



Sojern's Hotel Insights Report, 2018:

Impress Early to Never Miss a Booking



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With the end of the year quickly approaching, hotel marketers are busy not only planning for holiday travelers, but they are also strategizing initiatives to target the right travelers at the right time—increasing their direct bookings and overall return on ad spend (ROAS).

In order to arm hoteliers with insights needed for their advertising strategies, we looked at our unique data set of 350 million global traveler profiles—including billions of search and booking signals from our partners across the industry.

Our latest hotel insights research report offers an in-depth view of how travelers are moving through the increasingly complex path to purchase.

In this report, we uncover:

- The need to reach and influence travelers earlier along their path to purchase.
- Why mobile is changing the advertising landscape for hoteliers.
- How to increase bookings through real-time campaign management.

With these learnings, travel brands and hoteliers can develop strategic campaigns that find and convert travelers with the right message, in the right place, at the right time.

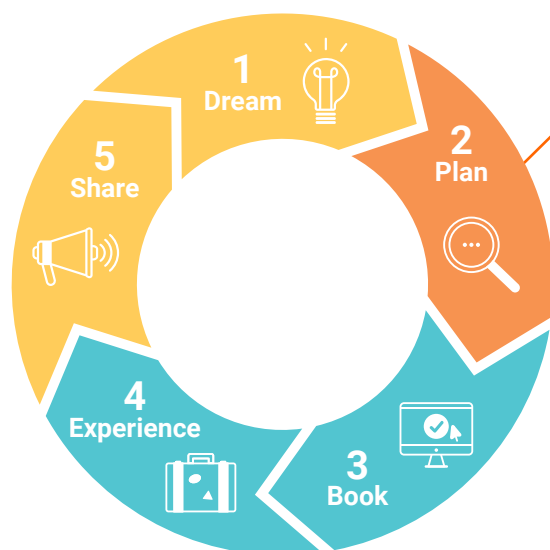
The Need to Reach Travelers Earlier During Their Path to Purchase

Every traveler's exact path to purchase can be varied and complex. But the road from dream to destination remains the same for each traveler—dream, plan, book, experience, and share.

When advertising to in-market travelers, marketers tend to target travelers in the planning stage when they are ready to book their trip, not high up in the funnel when they are only dreaming of their next adventure. However, Sojern's recent research shows that this is not the best tactic.

By the time travelers are ready to book their trip, they have already narrowed down their list of potential hotels to only a small set of brands. In fact, **by the time travelers are actively in market to book, they are considering an average of only 1.5 hotel brands within their online searches, and only 32% of hotel planners consider three or more brands when searching online.**¹

Cycle of Path to Purchase



68%
of hotel searchers
consider one or
two brands during
the planning stage.

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So, what can hoteliers do to reach travelers earlier in the cycle—
influencing them to consider
their hotel before they narrow
down their choices?

¹ Sojern Internal Data, US IP, Apr 2018

The Need to Reach Travelers Earlier During Their Path to Purchase

Inspire Travelers During the Dreaming Stage

During the dreaming stage, travelers are starting to explore building their perfect trip by looking for inspiration about which destinations, hotel brands, and even activities they should consider for an ideal experience—they still haven't made up their minds, making them brand and destination agnostic. Anticipating the needs of your consumer as they're looking for inspiration can help make sure that ***your brand*** is on their booking short list.

