

9 PRACTICAL
TIPS TO
PROMOTE
**DIRECT
BOOKINGS**



GuestRevu

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As a hotelier, you're always looking for new ways to **increase bookings** – but steep commission rates eat into your revenue

It's time to focus on direct bookings and **reduce the reliance** on commission-based sales



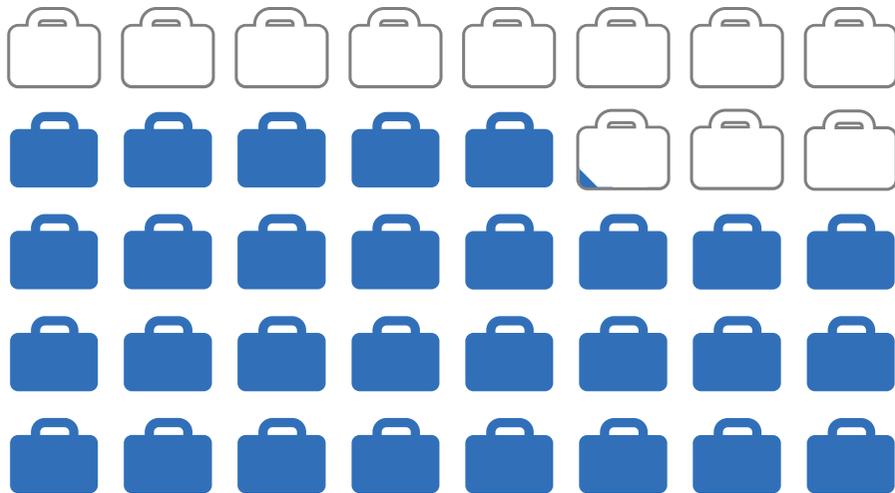
Online Travel Agencies such as **Bookings.com**, **Expedia** and **Priceline** are taking a big piece of the revenue pie

Smaller chains and independent hoteliers are uncomfortable about their dependence on OTAs to keep rooms full

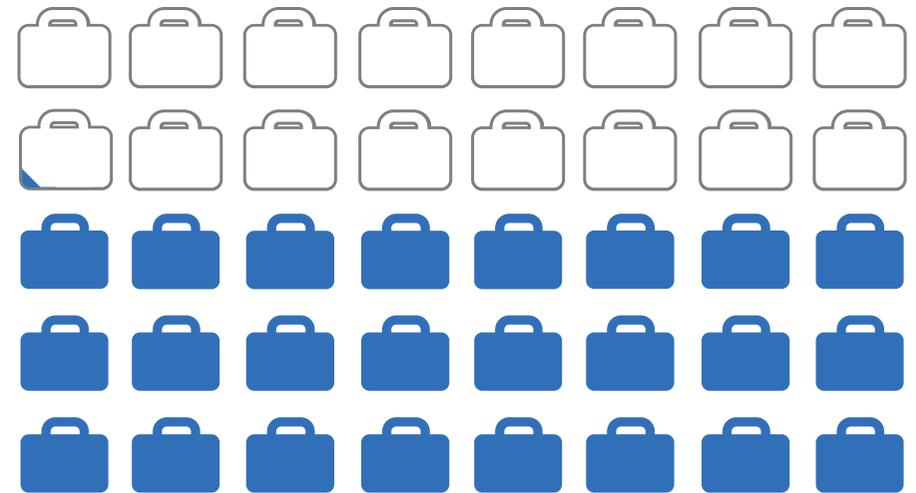
In addition, hotels can lose up to 25% in commission per booking



Of all online bookings in Europe,
online travel agents are responsible
for the majority



For independent hotels, OTAs
make up **74%** of online bookings



For hotel chains, OTAs make up
62% of online bookings

It's time to change course...
it's time to focus on **customer
engagement** and offering
value to guests

