

Mastering the GDS: A Guide to Effectively Engaging Travel Sellers

2024 Global Travel Sellers Report

New research explores ways for hoteliers, destinations and airlines to leverage global distribution systems (GDSs) to successfully engage travel sellers using GDS advertising.



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Introduction

Global demand for travel shows no signs of slowing down in 2024, with many regions and markets on par with or surpassing 2019 hotel occupancy levels, according to [Amadeus business intelligence data](#).

Business travel is returning, but it is leisure demand that is largely driving the post-pandemic recovery. Amadeus' [Agency360](#)® data shows that, as of July 2024, hotel room nights booked on global distribution systems (GDSs) for leisure travel have increased significantly over the last two years.

While this is good news for the travel industry, it's important to note that there continues to be some noticeable shifts in traveler behavior and preferences. It's all highlighted here in the results of Amadeus' Travel Sellers' survey, which includes a new segment of price sensitive shoppers who expect the best deals when

making their travel arrangements. This year, travelers have listed "value for money" as a key consideration, along with the availability of multi-modal options for an overall seamless journey. And with many travelers showing a greater interest in 'blended' travel, which merges both business and personal time on the same trip, carefully weighing their options has become even more important.

Now is the time for hoteliers, airlines and destination marketers to evaluate and refine their strategies to more effectively serve their key audiences, including travel sellers.

Travel sellers, valued for their expertise, use the GDS to find the best deals for their clients. Amadeus' latest research shows that to become a preferred choice among travel sellers and their customers, it is essential to find out how to market effectively on the GDS.

About the survey

In a comprehensive study authored by Amadeus, Takedown Research, a prominent provider of research and analytics, surveyed approximately 1,000 travel sellers from the industry's three major GDSs – Amadeus, Sabre, and Travelport – between May and June 2024. The research aimed to assess the usage and satisfaction with the GDS among travel sellers and track the evolution of awareness and perception of GDS advertising over the past two years. The study's findings provide a balanced representation of travel agents from the North

America (NORAM), Latin America (LATAM), Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA), and Asia Pacific (APAC) regions, with total travel agent percentages adjusted to reflect all regions equally.

As the most recent survey was conducted in [2022](#), it was crucial for the current survey to examine the changes that have occurred during this post-pandemic period, including updated findings and points of view that reflect the travel industry as it exists today.

Price: travelers' key concern

Over the past few years, health, safety and financial considerations have been primary factors when it comes to travel. Today, however, cost is the most important concern for travelers when making reservations through travel sellers. Travelers often modify their plans, from flight bookings to destinations, based on pricing considerations.

Despite the increasing cost of living and the impact it has on trip planning, consumers continue to have a strong interest in travel. Nowadays, they also expect a travel experience that offers great value and complete transparency in terms of its worth.



Travel Trends

Based on travel sellers' GDS usage

A growing interest in door-to-door travel experiences

For a travel seller, creating a frictionless journey for their clients is essential, from the moment they leave home, to the time they board their flight, arrive at their hotel, and return. **Two out of five** emphasize the importance of a seamless **door-to-door** experience for travelers, through every step of their trip.

In addition, offering convenience and efficiency have proven to be key to satisfying and retaining clients. **Half of all travel sellers** would consider offering the following services as part of this comprehensive door-to-door experience for travelers: flights (63%), fast check-in (58%), transfers (56%), insurance (51%), and car rental (50%).

The importance of sustainability

In today's world, more and more people are incorporating sustainability into their travel plans. The survey findings indicate that sustainability is a key factor for one-third of travel sellers, as it influences travelers' decisions when choosing a travel seller.

Travelers interested in sustainability expect to see specific information in travel sellers' descriptions. Over 60% of travelers find that sustainability ratings, or green labels, and the sustainability certifications of travel sellers themselves are important. 50% of travelers would carefully inspect the carbon footprint of any travel options, including accommodations.

Key takeaway: Sustainability information is more critical to travelers in EMEA and APAC than in other regions.

