

What Travelers Really Want On Mobile

How to Design For Traveler Emotion



Usablenet

Introduction

Nobody travels without their smartphone, but to what extent do travelers truly rely on their mobile devices when researching their trips, booking their flights and accommodations, traveling to their destinations, enjoying their trip, and sharing the experience after they return home?

The answer, as it turns out, is complex, encompassing both the diverse emotional states that people are in at every stage of the travel experience, and their concerns about – and capabilities of- the user experience that mobile travel sites offer.

Recently, we conducted research to uncover the emotions, behaviors, and experiences of travelers as they relate to different stages of the process, and to what extent current mobile offerings proved a help or a hindrance – in other words, are there opportunities for brands to improve their offerings to bring them more in line with travelers' desires and needs?

Click to download our recent travel infographic



Journey

The overall travel journey is broken down into 5 distinct stages: Researching, Booking, Traveling, In-destination, and Post-trip. During each of these stages, the traveler experiences changes in their mindset and behaviors, requiring brands to take a closer look at how to close the gap between what users want, and what they are offering on mobile.



Researching: “I don’t trust the content.”

When researching a trip, travelers are anxious; they are weighing costs, managing schedules, praying for good weather. They are curious, exploring the pros and cons of various destinations. And they are driven, determined to find the best trip at the best value and make it the best vacation ever. Yet a sizable percentage of travelers do not turn to their mobile device for this important stage of the process. Why?

We learned that many travel sites are not optimized for mobile; it’s hard to view photos and video, navigation is often difficult, and filtering is insufficient. Compared to tablets – which a whopping 87% of respondents said they used for researching trips – smartphones don’t measure up.



41%
of travelers do not
research on mobile



WHO'S GETTING IT RIGHT?

SuperBreak

Make your short break a SuperBreak

SuperBreak has been a short break specialist for over 30 years, offering short breaks, city breaks and weekend breaks in London, throughout the UK and abroad. They've paid special attention to basic UX elements that minimize user apprehension, so customers feel confident they've come to the right place to book their short break.

In doing so, they've made it possible for a customer to have the freedom to book every element of their trip in one place.

- Provided filters and expand/collapse features to allow a user to see as much, or as little content as they feel necessary [see Fig. 1&4]
- Streamlined and structures content to draw a users' eyes to the most important elements [see Fig. 1&2]
- Posted good and bad reviews to increase credibility and trust [see Fig. 3]



Fig. 1

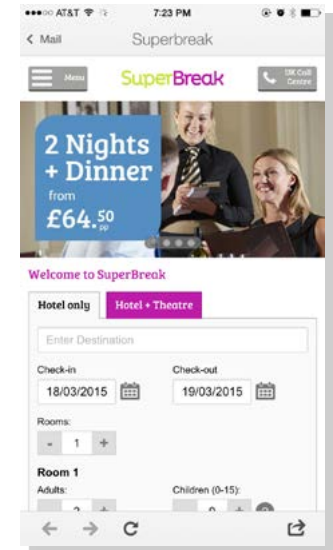


Fig. 2

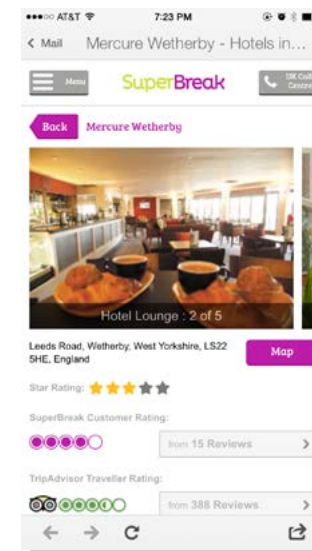


Fig. 3

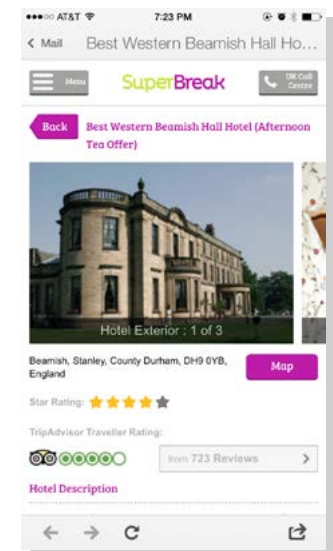


Fig. 4

Researching & Booking:

“These pictures are not great!”

