



THE TRAVELER'S

JOURNEY

2.0



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THE TRAVELER'S JOURNEY



In the daily operations of your hotel, you know that there are many ways travelers find your property, from traditional billboards and print advertising to the newer digital options including websites and OTAs. While it's true some travelers still make hotel decisions based on the nearest exit when they can't drive any more or based on where they can get the best last-minute deal, many others turn online to really scrutinize this decision.

Today, travelers have many touchpoints with hotels from the moment they decide to travel until after they've already returned home, and the traveler's journey is constantly evolving.

A well-rounded hotel marketing plan will not only target those who come in almost by chance, but also will help you get chosen when travelers are planning their trips weeks or months in advance. In order to do this, your hotel needs to be findable every step of the way on the traveler's road to decision and engage with the traveler during and after their stay.

There are four main points in the traveler's journey: interest, intent, interaction and insight. Here we'll explain each of these steps and the best way for you to engage with them along the way.



YOUR HOTEL NEEDS TO BE
FINDABLE EVERY STEP OF
THE WAY ON THE TRAVELER'S
ROAD TO **DECISION**.

A young couple is sitting at a wooden table in a cafe. The woman, on the left, is holding a black smartphone and looking at it with a smile. The man, on the right, is leaning in and pointing at the screen. They are both wearing denim shirts. In the foreground, there is a white coffee cup on a saucer. The background is slightly blurred, showing some greenery.

PHASE 1

INTEREST

PHASE 1

INTEREST



The beginning of the traveler's journey comes, of course, when a person makes the decision to travel. Whether for business, a family event, or a spur-of-the-moment weekend away, the decision to get a hotel room can happen hours, days, weeks, or months ahead of the actual stay. Regardless of the motivation, the interest stage is when a traveler starts weighing their options. Those at the interest stage are finding inspiration with broad searches and by perusing social media.

MOBILE SEARCH

You're on your phone all the time – such as while you're watching TV, in line at the grocery store, or in a waiting room. Inspiration to travel can strike at any time, and when it does, people are turning their phones to begin the search. A study by Adobe found that **81%** of people researched travel destinations on a mobile device,¹ which isn't really surprising when you consider that **76%** of U.S. traveler respondents said that understanding all options is an important factor when booking a trip.²

During the interest phase, future travelers aren't tied to a specific brand or destination and are open to suggestions. In 2015, **38%** of non-branded searches (such as "hotels in [city]") took place on a mobile device.³ Along with these broad searches, mobile users are turning to their connections on social media.

SOCIAL MEDIA

When travelers are choosing their destination, they find information on social media. **87%** of people under 34 consult Facebook for travel inspiration,⁴ and **52%** of Facebook users report that their friends' photos inspired their travel plans.⁵ These networks can have a huge impact on influencing choices – of those who used Facebook and Instagram to research travel, only **48%** stuck with their original hotel plans.⁶

Travelers are also influenced by social media outside of their immediate network of family and friends, instead turning to visual platforms to get inspired. **16%** of active Pinterest users and **28%** of daily Pinterest users say that Pinterest is their go-to source for travel information.⁷ Travel is one of the fastest growing categories of brand engagement on Instagram, and users love to search hashtags and geotags to find the best things to do in a location. **Your hotel needs to be on social media to engage during this crucial part of the traveler's journey.**



PHASE 2

INTENT

PHASE 2

INTENT



Once the destination has been chosen and the dates are set, the next step is to put the plan in motion by choosing a hotel. The intent stage is influenced by on-the-go availability of information, suggestions from friends, and input from past travelers.

MOBILE BOOKING

In the past, travel choices were often searched on a mobile device and later booked on a PC. While this is still true for many travelers, mobile booking is on the rise. In 2015, more than **20%** of online hotel bookings were generated on tablets and smartphones, **35%** of call-in bookings were generated from mobile websites,⁸ and conversion rates grew **88%** on mobile travel sites.³ The frequency of booking on smartphones and tablets is even higher for those who are regular mobile consumers, of which **68%** have booked a hotel on mobile.¹

Travelers want to have all the information they need to make a decision at their fingertips, and if they can't find it for your hotel, they'll choose your competition. According to Google,⁹ **40%** of travel and retail website visitors will abandon the site after three seconds if it doesn't load – and **40%** of those who leave won't return. **Not only do you need to be visible online, but you also need to be optimized for mobile devices to make the sale.**

ONLINE REVIEWS

According to TripAdvisor, the top three decision-making factors when booking accommodations are price, ratings on a review site, and online reviews and posts, with **86%** of travelers reporting that reviews are important.¹⁰ While price is most important, one study¹¹ found that **76%** of travelers would pay more for a hotel with a higher review score. When faced with hotels at the same nightly rate, **60%** chose the hotel with the highest review score.

Although travelers are influenced to book based on price, reviews, and their social media input, there is one factor hoteliers used to rely on for bookings that is missing: brand loyalty. Today, only about half of travelers are members of a brand loyalty program, and just **22%** of travelers said that they care whether a particular hotel brand is offered.² As travelers become more discerning and focus on the best value for their budget, hotels must manage their reputation by monitoring guest feedback, responding to reviews quickly and actively requesting positive reviews from satisfied guests.