Business and 'blended' travel is up

Following the pandemic, **81% of travel sellers have noted an increased demand for business travel**, along with a renewed desire for more in-person engagement. Travelers are increasingly combining business trips with leisure activities, extending their stays to explore and enjoy the destination beyond work. Travel sellers indicate that **more than a quarter of all bookings now fall into this 'blended' travel category.**

GDS USAGE

GDS usage is on the rise and continues to outpace other reservation channels in terms of growth.

Travel sellers, who connect an average of **6 times per day for nearly 9 hours**, still consider the GDS a critical channel in the growth of the travel market, according to the survey. Global distribution systems continue to outpace other reservation channels, with **over 50% of travel sellers using it more now than they did two years ago.**

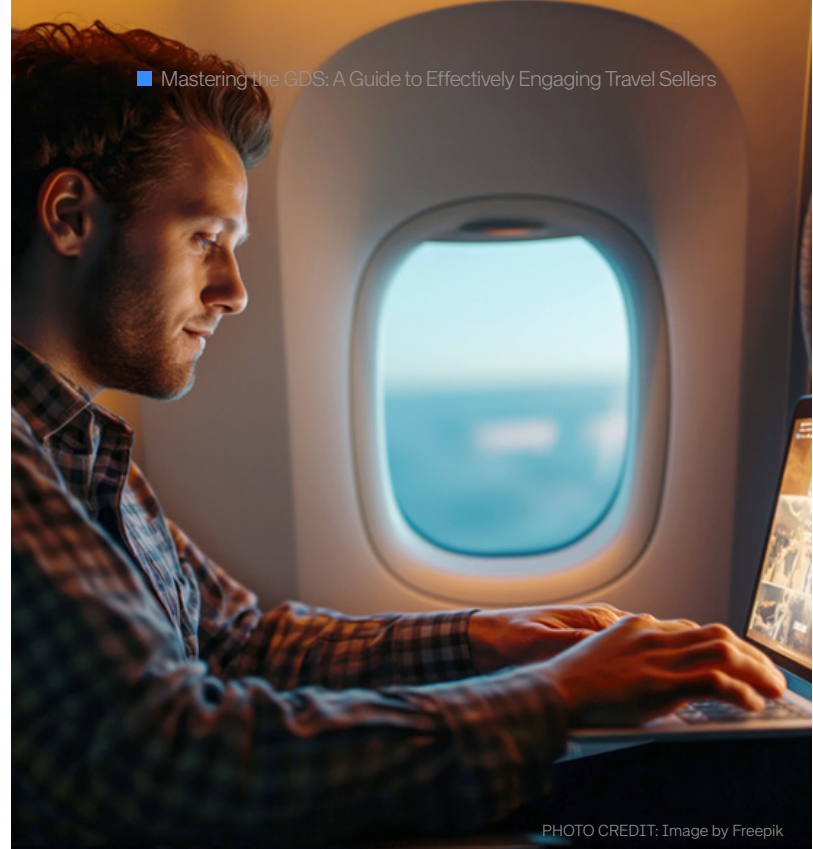
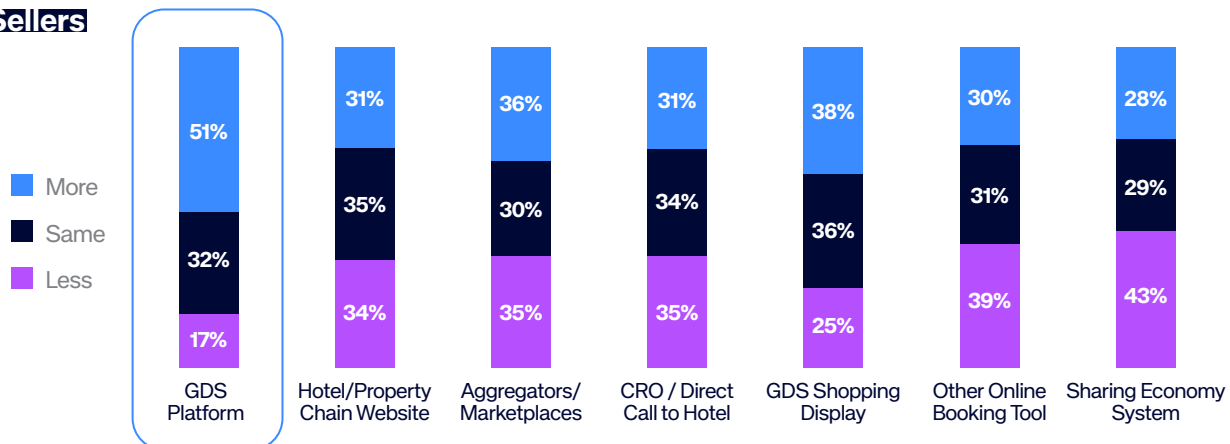