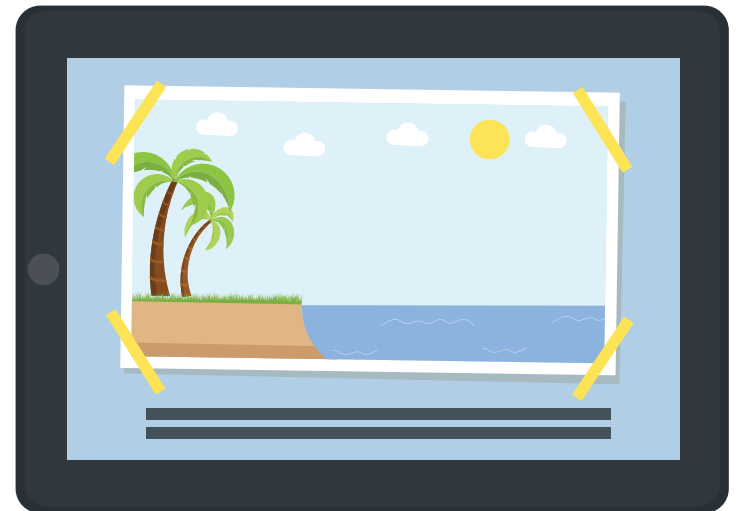
Mobile phones will always have smaller screens than tablets, but there are ways to make the user experience more engaging and effective. For example, to make the mobile experience more conducive for researching trips, brands should pay special attention to high-quality visual content.

Images and videos are the selling point during the Research and Booking phase. In fact, it was the number one aspect all Travelers felt was missing from their mobile experience. In order for Travelers to feel excited about their trip, they need brands to provide a visual representation of the experience they will be receiving.



87%

of travelers prefer to view pictures on a tablet because of screen size



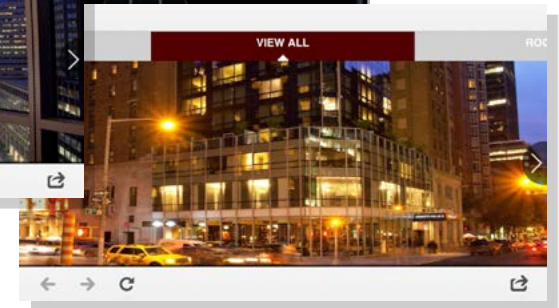
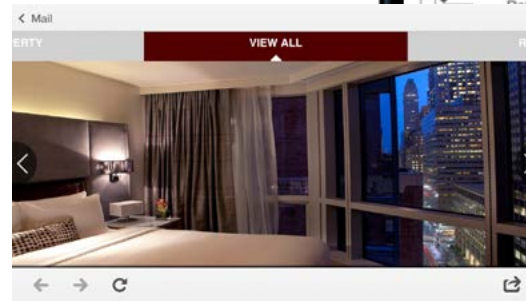
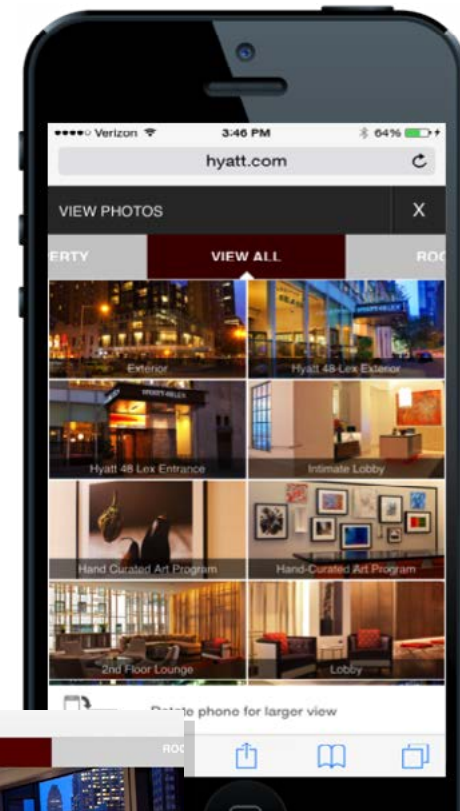
WHO'S GETTING IT RIGHT?



Hyatt is a widely recognized, global hospitality company, who is constantly evolving the online experience by listening to guests and understanding their needs. Travelers seek seamlessness on the go, but they also want brands to provide a visual representation of the experience they will be receiving.

