



# Agencies uncovered

This month Ethos Consultancy's mystery shopping team visited four Abu Dhabi travel agencies. *ATN* reveals their findings

## MYSTERY SHOPPING EXPLAINED

### WHO WAS VISITED?

Each of the following travel agencies were visited twice by one of Ethos Consultancy's 3000 well-trained mystery shoppers in June.

- **Compass Travel & Tourism**
- **Palm Oasis Travel**
- **Nirvana Travel**
- **Kish Travel & Tourism**

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

Each month *ATN* and Ethos will choose four different travel agencies from within the UAE to mystery shop and find out how satisfied your customers are. The purpose of this exercise is to find out the good, the bad and the ugly when it comes to travel agencies' customer service and sales execution performance across the UAE. Ethos will report their monthly findings as well as provide some insight and recommendations relating to areas which need improvement.

### WHAT WERE OUR MYSTERY SHOPPERS INSTRUCTED TO DO?

Each mystery shopper was given three scenarios from which to choose:

- 1) You are planning a family holiday in June/July. Ask the travel agent to recommend some destinations that you could visit and would be interesting for children as you are travelling with two kids who are under the age of 10.
- 2) Ask the agency for options for a gift of a prepaid three-night package for a honeymoon couple.
- 3) You are planning a holiday with friends and are looking for a holiday full of adventure and would be interested in staying at a hotel that can organise trips to the mountains, water sports activities, cycling, etc.

### WHAT WERE OUR MYSTERY SHOPPERS LOOKING FOR?

#### 1. Agency appearance

- Was the outlet easy to find?

- Were the opening/closing hours clearly displayed at the entrance?
- Did the outlet appear clean and tidy?
- Were the travel brochures and related literature placed in a good orderly manner?
- Was the temperature comfortable?

#### 2. Travel advisor

- Were the employees you encountered well groomed and neat in appearance?
- Were employee name tags visible?
- Were there a sufficient number of employees available to serve you and other clients?
- Did Travel Advisor employee make eye contact to acknowledge your presence at the desk?
- Did the outlet have a formal customer queuing system in place?
- How long did it take for you to be served?
- If you had to wait to be served, did an employee apologise for the wait?
- Did the employee serving you refrain from using the phone or conversing with other staff while attending to your enquiry?
- How were you greeted by the Travel Advisor who served you?
- Did the travel advisor provide all information relevant to your enquiry?
- Did the travel advisor have a friendly attitude towards you?
- Did the travel advisor who served you provide you with their full attention?
- Was the travel advisor knowledgeable about the services you requested?
- Did the travel advisor provide you with all the information you required in an easily-understood manner?
- Were you satisfied with the information you received?

#### 3. Overall experience

- Overall, based upon your experience, would you recommend this outlet to family and friends?
- How satisfied were you with the outcome of your visit?

## Ethos Consultancy Introduction

### BACKGROUND

Originating in the UK in 1995, Ethos Consultancy re-located to Dubai in early 2003. The Middle East has welcomed Ethos' expert advice and customer service solutions with open arms. A team of five has matured to a team of 50 and we're still growing. Consultants have been handpicked from some of the most mature customer service markets in the world, ensuring experience and best practice is built into everything we do.

### OUR FOCUS

Through years of experience, Ethos has developed a unique combination of products and services to help our clients understand exactly how their business is performing through the eyes of both the customer and their employees.

We strongly believe that unless you are measuring performance, it is extremely difficult to manage performance. Our customer service measurement solutions include; mystery shopping, satisfaction surveys as well as local and international benchmarking against competitors and best practice. Once our clients have a clear understanding of how they are performing, we help them improve by way of training, consulting and implementation of The International Customer Service Standard. Our solutions support a complete customer service improvement cycle.

Ethos prides itself on being at the forefront of cutting edge online customer service solutions and was awarded *Most Innovative Small Business* in the UAE at the 2008 Lloyds TSB Small Business Awards.

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**WHAT WERE OUR MYSTERY SHOPPERS LOOKING FOR?**

	Was the outlet easy to find		Did the outlet appear clean and tidy?		Were the travel brochures and related literature placed in a good orderly manner?		Did the travel advisor provide you with all the relevant information relating to your enquiry?		Was the travel Advisor knowledgeable about the services you requested?		Overall, based upon your experience, would you recommend this outlet to family and friends?		How satisfied were you with the outcome of your visit	
	Visit 1	Visit 2	Visit 1	Visit 2	Visit 1	Visit 2	Visit 1	Visit 2	Visit 1	Visit 2	Visit 1	Visit 2	Visit 1	Visit 2
Compass Travel & Tourism	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	yes	Yes	Yes	Very Satisfied	Satisfied
Nirvana Travel	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	yes	Yes	Yes	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor Dissatisfied
Palm Oasis Travel	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Neither satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor Dissatisfied
Kish Travel & Tourism	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied

