

Traveler personas for OTAs

Research into behaviors and
habits to enhance your targeting



Travelport 

The Experience is Everything

Foreword

As consumers, we take personalized experiences for granted. With Amazon presenting us with relevant products because of previous searches, and Netflix suggesting shows we might want to watch based on our boxset binges, we now expect every brand we interact with to put our personal preferences front and center.

And yet, these personalized experiences are sorely lacking when it comes to travel. Even in the cutting-edge OTA and metasearch world, it has been difficult to differentiate personas or persona groups visiting websites. With a tendency to prioritize the cheapest options in search results, travelers are often presented with multiple connections and overnight stays – options that sometimes don't deliver a relevant balance of price and convenience in the customer's eyes.

Enter traveler personas: the data-driven profiles that will allow your OTA to deliver more personalized experiences. By building a comprehensive view of your target customers, you can start to tailor your approach to presenting relevant travel choices – for example,

removing flight options with six-hour connections when families with small children are searching.

This eBook presents how your OTA can gain a better understanding of your customers, the market they're in, and how they are booking travel. By analyzing over a billion bookings made through global distribution systems (GDSs), we have identified six traveler personas your OTA can focus on in your pursuit of personalization.

We've combined this data with findings from our end traveler research surveys, which collate the views of over 3,000 travelers across the globe. The result is a comprehensive guide, which you can use as a starting point as you start to get to know your customers better and build out your own traveler persona profiles.

I wish you well as you dial up your personalization efforts and begin to reap the rewards that more tailored experiences can deliver: turning passive browsers to active bookers, and one-time buyers to loyal customers.



Robert Brown
Managing Director, Global OTAs
Travelport

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Introduction

How's your online travel agency's personalization strategy going? If you're thinking 'could be better', then you're not alone. Skift and Adobe's 2018 Digital Transformation Report found that only 36% of travel executives rated their personalization efforts as four or five on a scale of one to five¹.

For OTAs, keeping up with travelers' personalization demands can be a challenge. Despite travel brands collecting more data than ever before, extracting insights to create a more tailored experience is easier said than done. And with personalization now a critical component of virtually every online retailer's sales and marketing strategy, travel brands must keep up and offer customers the tailored experiences they both want and expect.

It all starts with knowing your customer and what makes them tick. In general, it's easy for an online travel agency to discover the types of trips a traveler typically takes, how far in advance they've booked, who they are traveling with, and how long they're going for.

However, this is but a slice of the overall picture. To truly get to know the customers in your market, you must build a comprehensive persona profile that incorporates data from a wide range of sources – not just your own.

This is where big data, such as that from global distribution systems (GDS), can shine a light. In our research for this eBook, we analyzed billions of data signals from the GDSs to uncover six distinctive traveler types – solo travelers, families, business travelers, couples, weekenders, and groups.

The persona profiles we present here are a good starting point for your business to begin building its own traveler personas. By combining these insights with your own data, you can start to use these personas to better inform your audience targeting and recommendations, enabling you to be more relevant, more of the time.

About the research

The findings presented throughout this eBook were gathered from various sources, primarily:

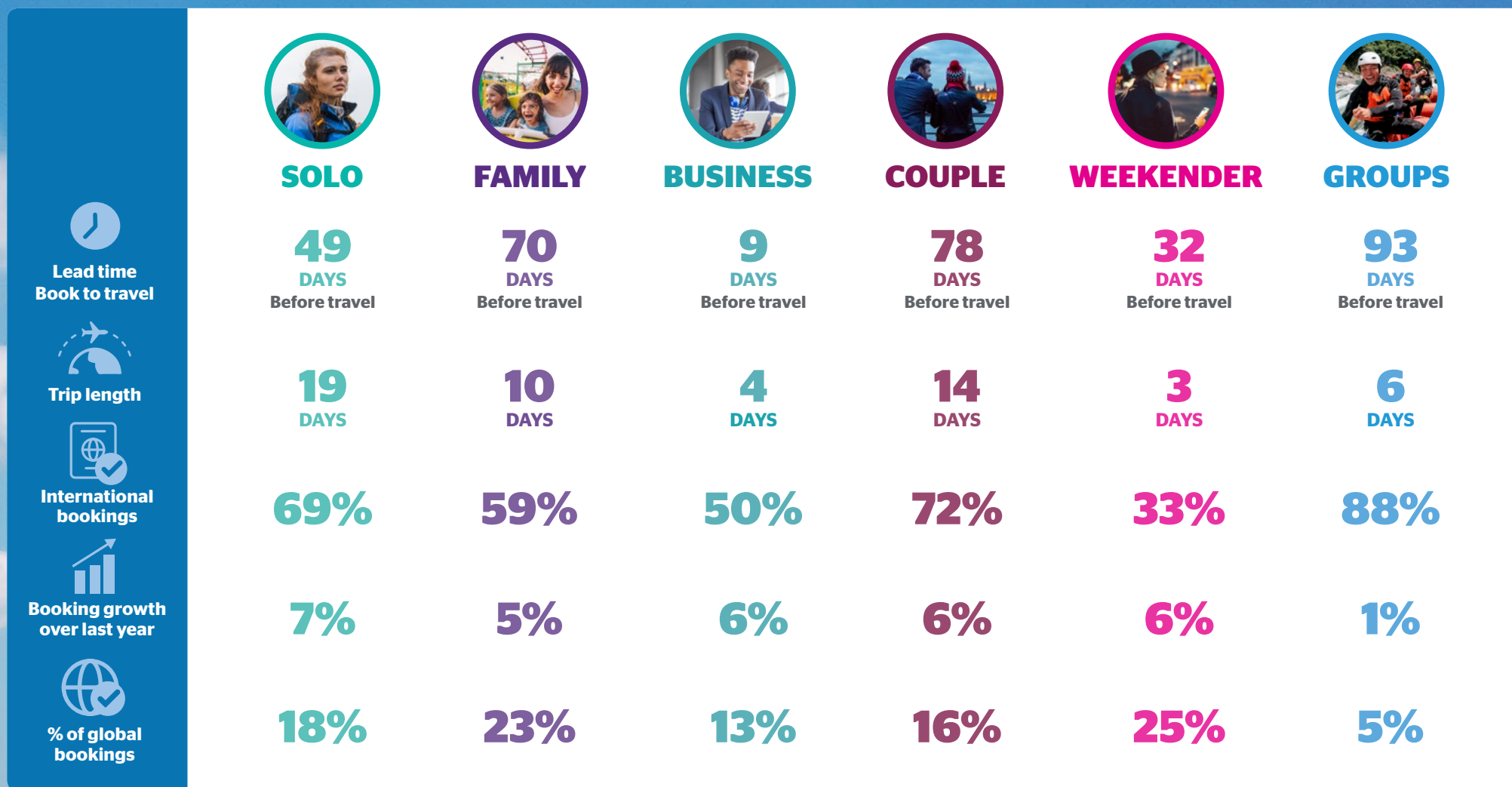
Travelport's OTA interpretation of relevant Marketing Information Data Transfer (MIDT) data. It reflects our analysis of over a billion travel bookings made through GDS only. Additional bookings are made directly with airlines, which may or may not also have a GDS presence.

Travelport OTA End Traveler Research (Feb 2019): Our research with over 2,000 end travelers who use OTAs to search and/or book travel.

Travelport Mobile End Traveler Research (Nov 2018): Annual research, where we investigate how travelers are using mobile and other devices to search and book travel. There were over 1,400 respondents to our 2018 survey.

Meet the personas

Here are the six traveler personas we have identified based on our analysis of GDS bookings.



Solo traveler



Solo traveler

Our first persona is the solo traveler. Making up 18% of global bookings, solo travel is becoming ever more popular and has increased by 7% in the last 12 months alone.

Younger travelers are particularly interested in solo travel, with 58% of millennials worldwide willing to travel alone, compared to 47% of older generations². We can therefore predict that this trend will continue to grow in the coming years, so now is the time to start personalizing your online travel agency's offering to this group. In this chapter, we'll show you how.