Hyatt offers an overall more intuitive, more visual, and more functional mobile site by taking the following UX actions:

- No “Pinch and zoom”
- No Pixelated images
- Images that make a bigger impact on travelers’ decision – 360 degree images
- Using visual design to represent the brand
- De-cluttering the design



**Want to easily create pages like these?
Click here to learn how!**



Booking: “I don’t feel secure.”

Booking a trip is stressful because this is when the money gets committed, the time off from work has been made official, and while travelers are excited, the booking process, especially on mobile devices, can leave a bad taste.

We uncovered that travelers are apprehensive to book on mobile. 51% of travelers told us they were not likely to use mobile payments because they lack trust in providing their credit card number over open and unsecured wifi connections.



58%
of travelers are
apprehensive to book
on a mobile site



WHO'S GETTING IT RIGHT?



Virgin America is a California-based airline that provides low-fare and high-quality service on the East and West Coast. To decrease stress and increase confidence on mobile, they include elements that add reassurance, such as security logos and feedback messaging.

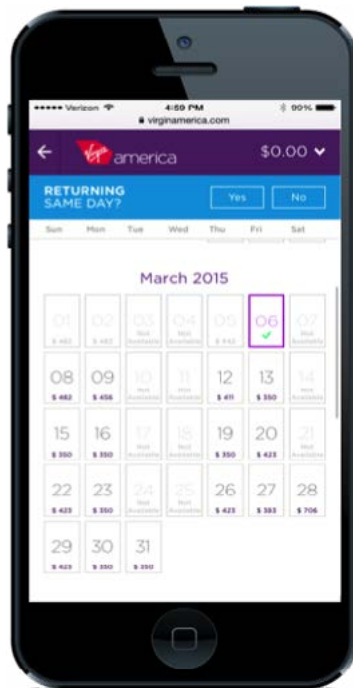


Fig. 1

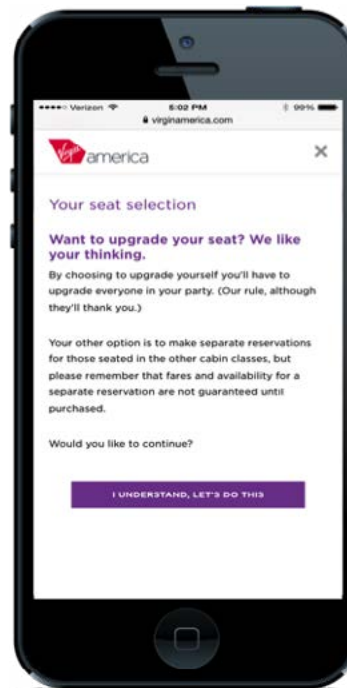


Fig. 2

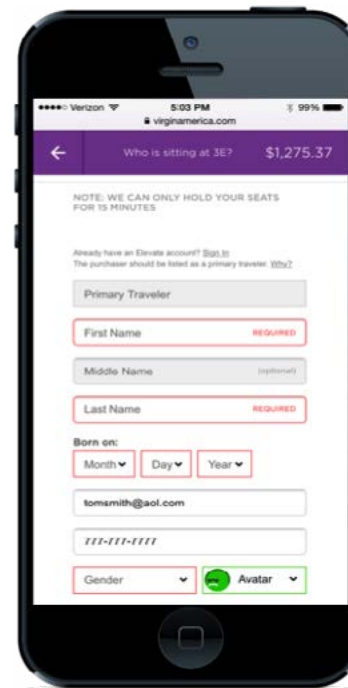


Fig. 3

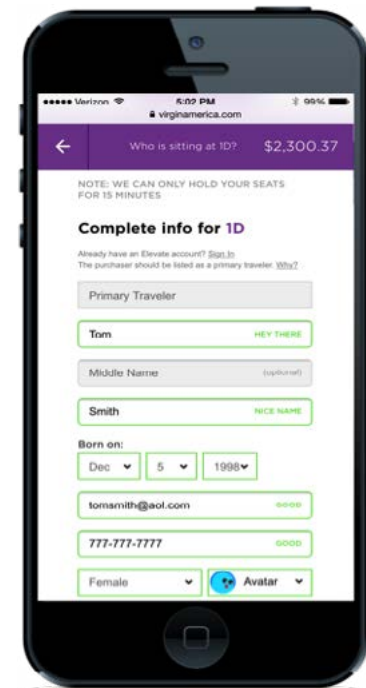


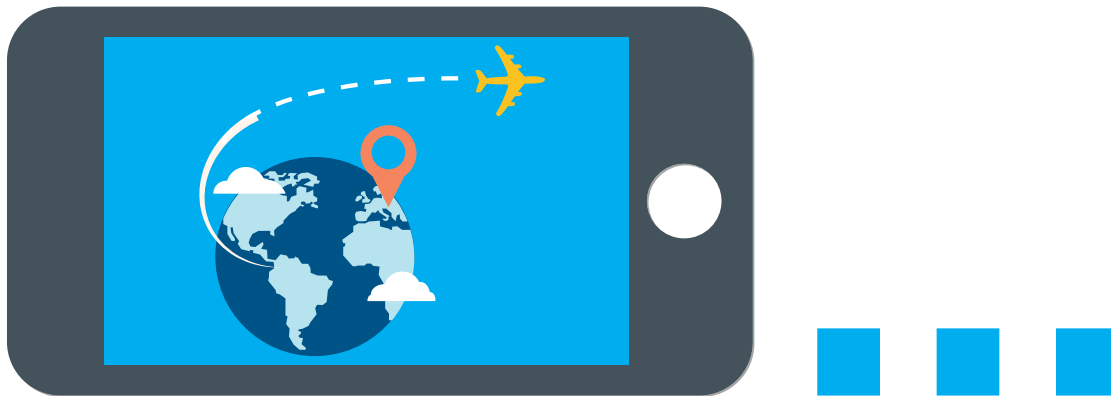
Fig. 4

Virgin America also offers prefilled forms to make it easier and personalize the experience.

Researching & Booking: “I’m having technical issues.”

As travelers are researching and booking their trips, we found that a majority of travelers are frustrated by slow load times and fearful of losing the connection in the middle of the transaction. Brands need to start asking themselves, is my site user friendly and is it designed for performance?

By paying attention to technical issues that may arise on mobile, and updating the user during their experience, brands can eliminate frustration and decrease the number of drop offs on mobile.



Users need feedback on any action. By applying the simple UX elements listed below, you are increasing performance, and decreasing the likelihood of technical issues.

- Use overlays to avoid user drop offs [See Fig. 1]
- Provide timely feedback [e.g. spinners] as an indication that the system is working [See Fig. 2]
- Provide help for questions [See Fig. 3]