PHOTO CREDIT: Image by Freepik

The GDS offers travel sellers the chance to provide their customers with tailored, exclusive travel services, enhancing the overall value of their offerings. Simultaneously, travel providers benefit from an increase in bookings.

Q: Compared to two years ago, would you say that you were using the following reservation channels more, about the same, or less?

Travel Sellers



Data Source: Takedown Research survey, May-June 2024

GDS Shopping Display: A platform that sources and aggregates all travel content - airline, hotel, rail operator, cruise, etc. - into one location that is deployed on a variety of interfaces.

The **Sharing Economy System:** Refers to an economic model that is based on people sharing possessions and services, either for free or for payment, usually facilitated through online platforms, such as short-term rental providers.

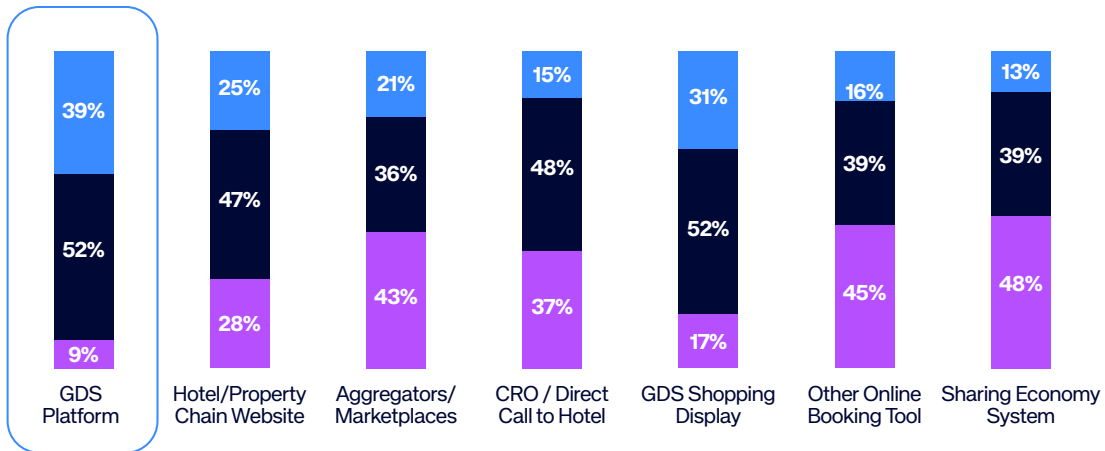
With GDS usage on the rise globally, platform preferences vary by region.

North American (NORAM) travel sellers are booking almost exclusively through the GDS, with less than 10% indicating that they are using it less than they were two years ago.

Q: Compared to two years ago, would you say that you were using the following reservation channels more, about the same, or less?