Global Profile



Lead time: book to travel

49
DAYS



Average trip length

19
DAYS



International bookings

69%



Booking growth last 12 months

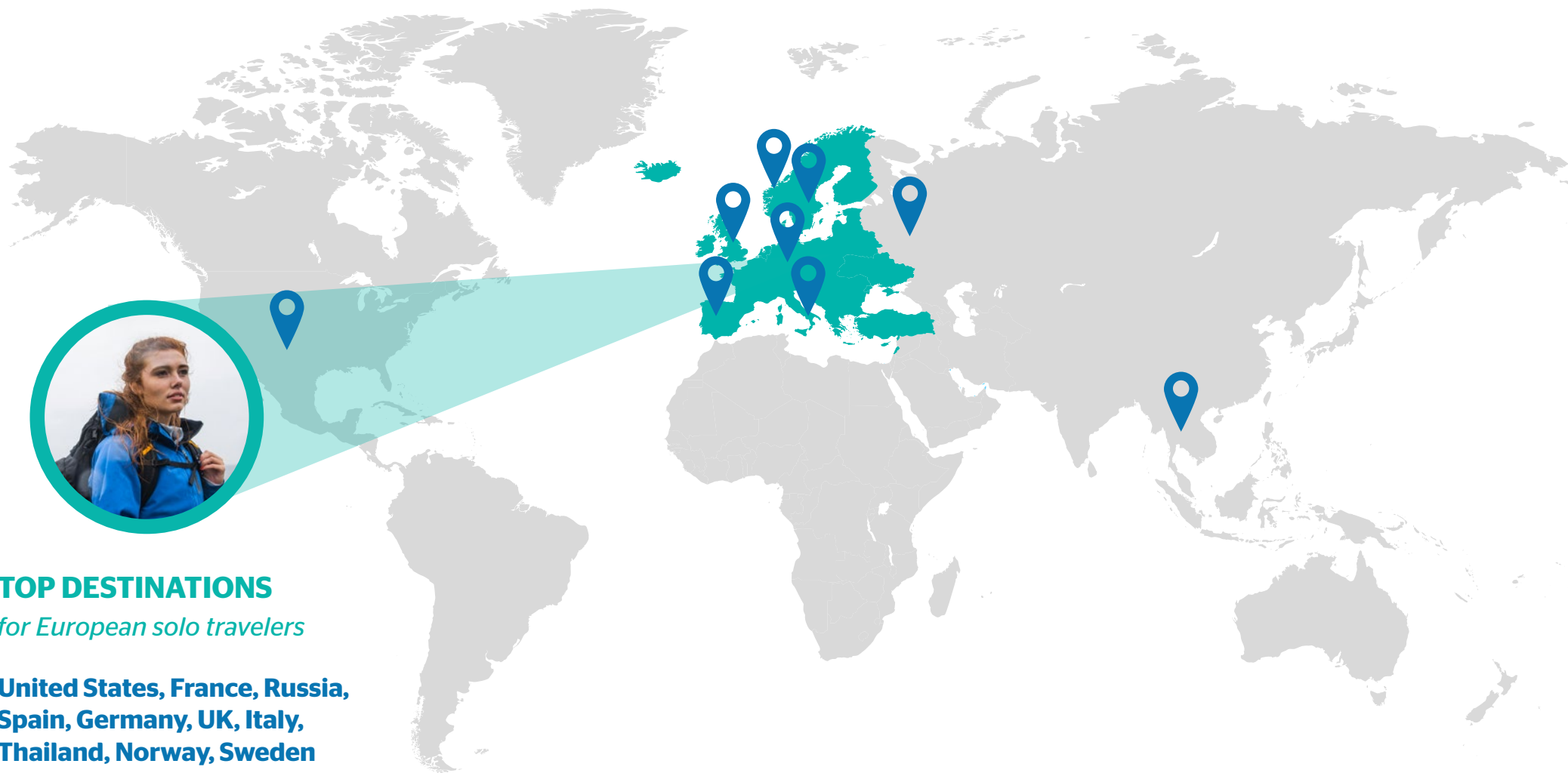
7%



% of global bookings

18%

Region in focus: Europe



TOP DESTINATIONS

for European solo travelers

**United States, France, Russia,
Spain, Germany, UK, Italy,
Thailand, Norway, Sweden**

50
DAYS

**Lead time:
book to travel**

20
DAYS

**Average
trip length**

88%

**International
bookings**

2%

**Booking growth
last 12 months**

20%

**% of regional
bookings**

What solo travelers want

Longer trips

Solo leisure travelers are likely to hit the road for extended periods of time. MIDT data shows that on average, solo travelers in Europe are taking trips of almost three weeks, with the majority of those trips being international.

For OTAs, a longer duration spells a big opportunity to increase return on trip by selling beyond-air content like accommodation, ground transport, or even in-trip activities to solo travelers.

Accommodation booking on-the-go

Considering the length of trips solo travelers are taking, many will likely require multiple accommodation options - some even booking while on their trip. This is where the importance of a mobile-first accommodation booking platform comes into play.

Our research shows that 46% of solo travelers have booked hotel via mobile³ and 59% believe it's important to be able to add extras to their booking while on-the-go⁴.

With only themselves to take care of, solo travelers have the freedom to book hotels while on the road, meaning last-minute deals and location-specific search results could be key influencers in helping to turn the solo traveler looker to a booker.



18%

of global bookings
are made up by
solo travelers



58%

of millennials
worldwide are willing
to travel alone



7% RISE

in solo leisure
traveler bookings
in the last 12 months



Mobile experience

Speaking of mobile, 62% of solo travelers use smartphone apps to research and plan the non-air parts of their trip – hotel, rail, car, and so on³. Looking at our European solo traveler data, more than half (59%) of those who have used an OTA to research or book a trip have downloaded an OTA app⁴.

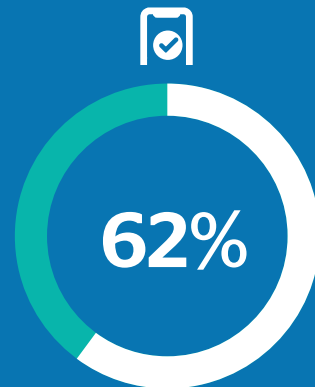
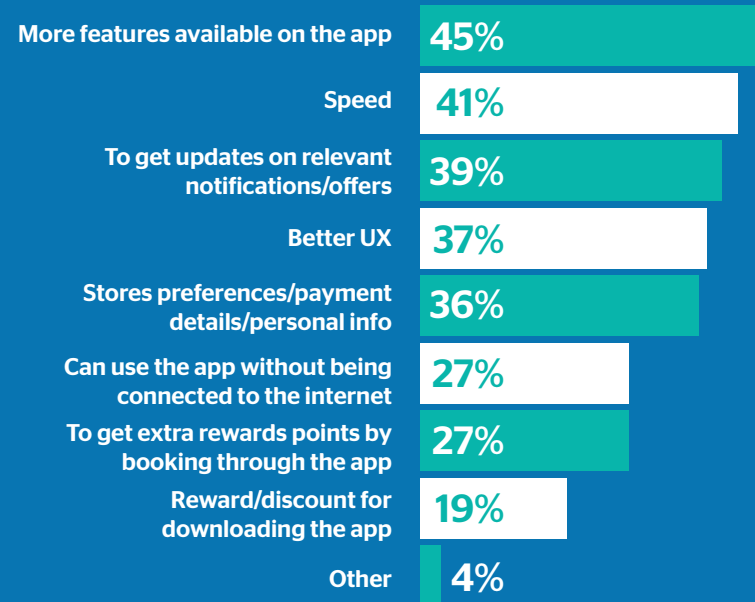
According to our research, the main reasons solo travelers download OTA apps is because apps have more features than mobile web, are faster, and provide relevant notifications.

Personalized travel offers

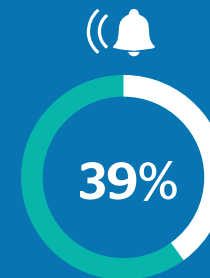
Our research shows that 60% of solo travelers want personalized offers from OTAs and 39% want those offers delivered via push notification⁴. OTA offers therefore must be tailored to specific personas to increase the chance of conversion.

43% of solo travelers also want to receive inspiration for their next trip based on their personal preferences⁴. This shows the importance of tailoring your inspirational content – like blogs or social posts – to your target personas.

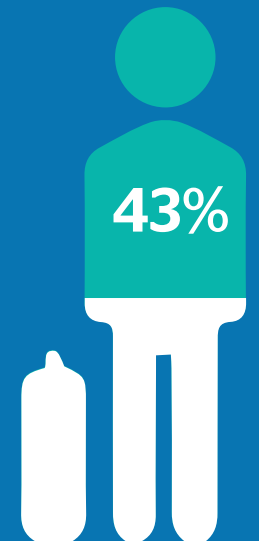
Solo traveler reasons for downloading an online travel agency app



of solo travelers use smartphone apps to research and plan the non-air parts of their trip



want those offers delivered via push notification



want to receive inspiration for their next trip based on their personal preferences

How your OTA can target solo travelers

Optimize your hotel offering

Due to the extended length of the average solo traveler's trip, they are likely to require more than one accommodation option per trip. Your OTA should offer accommodation options beyond traditional hotels – like hostels or accommodation sharing – to appeal to today's solo traveler, who may be visiting multiple destinations while on their trip.

As we've already seen, 46% of solo travelers have booked accommodation on mobile, so optimizing your hotel options for mobile is a good way to increase conversions. For example, you could send push notifications with offers for relevant hotels if the traveler hasn't booked one close to their departure date, to encourage last-minute bookings.

Offering a solo traveler a relevant accommodation offer on their first night on their first destination, when they are likely most receptive, is another great way to start the engagement throughout the trip.

Provide a great mobile experience

Mobile continues to rise in importance and it's no longer enough to only have an app or mobile-optimized website – most other travel brands have these as standard. However, getting the mobile experience right is key to driving customer loyalty.

66% of solo travelers say that a good mobile experience is important when considering who to book their next trip with⁴. In addition, only 29% of solo

How to optimize your mobile experience



App upgrades and innovation

If your OTA has an app, work with your developers to ensure it is consistently upgraded. Incorporating innovative features like voice and image search and map integrations can bring huge convenience to users.



Push notifications

Send personalized push notifications – for example, you could push a ground transport offer to a solo traveler who has just landed at their destination. If your OTA does not have an app, a few lines of code added to your website will allow you to send web push notifications.



Mobile-optimized search

Ensure your search capabilities are optimized for mobile by streamlining your search request parameters to increase performance and decrease response time.



Device continuity

Provide a more joined-up customer experience by allowing users to start their booking on one device (like their smartphone) and continue it on another (e.g. desktop).



Site speed

Site speed is essential to minimizing bounce rate from your website. Return air, hotel, and car search results faster with technology called asynchronous search, which returns results from providers as they become available, rather than aggregating all results before returning a single response.



Support on-the-go

37% of solo travelers would like to chat to an OTA via an app⁴. Providing chat capabilities can help show the added value of booking with your agency over your competitors.

travelers would be likely to book with a travel brand if they had a bad experience on their app³.

Destination guides

When targeting European solo travelers, look at the top destinations they are traveling to – MIDT data shows the top destinations for European solo travelers in the last year are: United States, France, Russia, Spain, Germany, UK, Italy, Thailand, Norway, and Sweden.