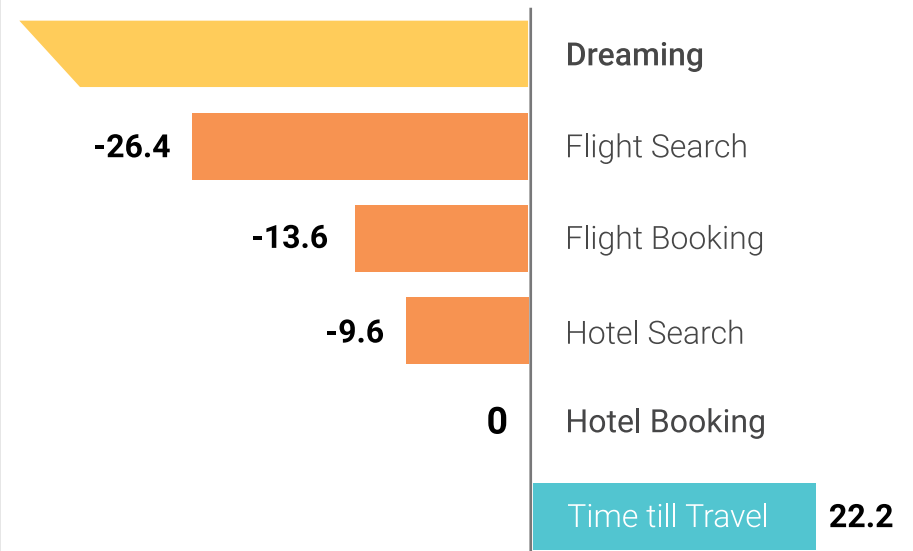
To gain a deeper understanding of how consumers start planning and booking their trips, we first looked specifically at US travelers planning for domestic summer trips (June - August) when searching and booking both flight and hotel. According to Google's data, travelers began planning earlier than one would expect. **Six in ten people considering a summer trip were already conducting some type of research in February.**²

During the dreaming stage, travelers are brand and destination agnostic. Become a part of their travel dreams by providing inspiration early along their path to purchase.

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According to Sojern's data set of an average summer trip in the US, a **traveler begins searching on travel sites about 49 days from their date of travel**, and they begin searching for their flight about 26 days before booking their hotel. For hotel bookings, travelers search about 10 days before booking their hotel and 30 days before travel.

Average Days Between Event and Hotel Booking



² Think with Google, April 2017



As travelers narrow down their options and plan their trips, it's important that hotel marketers have a strong strategy for intercepting travelers—**raising consideration in the dreaming stage to ensure they're in the running at booking.**

The Need to Reach Travelers Earlier During Their Path to Purchase

3 Ways to Inspire the Dream

1. Go Beyond Your Branded Keywords

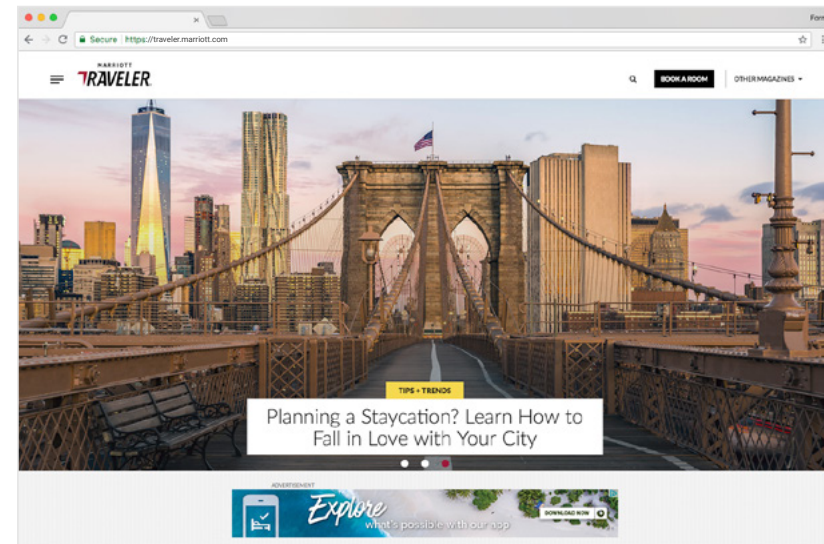
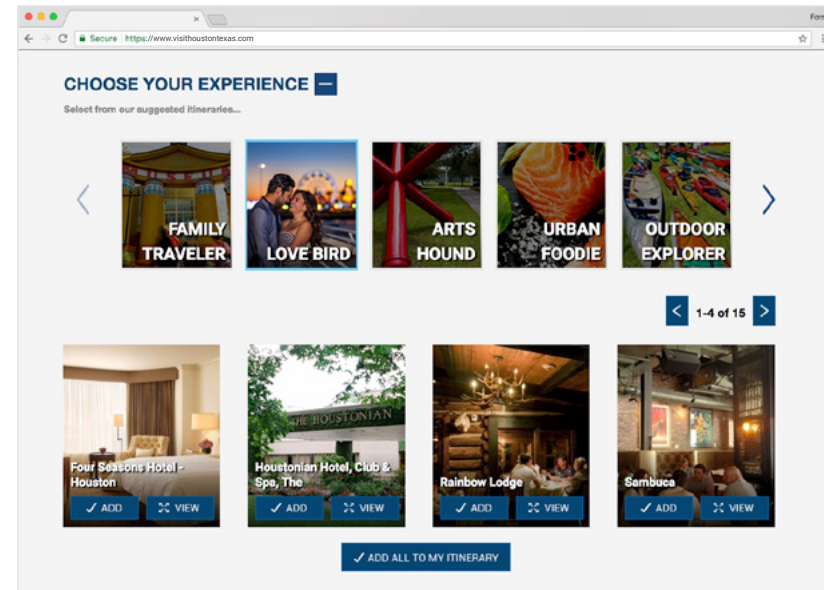
Inspire the dream by adding keywords to your SEO strategy that are not brand specific. Think about how people search while they are dreaming about where to go and what to do. Many people will start searching for generic terms, such as “best time to visit” a location or “best place to travel solo” or “top honeymoon vacation spots.” By crafting content that helps the traveler explore the area or activity, you can make sure that your brand becomes top of mind when it is time to book their final plans.


