

DIRECT BOOKING
SUMMIT

14th - 15th March 2023

DIRECT BOOKING SUMMIT: APAC

KEY LEARNINGS

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What you stand to lose to OTA's if direct bookings are not your first priority in 2023

Michael Belanger, VP of Commercial Strategy, GCP Hospitality
Dan Mourad, General Manager APAC, Triptease

- With over 70% of hotel bookings in Asia being driven by OTAs, there's clearly work to be done in reducing the reliance on OTAs and better using them to your advantage. But with OTAs carrying a lot of weight in terms of distribution of bookings, it can be difficult to convince your boss that driving bookings away from OTAs and instead through your direct channels is worth the investment.
- Asia differs to the rest of the world with a wholesaler prevalence that isn't seen in the rest of the world and as a result, sees significant problems with rate leakage. So the way we have to look at it is shifting bookings first from wholesalers to OTAs, and then to direct. This not only helps to solve rate parity issues but also drives direct bookings effectively.
- GCP Hospitality wasn't initially focussed on direct bookings and it took them time to balance the use of OTAs with direct business, and to demonstrate the benefits of direct bookings to the leadership team. They did this by speaking the same language as their leadership team through aligning with their incentives and KPIs. The typical metrics impacted by direct bookings are gross operating profit (GOP) and revenue generated index (RGI), length of stay, return on advertising spend (ROAS), staffing, upsell, loyalty and guest satisfaction.
- From 2020 until 2022, GCP Hospitality were able to increase their direct distribution contribution from 10% to 25%, GOP margin was up by 0.32%, length of stay increased by 2% and ROAS improved by 8%. Had this business come through OTAs they would have lost US\$100,000 in profit from commission alone.
- Michael recommends to start shifting your mix to direct by tackling your wholesaler contracts, understanding each of your OTAs and how you can leverage them, stop member's rates and fix your parity.
- Use OTA data to your advantage. If you're seeing a booking window of 31-60 days - do you have something on your direct site to encourage longer lead time? Expedia also tells you which hotel's you're losing business to - look at this regularly and adapt your information to drive your strategy.



The state of the industry 2023

Pimpawee Nopakitgumjorn, Business Development Manager of Thailand, OTA INSIGHT

- In 2023 the importance of search data or pre-booking data is more important than ever to better forecast demand. In the past, hotels used post-booking data (number of booked reservations, repeat events and historical performance) to forecast. But in a post-Covid world your customer profile is unknown and historical performance is not entirely reliable.
- Year-on-year flight searches are up 31% globally and 90% in the APAC region. The top cities who have increased flight and hotel searches are Guangzhou, Taipei, Macau, Tokyo and Hong Kong.
- China is starting to travel again and they're also paying more than pre-Covid levels.
- If your destination was on the pre-Covid China travel list but not on the new list of destinations above, what are you doing to encourage Chinese travellers to come to your location? You could welcome them back with an email advertising a special rate.
- As of December 2022, Average Daily Rates (ADRs) for all locations analysed (Bangkok, Seoul, Shanghai, Singapore, Sydney and Tokyo) are back to positive numbers compared to 2019.
- Traveller confidence has also increased. Analysis of metasearch lead times shows that from December 2022 to March 2023, there's been a 13% point increase in people booking more than 90 days in advance.
- Your pricing and promotion strategies have to change with the times too. Hotels must move past the days of just wanting heads in beds.
- Length of stay discounts can be key to capturing extra demand. Make sure you're offering length of stay discounts in line with guest preferences, but use data and be selective - look at how many guests are staying and how many nights they've booked. In Sydney for example, 22% of hotels offer a special rate to guests who stay more than three nights. If you're not doing something similar you're probably losing out to your competitors.
- Offering discounts to customers on mobile is an opportunity that not many APAC hoteliers are taking full advantage of yet, but it is starting to have regional traction.
- Look at your rate flexibility. There has been an increase in hotels offering non-refundable rates.
- The world has changed, travel has changed, booking behaviour has changed and hotels have changed. The focus should now be on
 - Rising consumer confidence and spending power
 - Incoming rebound markets (e.g. China)
 - Changing pricing and promotion strategies