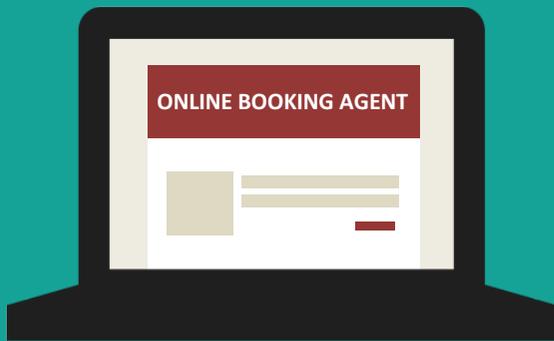


....to get them to book direct



1

**embrace the
online travel agency**



1 out of 5

direct bookings happen
after someone sees you on
an OTA

2

**get your
website right**

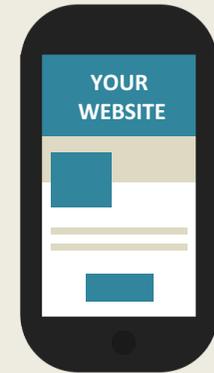


47%

of visitors will expect your
website to load in 2 seconds
or less

3

**be mobile
friendly**

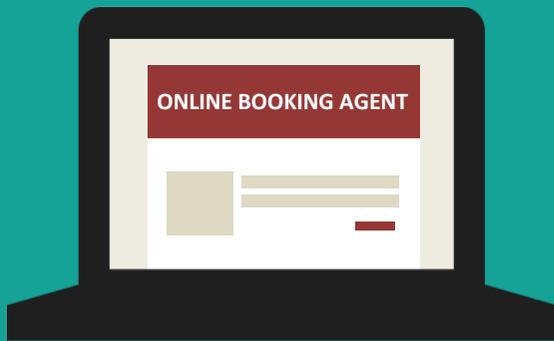


77%

of mobile users will leave
if your site isn't mobile
friendly

1

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online travel agency**



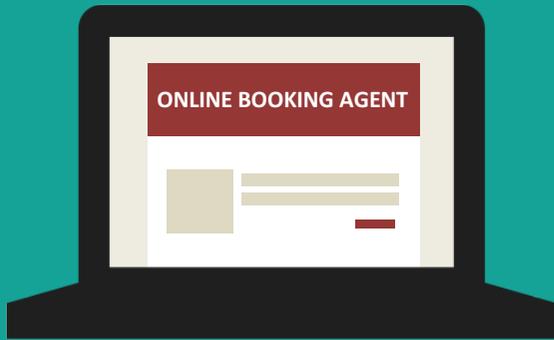
1 out of 5

direct bookings happen
after someone sees you on
an OTA

It sounds odd, doesn't it? But no, we have not lost our minds. A 2013 WIHP study observed that 20% of direct bookings happen after someone sees a hotel on an OTA, and even if they do book through the OTA, optimising your presence there means more bookings anyway

1

**embrace the
online travel agency**



1 out of 5

direct bookings happen
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an OTA

Top tips...

Add awesome images – Quality, quantity and variety are key

Add some videos – People don't think you're duping them when you show them a video

Write detailed descriptions – Make it easy for guests to research you

Keep up-to-date – Tell people about new features and facilities

Ask for reviews – But don't cheat and offer incentives for good reviews

Respond to reviews – 60% of TripAdvisor users would rather stay at a hotel that responds to reviews

2

get your website right



47%

of visitors will expect your
website to load in 2 seconds
or less

One of the reasons people book through OTAs is because they are easy to use. Make sure that your website is equally easy

Top tips...

Get the look and feel right – Give visitors a taste of your brand and what to expect

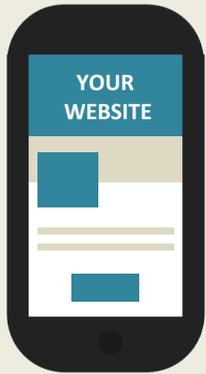
Use lots of high quality images – Show the rooms as well as the reception, restaurant, gardens and surrounding area

Have a call-to-action – Use simple, direct words to encourage visitors to make a booking, preferably using a built-in form in a prominent area

Optimise your site speed – Users will go elsewhere if a page doesn't load quickly

3

be mobile friendly



77%

of mobile users will leave if your site isn't mobile friendly

Top tips...

Mobiles are the go-to devices for late bookings – 65% of same-day hotel reservations are done on a smartphone

The buying journey starts on mobile devices – 73% of mobile searches trigger additional actions

Be aware of the speed – Your mobile site should be light for slow connections

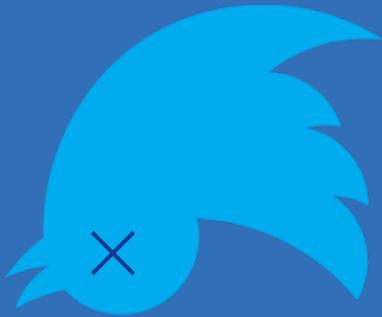
Be aware of changing trends – A dated website implies a dated hotel, even if that isn't the case

Consider 'mobile first' design – This means the site should be perfect on a mobile device, and have space to spread out on a desktop

Just do it – Any mobile responsiveness is better than none

4

keep your
social media alive



83%

of travellers use social
networks for online
research

5

offer a
better deal



70%

of leisure travellers believe
an OTA offers better deals

6

add some
AdWords

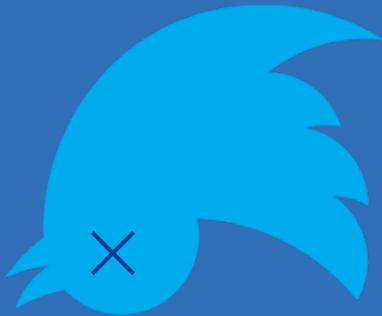


2x

what businesses spend on
Adwords is generated in
additional revenue

4

keep your social media alive



83%

of travellers use social
networks for online
research

Millions of daily users make social media essential in the modern travel industry

Top tips...