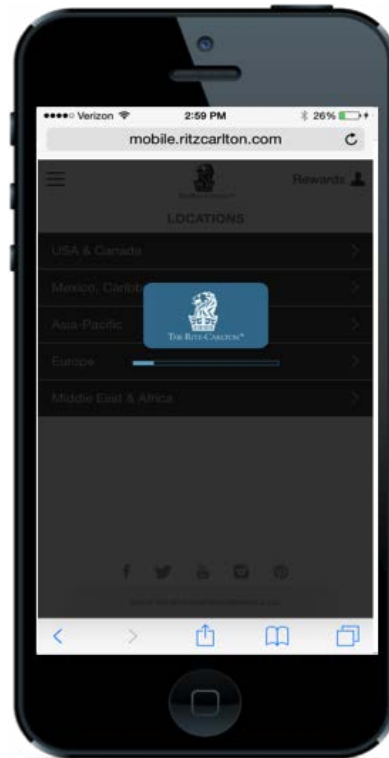


Fig. 1

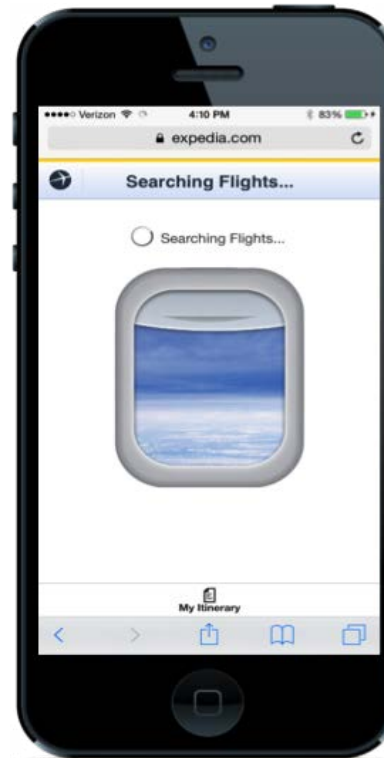


Fig. 2

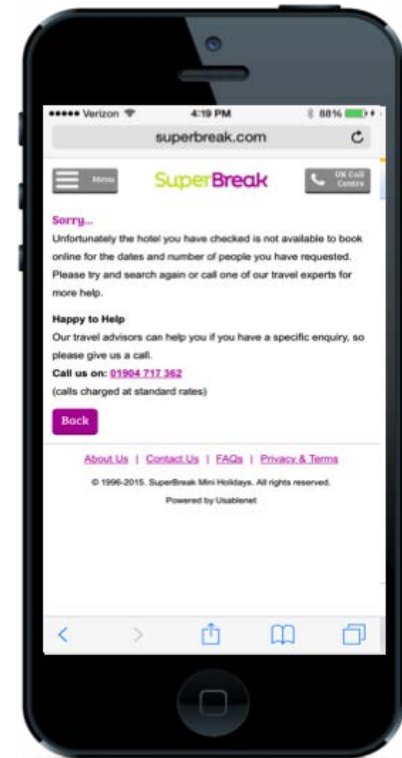


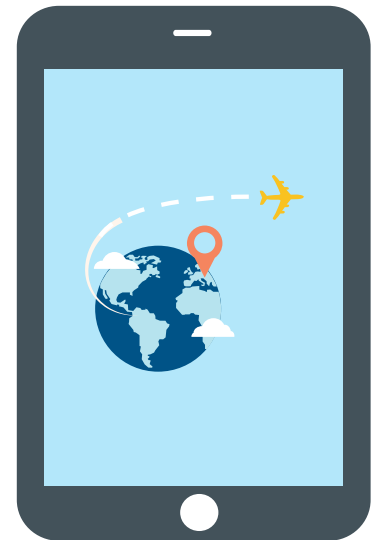
Fig. 3

Traveling & In-destination: “It seems you don’t know me.”

As the trip begins, travelers are apprehensive (Is everything going to go as planned?) and yet filled with anticipation for all the sites and activities that await them. Interestingly, the trip itself is one area of the travel experience where the smartphone clearly trumps the tablet. We found that 75% of travelers do *not* use their tablet while traveling. So given that clear advantage, how can brands leverage the ubiquity of phones?

Because people tend to keep their phones in the same locations (pockets and purses) that they do their keys, functions like mobile check-in and keyless entry are a natural. Yet self-service convenience should never be allowed to replace human interaction; a well-trained staff should support and complement new technologies. User testing through minimum viable products can help to find the right balance and indicate those services that travelers truly wish to be automated.

61%
of travelers value local
information on
a brands mobile site



Once the traveler has arrived, they want to go on an adventure, sightsee, shop, have dinner, and take in the local color. Rather than carry dog-eared guidebooks, or rely on concierges they can't take with them, travelers want to be able to use their mobile phones to aggregate information about the local area and help them plan their days and nights. And when they return to the hotel, they'd like to be able to use the same device to order room service, request housekeeping, and access other amenities. Therefore, opportunities exist to create apps that focus on specific use cases, such as Virtual Concierge, Food & Beverage, Beauty Services, or Banqueting.



WHO'S GETTING IT RIGHT?

Extended Stay America is a hotel focused on meeting the expectations of their savvy, self-sufficient, practical guests. Their app includes an “on property” mode to provide relevant content, in order to increase customer engagement, build brand loyalty and drive sales on mobile.

ESA's mobile app includes local information, such as near by restaurants and bars, that will be valuable both when planning travel at home and itinerary building on-the-go.

[Fig. 1 & 2]

Contextually relevant content works with the device's native functionality (camera, GPS, gyrometer) to provide continually updated information based on where the travelers go (for example, the best nightlife in each city as they get there). Such content should be refreshed frequently to avoid sending guests to restaurants that no longer exist.