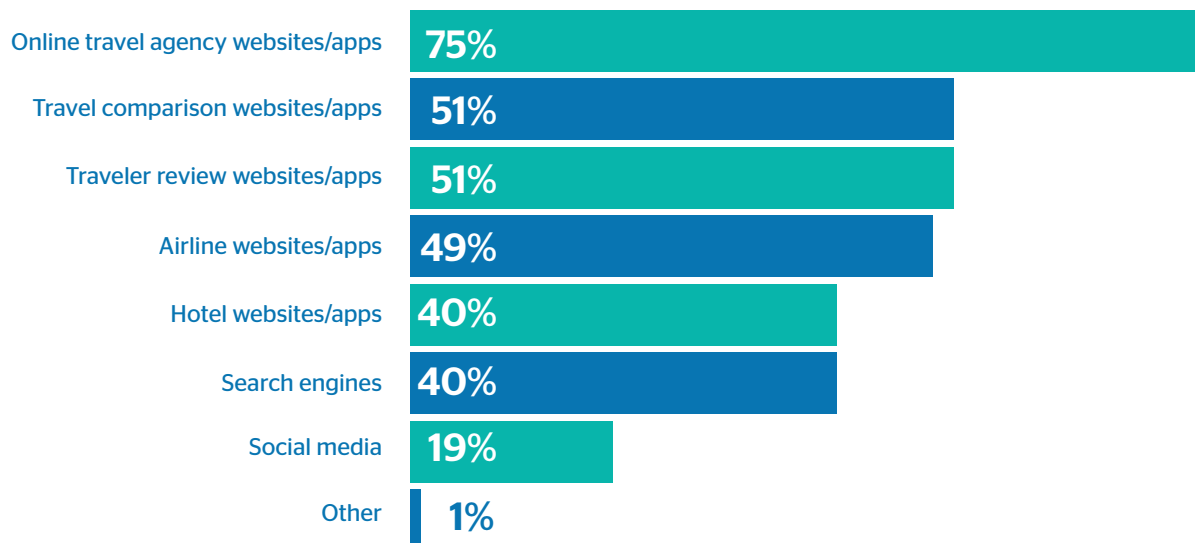
Remember that almost half of solo travelers also want to receive inspiration for their next trip from OTAs based on their personal preferences. By using this data and your own customer insights, you can identify

growth opportunities for your OTA, but also create a more personalized and data-driven keyword strategy. You can also create website and social content about these destinations to attract solo travelers who are looking for travel inspiration.

Guided trips and tours

It may sound contradictory, but not every solo traveler wants to travel alone. Mintel's *2018 Solo Traveller Report* found that 52% of solo travelers are interested in an escorted holiday⁵ – a group tour where they can mix with other travelers. So, when personalizing your offers to solo travelers, consider promoting group activities and tours, as well as solo activities.

Channels used by European solo travelers to plan trips



To sum up...

Solo travel has risen by 7% globally in the last 12 months – your OTA needs to actively target this segment to optimize conversion rates and to drive loyalty and retention

Solo travelers crave personalization from OTAs, with 60% looking for offers tailored to them

This segment takes the longest trips at approximately an average of 19 days

A mobile-first approach is key when targeting solo travelers as 60% of solo travelers use smartphone apps to research and plan the non-air parts of their trip



**7% RISE
IN SOLO
TRAVEL**



**TAKE THE
LONGEST
TRIPS**



**WANTS
TAILORMADE
OFFERS**



**MOBILE
FIRST**

Solo traveler engagement plan

Lead time: **49 days** Trip length: **19 days** Motivation: **Adventure and spontaneous travel experiences**

PRE-TRIP

Thanks for booking

Destination insights



-49

Day of booking

Survey

Tell us more about your trip



-47



Social

Share your adventure

Hotels

5 budget-friendly options



-37



Checklist

Visas, insurance, hotel

Instagram moments

Photo ops in destination



-17



Destination activities

Live like a local

-4



Final checklist

Credit card, airport transfer

IN-TRIP

Survival guide

Staying safe on your travels



0

Day of travel

1



Social

Tag us in your vacation snaps

Last-minute trips

to add to your itinerary



6

15



Group trips

Meet new friends through group activities

Last day

3 attractions you can't miss



19

POST-TRIP

20



Survey

Tell us about your experience

Families



Families

On average, almost a quarter (23%) of global air travel bookings are made by families. This persona group is one of the largest segments globally and has unique requirements, centered around child-friendly activities.

If your OTA is not personalizing its offering by persona, you are missing an opportunity to drive higher conversions and loyalty across this segment. The good news is that family personas are the easiest to identify in your existing workflow, as they will include a search with combinations of adult and child or infant passenger type codes.

By diving further into your OTA's data and identifying family personas, you can start to personalize your air, hotel, car, and destination experience offerings to this group – and converting more searches to bookings.

Global Profile



Lead time: book to travel

70
DAYS



Average no. of passengers

3.7



Average trip length

10
DAYS



International bookings

59%



Booking growth last 12 months

5%



% of global bookings

23%

Region in focus: South America



69
DAYS

**Lead time:
book to travel**

10
DAYS

**Average
trip length**

50%

**International
bookings**

4%

**Booking growth
last 12 months**

27%

**% of regional
bookings**

What family travelers want

Entertainment

Keeping the family entertained while on vacation is top priority for this persona – even more so than price, according to Expedia research⁶. How suitable an activity or hotel is for children is the key driver in travel decision-making for this group. 85% also say their family loves to travel to major entertainment attractions or theme parks

For OTAs, this means that marketing content should be geared towards keeping children entertained while on holiday through in-trip activities.

Convenience

Throughout their trip, the families want a seamless experience. This means convenience when booking as well as when they travel. Our research shows that over a quarter of families (26%) use one website to book their entire trip – flights, hotel, car rental, and tours and experiences⁴.

In addition, 74% would be likely to book a trip with an OTA who offers the ability to book everything in one place. Almost half of family travelers (47%) look for package holidays through OTAs, and more than a quarter (27%) booked a package holiday with an OTA on their last trip⁴.

When it comes to booking flights, most families will pay a little extra to avoid overnight flights or multiple connections. And the younger the children, the more value short and convenient flight options bring to the itinerary.



27%

of families booked a package holiday with an OTA on their last trip



85%

love to travel to major entertainment attractions or theme parks



ONE WEBSITE

26% use one website to book their entire trip – flights, hotel, car, tours and experiences



Advanced planning

Unsurprisingly families like to plan in advance and typically book flights around 10 weeks before they travel. For OTAs, this presents an opportunity to upsell and cross-sell ancillaries that will help to enrich the traveler experience and increase the return on trip.

Again, the ancillary upsell should focus on the services that will appeal to those traveling with children - travel insurance, extra baggage, discounted tickets into key attractions, and hotels with child-friendly swimming pools, for example.

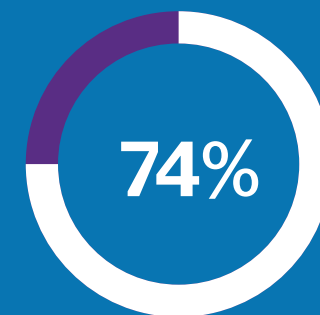
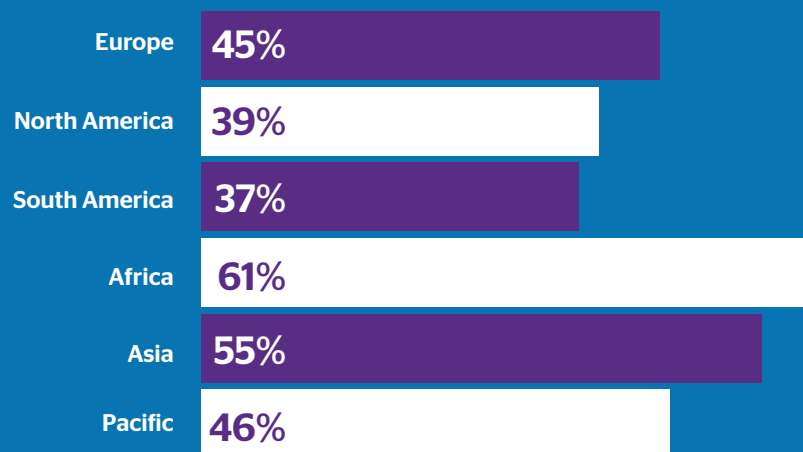
Car rental

Our research shows that 30% of those who primarily travel as a family search for car rental through online travel agencies⁴. Convenient ground transport options are essential for any family traveler and giving the persona the option to book this on your website will not only add to your ancillary revenue, it will also position your agency as an easy booking option for your target travelers. Car rental can also be offered as a mid-trip as an alternative transport option for excursions.

Domestic travel

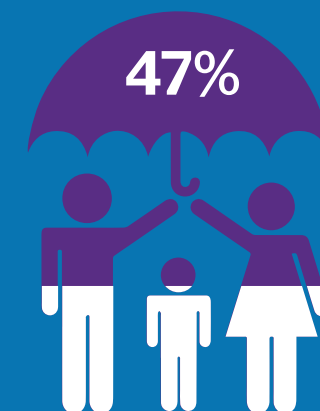
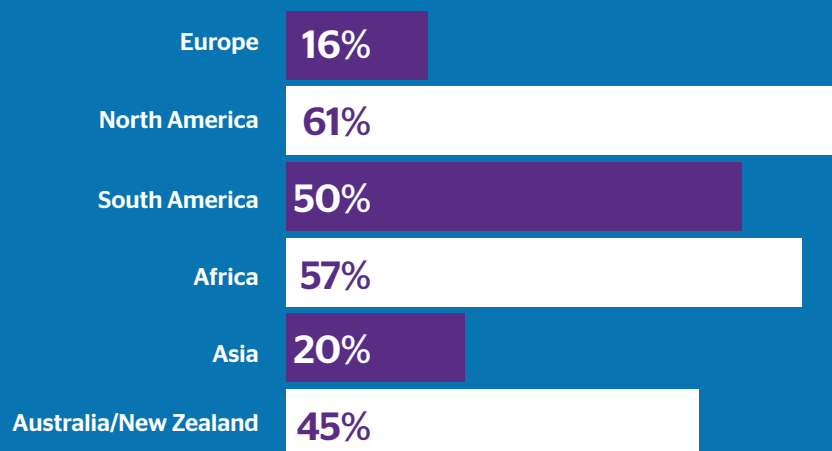
MIDT data shows that globally, almost half (41%) of family traveler bookings are domestic bookings. In the Americas, domestic bookings are far more commonplace than in Europe or Asia.