2. Leverage Local DMOs

Many travelers start looking for inspiration by looking for experience or activity packages based on their travel destination. For example, say someone in Texas is looking for a romantic Valentine’s Day trip close to home, they may search “Houston Romantic Getaway” and land on [Visit Houston](#)’s romantic “Love Bird” package offerings. Since the package is already tailored to the traveler’s desires, hotels can make sure that they are within the traveler’s booking consideration set.

3. Create Your Own Inspiration Website

In 2015, Marriot launched their own editorial website, [Marriott Traveler](#), in order to provide travelers with meaningful travel destination content and information. Their editorial site covers a wide variety of topics from [packing tips](#) to key places to level up your next [Hawaiian adventure](#). The site not only captures travelers while they are dreaming, but Marriot backlinks to its booking site for direct booking conversions.





“We are focused on producing engaging and informative content created for the way people research and purchase travel online. Launching Marriott Traveler, expands the value our website brings to consumers, particularly younger business and leisure travelers who want to experience something unique during their travels and share their adventures with their social networks.³

Andy Kauffman

Senior Vice President,
Global Marketing Optimization,
Marriott International

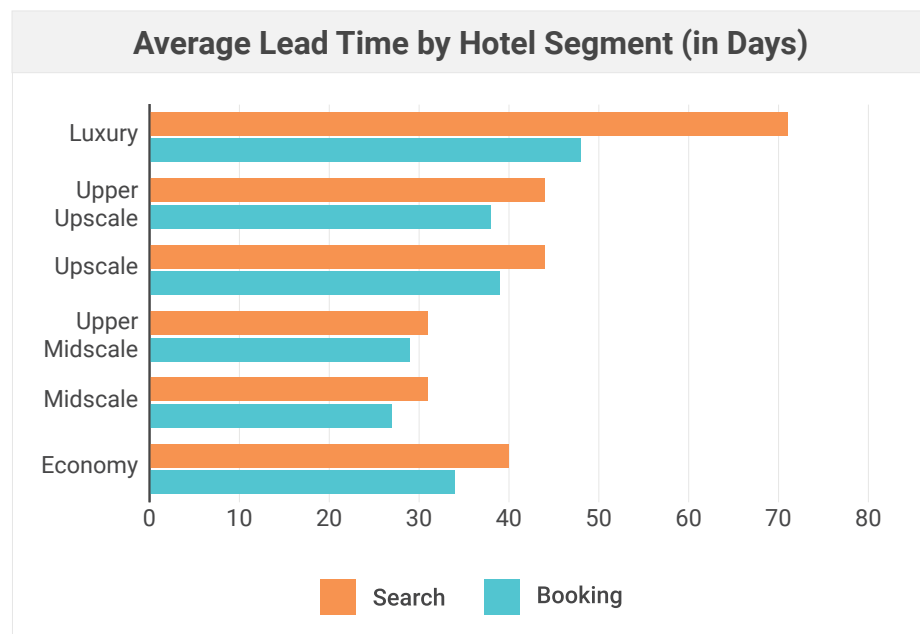
³ <http://news.marriott.com/2015/03/marriott-traveler-a-new-travel-and-lifestyle-publication-featuring-destination-content-launches-at-traveler-marriott-com/>

The Need to Reach Travelers Earlier During Their Path to Purchase

Booking Lead Time by Hotel Segment

All hotel segments have a huge opportunity to provide inspiration to travelers during the dreaming stage, before brand considerations begin to narrow. Once a hotelier has identified an audience of travelers likely to book lodging within their local market—for example, travelers who’ve booked a specific Origin / Destination pair for certain flight dates but not yet booked a hotel—brands should continue to engage these travelers further through the planning stage. Recommended tactics include targeting those who abandoned their cart or those who are looking for competitive options.

