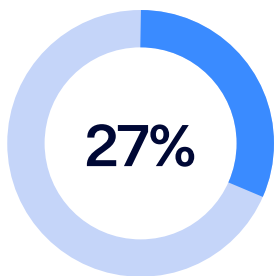


The disruption experience

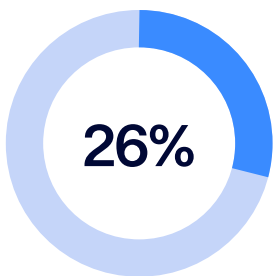
A true time of need

In the first section of the report we talked about managing disruption from an industry and technology perspective. Here, we look at it through the lens of traveler experience.

Given the nature of any journey – be it leisure or business – the potential for disruption is a source of anxiety for many travelers. Amadeus’ own research identified flight delays, cancellations or airport closure based on unforeseen circumstances (such as weather events) as one of the biggest sources of anxiety for leisure (27%) and business travelers (26%) alike.



Leisure travelers



Business travelers





However, effectively managing such disruption for the traveler can be boiled down to three core tenets:

- 1 Reassurance: removing the unknown and giving confidence for a resolution through information sharing
- 2 Insight: knowing what this resolution (or an alternative) might be
- 3 Action: knowing when this resolution might take place

Action as a loyalty-driver

Importantly, successfully solving the issues caused by disruption can become a loyalty driver when it comes to circumstances outside the control of the relevant operator, be it the airline, airport, or travel agent. It’s a key marker of the importance of putting the customer experience first.

When asked about the impact of how an organisation handles disruption, three quarters (75%) of travelers said they could see the true quality of a provider in such an instance. In fact, 74% would likely book again if their provider handled the disruption well by offering proactive solutions (which could include next available flight rebooking, overnight accommodation, ground transfers, or food and beverage vouchers), and 72% say they can forgive their provider if they can see they are doing their best to help.



Could see the true quality of a provider in such an instance



Would likely book again if their provider handled the disruption well by offering proactive solutions



Can forgive their provider if they can see they are doing their best to help

The importance of communication

The unknowns and ‘what ifs?’ during disruption are primary drivers behind anxiety – a combination which must be resolved (as much as is possible in the circumstances) through reassurance. This might be the resolution of the problem, or it can simply be an update that the fix is being investigated. When it comes to reassurance, one thing is key: communication. Travelers need to know what’s happening so they can understand how long to wait or arrange alternative plans with the support of the operator.

Amadeus has partnered with 15below since 2019, with more than 30 airlines worldwide supported by automated, personalized passenger (and airline or airport staff) communications ensuring the passenger is always in the loop. Innovation priorities are building on this through looking at adaptable, scalable solutions for disruption management through airline integration systems.

“By prioritizing real-time communication and being proactive with their service recovery, airlines are able to reassure their passengers, empower them throughout their journey, and build loyalty at a time when passenger trust is harder to earn than ever.”

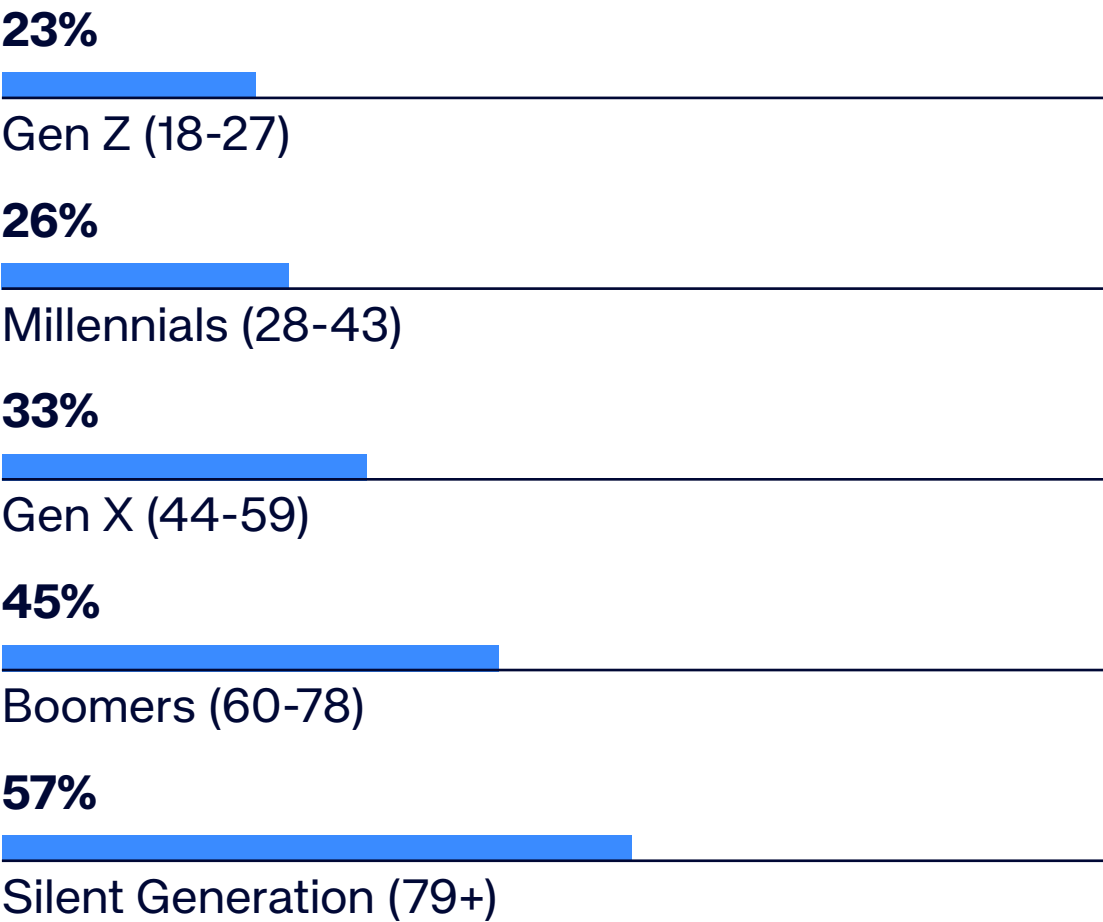
Mathieu Beynel
Product Manager for Disruption Management,
Amadeus