Make use of images – Images inspire emotions quickly in your audience

Post live – Don't waste time by over-thinking – post in the here and now

Schedule ahead – Use down-time to schedule so you can save time when you're busy

Use your mobile – You can't always leave the action to sit in front of your computer – so use your mobile instead

Sharing is caring – Sharing someone else's post can be done in a jiffy, and gives that person an ego boost

5

**offer a
better deal**



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of leisure travellers believe
an OTA offers better deals

Top tips...

A discounted rate – if you don't have any price parity agreements with OTAs, offer a discounted rate for guests that book direct

Provide unique experiences – Create exclusive packages featuring unique travel experiences or team up with other tourism professionals to offer complimentary experiences

Tell people about it! – Communicate direct booking benefits on your website and promotional material, and through social media

Train your staff – Guests may ask why some are getting perks and others aren't, so staff should know procedures and policies

6

**add some
AdWords**



2x

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Top tips...

Aim for long tail keywords – It is cheaper to bid on search phrases that contain three or more words than on generic keywords

Let other ads inspire you – Many others have gone through extensive testing and experimentation, so use what's working and adapt it to your brand

Be clear with your goals – Be specific about what you want to achieve, otherwise you will miss out on more qualified traffic

Bid on your own brand name – Make sure that when people search for your hotel, they find your website and not your OTA listing

Keep experimenting – Adapt adverts and cut keywords that aren't delivering the right traffic to up your conversion rates and ROI

7

deliver great experiences



Happy customers are your best brand ambassadors!

8

offer enticing incentives



Deliver great experiences and people will recommend you to others

9

make use of your staff



Create a culture within your team of encouraging direct bookings

7

deliver great experiences



Happy customers are your best brand ambassadors!

Top tips...

First impressions last – The way your guests experience their arrival can colour the rest of their stay with you - a friendly smile, a glass of juice and helping with luggage can go a long way

Treat each guest as your favourite – Be flexible with guests and go the extra mile, surprise your guests with service that makes them feel special

Create an atmosphere – Ensure that the atmosphere in your hotel is pervasive and authentic by finding what comes naturally to your property, believing in it and living it in every interaction with your guests

Love what you do – Loving what you do and believing in the service that you provide for your patrons is what will ensure that your guests have the stay that they were hoping for

8

offer enticing
incentives



Offer guests a good reason
to book direct instead of
through an OTA

Room upgrade

48%

of travellers said a free
room upgrade would most
likely entice them

Free food

43%

of travellers said a free meal
would be the best in-room
incentive for booking direct

Room service

23%

of travellers said that free
room service would be the
most encouraging incentive

Free Wi-Fi

is the single most important
hotel amenity to guests
according to a recent study

8

offer enticing incentives



Offer guests a good reason to book direct instead of through an OTA



Complimentary experiences

A free in-room massage, game drive, horse ride, surfing lesson, guided tour of the area



Special gift cards

Gift cards recently came in as the third most likely incentive to convince travellers to book direct



Personalised service

Go the extra mile for guests by, for example, putting their favourite tea in their room



Exclusive packages

Put together a few discounted rates packages based on different types of travellers

9

make use of your staff



Create a culture within your team of encouraging direct bookings

Top tips...

Educate – Make sure they know all the latest offers and deals and that they can easily explain the benefits of booking directly

Incentivise – Provide in-house incentives to staff who convert third-party business to less costly supplier-direct business, or those who collect email addresses from guests who have booked via an OTA so that you can market to them directly

Empower your team – Allow your staff to offer room upgrades or extra amenities if they can take the reservation directly

Make it personal – Provide guests who booked via an OTA with a personalised email from the GM offering them a discounted rate if they book directly next time

Hospitality is a people business, and engagement is at the forefront of increasing direct bookings, loyalty and conversion rates

GuestRevu (www.guestrevu.com) is a leading provider of online reputation and direct guest feedback solutions for accommodation providers around the world

Get a **free** demo today:

<http://hub.guestrevu.com/request-a-guestrevu-demo>

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