One notable caveat to point out: when travelers are searching for luxury hotels, the average time gap between search and booking is considerably larger, meaning higher-end travelers are putting more research into selecting the best possible lodging experience. This gives luxury hotels and resorts a longer opportunity to provide the traveler inspiration and capture their interest in **both** the dreaming and the planning stage.



The date range covers a full year, from August 2017 - July 2018. A mobile device is categorized as a mobile or tablet with full browsers (no app). Segment follow the [STR segmentation of hotels](#).

4 <https://www.sojern.com/blog/using-instagram-to-help-launch-a-new-boutique-hotel/>

“Successful [Instagram] accounts know that advertising is not the key to engaging followers. The personality is displayed, and then in the personality there are things that can be marketed—which is happening with The Wink, and it’s what we’ve wanted from the beginning.”⁴

Kris Carlson

General Manager, The Wink

[See how The Wink inspires travelers to dream using Instagram.](#)



Why Mobile Matters for Hotels

Mobile plays an increasingly significant part during a traveler's dreaming, planning, and booking stages. In fact, **mobile travel searches made on travel sites are increasing at a faster rate than desktop searches, growing 43% faster YOY.**⁵ And eMarketer predicts that by 2021, mobile will represent nearly half of all digital travel sales.⁶

In order to make sure that your hotel is in a traveler's consideration set, hoteliers need to place mobile first in their marketing strategy—providing inspirational content that can be easily viewed on mobile devices as travelers dream of their next trip.

“Hotels historically prioritized seasonal marketing campaigns to drive bookings during peak season. But in today's highly-connected and mobile-first world, travelers are dreaming about destinations far earlier than ever before, and it changes how they book. Today, an always-on, mobile-friendly approach to marketing is key.

Kurt Weinsheimer
SVP of Property
Solutions of Sojern

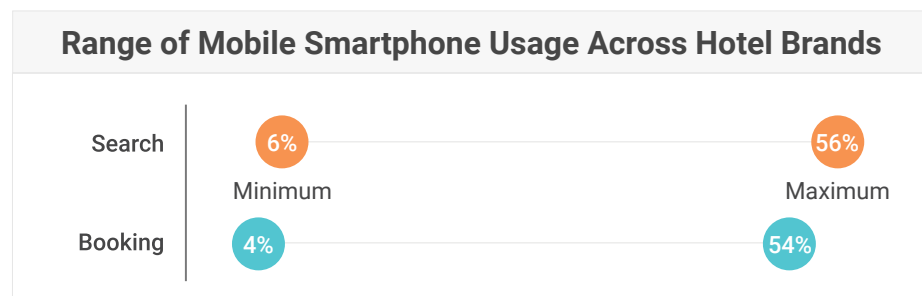
⁵ Sojern Internal Data, US IP, Apr 2018

⁶ <https://www.emarketer.com/Article/Mobile-Drives-Growth-of-Online-Travel-Bookings/1016053>

Why Mobile Matters for Hotels

Smartphone Hotel Search and Booking Usage

To understand how travelers use their smartphones* when searching for hotels, we looked at overall device usage across hotel brands.