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The need for empathy

The need for empathy is undoubtedly heightened during disruption and this is where the travel and hospitality industries must recognize the importance of delivering support to suit different preferences. While the use of chatbots and AI agents has become standardized in many customer service realms, during disruption a sizeable number of passengers still prefer to speak to a real human. Indeed, in an Amadeus survey, the human touch came out top at 29% in terms of what travelers would want most to feel reassured during travel disruption.

This has an interesting dynamic however when it comes to demographic and age groups – with older passengers significantly more demanding. Indeed, the percentage of those wanting to speak to a human agent correlates directly with age – the older the traveler or guest, the higher the appetite:



This is a clear example of where the industry needs to meet the traveler on the latter’s terms depending on the situation.

Building trust in AI solutions

Demand for a ‘hybrid’ approach to customer support, as it were, will always exist. It’s human nature to want to talk to someone in person. But huge opportunities exist on the agentic side around resolution where scenarios can be played out across multiple AI solutions to manage (and resolve) disruptions sooner.

It is worth mentioning that AI support is still fairly nascent, so personal preferences are naturally going to change based on customer experiences of its use and application over time. Beyond early adopters, much of the public are relatively neophobic when it comes to new technology – especially where sensitive data is concerned, or where it significantly differs from trusted, known solutions.

The travel and hospitality industries have arguably seen the same with biometrics. At first people were skeptical, but smartphones gave us the convenience of unlocking devices and confirming payments just by looking at them using fingerprint and facial biometric data. This then becomes a door opener to using this same technology in other areas of life.

Enhancing support through AI

In the case of disruption to flights, we envisage that AI support would be three-fold (and more use cases are likely to develop as operational experience using these solutions grow):

Cumulatively, the experience must echo the advances seen in other industries when it comes to what the customer expects from service providers. And the increased use of AI will see time freed up for in-person support for those travelers who need it.

- 1 **Anticipate any upcoming disruptions based on real-time and multi-source data (an improvement over traditionally reactive and often siloed responses using the different impacted systems).**
- 2 **Orchestrate and engage with the various personnel involved in the recovery decision-making process (including the crew, maintenance teams, airport slot assigners, etc.) to provide a fast, robust and comprehensive solution that will address customer needs.**
- 3 **From the traveler perspective, AI could propose a solution that is more likely to suit the individual passenger’s needs and preferences (a more personalized response), which gets the passenger’s travel back on track.**



“Technology solutions need to evolve alongside changing traveler expectations. We’ve been progressing a lot in operational notifications, with the ultimate goal being to meet the changing needs of customers and extend notification capabilities to the wider travel ecosystem.”

Mathieu Beynel

Product Manager for Disruption Management,
Amadeus

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The themes of reassurance, insight, and action are shown clearly in the results of Amadeus research into traveler priorities and anxieties.



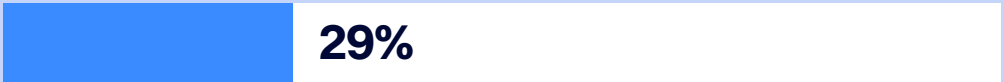
Resolving issues quickly

No-one likes being left in limbo, so it’s crucial that as soon as a resolution is in place, the traveler is made aware of it immediately and can make a decision on whether to move ahead with it. This involves passengers receiving a notification direct to their app or mobile device that explains the airline’s or travel seller’s recommended alternative travel option, with the ability to accept or reject it digitally from their device – or even be able to edit the recommendation to match their specific needs.

Recovery options will factor in the entire journey leading to better outcomes for travelers while ensuring the needs of each passenger and their entitlements are understood across partner airlines and other suppliers. This model also means that the individual feels empowered despite things not going as planned - something which can add further reassurance as the situation gets resolved.

At the end of the day, the unknown is a core factor in anxieties being heightened - but building processes and systems that adopt a fully integrated approach throughout the travel ecosystem, means not only can every part of the system work together to resolve the issue, but they can drive positive reputation for handling disruption. Through implementing the right technology solutions to identifying how to resolve an issue, alongside the means to keep the traveler in the loop, anxieties are lessened.

During a travel disruption when travelling abroad for leisure, which of the following could a travel provider do to help you feel most reassured?



Being able to speak to a human assistant



Help with quickly rebooking or rearranging travel plans



Ability to manage disruption myself (for instance, using a travel provider’s app to rebook available options without the need to queue at the airport or speak to a call center)



Compensation or vouchers offered proactively



Clear, regular updates on the situation through email or the travel provider’s app



Assistance with arranging alternative transport or accommodation



Access to a comfortable waiting area or lounge



Complimentary drinks and snacks



Ability to take control and review options and rebook flights using an app



Clear reminders of their claims and refund policy