Regional view: Family travelers searching for package holidays with OTAs



are likely to book a trip with an OTA who offers the ability to book everything in one place

Domestic family traveler bookings across regions



Almost half of family travelers look for package holidays through OTAs

How to target family personas

Mobile apps

As with every traveler today, mobile-first is the way to go. 53% of family travelers prefer to use apps when searching and booking flights and online travel agency apps are the most popular type of travel app that families have installed³. With more than half of families (59%) using their smartphone to pay for a flight, investing in your mobile offering is a smart move to optimize conversion across this segment.

Use social to inspire

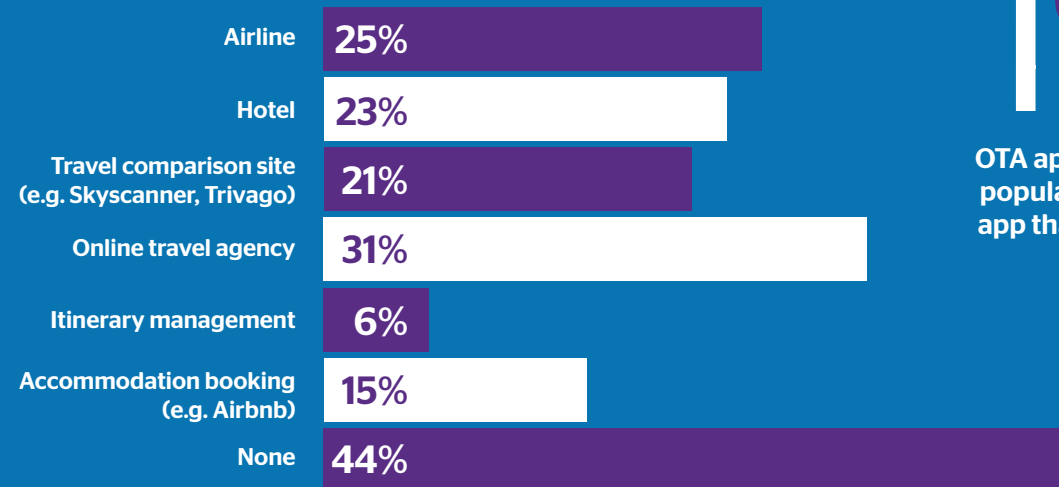
Social media is a powerful channel to inspire travelers with ideas on where to go on their next trip. This is particularly true for families in Asia, 46% of whom use social to research their trips⁴. Your social media strategy should therefore look to your persona segments, such as your family travelers, and incorporate content that relates to this group.

For example, showing family-centric imagery will help appeal to this group. But even better, sharing content from your family customers (with their consent) will present an authentic view of family travel, with your OTA's brand at the center.

Convenience-driven offerings

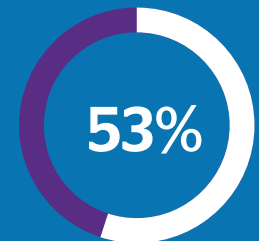
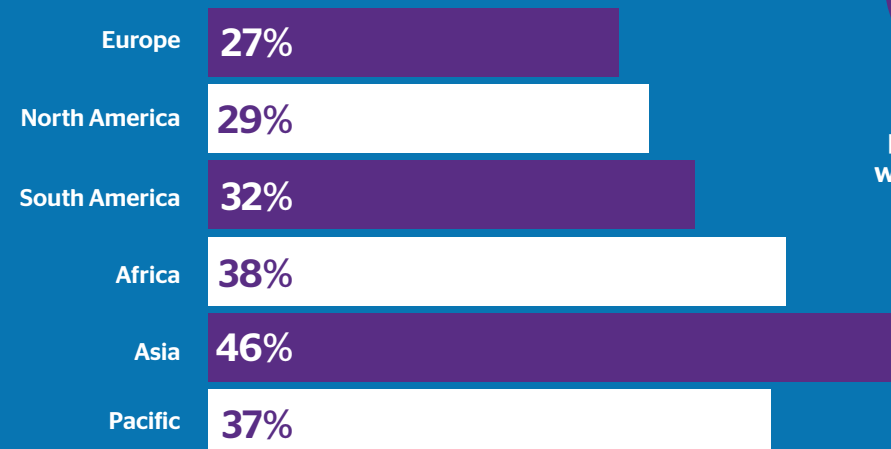
Anyone who has traveled with children will know how stressful it can be. To appeal to families, your offering should make travel easier and keep the children entertained. 67% of family travelers want to see their entire trip itinerary in one mobile app, seeking the convenience of being able to refer to it on-the-go. In addition, 73% find push notifications related to their

Categories of travel apps installed on family travelers' smartphones



OTA apps are the most popular type of travel app that families have installed.

Family traveler personas who use social media to research trips - by region



prefer to use apps when searching and booking flights

trip useful, so use this opportunity to keep in touch with your traveler throughout their journey³.

Family-friendly marketing content

Aside from social media, there are plenty of opportunities for your OTA to present family-friendly imagery and content across your marketing channels. This includes across paid channels, as well as owned – like your website blog. (Tip – if your OTA doesn't have a blog, now is the time to start one.)

Use destination articles on your blog to present travel offers and inspiration. This is an approach that Booking.com takes, while also earning commission from the hotels it promotes within its articles. Along with boosting your SEO ranking for key family-friendly

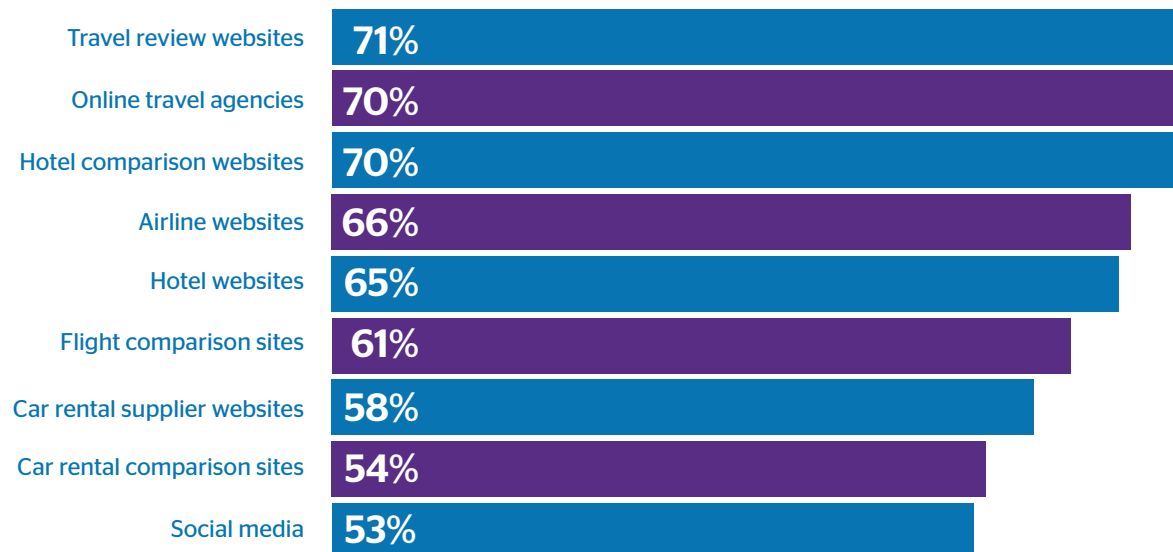
search terms, it could also be another source of revenue for your business.

Reviews

As keeping their family members happy is at the top of the list of priorities, it's no wonder that reviews are important to this traveler persona. Expedia research reports that 63% of families say their travel decisions are influenced by travel review sites and OTAs⁶. Our research shows that families place a lot of trust in online reviews, with travel review sites, hotel comparison sites and OTAs being the top most-trusted resources for families (see graph below)⁴.

It is a good idea to enable search filters to show the top-reviewed hotel options first when you have identified a family traveler booking.

Family travelers' trust in online travel reviews...



Use **destination articles** on your blog to present travel offers and inspiration.

This is an approach that Booking.com takes, while also earning commission from the hotels it promotes within its articles.

Case study

Persona-based personalization

Travelport worked with a global OTA on a data-driven approach to uncovering new business opportunities and growth areas.

After analyzing data from billions of bookings, as well as from the OTA's website, we identified an opportunity for the OTA to capture more **family traveler bookings**.

After a more focused approach at targeting family travelers in its region, the OTA saw the following results:

- * **290% increase in bookings** made by family travelers
- * **72% booking growth** in 12 months
- * **116% increase in bookings** from January to April 2019 compared to the previous period.



72%
**BOOKING
GROWTH**
in last 12 months

290%
INCREASE
in family traveler
bookings

116%
INCREASE
in bookings from Jan-
Apr 2019 compared
to previous period



Show only relevant search results

As we have seen, families crave convenience. Therefore, a flight with multiple stopovers or a long connection time is unlikely to appeal to them – so why show it at all?

You can use rules-based consoles to filter your air search results to present only the most relevant options for families – shortest flight times and baggage included, for example.

Similarly, with your hotel and car search results, show only the offers that interest families. On a basic level, if there is an itinerary with two adults and three children, don't show car rental options that won't fit all of the passengers. You could also prioritize hotels with pools for families, or ones that are close to key attractions.



To sum up...

Families are driven by keeping the kids happy – make sure your marketing efforts are packed with in-trip activities to entertain the whole family.

Convenience is key when it comes to picking travel options. 74% would be likely to book a trip with an OTA who offers the ability to book everything in one place.

Tailor your hotel and car content to the family persona by showing family-friendly hotels and cars that are suitable for the number of passengers on the itinerary.

Family travelers plan their trips well in advance, so your OTA should take advantage of the upsell and cross-sell opportunities in the time between when they book and when they travel.



**ACTIVITIES
FOR THE
WHOLE
FAMILY**



**FAMILY
FRIENDLY
HOTELS &
CARS**



**EVERYTHING
IN ONE PLACE**



**PLAN
TRIPS
WELL IN
ADVANCE**

Family traveler engagement plan

Lead time: **70 days** Trip length: **10 days** Motivation: ***Planned entertainment with time to relax***

PRE-TRIP

Thanks for booking

Destination insights



-70

Day of booking

Survey

What entertains you?