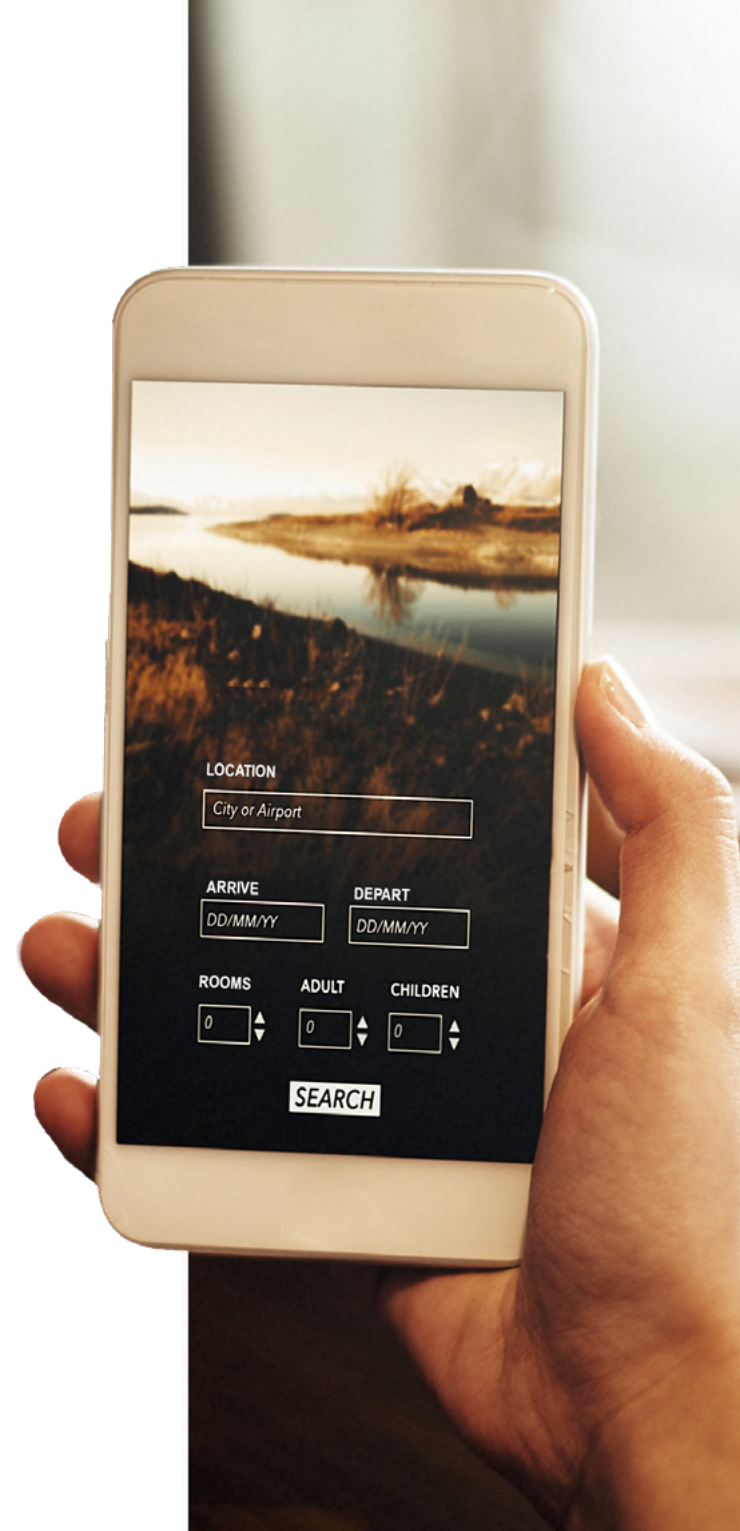


The date range covers the first half of 2018 from Jan - June 2018.

Our data explains that the share of smartphone usage for mobile search and booking can vary greatly across hotel brands.

There are many factors that play into this, from hotel segment to the ease and speed of the mobile site—how long your site loads on mobile devices can greatly affect the performance of your site. In fact, according to Google, **53% of mobile site visitors leave a page that takes longer than three seconds to load**, so make sure your site is ready to capture and convert those travelers.⁷

Brands that have well-performing sites and fast mobile speeds tend to garner a higher share of mobile usage.



⁷ Jaclyn Loo. May 2017. Travel Planning and Purchasing Has Evolved on Mobile.

* A mobile smartphone is categorized as a mobile smartphone device with full browsers (no app).