Capitalizing on guests' changing digital habits to boost direct bookings

Chetan Patel, Vice President, Marketing, Dusit Hotels and Resorts

- **Personalisation is an industry wide issue.** When you go to Netflix, YouTube and any social media sites, all of the content on the page is tailored to you. When you go on a hotel website, everyone sees the exact same thing.
- There are clear expectations of curated content for users and that's where a lot of data crunching is involved. Focus on personalization through your website or app. There are plenty of solutions out there that you can use, and you can also follow up using your CRM to deliver personalised communication and experiences to your guests.
- **Mobile is key.** 69% of people are browsing on mobile but only 34% are booking. As an industry the hospitality mobile experience still lags behind. Mobile devices have been seeing higher usage when guests are in the booking cycle. Hotels are missing out on a huge chunk of users who are seeing your website content on mobile. OTAs and larger brands already have user-friendly mobile websites or apps - so being mobile optimised is crucial.
- **Social media needs to be authentic, measured, optimised and improved.** Many hoteliers believe that just posting on social equals 'marketing' however that's not the case. Hoteliers need to focus on authentic and engaging content and - most importantly - measure its performance.
- **Cross-device and interrupted journeys have become more frequent** due to low attention spans but also because users are resuming a browsing or buying journey on a different device from the one they started on. It's vital to bring automated solutions into play here. For example, pre-populating dates previously searched by users and allowing them to sign in across multiple devices.
- **Users are demanding instant responses with chats and IMs.** Their friends, Google and other suppliers do this already, and so hotels need to do the same. You can aggregate and centrally manage chats whilst also using smart Chatbots that leverage AI.
- **Cashless payments, 'scan and pay' and e-Wallets have been gaining traction** and guests want to pay using their favourite mechanisms. The more complex the payment option, the more likely you'll lose that guest.



What can we expect in '23 & what can we do about it? APAC hotel rate parity trends

Charlie Osmond, Chief Tease, Triptease

Jonathan Hickford, Staff Product Manager, Triptease

- Understanding parity is hard. There are so many ways that you can slice the data that it's often best to start by asking a high level question - how often am I being undercut?
- Undercutting rates in APAC have increased since 2021 as the region unlocks more travel than last year and OTAs are fighting over a small number of valuable guests by competing on price.
- Next, move on to a more specific question - who is undercutting me? In APAC it's Agoda who have the best price most often, followed by Trip.com, Booking.com and Expedia.
- But what about metasearch parity? Meta is a 'winner takes all' environment, and we know that having the cheapest rate in meta can increase your click through rate by as much 2X or 3X. Which directly leads to the same increase in bookings via metasearch. There are MANY more OTAs to compete with in the meta space and we see interesting tactics.
- The 2022 benchmark undercut rate on metasearch is 60%. That means 60% of all the direct price impressions appearing on metasearch are undercut by at least one other OTA rate.
- But not all undercuts are equal - some are worse than others. APAC sees lots of small undercuts and big spikes at 1%, 4%, 10% and we can see it's Trip.com who are driving these spikes.
- Agoda has a broader distribution and Expedia has an almost identical profile with a quarter of Booking.com and Expedia's undercuts are under 2% and half of booking.com and expedia's undercuts are under 5% - if you could automatically match those rates you'd remove a huge amount of metasearch price undercutting for your hotel.
- The **Triptease Parity** product addresses these types of questions to help you take action and quickly resolve your hotels parity issues. Plus if you need an instant solution then **Triptease Price Match on Meta** will discount your price on metasearch and your booking engine by just enough to ensure you win the booking.



Hospitality's next transformation

Will Howes, Sales Manager & Enterprise Sales Director, Revinate

- Hotel technology has come along way. Market valuation for hotels that adopt technology to improve guest experiences is forecasted to grow 4x over the next decade.
- There are three types of data. **Third-party data** is the least valuable and is often data purchased from aggregators, which is low quality and outdated.
- **Second-party data** is when a potential business partner gathers data and shares it with you. Its value depends on the source's reliability and how you will use it at your property.
- **First-party data** - the holy grail. It's collected from guests interacting with your group or property. Examples include dates on your guests' stay, preferences and spending habits, etc. and is the most valuable type of data for any hotelier.
- Data is your biggest asset. Capturing richer data enables better analysis and understanding of your guests. Protecting guests' sensitive data builds brand trust and drives revenue through your direct channels.
- Data can also be your biggest liability. Data breaches are not going away and in countries like the UK, the average cost of a data breach is \$5.05 million (USD). It's time to start thinking about how to protect your data- even if you have your laptop stolen it is declared as a data breach!
- Using a Customer Data Platform (CDP) removes liability for your hotel. It offers security over data encryption, strong access controls, privacy compliance and consent, regular backups, incident response plans and security audits.
- S Hotels & Resorts struggled with bringing together data across multiple PMS's and were at risk of data breaches. Without a single view of guest data, the team were unable to recognize repeat guests and send personalized content. The CDP was the missing link that allowed easy access to S Hotels & Resorts data without expensive infrastructure upgrades. It resulted in over one million guest profiles merged in a secure and compliant way and generated \$750k revenue in six months.
- Your three steps to transformation:
 - Step one: Collect data throughout the full journey into a single source database. From inspiration to booking, to pre-arrival, on property and post-stay.
 - Step two: Invest in a secure and compliant CDP.
 - Step three: Segment and personalize to drive direct revenue. For example, you can leverage data on your guests including birthday and stay history - allowing you to send relevant and targeted campaigns that feel personal.