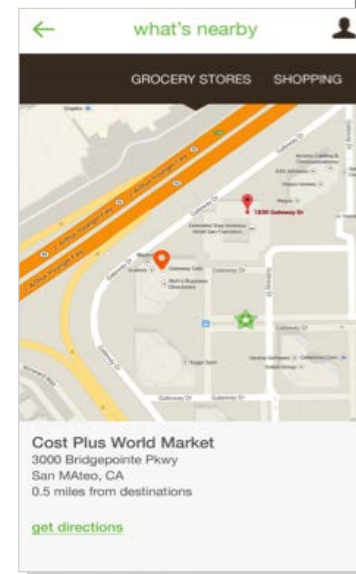


Fig. 1

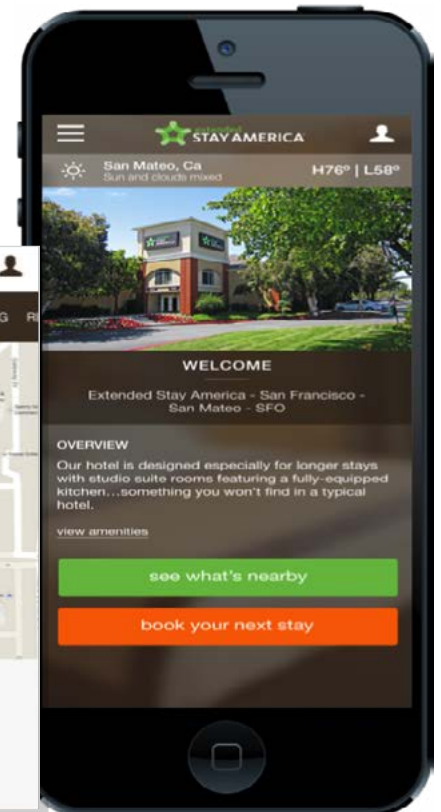


Fig. 2

WHO'S GETTING IT RIGHT?

Ritz Carlton is a luxury hotel chain, operating worldwide. Their app for Apple iPhones and Android smart phone devices, turns a guests' stay into something truly extraordinary. Ritz Carlton improves the digital guest experience, offering a complete set of mobile guest services:

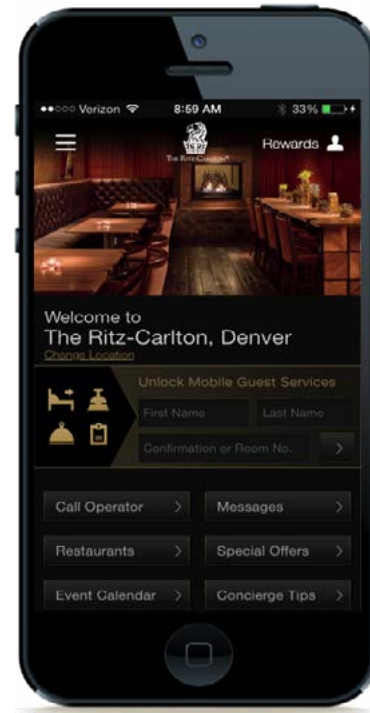


Fig. 1



Fig. 2

- Mobile Check-in
 - Welcoming pre-arrival email
 - SMS notification when room is ready [see Fig. 2]
- Service Requests
 - Order fresh towels and amenities [see Fig. 3]
- In-room Dining
 - Poolside orders delivered to guest location [see Fig. 4]
- Mobile Checkout
 - View folio on mobile [see Fig. 5]

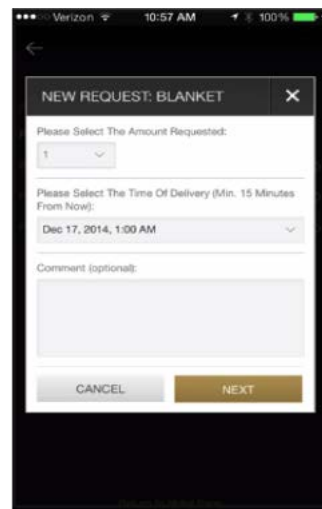


Fig. 3

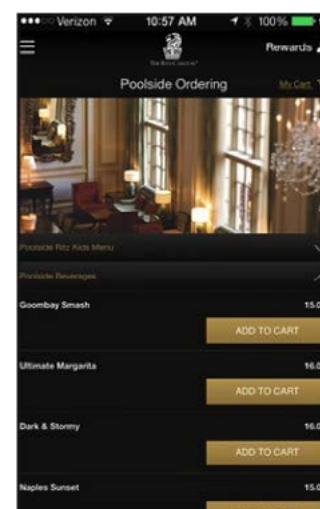


Fig. 4

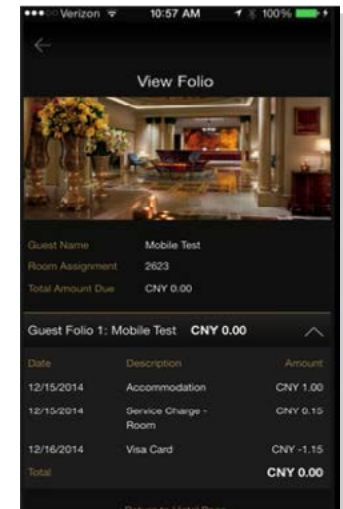


Fig. 5

Post-Trip:

“I don’t feel loyal to you.”

