the years ahead.”

SOCIAL CONVERSION FUNNEL