**OUTLET APPEARANCE**

Travel agency	average
Compass Travel & Tourism	80%
Nirvana Travel	60%
Palm Oasis Travel	60%
Kish Travel & Tourism	60%

**TRAVEL ADVISOR**

Travel Agency	Average
Compass Travel & Tourism	81%
Nirvana Travel	71%
Palm Oasis Travel	68%
Kish Travel & Tourism	33%

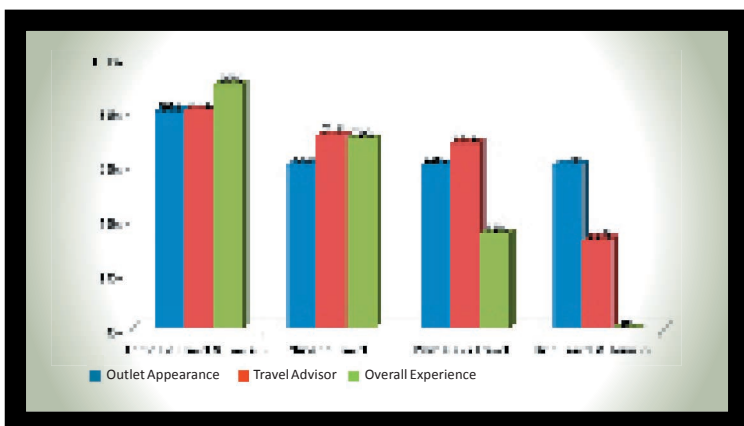
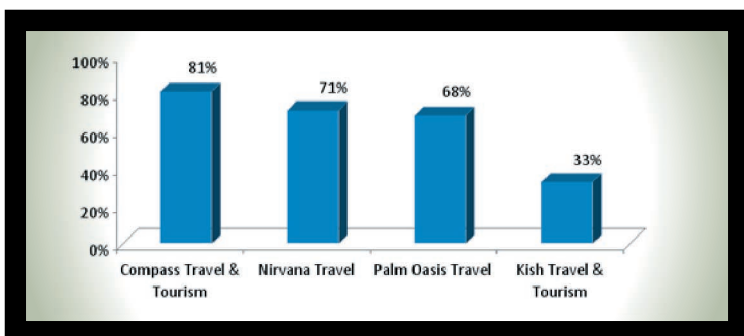
**OVERALL EXPERIENCE**

Travel agency	average
Compass Travel & Tourism	90%
Nirvana Travel	70%
Palm Oasis Travel	35%
Kish Travel & Tourism	0%

**ALL FOUR AGENCY SCORES COMBINED**

All four Agency Scores Combined	
<b>Overall Attributes</b>	
Outlet Appearance	65%
Travel Advisor	63%
Overall Experience	49%

**OVERALL SCORE**



**Conclusions**

This month's *Agency Customer Service Challenge* winner is Compass Travel & Tourism with an overall score of 81%. Compass Travel & Tourism performed well in all three measurement criteria — outlet appearance, travel advisor and the overall customer's experience. Nirvana Travel came in at a close second, also performing well across all three categories with an overall score of 71%. Placing third, Palm Oasis Travel scored a total of 68%, which is also a great achievement, leaving Kish Travel & Tourism in last place at 33%.

Similar to last month, Outlet Appearance seems to be an area which all four agencies are performing well. This category covers tidiness, brochure displays, ease of finding the store and temperature comfort. However, both Nirvana Travel and Palm Oasis Travel mystery shoppers reported a few circumstances of confusion finding the outlet.

Travel advisors at the top three performing agencies all received scores of 68% and above indicating sound product knowledge, customer interaction skills, and ability to ask appropriate questions to identify their customer's needs. Kish Travel & Tourism's travel advisors did not score as well with an average of 33% for over the two mystery shopping visits conducted.

Both Kish Travel & Tourism's mystery shoppers reported being dissatisfied with their travel

advisor indicating poor product knowledge and inability to make suggestions of trip packages within the mystery shopper's budget.

After careful consideration of each agency's performance, Ethos Consultancy recommendations for this month are as follows:

- Always make eye contact with your customers. A customer will not feel special or want to give you their business if they don't feel they are receiving positive body language from the travel advisor.
- Product knowledge is a MUST. This month's poor scores were mainly the result of poor product knowledge leaving our mystery shoppers confused and frustrated. Only five of our eight shoppers indicated they would recommend the agency they visited. The three that wouldn't be giving a recommendation mentioned they were dissatisfied with the travel advisors product knowledge.
- Ensure the lighting of your agency is bright, hence creating an inviting and happy atmosphere. Also try and choose furniture that isn't too dark. The brighter your agency, the more inviting.



Always make good eye contact with your customers.