Whether a trip lived up to expectations or not, travelers always return home with stories to tell. But to what extent do they use their smartphones to do that sharing? Not many, we learned. **Fewer than four out of 10 travelers shared the photos they had on their phone on social media.** And nearly all said they would not be inclined to share their travel experience on a brand’s site unless it was convenient or beneficial to them. The opportunity for brands, then, is clear: create an incentive for travelers to share their photos and memories on the brand’s mobile site or social media page.

It’s also clear that loyalty programs are being underleveraged. While majority of travelers collect loyalty points, less than a third are redeeming these points on mobile, which begs the question, why? Brands need to incorporate loyalty into mobile and market it as an extension of their brand. Design your site to let travelers seamlessly access their points, and make it clear that interacting with your brand on mobile is going to be beneficial to them, and their wallets!

Only

38%

of travelers are likely to share on the social media page of the hotel they stayed at



WHO'S GETTING IT RIGHT?

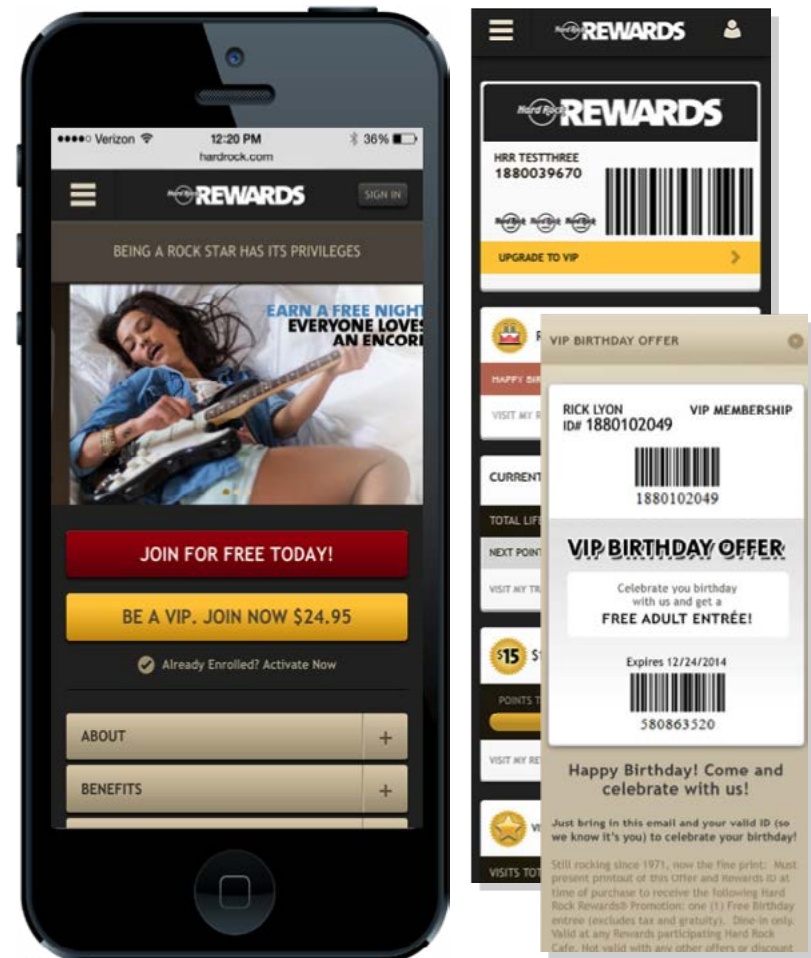


Hard Rock Rewards is a unified guest affinity program developed to recognize and reward Hard Rock's dedicated fans with exclusive privileges when they stay and play at participating Cafes, Rock Shops, Hotels and Casinos worldwide.