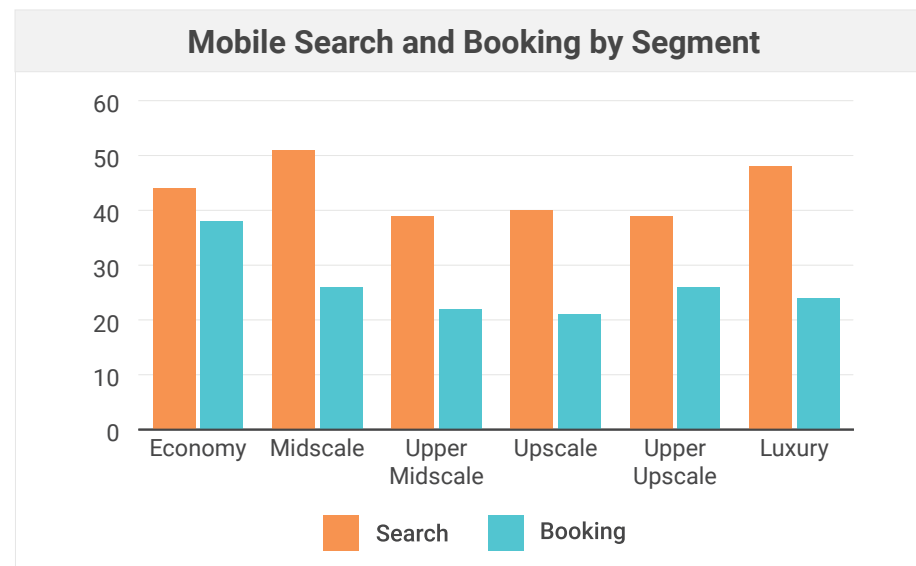


Why Mobile Matters for Hotels

Mobile Device Usage by Hotel Segment

When travelers are dreaming of their next trip, they are looking for inspiration using their mobile devices. And, that couldn't be more to the point when it comes to dreaming about a stay at a luxury hotel.

Generally speaking, the more economical the segment, the higher the rate of interactions are seen on a mobile device or devices. Though, luxury segments also see high rates of mobile interaction in search. This may be fueled by travelers who are dreaming about luxury vacations for longer periods of time—using their mobile devices to find inspiration at a higher stage of the purchase funnel. When it comes to bookings however, economy hotels lead in the share of mobile bookings. This may be based on the level of trust consumers feel about mobile transactions—the higher the dollar amount, the more likely they are to book on desktop.



The date range covers a full year, from August 2017 - July 2018. A mobile device is categorized as a mobile or tablet with full browsers (no app). Segment follow the [STR segmentation of hotels](#).

Why Mobile Matters for Hotels

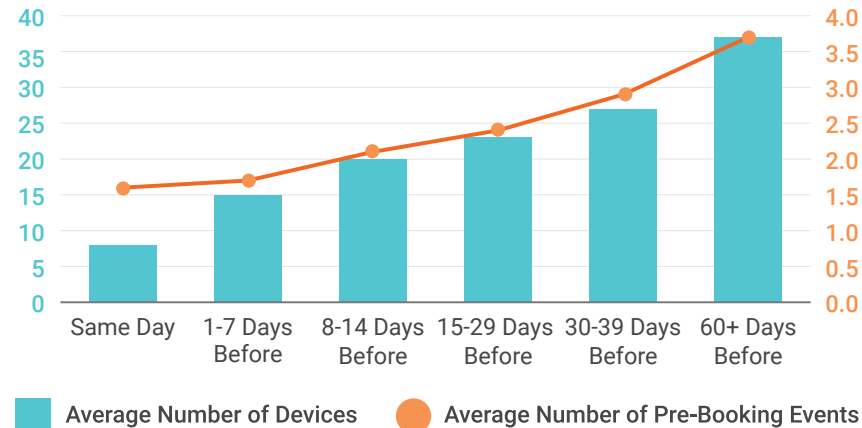
Number of Devices Used Over Time for Hotel Booking Research

Today, many of us own multiple devices and research multiple websites and apps before making a travel booking. And, considering that there is [no average traveler path to purchase](#), we wanted to see what the data could tell us just how many devices travelers used, depending on the length of time between searching and booking.

The results are not surprising—the more lead time between search to book is usually associated with more search queries on more devices.

Our data confirms that we are in a multi-device world! Even shoppers, guests, or potential guests that start searching for hotels on the day of booking use more than one device on average. One key thing to remember is that **the longer people search, the more devices they use.**

Number of Pre-Booking Events vs. Number of Devices Used



The data is for hotel bookings made in the US during Jan-Jul 2018. Pre booking events are “hard” events, i.e. searches or bookings—not mere homepage visits. Devices defined as unique mobile device IDs and unique “useragents”. Useragents are a proxy for web devices as they are browser - rather than device specific.