NORAM

- More
- Same
- Less



Data Source: Takedown Research survey, May-June 2024

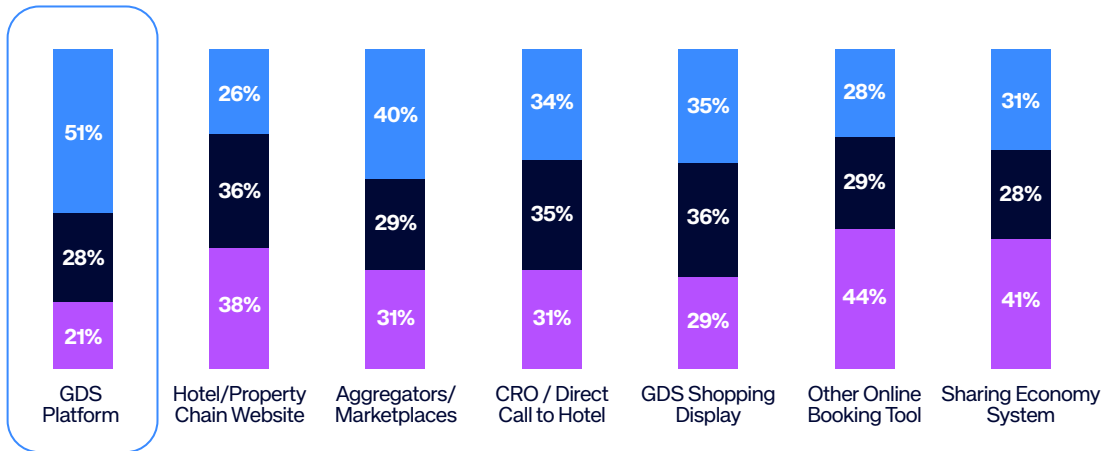


In Latin America (LATAM), too, more than half of surveyed travel sellers are using the GDS more often than they were two years ago (+3% compared to the 2022 report, where the same question was also asked).

Q: Compared to two years ago, would you say that you were using the following reservation channels more, about the same, or less?

LATAM

- More
- Same
- Less



Data Source: Takedown Research survey, May-June 2024



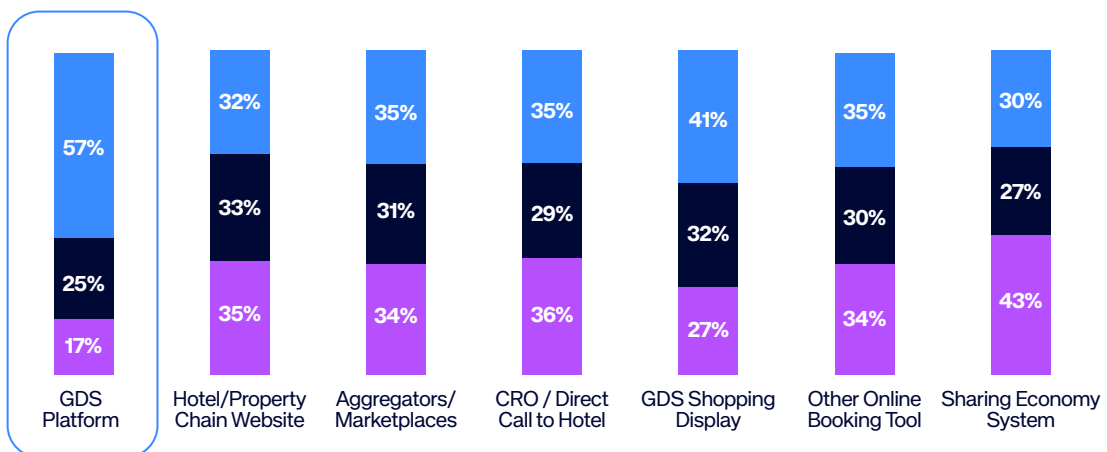


57% of surveyed travel sellers from Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) are using the GDS more often than they did two years ago (+5% compared to the 2022 report, where the same question was also asked).

Q: Compared to two years ago, would you say that you were using the following reservation channels more, about the same, or less?