How to improve your organic presence with Google

Arindam Das, Head of Business Development, Travel - APAC, Google

- The Asia Pacific (APAC) region is experiencing a surge in international demand, surpassing pre-pandemic levels by over 20% in the second half of 2022. This increase in demand is reflected in travel-related search interest, which has also reached or exceeded pre-pandemic levels.
- Travellers highlight the importance of flexibility, and this is now considered the number one initiative that travel brands should prioritise. Despite concerns over inflation, over 25% of travellers say that it won't impact travel plans.
- In order to make the most out of Google, it's important to understand how hotels are searched for. This is typically through one of two search types:
 - Some users search for a specific hotel. For these, paid search ads, organic listings and a business profile is displayed. The business profile provides information such as the hotel's phone number, website, and directions above additional hotel ads and free booking links.
 - Others search for hotels within a specific destination. Here, the results will show paid search ads and an immersive hotel search centered around a map.
- To get the best out of your organic presence on Google, ensure your hotel's free business listing is up to date and activate your free booking links. These offer hotels a way to show travellers accurate prices and availability, meaning you can increase direct bookings, maintain control over the guest experience on-site, and collect guest data.
- **Are free booking links here to stay as free?** They here to stay for free since we already have paid links. Google plan on surfacing more than just prices including room availability and other amenities that will let users book directly with you.
- **What insight do you have on the conversion rates between free and paid booking links?** Conversion numbers vary and Google doesn't have visibility over conversions on-site. However, the volume of bookings through free booking links has grown from 15-20% of all clicks to 35-40% at the end of 2022 and is forecast to be 50% by the end of the year.
- It's more important now than ever to connect to Google and access the Google audience to drive direct bookings at a low cost through free booking Links.



Five point plan to getting and using first-party data

Yulia Askhadulina, Compliance and Data Protection Director, Minor International
Luis Carvalho, Assistant Director of Digital Performance, Minor Hotels

- 137 out of 194 countries have data protection laws in place. Personal information includes personal contact information (name, address, phone number, email address), identifiable details (social security number, date of birth, driver's license number, IP address), financial information (credit card numbers, bank account numbers) and usage details (tracking on websites, cookies, prior visits).
- Privacy laws can be applied if the company is located or does business in any given country (e.g. branch or subsidiary location, employees, servers or equipment location). They can also be applied if the company targets customers in the country (e.g. providing its services, content in local languages, acceptance of currency, country-specific offers or monitoring the behavior of customers in the country via cookies or CCTV).
- 63% of consumers expect personalisation as standard but 65% of APAC consumers believe that most companies are not transparent about how they use their data. Collecting and using their data correctly fosters trust and gives your hotel a competitive advantage.
- When collecting first-party data:
 - Ensure you collect only the necessary data from your hotel's website, booking engine, and other relevant sources. Catalog input fields and forms to create a data inventory of your first-party data.
 - Include an opt-out link in all marketing emails. Delete or anonymize data when you receive an unsubscribe request.
 - Collect consent for cookies, marketing emails and user generated-content (UGC).
 - Create a clear privacy statement and cookie policy.
 - Analyze data and personalize your campaigns while respecting privacy. Use anonymization and pseudonymization to protect privacy while still allowing for meaningful data analysis.