-63



Social

Share your adventure

Shopping vouchers

Clothes for the holiday



-33



Plan your activities

Fun for all the family with these excursions

Accommodation

Upgrade to a family suite for \$200



-10



Survey

Tell us about your preferences

Baggage

Bring it on-board for only \$40



-2



Checklist

Visas, insurance, etc

IN-TRIP

Social

Share your experience



4



Welcome

Have a drink on us

Final day activities

Make memories that will last a life time



9



Relax and enjoy

Kids' club free today, for you

POST-TRIP

11



Survey

Tell us about your experience

Business traveler



Business traveler

Most OTAs focus on leisure travelers in their targeting and leave business up to travel management companies.

However, this is an enormous missed opportunity, considering the fact that 83% of travelers we surveyed said they book at least some of their business travel through OTAs. 32% say they book all of their business travel through this channel⁴.

So, whether you're tracking it or not, business travelers are booking through your OTA; however, by not capturing this data you're missing a valuable opportunity to truly personalize your offering with tailored search results.

Global Profile



Lead time: book to travel

9
DAYS



Average trip length

4
DAYS



International bookings

50%



Booking growth last 12 months

6%



% of global bookings

13%

Region in focus: North America



TOP DESTINATIONS

for North American business travelers

**United States, Canada, Mexico,
UK, China, Australia, India**

10
DAYS

**Lead time:
book to travel**

4
DAYS

**Average
trip length**

32%

**International
bookings**

7%

**Booking growth
last 12 months**

13%

**% of regional
bookings**

What corporate travelers want

Great UX

Whether companies like it or not, travelers are using OTAs to book their business trips. According to our global traveler research, 52% of North American travelers said they book at least all or most of their business travel through an online travel agency⁷. In China, 42.2% of bookings come from OTAs, compared with 27.8% that are from TMCs⁸.

Much of this comes down to the fact that online travel agencies, particularly big players like Expedia, Ctrip and Booking.com,, offer a better user experience than many corporate booking tools.

On-the-go ancillaries

The upsell opportunities with business travelers are significant. Our research found that those who travel primarily for business are buying beyond-air offers on mobile – hotels, airport offers, Wi-Fi, and car hire are the most popular choices.

Our Global Digital Traveler Research also found that more than half (53%) of business travelers research all of their travel arrangements on their smartphone, and 61% travelers have booked and paid for an entire or part of a trip online through their mobile.

One-stop-shop

Over half of all business travelers (55%) would prefer to book all aspects of their journey on one website/app only (flights, hotels, ground transport, activities, etc.) With the shortest lead-in time of any traveler group, shopping around for deals is less of a concern for business travelers than leisure. As a result, it's key that your agency



83%

of travelers book some of their business trips through OTAs



UPSELL OPPORTUNITIES

hotels, airport offers, WI-FI and car hire are the most popular



52%

book all or most of their business travel through OTAs



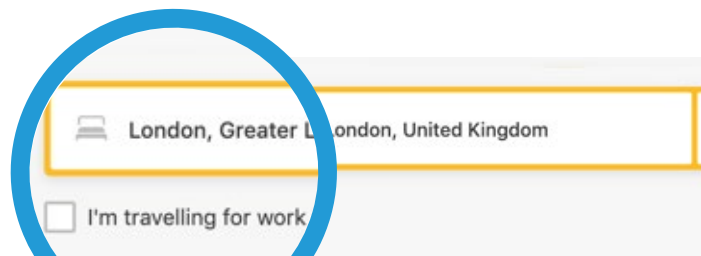
can offer a range of services in one place to enable the business traveler to quickly book their entire trip.

How to target business travelers

Don't treat business travelers like leisure travelers

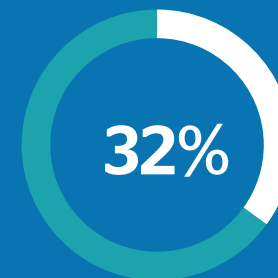
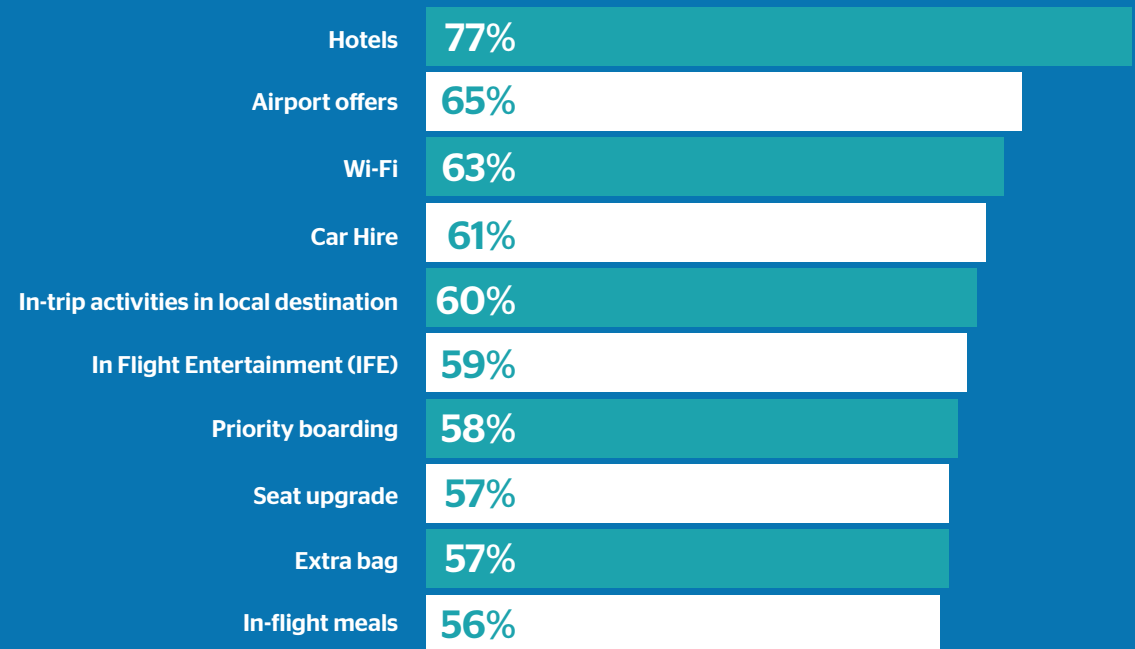
While we know that a large proportion of corporate bookings are made through OTAs, many agencies offer the same booking experience to business travelers as they do leisure. However, tailoring your OTA's offering to business travelers by offering extras like seat upgrades, lounge access, and highlighting hotels close to conference centers, could help you boost bookings.

You can identify corporate travelers in two ways. Firstly, you can look at your data to find solo travelers who have booked short trips, happening mid-week, which are booked close to the day of travel. Alternatively, you can get travelers to tick a box to identify themselves as traveling for work to capture this data.



How Booking.com asks corporate travelers to self-identify

What business travelers have bought on mobile



book all of their business travel through this channel



56%

would prefer to book all aspects of their journey on one website/app

Business travel and the Big 3

As expected, the biggest OTA players in the world are ahead of the game. Expedia Group, Booking Holdings and Ctrip have all jumped aboard the business travel train, offering solutions that combine the world-leading user experiences of an OTA with the needs of corporate travelers.

Not only do they target the business traveler persona, but also the business travel manager.

Expedia group: Egencia Expedia's corporate travel business, Egencia, offers both booking and travel management capabilities for business travelers. It promises to offer "more personalized experiences through curated access to the world's most relevant travel options".

Booking Holdings Booking takes a similar approach, creating a specific solution aimed at

corporates looking to better manage their business travel. They target all sizes of businesses, from individual travelers to enterprise accounts.

Ctrip The Chinese online travel agency offers everything from flight tickets and hotels to train tickets, car rental and visa applications. Again, all solutions already being offered in the leisure space, now collated and targeted towards business travelers.

Expedia group: Egencia

EGENCIA Solutions Platform features About Resources Contact Request a demo LOGIN

Go wherever your business takes you

Whether your business is big or small, let's make your travel management simple.

[Request a demo](#)

While you focus on growing your business, we'll focus on getting travelers where they need to be.

Take advantage of user-friendly Get up and running quickly with Business travel support.

Booking.com Sign in Contact Us

Make the World Your Workplace

Save, book faster, and easily manage employee travel with Booking.com for Business

First Name Last Name
Company Name
Email Address
Create Password
You book business travel for:
I'm not a robot

Now used everywhere for business and leisure travel

Google Samsonite YAMAHA SAMSUNG TOSHIBA

Made to Fit Your Business

Smart Savings
Your travelers can earn Genius discounts and perks for your company by booking 5

Stay in Control
Track your spending by department, team or individual business traveler.

All in One Place
Whether you're a Travel Organizer, or just traveling solo for business, get total oversight

Ctrip

WHY CHOOSE US?

Transparent: The real time business travel on-line reports make corporate business travel expenses clear to check.
Saving: Saving up to 30% business travel expenses with the help of products integration and travel management.

CEO/Manager CFO Travel Manager Traveler/Reservationist

Ctrip corporate travel app

booking anytime, multiport synchronization, authorization management, travel reminders

Tailor your search responses

As business travelers spend less time researching trips, the look to book window is short – so you need to capture their attention quickly. Central to this is presenting search results that are most relevant to the business traveler. For example the shortest durations should appear at the top of the results list and minimize the number of connections.

Many business travelers are loyal to an airline alliance if they are a member of a loyalty program. For the unmanaged business traveler, it makes sense to include the airline alliance in your search response display to entice the traveler to add their loyalty details. This is also a good starting point for a more targeted traveler profile.

Displaying both business and premium economy flight options is another way to tailor your OTA's search results to a corporate audience. Airline economy brands do not include fast track or lounge access, which are valued ancillary upsell opportunities for the business traveler.