Even when searching and booking a hotel on the same day, travelers use 1.5+ devices.

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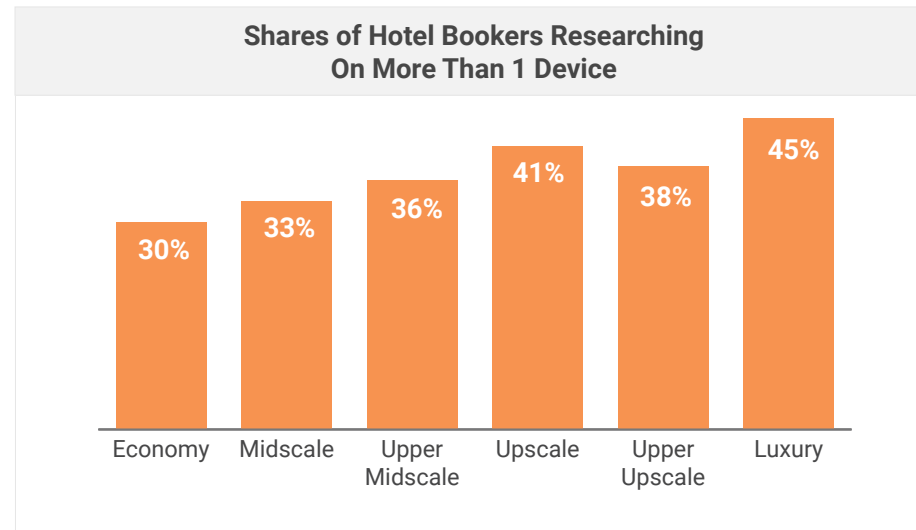


Why Mobile Matters for Hotels

Number of Devices Used For Bookings by Hotel Segments

With the multi-device data, we wanted to understand how many devices travelers used to book across each hotel segment.

Researching and booking on a single device is the norm for 63% of hotel bookers. Single device user journeys are more often to be found with those booking economy than for those booking luxury. This data is not surprising—considering that travelers will dream and plan for higher price point luxury hotel stays far longer than they will for economy hotels. When booking luxury hotels, 45% use multiple devices.



The Need For Real-Time Campaign Management and Engagement

Let's take a moment to look at one anonymous traveler's path to purchase for an overnight stay for two in Orlando, FL. In little more than a day, this traveler looked at six different hotels with more than 30 different searches.

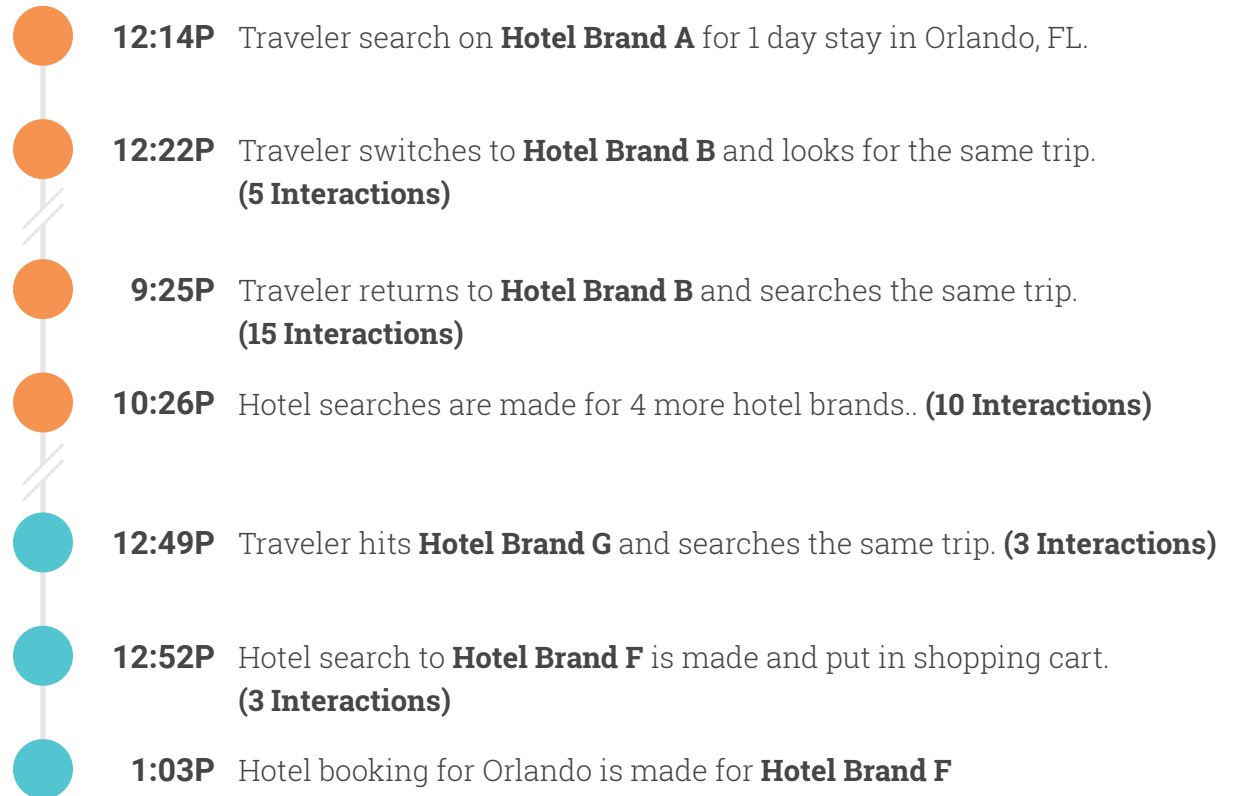
During lunch, they started out with only two brands in their consideration set.