Game over for OTAs? New strategies for turning data into direct bookings

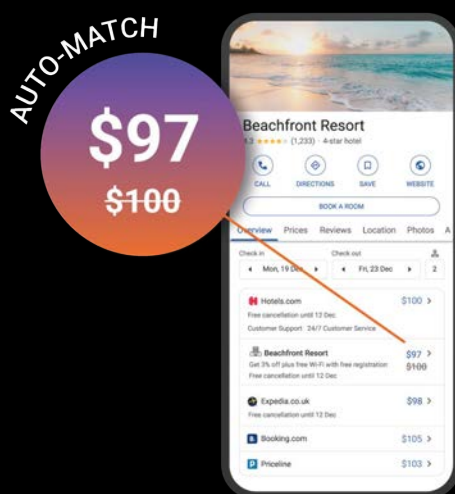
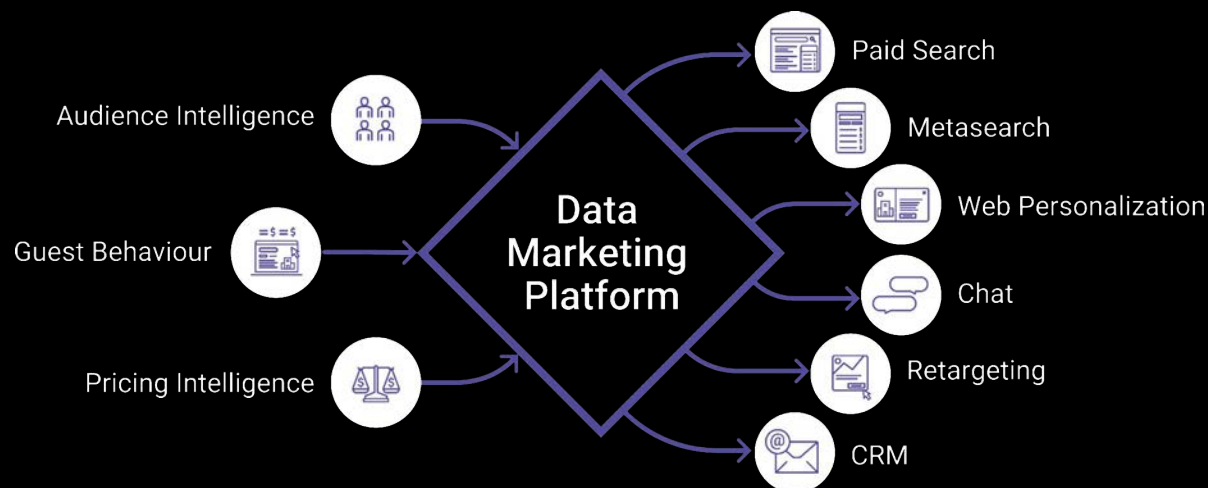
Alasdair Snow, Co-Founder & Chief Product Officer, Triptease

Jonathan Hickford, Group Product Manager for Guest Applications, Triptease

- Knowing who your best guests are is hard because it isn't a stable picture - guest's needs change continuously. On top of that OTAs are adapting their pricing and offers all the time, plus feeder markets are coming online at different times of the day. The whole market is rapidly moving around you, all the time.
- In this environment you can't respond with pre-fixed strategies and stale data. Every bid you make that's not optimised, every OTA undercut that you miss and every direct booking experience that doesn't serve a guest's needs in that moment costs you money. It might not be counted in empty beds in your hotel but what about in Booking.com commissions? Just because your hotel is full doesn't mean you've maxed out value. Booking.com have built an \$80bn business in the last ten years by getting this stuff right.
- There are options to tackle this problem but none are perfect. Doing it yourself or using an agency takes too long and is unreliable, plus agencies have even less understanding of your data than your team does. Stitching together a bunch of point solutions like an Ad platform and your booking engine's built in tools is painful and doesn't hold together well. The end result will still give you no clear view of your customers. In a perfect world you would have all the data about the path to purchase together in one system: Demand data, guest behavioural data and pricing and performance data. You'd also have the tools to activate that data across all your marketing channels in a really synchronised, joined up way.
- We call that system the **Triptease Data Marketing Platform**. It captures data, understands data and activates data for hotels. We can make marketing dollars go further by adjusting bidding based on whether you have the best price for that particular guest, and whether they are a good fit for your hotel. We can **coordinate communication across on-site messaging and your CRM to reduce cart abandonment**, we can even **change your prices so that you're never undercut on metasearch**.
- This personalisation works across a range of channels beyond just your website - including retargeting, metasearch, paid search and email.
- The Triptease Data Marketing Platform provides the data sophistication of an OTA for every hotel. **Request a demo to find out more.**