Business-focused hotel offering

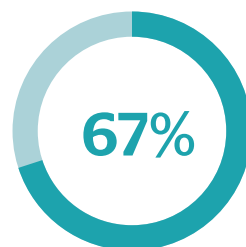
A business traveler has different hotel requirements to a leisure traveler. Business travelers take short trips and therefore need to be close to the office or conference center they are visiting. So, when displaying hotels on your website, show a map view to allow your users to make quick decisions on the most suitable hotels.

Another key consideration is to show clearly what is included with the rate, such as breakfast and Wi-Fi. Our global research found that 67% of corporate travelers will avoid hotels who charge for Wi-Fi⁷.

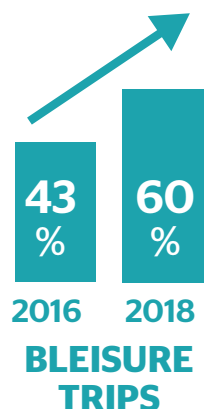
The bleisure opportunity

Bleisure – extending business trips to include some leisure time – has become one of the hottest trends in corporate travel over the last few years. It's set to increase, with Expedia reporting that the number of US business trips featuring an added leisure element increased from 43% in 2016 to 60% in 2018⁹.

This presents another engagement and upsell opportunity for OTAs. Once you have identified a business itinerary from your data, you can push offers with options to extend the trip to include leisure activities. This is especially relevant if the business trip is due to end close to the weekend.



of corporate travelers will avoid hotels who charge for Wi-Fi



US business trips featuring an added leisure element is on the increase



To sum up...

Identify business travelers from your own customer data by finding solo traveler itineraries that are short in duration, happen mid-week, and are booked close to the travel date. Alternatively, you can ask travelers to identify if they're traveling for work during your search or booking flow.

Create rules to filter your search results for business travelers, showing the shortest flight times first and highlighting premium economy or business fares.

Business travelers like to hold their trip details in their hand and 61% have booked and paid for an entire or part of a trip online through their mobile.



NEEDS TO BE IDENTIFIED



BLEISURE TRIPS ON THE INCREASE



TAKE THE SHORTEST TRIPS



MOBILE FIRST

Business traveler engagement plan

Lead time: **9 days** Trip length: **4 days** Motivation: ***Make the most of the trip***

PRE-TRIP

Thanks for booking

Destination insights



-9

Day of booking



Checklist

Visas, insurance, etc.

Hotel

Top hotels for business trips



-7



Survey

Tell us about your business trip

Ground transport

Car, Uber/Lyft



-5



Loyalty

Upgrade flight for extra loyalty points

Share itinerary

Let your colleagues know your itinerary



-3



Restaurants

Local food you need to try

Final checklist

Have a great trip



-1

IN-TRIP

Restaurants

Where to eat close to your hotel



Day of travel

0



Airport transfer

Get a taxi to your hotel

1

Check-in reminder

Flight details and time to airport



2

3



In-trip activities

Cultural experiences

POST-TRIP

4



Survey

How was your trip?

Couples



Couples

Our analysis of MIDT data shows ‘couples’ as being a large persona group, making up 16% of global bookings. However, this group primarily covers those couples traveling on longer trips of around two weeks. An even bigger segment, with 25% of global bookings, is those who take shorter weekend breaks - i.e. ‘the weekender’. In this chapter we’ll cover both.

Many of those who travel as a couple may also at other times fall into other persona categories - like business traveler or family. For OTAs, it’s vital to identify the trip context from the outset to present the most relevant options for a particular person at a given time. The hotels you suggest to someone traveling with their spouse alone will vary greatly to the family-friendly option you present to that same customer booking an itinerary that includes three kids!

Global Profile



Lead time: book to travel

78
DAYS



Average trip length

14
DAYS



International bookings

72%



Booking growth last 12 months

6%



% of global bookings

16%

Region in focus: Australia and New Zealand



97
DAYS

**Lead time:
book to travel**

17
DAYS

**Average
trip length**

75 %

**International
bookings**

6 %

**Booking growth
last 12 months**

19 %

**% of regional
bookings**

What couples want

Package holidays

Rumors of the package holiday's demise have been greatly exaggerated, and couples in particular are keen bookers of package deals. Our research shows that almost half of couple respondents (45%) look for packages with OTAs and around one-third have gone on to book these kinds of vacations through OTAs⁴.

Social media is key for trip planning

Social media's influence on vacation planning can't be underestimated and this is particularly true for couples. 30% of our 'couple' respondents say they have used social media to research or book a trip⁴.

The majority of couples use more than one website to book

While package holidays are relatively popular, most couples will shop around for the best deals and will book various parts of their trip across different websites. Our research with OTA end travelers found that 61% of couples use between 2-3 websites to book an entire trip⁴.

Personalization

These personas want personalization: 62% of those who travel as a couple are willing to provide more personal details if it results in a more personalized travel experience³. This includes details such as age, gender, destination preferences, preferred hotels and so on. OTAs must take advantage of this personalization opportunity – these traveler personas both want and expect them to do so.



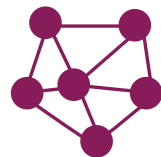
61 %

**use 2-3 websites
to book an entire
trip**



45 %

**of couples look for
package holidays
with OTAs**



30 %

**have used social
media to research or
book a trip**

How to target

Retargeting

Since these personas are willing to offer up personal details in exchange for a tailored experience, it's essential your online travel agency can deliver. One way you can achieve this is by retargeting customers who previously traveled as a couple with similar offers and inspiration for their next trip. And with 35% of couples taking between three and five trips per year⁴, the potential for conversion is significant.

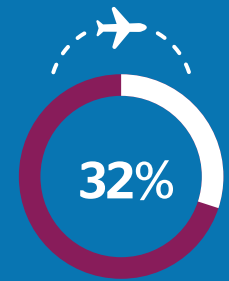
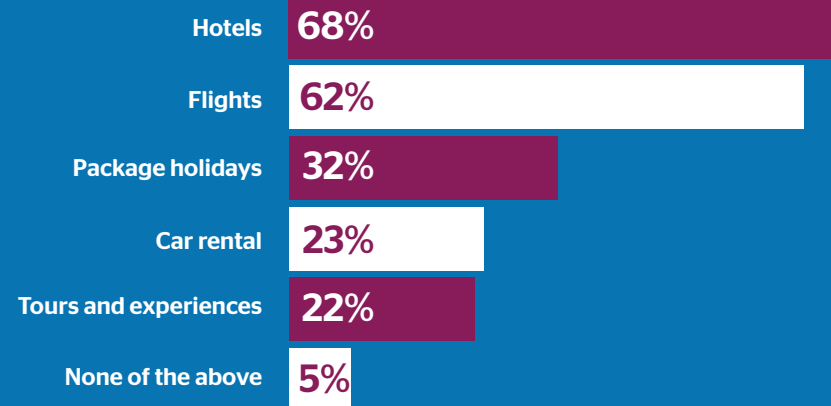
Of course, retargeting a couple that has just spent four days in Barcelona with an ad for another trip to the same city is ineffective. Instead, you can look at your own data, combined with general market trends, to discover other popular destinations for couples in a particular region.

By presenting offers for these new destinations, you can greatly increase your chance of getting that customer to give their business to your agency once again - especially considering that 57% want personalized offers from OTAs⁴.

Couple-specific messaging

Just like when you are targeting family travelers, the messaging and imagery you use should directly relate to the persona you are trying to capture. For example, you can create destination articles on top activities for couples, romantic restaurants in particular cities, or best hotels for couples in a certain region.

What couples are booking through OTAs...

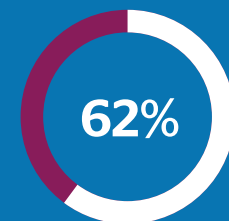
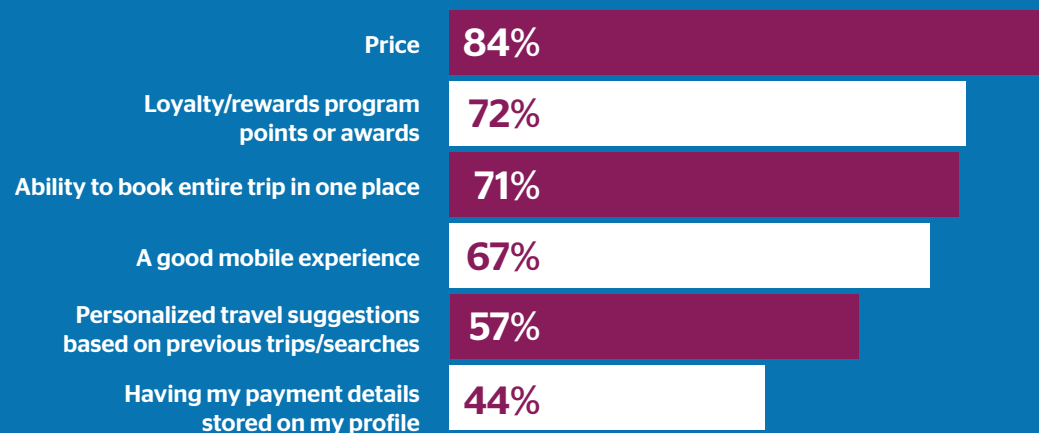


take between
3 and 5 trips
per year



want
personalized
offers from
OTAs

How important would the following factors be in influencing you to book another trip with the same online travel agency?



are willing to provide
more personal details
if it results in a more
personalized travel
experience

Our research found that 30% of couples find inspiration on social media, so again creating couple-specific posts for this audience is more likely to capture this persona's attention⁴.

Speed of search

With 71% of couples using more than one website to book their entire trip⁴, your online travel agency faces a lot of competition to capture and retain their attention. Returning fast search results means you can reduce the likelihood that visitors will bounce from your site to a competitor.

Returning air search results in less than two seconds should be your goal. As mentioned previously, you can also use asynchronous search, which returns results from providers as they become available, rather than aggregating all results before returning a single response.