INTERACTION

PHASE 3

PHASE 3

INTERACTION

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The contact between brands and consumers doesn't stop when the trip is booked. Travelers are always connected and use social media when they're on vacation to share what they're doing, look for restaurant and attraction recommendations, and to get customer service help.

SHARING

As previously mentioned, photos shared on Facebook and Instagram can have a huge impact on future travelers. How much content is being generated while guests stay at your hotel? The short answer: a lot. You may be surprised to hear that **76%** of travelers post photos to social networks. One survey found that of those that share travel experiences on social media, **94%** of respondents would chronicle their trips on Facebook, **45%** on Instagram, and **25%** on Twitter. Plus, almost half said they would post multiple times a day, boosting the volume of guest-generated content that could be influencing future travelers.⁶

SOURCING

According to Google, mobile searches from hotel properties grew by **49%** in 2015, and many of these searches included the phrase "near me."³ Hotel guests are increasingly forgoing asking the front desk for recommendations, instead seeking out the "best breakfast near me" or "places open late near me" so they can compare reviews on websites like Yelp, TripAdvisor, and Google and feel confident that they are having the best possible experience in their new location. These location-based searches are influential in guiding travel behaviors.

SERVICE

Long gone are the days of waiting on hold for a customer service rep when things aren't going according to plan. Today's consumers are turning to social media for help and are expecting you to respond and respond quickly. When a customer complains on Twitter, **42%** of consumers expect a brand to respond within one hour.¹² If a company doesn't respond to a question within a week, **50%** of consumers will stop doing business with them entirely.¹³ **Monitoring your social media accounts in real-time is vital to helping today's consumers and keeping them as customers.**



PHASE 4

INSIGHT

PHASE 4 INSIGHT



The final step of the traveler's journey takes place when they've already left your property. From the moment a guest exits your property to weeks after their stay, they are still experiencing their vacation. Whether they finally are looking through and posting vacation photos, following your social media accounts, or leaving reviews about their experiences, the impact of a vacation lasts long after check out. By analyzing what is being said online about your hotel following a stay, you can better respond and encourage future travelers.

TRACK

Most travelers find reviews important, and they're making this apparent in how many they're writing. In 2013, TripAdvisor experienced a **50%** growth in reviews year-over-year, which came to about 90 reviews submitted every minute.¹⁴ With this kind of an influx on one website alone, it can be easy to miss a review. You can sign up with TripAdvisor to receive notifications when a new review is posted for your business; however, this is just a slice of the pie. Using a review monitoring product will allow you to receive notifications and monitor reviews for a variety of websites where guests leave hotel reviews like Yelp, Expedia, Google, social media websites and more.

SENTIMENT ANALYSIS

The number of stars in a review is more than meets the eye. Sentiment analysis services allow you to see what's really going on at your property. If you're able to categorize your reviews into common themes, you can see where there's room for improvement and get an idea of what travelers reading the reviews of your property are seeing.

Identifying negative trends also helps to determine reviews that require a response. If a guest overall had a good stay and left you a 4-star review, you may not notice that they mentioned that they didn't enjoy the breakfast. Advanced sentiment analysis will allow you to address these issues.

RESPOND

Travelers want to see that you're concerned with your guests' experiences. In fact, **78%** say that managers that respond to reviews (good and bad) care more about their customers. However, responding isn't just about showing that you care – it's good for business, too. **65%** of travelers are more likely to book a hotel that responds to traveler reviews,¹⁵ and hotels that responded to over **50%** of reviews grew occupancy rates by **6.4%**.¹⁶ **By responding to both positive and negative reviews, you can attempt to influence a guest into becoming a return guest and give confidence to readers that are considering your property.**

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES



Although one traveler's journey ended, your job continues. The traveler's journey is cyclical. As each guest moves from interest to intent, interaction to insight, you can leverage digital marketing to have a positive impact on their stay and the experience of future guests as well. As soon as this guest checks out, the cycle starts again as a new traveler will be either positively or negatively influenced by the experience of this guest. The process of optimizing your digital marketing for mobile and social users may seem overwhelming, but now you know where to begin.

First, it is important to keep in mind the cyclical nature of the traveler's journey. The enhancements that you make in one phase will result in compounded increases in other phases. With the right partners and strategy it is very easy to make all of these phases work for you with little heavy lifting on your part. There are enough things for today's hotelier to master and stay on top of, and becoming a full time reactive marketer shouldn't be one of them.

With tools that span and impact the entire traveler's journey, Travel Media Group has the ability to engage your guests and enhance your marketing strategy to drive bottom line revenue and let you get back to what you do best - hospitality.



THE **ENHANCEMENTS** THAT
YOU MAKE IN ONE PHASE
WILL RESULT IN
COMPOUNDED INCREASES
IN OTHER PHASES.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP



At Travel Media Group, we know that the traveler's journey never truly ends, and we want to help you at each step of the way. With reputation management solutions, social media tools, mobile-friendly websites, online listings, and more, we make sure that your hotel is engaged for every step of the traveler's journey.

Learn how we can help you earn more and better reviews online, boost your social media following, and optimize your online presence with our comprehensive suite of hotel marketing tools. Custom packages give you all the services you need and none that you don't. Plus, you and your team will be trained by a dedicated client support specialist who can help you get the most out of your products every step of the way.

Partner with Travel Media Group and help your property be found and get chosen online!

Contact us today at **888.855.2590**

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