All participants gain access to exclusive program benefits, including monthly offers from participating Hard Rock Cafes, Rock Shops, Hotels and Casinos around the world, dedicated check-in lines, late check-outs and complimentary welcome amenities at participating Hotels.

Hard Rock makes enrolling and navigating through Rewards a very seamless process, using simple UX design features like:

- Giving explicit content on Rewards benefits
- Encouraging enrollment and redemption of mobile loyalty
- Giving ability to share products/pages
- Gamification-- earn badges and unlock special access [e.g. back-stage tickets]

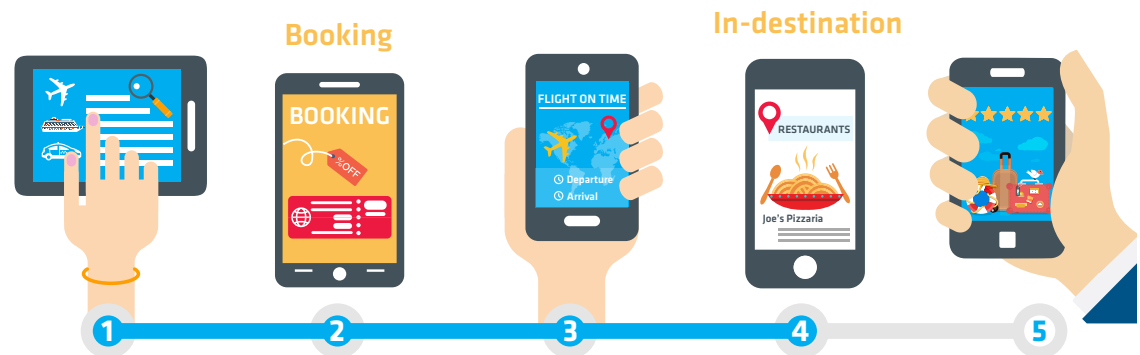


In Summary

From our research, we learned that travelers experience different emotions at every stage of the travel process. While brands are accustomed to understanding a traveler's practical needs and personal preferences, it is also valuable to recognize and respond to the emotional states of their customers. The reason is that when travelers experience a negative emotion, it often prevents or discourages them from completing a transaction. Some of that is caused by the stress of making what could well be quite expensive travel plans, but some of it is because of mobile sites that are underperforming at key junctures of the process.

Analyzing our findings, both the qualitative and the quantitative feedback we received, we found six commonly expressed emotional states that relate to various stages of the travel experience- these are covered in this eBook.

To enable brands to make important improvements to their mobile offerings, we offer actionable recommendations that address each of the concerns. [See next page.>](#)



Actionable Takeaways

- ✓ Invite users to browse and book with compelling visual navigation, and advanced search options
- ✓ Engage travelers with rich visual content.
- ✓ Allow travelers to play and explore destinations and locations while they plan.
- ✓ Prominently display visual security cues throughout the journey
- ✓ Reduce the number of lengthy page loads to improve speed and increase perception of speed
- ✓ Reduce unnecessary pages and forms by including only those fields vital to checkout.

- ✓ Include a clear numbered step indicator throughout core booking stages, so that users maintain a sense of progress.
- ✓ Incorporate location-specific videos and user-generated reviews
- ✓ Leverage loyalty programs to engage your customers

Streamlined, efficient and agile mobile experiences that enable travelers to accomplish their required goals make for the most satisfying user experiences. Improving the user experience of your mobile offerings improves the travel experience of your guests and helps to ensure repeat business. Don't let their last vacation be their last vacation with you.



**View a checklist of these
UX actions here**





Usablenet is a global mobile technology company. Our powerful platform enables leading companies in all sectors to create compelling experiences for their customers on smartphones, tablets, kiosks and in mobile apps. Usablenet customers include Marks & Spencer, ASOS, JCrew, CVS Health, FedEx, Dell, JetBlue and The Ritz Carlton. Founded in 2000, Usablenet is a private company headquartered in New York City with offices in Los Angeles, Italy and London.

Visit our website
www.usablenet.com
and follow us on
Twitter [@Usablenet](https://twitter.com/Usablenet).



New York

142 West 57th Street, 7th Floor,
New York, NY 10019
Phone: 1 212 965 5388

London

11A Curtain Road,
London EC2A 3LT.
Phone: 0203 617 3200

www.usablenet.com