Offer more than air

Since couples are particularly interested in package holidays, it's important to give the people what they want. Allowing your visitors to buy package deals, or even better, build their own, will help to drive conversion.

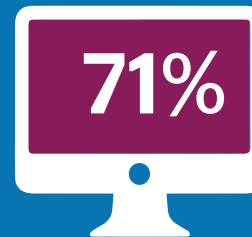
The key to doing this is to offer more than just air. Selling hotel, car rental, ground transport, and in-trip activities will give your customers more than enough choice and scope to build their perfect trip.



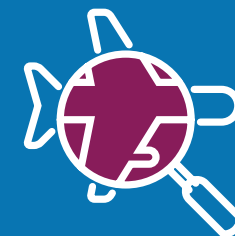
of couples
find inspiration on
social media



OTAs SHOULD
OFFER MORE
THAN AIR
to build perfect
trips for couples



of couples use more
than one website to
book an entire trip



< 2 SEC
return air search
results as quickly
as possible

Couples engagement plan

Lead time: **78 days** Trip length: **14 days** Motivation: *Relax, relax, and relax some more*

PRE-TRIP

Thanks for booking

Destination insights



-78

Day of booking

Hotel

Get pampered at these hotel spas



-71



Survey

Trip preferences

Make it special

Exclusive room upgrade



-57



Upgrade

All-inclusive packages

Trip tips

Things to do



-43



Social

Share your trip

-17



Checklist

Visas, insurance, etc.

-9

-3

-1

IN-TRIP

In-trip support

We're here if you need us



0

Day of travel

Souvenirs

Pick up these items to remember your trip



9



Restaurants

Try these recommended spots

14

POST-TRIP



Survey

How was your trip?

15

Weekenders

According to MIDT data, 'weekender' bookings have grown by 6% in the last 12 months and make up 25% of global bookings. Of these bookings, only one-third (33%) are international, with the majority choosing to travel domestically when taking a short trip.

Despite the short duration of the trip, weekenders still book around 32 days before they travel.

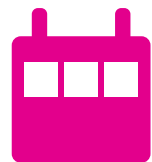
The weekender persona can cross over into two other personas we've already covered – the solo traveler and couples. However, the previous personas we've looked at show trends across longer trips. Each of these personas may also take multiple weekend breaks in a given year and OTAs should present offers for shorter breaks as well as longer trips.

What weekenders want

Make the most of short trips

With only a few days to sight-see, the weekender is looking for the flight options that will allow them to make the most of their time away. Often the cheapest fare can also result in a shorter weekend, so showing the lowest price first may not be the right option for this persona.

The fare that offers the most value to a weekender is the one that allows them to get the most out of the weekend – that is an early (yet not too early) arrival and late departure. These flights are likely to be the most popular, so can be highlighted through an urgency tag as flights that will quickly see an increase in price.



25%

of global bookings
are made up by
'weekender' bookings



**EARLY ARRIVAL
LATE DEPARTURE**

suits weekenders
so they can get the
most out of the trip



6%

**BOOKING
GROWTH**

in the past 12 months



Hotels close to key sights

Again, given the short trip duration, weekenders want accommodation close to major sight-seeing and restaurant hot spots. However, that should not inhibit offering hotels with spa facilities or close to the city's famous parks for a morning or evening jog.

The key is to show the reasoning behind why you're showing specific hotels in your messaging. You can also offer capabilities to book one of the offers or give the option to chat through a messaging platform with either a virtual or physical agent.



To sum up...

Couples and weekenders are a significantly large traveler segment.

35% of couples taking between three and five trips per year and there is a big opportunity to pull them back to your website to book their next trip through retargeting campaigns.

71% use more than one website to book their trip, so the competition is fierce. Make sure your OTA comes out on top by returning relevant search results in the fastest time.

'Weekender' bookings have grown by 6% in the last 12 months and make up 25% of global bookings.



**COUPLES
MAKE UP 16%
OF GLOBAL
BOOKINGS**



**WEEKENDERS
MAKE UP 25%
OF GLOBAL
BOOKINGS**



**71% USE
MORE THAN
ONE WEBSITE
TO BOOK**



**TAKES 3-5
TRIPS PER
YEAR**

Weekenders engagement plan

Lead time: **32 days** Trip length: **3 days** Motivation: ***Make the most of the weekend***

PRE-TRIP

Thanks for booking

Destination insights



-32

Day of booking

Survey

Trip preferences



-22



Social

Share your adventure



Suggested itinerary

3 days in your destination

Last-minute deals

Extend your trip



-9



Checklist

Visas, insurance, etc.

-2

IN-TRIP

Lounge access

Enjoy your short break



0

Day of travel

In-trip activities

Make the most of your trip



2



Social

Share your trip



Airport transfer

Book your Uber

3

POST-TRIP

Survey

How was your trip?



4

Groups



Groups

Our final traveler persona - those who travel as a group. If there's one thing we all know about groups, it's that organizing everyone can be a challenge. The websites that will win out in this persona's eyes are those who can offer good deals, has an easy to use interface, and allows friends to share ideas.

Despite relatively short trip lengths of less than a week, group travelers book the furthest in advance than any other persona group.

While group travel makes up a small proportion of global travel bookings, in Asia it has a significantly higher share at 16%.

Global Profile



Lead time: book to travel

93
DAYS



Average no. of passengers

14



Average trip length

6
DAYS



International bookings

88%



Booking growth last 12 months

1%



% of global bookings

5%

Region in focus: Asia



TOP DESTINATIONS

for Asian group travelers

**China, Japan, Vietnam, Guam,
United States, Thailand, South
Korea Taiwan, Philippines,
Hong Kong**

81
DAYS

**Lead time:
book to travel**

5
DAYS

**Average
trip length**

92%

**International
bookings**

-1%

**Booking growth
last 12 months**

16%

**% of regional
bookings**

What groups want

Flexible payments

When it comes to group vacations, costs can add up quickly for the person who's making the bookings. So, it's unsurprising to find that 72% of those who primarily travel as a group feel it's important to be able to pay in installments⁴. Allowing payment by installments shows consideration for a key pain point in the group travel booking process, as coming up with payment for a large group can be a challenge.

All-in-one packages

Package holidays are most popular among group travelers, with almost half (42%) saying they have searched for package vacations with OTAs⁴. Over a third have then gone on to book the package holiday.

This may come down to the fact that booking a package holiday for a large group of people is more convenient than shopping around and researching various trip elements for such a large group.

In-trip experiences

More than a quarter of group travelers have booked tours and experiences with an OTA. Phocuswright research found that 80% of in-destination experiences are booked offline¹⁰, however some global OTAs like Expedia are upping their efforts to sell more tours and experiences online.

With 81% of group travelers saying they would be open to receiving location-specific travel tips while on their trip⁴, this paves the way for travel brands to push offers on tours and experiences throughout the journey.



16%

of Asian travel
bookings are made by
group travelers



72%

feel it's important
to be able to pay in
installments



42%

have searched for
package holidays
with OTAs



How to target groups

Support

Booking a group trip can be complex. Having agent support on-hand will help show the added value of booking with your OTA over the hundreds of other websites out there. While this could mean having an agent ready to assist via phone or email, other channels also appeal to this group like web chat and social media messengers.

In fact, our research found that among group travelers, online chat is the number one channel they want to contact OTAs through when booking travel.

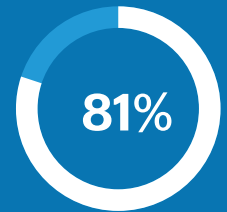
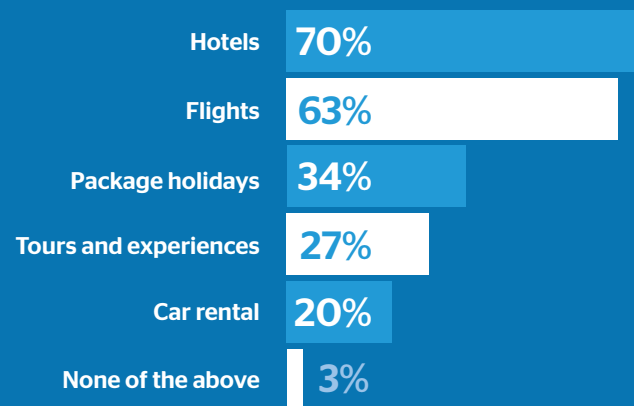
Social media and chatbots

Across the journey, social media is a key channel used by groups to plan and book their trip. Our research shows that almost half (48%) of group travelers have used social media when researching their travel options and 21% have used it to make the booking⁴.

In addition, 29% of group travelers expect to be able to chat to a travel brand on social media with queries once they have made a booking⁴. To appeal to these traveler personas, your social media strategy should look to incorporate not only inspirational content, but also key support and chat services that group travelers are looking for.

Social is also a good channel to drive downloads of your OTA's app, as 30% of group travelers have downloaded a travel app because of an ad they saw on social media³.

Which of the following parts of your trip have booked through an OTA?



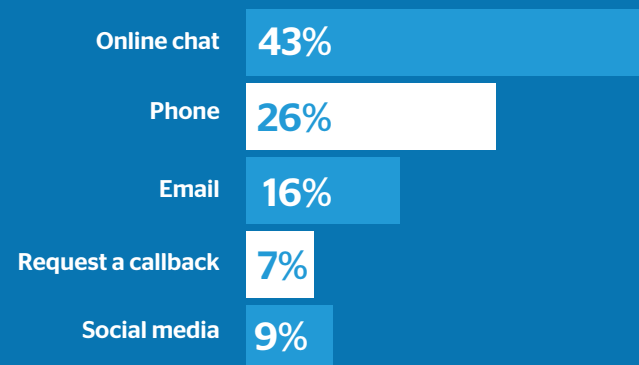
say they would be open to receive location-specific travel tips



ONLINE CHAT

is the no 1 channel groups want to contact OTAs through

Preferred method of communication with OTAs during booking



have downloaded a travel app because of an ad they saw on social media.

Simplify the booking experience on desktop and mobile

It's unsurprising given the intricacies of booking for a group that 83% sometimes or nearly always use desktop to book a flight, although 65% also use smartphone apps.