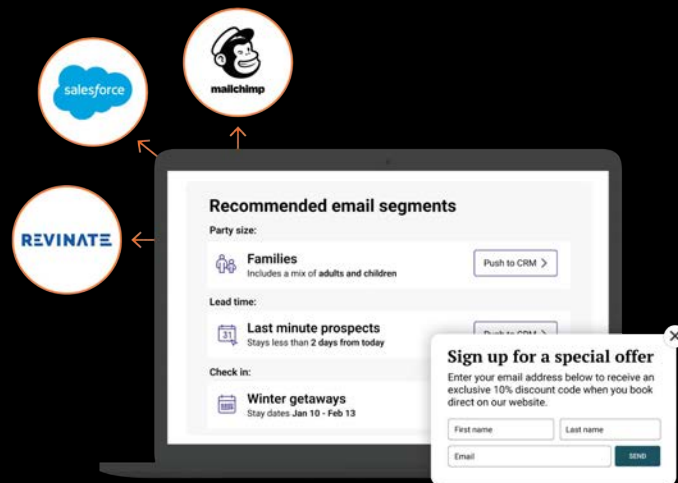
Game over for OTAs?

Discover the all-in-one Triptease Data Marketing Platform for hotels.



Price Match on Meta

Never get beaten on price. Solve your metasearch parity for good and increase bookings by 33%.



Audience Sharing

Grow your revenue with pre-booking guest data. Send targeted, personalized email content to specific types of customers who have interacted with your website, with niche segments.



Discover the power of AI to optimize channel and direct bookings revenue

Sandy Wee, Senior Regional Director of Sales, IdeaS Revenue Solutions

- Several factors influence pricing decisions: historical data, competitors, events, party size, length of stay, lead time, room type and your general manager. It can also include overbooking by room type, free or paid upgrades, operational constraints like housekeeping or renovations and overall market conditions. That's a lot of factors and this is often manually decided by the Revenue Management team!
- Let's look at the way AI looks at the value of a booking for you. Take a typical seven day week of a hotel. They have one room left and the question is 'at what price are you going to sell this room?' This is your last chance to make more money and if you choose the wrong approach, you'll make less revenue:
 - a. Option one (without AI): The highest rate you could charge for one night is \$500 at 100% chance.
 - b. Option two (with AI): There is a 75% chance to sell three nights at \$300.

So option one is 1 night at $\$500 \times 100\% = \500 . Option two is 3 nights $\times 75\% = \$675$.

- Choosing option two can be more high risk, but the advantages means you can increase the occupancy of your shoulder nights, before and after and more importantly, increase your REVPAR.
- People believe with AI, they lose control. But it can give you the information to make better decisions. Your job will not disappear - the quality of your work and production will increase.
- Another myth is that return guests do not like fluctuating prices. This is not the case. AI can understand how often guests stayed with you including which room types, if they dined in your restaurants, etc. Airlines already follow this approach and segment guests based on loyalty and interaction (silver, gold and platinum members). AI can also determine what a regular guest is actually willing to pay for a hotel room.
- AI uses statistical concepts that are universal: booking lead time, length of stay, rate, number of people, booking channel, room type, willingness to pay and competitors. As long as you have statistics and numbers, AI can do its job, and improve yours.



What happens when you shut down OTAs. Key learnings for managing partnerships

Sunish Sadasivan, VP of ECommerce and Revenue Management, Chroma Hospitality

- When Sunish closed down Booking.com (his hotel's biggest online revenue generator) for 30 days, he monitored the progress over four weeks and found that, even though online segments overall lost 36% business in the first week, the brand website lost only around 7% revenue. By week four, brand.com showed a 14% increase from normal weeks - and other OTA's increased too - but revenue loss was still at 9%.
- He then tested operating a one strike policy, with any OTA found displaying an undercut rate immediately switched off. Within just four days, they were all switched off completely. Initially online segments overall lost 65% business but by week four brand.com recovered 63% of business back (having previously been 40% of the total online pie).
- As a result all channels were reopened and new strategies were put in place including a 5-7% gap between brand.com and OTA's, as well as direct booking benefits such as airport transfers and special discounts on F&B or spa treatments. The hotel also learned an important old school lesson – the importance of the billboard effect.
- Sunish's key learnings to share:
 - Hotels need to give customers reasons to book direct.
 - You need to take control of their distribution - know how and where your discounts and contracted rates are being distributed.
 - Metasearch is here to stay, so become part of it and conquer. They're your rates and no one should be selling better rates than you.
 - Hotels should create a three strike policy for wholesalers/B2B and OTAs.
 - B2B/wholesalers should be an integral part of your yielding strategy - on an agreed occupancy percentage, with all static rates moved to dynamic.
 - You should check your parity report daily, and create a parity department (even just one employee). Grow this department based on cost reduction directly associated to them, discuss this in your weekly revenue meetings and use technology to beat OTAs at their own game.