EMEA

- More
- Same
- Less



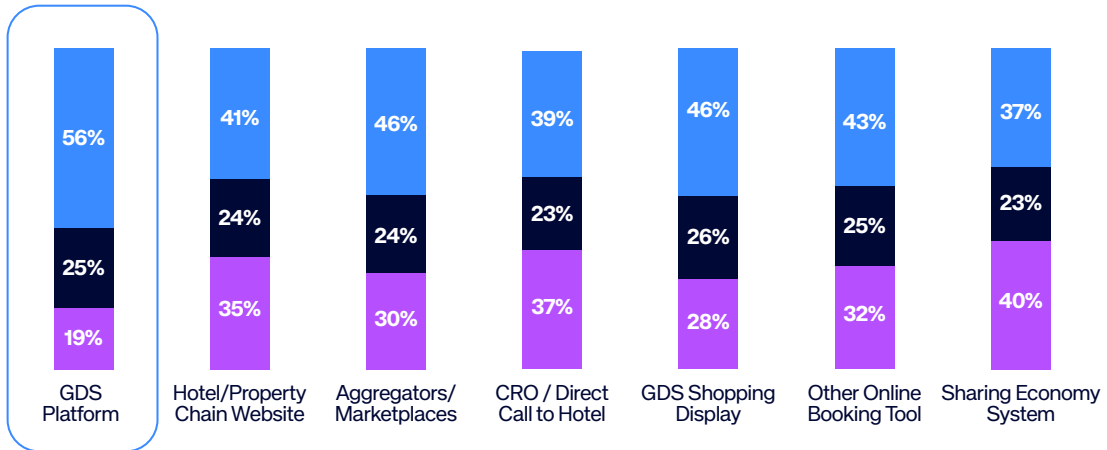
Data Source: Takedown Research survey, May-June 2024

56% of surveyed travel sellers from Asia Pacific (APAC) are also using the GDS more often than they were two years ago (+5% compared to the 2022 report, where the same question was also asked).

Q: Compared to two years ago, would you say that you were using the following reservation channels more, about the same, or less?

APAC

- More
- Same
- Less



Data Source: Takedown Research survey, May-June 2024



Why are some travel sellers using the GDS more?

Travel sellers find they can use the GDS to make travel easier and less stressful for their clients. Travel sellers can better accommodate their clients' needs, explain policies, present personalized offers, and streamline the entire booking process down to the smallest detail.

Beyond offering [seat selection](#) and [fast check-in](#), **over 50%** of them would also offer key value-added services like [transfer](#), [insurance](#) and [car rental](#) to their customers.



The importance of rate parity

Maintaining uniform rates across various distribution channels, known as rate parity, is crucial to travel sellers worldwide. According to survey results, **3 out of 5 travel sellers** actively avoid hotels that don't offer consistent rates across GDS providers.


Key takeaway: Almost all travel sellers in NORAM feel that rate parity is an important consideration.

Optimizing hotel content on Global Distribution Systems

An accurate hotel description (HOD) is crucial for a hotel to be able to convert bookings. Most travel sellers rely on HODs – essentially, a hotel's electronic brochure or landing page – to tell them everything they need to know about the property. Nearly 80% of travel sellers search primarily for a property's star-rating and photos, followed by hotel services and amenities.

Out of all regions, travel sellers in NORAM (61%) and LATAM (59%) rely most heavily on HODs. These results align closely with surveys conducted prior to the pandemic.

[Download Amadeus' Guide to Optimizing GDS Visibility to learn more about HOD best practices](#)



GDS advertising: The art of being top-of-mind for travel sellers

GDS ads influence travel sellers' buying behavior

More than two thirds of travel sellers state that GDS advertising has some influence over their buying behavior. Reaching travel sellers through this channel should then become a key marketing strategy for hotels, airlines, and destinations.

Key takeaway: Travel sellers in NORAM are the most likely among various regions to book providers that are featured in GDS advertising.

Hotels, DMOs, airlines and other travel providers can choose from a selection of GDS ad placements to target travel sellers, including sign-in, search availability, lock screen and sell-time ads. Hotels can also [market to travel sellers](#) by purchasing top placements on GDS hotel search screens, or preferred placement products, like paid search on search engines.