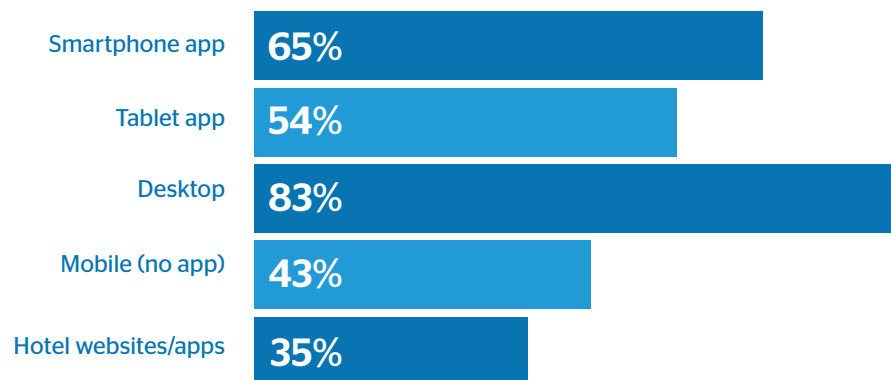
Simplifying your booking flow and creating a clean user interface on both mobile and desktop will enable groups to put a trip together quickly and feel confident enough to make the booking. It is also important to create continuity between devices during the booking process, allowing the traveler to start their booking on their smartphone and complete it on desktop, for example.

Group tours

Our research shows that 39% of group travelers look for tours and experiences on online travel agencies.. Showing options that are suitable for groups – or even better, group discounts – will allow you to boost ancillary revenue beyond flight and accommodation bookings.

In addition, enabling sharing options, like via email or mobile messengers, will help make the group booking and traveling experience as seamless as possible. In turn, this will allow you to create a better relationship with your customers. Our research found that 55% of group travelers like to be able to share their itinerary with friends and family via a mobile messaging apps like WhatsApp⁴.

Which of the following do you usually use when searching flight options?



To sum up...

Group travel is most popular in Asia, making up 16% of bookings in the last 12 months

Having the ability to pay by installments is particularly important to this group, with 72% wanting OTAs to offer this capability

Booking group travel can be a complex business and 43% of group travelers would choose 'online chat' as their preferred method of contacting an OTA during the booking process

While 65% have used smartphone apps to search flight options, 83% usually use desktop when looking for flights



**MOST
POULAR
IN ASIA**



**83% SEARCH
FLIGHTS ON
DESKTOP**



**FLEXIBLE
PAYMENT IS
IMPORTANT**



**ONLINE CHAT
NO 1 METHOD
OF CONTACT**

Groups traveler engagement plan

Lead time: **92 days** Trip length: **6 days** Motivation: *Planner/explorer, with itinerary sorted before trip starts*

PRE-TRIP

IN-TRIP

POST-TRIP

Thanks for booking

Destination insights



-92

Day of booking

Survey

What do you like to explore?



-85



Share your trip

With other passengers

Suggested itinerary

5 days in your destination



-67



Reviews

See top-rated hotels/activities

Last minute offers

Day of rest ideas



-32



Destination activities

Book in advance to avoid lines

Personalized itinerary

Trip overview



-12



Checklist

Visas, insurance, etc

Personalized itinerary

Trip overview



-7



Last minute checks

Enjoy exploring

Airport transfer

Where to find your transfer



0

Day of travel

Social

Share trip and tag us



2



In-trip support

Chat to us through our app activities

4

6



Airport offers

Meeting points and gate info

Survey

How was your trip?



7

Steps to better personalization

Now you have the data, how can you start using it to truly personalize your offering? Here are some of the ways.

Create your own traveler personas

The data we present in this eBook is a good starting place in your quest to get to know your customers better and personalize your offering to them. But it is just a starting place - there is a lot more you can do to create comprehensive traveler persona profiles, which will help you deliver a truly personalized experience.



Data to include in your traveler persona profiles

Website data: It's likely you're already conducting in-depth analysis of your website data. By studying behavioral and booking trends across your site, you will be able to see content preferences, popular routes and frequent searches, all of which can be used to build out robust traveler persona profiles.

Customer data: Look at your existing customers to formulate your own persona groupings. Some traveler groups are easier to identify than others (for example family travelers can be easily spotted by the inclusion of children on the itinerary). However, there are other signals you can use to identify personas. The flight itinerary data gives a clear indication of the type of traveler persona – for example you can identify families by passenger type codes, back packers by price and duration of stay, leisure weekend break or business traveler by days of the week. The more you interrogate and analyze your data, the more accurate your traveler persona profiles will become.

Market data: By interrogating big data, such as that from GDSs, you can identify market trends within the regions in which you operate. This will help you to identify the personas in your market who you may not already be targeting, and therefore open up new growth opportunities for your business. It can also give you some competitor insights – and see what share of certain personas your OTA is capturing compared to others in your region.

Personalize your search results

If you are just getting started with personalization, your flight search results are a good place to start. Some platforms allow you to create rules for the flight results that are shown to various personas, see example on the right.

It is also essential to have technology that allows you to restrict poor-performing search results, for example from airlines with high sell failures. Why? Because travelers are using so many websites and channels to search and book their travel, that one bad experience on your website is likely to send them elsewhere – and you're unlikely to get them back.

Another advantage of using a rules-based console to personalize search results is that you can prioritize preferred suppliers – helping you to achieve supplier targets and build better relationships.



Families

Show the shortest flight time to the family persona who value keeping their family members happy over the absolute cheapest price



Solo Travelers / Couples

Break the itinerary for couples or solo travelers taking long trips – so instead of a flight connection, it can become an experience within the trip



Weekender

Present flights that arrive early and depart late to ensure weekenders can get the maximum value out of the duration of their trip



Business Traveler

Restrict the number of connections in a business traveler's itinerary

Show business class and premium economy fares for business travelers

Think beyond the air booking

Many OTAs primarily focus on selling air, but to truly grow your business, it's essential to offer services beyond a flight.

There are a number of reasons to do this:

- 73% of travelers want to book an entire trip in one place – flight, hotel, and in-trip activities. While a majority are still using 2-3 websites to book an end-to-end trip, there is a huge opportunity for OTAs to become a one-stop-shop by selling the full trip⁴.
- You can grow your revenue by selling high-margin products like hotel and car directly through your online travel agency. Air products have an extremely low margin – if any margin at all – so to truly start optimizing your profits, hotel and car are the best options.
- An air booking gives you a wealth of data about a particular traveler – it's a shame for that data to go to waste. You can use the demographics and itinerary information you've gathered to present hotels and car rental options that are best suited to that particular customer. By doing so, you're not only driving ancillary revenue, you're also positioning your brand as a helpful partner who keeps the customer's preferences to the fore.

How can your OTA get started selling hotel content? There are two ways: a white-label/affiliate model approach, or directly through your agency via GDS.

Selling hotel: Affiliate v agency model

Affiliate

V

Agency

🕒 About

Involves installing a while-labeled widget on your site, which redirects the traveler to another third-party website to book the car or hotel.

✓ Pros

Easy to get up and running and likely requires little development cost.

Earn commissions from bookings made through third party websites.

✗ Cons

The affiliate website owns the customer relationship, which limits your ability to engage with the traveler post-booking.

You're sharing margin on the most lucrative part of the itinerary.

You forego upsell opportunities, brand development, and supplier relationships.

It's a disjointed customer experience, where the customer starts a booking on your website but ends up on another.

🕒 About

Integrate the content into your website and sell directly to the customer on your own channels via a GDS API.

✓ Pros

Revenue boost as you're not sharing margins.

Own the customer relationship and personalize your offering.

Enhance the customer experience and build longer relationships with your travelers.

Build supplier relationships as it will be your brand they see when a booking comes through, not the affiliate's brand. This can evolve into negotiated rates and agreements.

✗ Cons

Some development time or costs. However, by choosing a single API that can deliver a wide range of content like air, hotel, car, branded fares, and ancillaries, you can get up and running quickly with limited development overhead.

Conclusion

The online travel space is growing at a phenomenal rate. With an expanding list of competitors, your online travel agency needs to differentiate its offering by delivering personalized, tailored experiences that today's consumers expect as standard.

But of course, it's not always that easy.

Developing the right personalization strategy can take time and more data than your online travel agency has available. The booking data and customer details you collect, while a good place to start, is just one slice of an overall bigger picture.

Combining your agency's shopping and buying dynamics with wider data from the market, and your competitors, will allow you to gather insights and take action. By doing so, you can identify new target audiences and build your own persona-driven marketing strategy – with the ultimate goal of driving conversion and ROI.

Now is the time to take the first step by building robust traveler persona profiles that are relevant to your business. Do that, and you'll be well on your way to delivering personalized search results, ancillaries, and experiences that your customers will love – and will keep them coming back for more.

Ready to talk about your personalization strategy?

Spanning 180 countries, processing 11 billion travel transactions a month and with access yearly to over a billion travel bookings, Travelport can provide a window to the world of unknowns for OTAs.

By analyzing the consumer data signals coming in from the GDS we are in a unique position to inform and improve the traveler buying journey. From shaping how and when to market to your customers and detailing the most relevant content, we can advise on what to do next to increase conversions, loyalty, and retention.

travelport.com/ExperienceConversion

Sources

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About Travelport

Travel is a \$7 trillion industry – and Travelport is at its heart, powering the experiences that the world's leading travel companies provide. Our platform enables travel providers, travel agencies, corporations and developers to search, share, buy and sell travel. We connect the world's leading travel providers with online and offline buyers in a proprietary B2B travel marketplace.

In 2018, our Travelport systems processed:

- * Approximately \$89 billion of travel spending
- * Over 4 trillion messages passed over our networks; approx. 11 billion air shopping requests per month
- * Over 335 million segments sold by travel agencies including:
 - Over 107 million car rental days
 - Approximately 67 million hotel room nights
 - 45 hospitality segments per 100 air tickets sold

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