Optimizing profitability through product design and upselling

Tom Welbury, Chief Product Officer, Bloom Hotel Group

Michel Politano, Vice President Revenue & Distribution, Atmosphere Hotels & Resorts

Moderator: Annalyn Hood, Market Director, Triptease

- Upselling is anticipating or triggering needs to enrich the customer experience. Apple doesn't answer what you need, it tells you what you need.
- Don't just think about what's good for profit but what's good for guest experience? That might mean offering things outside of your own hotel revenue streams. E.g. At a beach resort hotel in Goa, one segment of guests will typically want to eat at two or three restaurants outside of the hotel during their stay. Instead of trying to persuade guests to eat at the hotel every night they help to get the restaurant bookings, then focus selling them hotel dinner packages for their other nights.
- In terms of product design, don't be afraid to challenge the status quo and design for the future with calculated risks. Everything starts with obsessing about guests' needs and understanding what matters to them most, then continually tracking how they are rating their stay experience.
- Michel's strategies that require a 'total revenue' mindset.
 - If you have wine that's not selling or 'expiring', organise a wine week with special offers.
 - A free 45 min spa treatment encourages guests to add extra time from their own pocket.
 - Send a message in your app two days before departure - 'We have seen you have not used the water sports facilities, have 20% off before you go'.
- Tom's ideas for revenue generation:
 - Focus on doing a few key things brilliantly for your core customers. For Bloom this has led to 35% of all stays being repeat, which drives the overall profit line. Know your core customer and be great for them, don't dilute yourself by trying to please everyone.
 - Think about room design. Bloom optimised their room width and functionality which provided two additional rooms per floor, and an overall uplift of 15% room revenue. Same thought processes can be applied to any operational consideration once you are clear on your guest needs.
 - Changes can be small and always evolving. E.g. Adding premium coffee brands in the room where 5* hotels still have the same Nescafe. We've had very strong positive feedback from guests.



How to infiltrate & exploit new markets for direct booking triumph

Kaavya Murthy, Director of Marketing Communications, Banyan Tree Phuket & Banyan Tree Veya Phuket

- Prior to the pandemic, Banyan Tree were highly dependent on the Chinese market, with the domestic market contributing to just 5% of direct bookings in 2019. However, following the pandemic and travel restrictions, it gave them an opportunity to refocus their attention on the domestic market.
- To leverage evolving trends and changing markets, Banyan Tree followed three steps:
 - Identify
 - Innovate
 - Incentivize.
- This approach helped the hotel group reimagine their staycation packages. In the early days of the pandemic, they understood that their highly popular rooftop bar, 'Vertigo' would attract domestic audiences who craved a break without the hassles of local restrictions. If they booked dinner and drinks, Banyan Tree could give them a complimentary room night.
- Influencers helped increase book-ability which drove recognition and increased footfalls for the rooftop bar. The first three months from launch generated THB 17.16 million.
- Banyan Tree continued this momentum by launching other highly successful staycation packages that catered to this new domestic segment. E.g. Banyan Tree Veya Phuket is a wellbeing hotel so they built on their reputation as a wellness destination and built packages to enhance the brand for consumers looking to take care of their health and wellbeing.
- Some additional ideas to increase direct bookings: reward direct booking behavior with value add-ons or exclusive privileges to retain customer loyalty, use loyalty programmes and build strategic partnerships with airlines and lifestyle brands to enhance incentives to book direct. Encourage referrals and repeat bookings with cashbacks and discounts.
- It's important to remember that your brand website has so much more impact when delivering personal experiences - the OTA experience can't do that.
- Key takeaways: develop offerings and experiences based on your USPs. Evaluate the outcome of your idea - a one size fits all approach does not work. Put your learnings to work and focus on leading growth.