Then, they picked up the search later on that night—adding four more brands to their search.

They again picked up the search in the morning by adding one additional brand—ultimately, booking with the last brand they searched.

Example Traveler Search Pattern

25 hrs, 49 mins





The Need For Real-Time Campaign Management and Engagement

So what could have brand A done differently to win this traveler's business?

Brand A missed out on the traveler's business since they did not have a complete picture of the traveler's searching behavior in real time. By monitoring search intent in real-time throughout a campaign across not only their own website, but across all search channels, Brand A would have seen the traveler searching additional brands and would have been able to retarget the traveler to bring them back to Brand A's booking engine.

This is where Sojern comes in to provide invaluable insights and unique solutions for hoteliers. Our platform leverages proprietary data partnerships with OTAs, meta search engines, airlines, hotel chains, and tourism boards—along with specialized algorithms and machine learning—to give hotel marketers a more complete view of a traveler's search and booking behavior across the spectrum of competitive travel brands and aggregators.



Don't Lose Out on a Competitive Booking Opportunity

There is no average traveler. With today's complex and varied traveler path to purchase, it is more important than ever that hoteliers provide inspiration earlier in the funnel in order to gain awareness before a traveler limits their consideration set.

Inspire the Dream

The dreaming stage is a continual process for many travelers. Reaching them as they dream ensures you'll be top of mind as they move to the planning stage and that your brand reaches their initial, and final, consideration set.

Putting Mobile First

As mobile is (and continues to grow as) the device that assists travelers while in their dreaming stage, your campaigns can't live only on desktops.

Advantages of Real-Time Monitoring

Increase booking opportunities with the power of data! With Sojern's comprehensive audience network hotel marketers can gain a complete view of a traveler's search and booking behavior in real time.

Get a Complete View in Real-Time.

CONTACT SOJERN TODAY! ►





About Sojern

Built on a decade of expertise analyzing the complete traveler path to purchase, Sojern drives travelers from dream to destination. The company delivered \$13B in bookings for its clients to date by activating multi-channel branding and performance solutions on the Sojern Traveler Platform.

Recognized on the Top Company Cultures list by Entrepreneur Magazine, Sojern is headquartered in San Francisco, with teams based in Berlin, Dubai, Dublin, Hong Kong, Istanbul, London, Mexico City, New York, Omaha, Paris, Singapore, and Sydney.

www.sojern.com

Research Methodology

Sojern's reports are based on the rigorous analysis of more than a billion traveler intent data points obtained through Sojern's unique partnerships with some of the world's largest renowned travel brands. Hotel brand segments are defined and based on Smith Travel Research (STR) chain scale segments.