Travel providers can consider these essential elements to help craft a compelling ad:

- Travel sellers indicate that the most effective times to receive promotional messages on the GDS are either during the **search (35%) or log in process (25%)**.
- Three out of four travel sellers find **graphical messages more appealing than text-based ones**.
- Words such as “**free**” or “**complimentary**” are especially compelling for almost all travel sellers (93%).
- Sustainability information influences booking decisions for **60% of sellers**, especially when it contains **sustainability ratings or green labels**, or travel providers’ **sustainability certifications for sellers**.

Three quarters of travel sellers indicate that they would book a provider’s “best offer” regardless of where the ad is placed.

Targeting international travelers: GDS advertising for destinations

Destinations leverage [GDS advertising](#) primarily to expand international reach and visibility. GDSs provide a platform to target international travelers, enhance the local economy, and foster sustainable growth within the tourism sector. When it comes to advertising, travel sellers consider **incentives, discounts, and special deals** as the greatest motivators to selecting a destination (66%), followed by the **unique experiences** they can offer (48%).

“I’d love to see engaging advertising content on the GDS that brings to life local experiences, showcases unique cultural offerings, and highlights lesser-known destinations, all of which would inspire a sense of adventure and discovery among travelers.”

Anonymous survey respondent

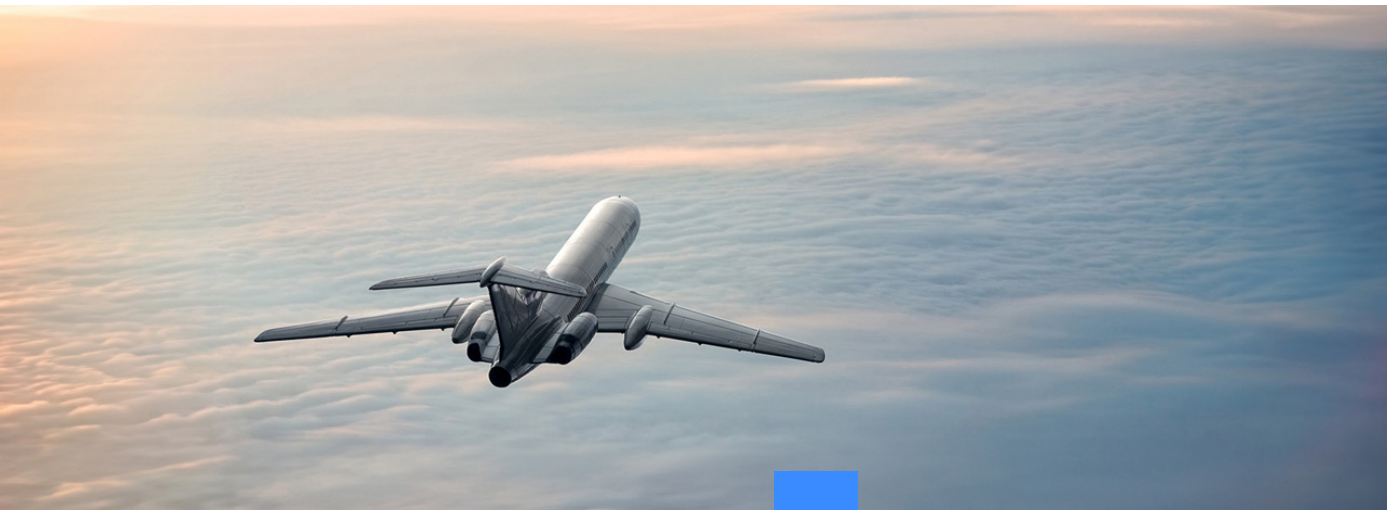


GDS advertising: Expanding airlines' horizons

As travelers continue to show interest in vacationing to more exotic locations despite budget constraints, airlines are rethinking ways to cater to passenger tastes with more affordably priced tickets.

Some airlines have added new or non-stop routes, or even brand-new destinations as part of a promotion. GDS advertising plays a key role in promoting travel options and ensuring they are visible to travel sellers who are actively booking trips for customers, thereby enhancing the probability of rapidly filling all available seats.