How to use TikTok to drive consistent direct bookings

Tejveer Singh Bedi, Head of Travel-SEA TikTok

- Short-form videos are taking over as the preferred way of consuming content, with 70% of people wanting to use them to learn about brands or products.
- 83% prefer to see video ads from brands rather than blog posts, gifs or static images - so it is imperative for brands to think video-first to connect with their audience and stay relevant.
- TikTok is seeing a shift in consumers' path to purchase. It is no longer a straightforward or linear journey but an infinity loop from discovery to consideration into action through branded content. The Tiktok community amplifies this by reviewing and participating in brand engagements, driving even more people into action. We have seen firsthand that brands can engage the audience to book at any point of the travel framework that we are familiar with [dream > plan > book > experience > share], especially through videos.
- Create a TikTok business account and commit to posting at least three to five times a week and boosting 20-30% of your posts via the Promote function. Hotels can also lean on content and standard ads to drive more in-market buzz for their product and services.
- **Storytelling is key.** Record videos full-screen with sound on, so that the audience can fully immerse in your content. This is integral to TikTok experiences where most users (80%) watch with sound on. In fact, 88% of TikTok users say sound is integral to their experience.
- **People want to see lighthearted content that makes them laugh.** This has extended to branded content as well, with 44% saying that they want branded content to be funny and entertaining. Don't be afraid to make fun of yourself e.g. Ryanair created content around people not wanting to pay for additional baggage.
- **Build a strong community.** One in three TikTok users ask for travel recommendations online, so this is an opportunity for brands to be a part of this engaged travel community. Respond to comments, interact with posts and invite users to co-create with you.
- **Work with creators to reach niche audiences and to build brand affinity** - 46% of TikTok users look for travel content posted by creators. Hilton's TikTok-first strategy #HowDoYouhilton worked with five popular creators and used TopView and ODM to maximize impact. They achieved 68.8M total impressions and 23% ad recall.



Beware of short-term benefits - the balancing act of revenue management

Ratchaya Termsilkanokm, VP Strategy & Digital Transformation, Cross Hotels & Resorts
Simon Rendell - Senior Director, E-Commerce & Direct Distribution, Onyx Hospitality Group
Moderator - Timothy Chek Customer Success Director, APAC

- The benefits that hoteliers can get from using third-party options like pre-buy schemes, price matching from OTAs, geo rates depends on the hotel's objective. What is the stage that the property or destination is in? Do they need awareness or to optimize? A hotel might need to use these schemes in the short-term to optimize, but it has to be a strategic decision.
- These types of schemes can be risky for hotels. Hotels using R-Prebuy and Price Match could likely find that their ADR would suffer. Booking.com Genius is very difficult to get out of and it competes directly with your targets. Any strategy still needs to protect direct, and to look at the distribution costs overall.
- Examples of long-term strategies to increase direct website revenue include: Building a culture into the team to always protect direct, applying more discount on metasearch in the right time frame and keeping certain rooms on brand.com.
- Onyx Hospitality Group launched member rates with a 10% discount which significantly drove more direct bookings
- Having a culture that's focused on price parity is essential to Simon, who organises monthly performance calls, including a KPI update. For Ratchaya - who operates as a smaller hotel - undercuts are less of an issue. He doesn't need big volumes from OTAs and uses social media to drive direct bookings. That said, you still need to reinforce parity on the brand.com website.
- Once you turn on the tap of OTA bookings, it's easy to become over-reliant and hard to wean your business off them. Hotels will then look back and see how much they really lost. Selling yourself out to an OTA is easy but you'll pay the price as it will reflect in your ARI or RGI. The budget spent on OTA commission could be spent on strengthening the power of your brand.
- Focus on direct. Whichever form of distribution, ensure you have priority and exclusivity.
- Hotels need a vision of their long-term strategy. Think about your pricing, marketing and direct booking strategy.



Customer micro-segmentation: the key to direct profit growth

Jeong Pyon, Director of Hospitality Solutions APAC, Duetto

- Micro-segmentation is the process of dividing markets and customer pools into small, actionable groups with common characteristics and preferences, which hotels use to tailor offerings and marketing messages to each group.
- The old segmentation method was USALI (Uniform System of Accounts for the Lodging Industry), the current segmentation method is a deep dive into channels and rate models.
- Forward-thinking hotels focus deeper into main clientele: **Geo Source Market, Customer Persona** and **Marketing Channels**.
- Micro-Segmentation is the easiest way to attract more guests to you hotel versus the competition. You can calculate the unconstrained demand by micro segments (Geo Source, Channel, Membership tier, how much money a client spent in the casino, etc) to create highly personalized packages that match the needs of these carefully selected segments. That means you as a revenue manager can have a clear understanding of where the opportunities are for the future dates and how to capture them.
- **The 5Ws** about hotel customers: **Who** are the customers? **Why** are they travelling to the destination? **Where** to find them? **When** will they come? **What** do they need from your property? Collecting this data allows hoteliers to micro-segment customers easily.
- Creating micro-segments is a critical step in personalizing offerings to hotel guests. Media, entertainment, and gaming led the way in showing us all how to use data to micro-segment customers in order to drive revenue.
- Netflix understood that we purchase faster if we are told what we might like to buy, they also understood that personalization isn't just about initial purchases - it goes a long way to securing customer retention rates too.
- For most hoteliers, data remains an under-used and under-appreciated asset. Good data analysis comes from a variety of sources to ensure that published rates are taking into account all of the data available to us.
- Use clean and uniform data to micro-segment your customers, this is the easiest way to attract more direct bookings among your competitors.
- Focus on your strategy and let the RMS do the planning for you. The combination of human and machine yields better results than any of those would do in isolation.



Content that converts: strategies to increase your direct bookings

Blessy Townes, VP & Head of Digital, Discovery Hospitality

Anita Chan, Senior Vice President of Brand Marketing, Dorsett Hospitality International

Moderator: Fandy Gunawan, Sales Director APAC, Triptease

- Being transparent in the content you present about your hotel is really important. Anita shared that her focus has been on providing content that is less about what the hotel team want guests to see but about what the guest wants to see.
- Content accuracy is very important in managing guest expectations - especially as people are booking more longer-stay bleisure trips. You can choose to over-glamorize your property photos and videos, but what you put out will be reflected in your reviews - you'll get negative feedback where customers compare what they really got with what you promised. Build brand trust by being honest about the reality.
- Successful content pieces are not necessarily the ones that directly delivered the ROI. Depending on the attribution model and where they are as a touchpoint in the journey, some content can be successful based on other KPIs such as reach, engagement, website traffic, or media mileage. Others can be more complicated to measure such as brand love and brand association. In the Philippines it's not always simple to track conversion data because people may see content online but then book offline - so we might look at 'click to call' as a way to measure effectiveness.
- Experiment with new content formats and strengthen on the tried and tested ones.
- Content should answer the question 'Why do people stay or choose my property?' then organize your buckets based on where the customer is in their booking journey: Inspiration, Research, Planning, Booking and Post-Traveling stages.
- What you put out there is important, but what you do to maximize content is more crucial. Blessy was one of the first in the Philippines to invite bloggers into the properties not because of their blog, but because of their pagerank. Maximize the backlinks, the link juice, the visibility to their fan base, and their influence in social proof. Don't think of just ranking, but dominating the search results,



Insider advice on managing partnerships with OTAs

Luis Fernando Arjonilla Muñoz, Executive Sales & Distribution Leader

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Live website audits with a user experience expert

Ewin Teo, Product Designer, Triptease

Siddhesh J Gawde, Head of Marketing, Kingston Hotels Group

- The booking process is non-linear, with three stages: dreaming, researching, and booking.
- Throughout these stages, the guest asks questions such as 'Is this dream a possibility?', 'What amenities are available?' and 'What's most important to me?' as well as the crucial question 'Is this the best way to book this hotel?'
- Ewin and Siddhesh reviewed redesign of the Valia website, providing a full user experience design (UXD) audit in relation to the business goals of increasing direct bookings, selling more high ADR, premium rooms and providing the right information at the right time to website visitors.
- Siddhesh swapped out a template-driven website where all hotels in the group looked the same, for a customized website that provided flexibility, scalability, SEO plugins and affordability. Your hotel website is your online storefront and should reflect your brand identity, values and the experience that you offer.
- Think mobile-first when improving your website's UX. While the Valia website had lots of good qualities like a sticky navigation bar, well-written text and a gradual reveal of information, the mobile site was not responsive so the text did not format so cleanly there.
- While deep, rich colors emphasized the luxury brand aesthetic of the property, not all of the colour combinations passed accessibility tests for visually impaired people. Over 1.3 billion people experience significant disability, which means having an accessible website is key. In addition to increased market reach, it helps with diversifying key revenue sources and SEO.
- Color and contrast can often go amiss when considering what colours to use on your website. You can download a Chrome extension called Stark and it not only tests for contrast but tests how it works for color blind people too. Another tip is to attach alt text to your images (written copy that appears in place of an image), which helps readers and Google understand your website better.
- Don't have a designer? Learn from the experts. Expedia and Booking lure guests using unparalleled data and user research insights. Learn from travel and e-commerce giants. They are a few years ahead of hospitality.