Beyond air tickets, passengers are looking for complementary services to enhance their experience – services that represent valuable revenue opportunities for airlines, as they allow travel sellers great flexibility to design more personalized trips. Additional services that travel sellers most frequently offer their clients include seat selection (63%) and fast check-ins (58%). According to the survey, 81% of travel sellers find that loyalty programs are key to incentivizing customers to purchase more ancillary products and services, in exchange for various rewards such as points, miles, or status upgrades.



Optimizing GDS advertising: Strategic insights and Amadeus' recommendations

Travel sellers have their own target audiences, which can vary widely based on individual special interests, geographical focus, client demographics, and other factors. Understanding travel sellers' target audiences is crucial for travel providers aiming to effectively engage with them through the GDS.

Data gives travel providers valuable insights to effectively target the right travel sellers. To optimize the use of GDS and achieve success, here are four recommended steps to follow:

1. Identify the audience

In an ever-evolving travel landscape, hotels, airlines, and destinations must embrace flexibility to understand market trends and travel sellers' shifting preferences. Leveraging market insights from [business intelligence tools](#) can help these travel providers predict and respond to shifts in booking behaviors and align their offers accordingly. Data is key to helping identify travel sellers based on various criteria such as geographic location, size, booking trends and patterns, and client specializations (e.g., corporate travel, leisure travel, and **blended travel**).

This process of segmentation is important for understanding which sellers are most likely to be interested in specific offerings.

2. Build targeted marketing strategies for maximum engagement

Once travel sellers are identified and segmented, travel providers should ensure their offerings are detailed, up-to-date, and visually engaging with high-quality descriptions, images, and multimedia content. **More than 8 in 10**

travel sellers acknowledge that they view hotel description details when booking or researching a property.

The messaging of each offer or discount on GDS ads should be tailored to a specific travel seller segment.

While travel sellers and their clients prioritized price, health, and safety in 2022, the current economic climate is leading them to search for **'great deals'** that provide consumers with the most value for money spent.

3. Analyze and optimize campaign performance

Every GDS advertising campaign should involve ongoing monitoring to gauge its performance. Utilizing GDS analytics tools in conjunction with business intelligence solutions can be instrumental in identifying where demand is coming from. By analyzing data such as booking volumes, conversion rates and revenue generated, it's possible to determine which travel sellers are delivering the best return on ad spend (ROAS) and adjust strategies accordingly.

4. Build a winning relationship

A surge in bookings and revenue from the latest GDS campaign does not necessarily guarantee that the identified travel sellers will maintain their booking frequency. It is important for a travel provider to cultivate relationships with these sellers and to develop a good understanding of their needs and challenges to ensure they continue to take advantage of exclusive deals in the GDS.



Amadeus' comprehensive media solutions: Enhancing visibility and bookings for hoteliers and DMOs

Amadeus Hospitality works with hoteliers and DMOs to enhance their visibility and bookings through comprehensive media strategies that are attuned to their audiences' needs. [Amadeus' Media Solutions](#) provide targeted, persuasive messaging to travel sellers, who are a crucial audience for hotels, DMOs and travel providers. Unique in offering multi-GDS advertising, Amadeus enables brands to advertise across all three major GDS providers: Amadeus, Sabre, and Travelport.

Powered by proprietary insights and industry expertise, the Amadeus Media team facilitates targeted advertising during the shopping and booking stages, along with preferred placement options. Campaigns can be scheduled around specific promotions or sales periods, backed by strategies that account for booking lead times. Amadeus experts guide clients through the campaign process, providing data-driven recommendations from start to finish to enhance campaign outcomes.

As an added value, Amadeus simplifies the process by handling the creative design work necessary for ad launches. Hoteliers are also able to leverage [Agency360](#)[®], the industry's only business intelligence solution that tracks travel seller bookings across leading GDS platforms. This forward-looking booking data allows hoteliers to spot trends and capture revenue opportunities early on, while also identifying which travel sellers to prioritize. Insights into sellers booking within their market, and comprehensive travel seller profiles, help hoteliers and DMOs develop new relationships.

Interested in learning more? [Contact us](#) or visit amadeus-hospitality.com.



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