

The Personalization and Direct Bookings Playbook

Actionable strategies to support direct booking conversion and Personalize the guest experience



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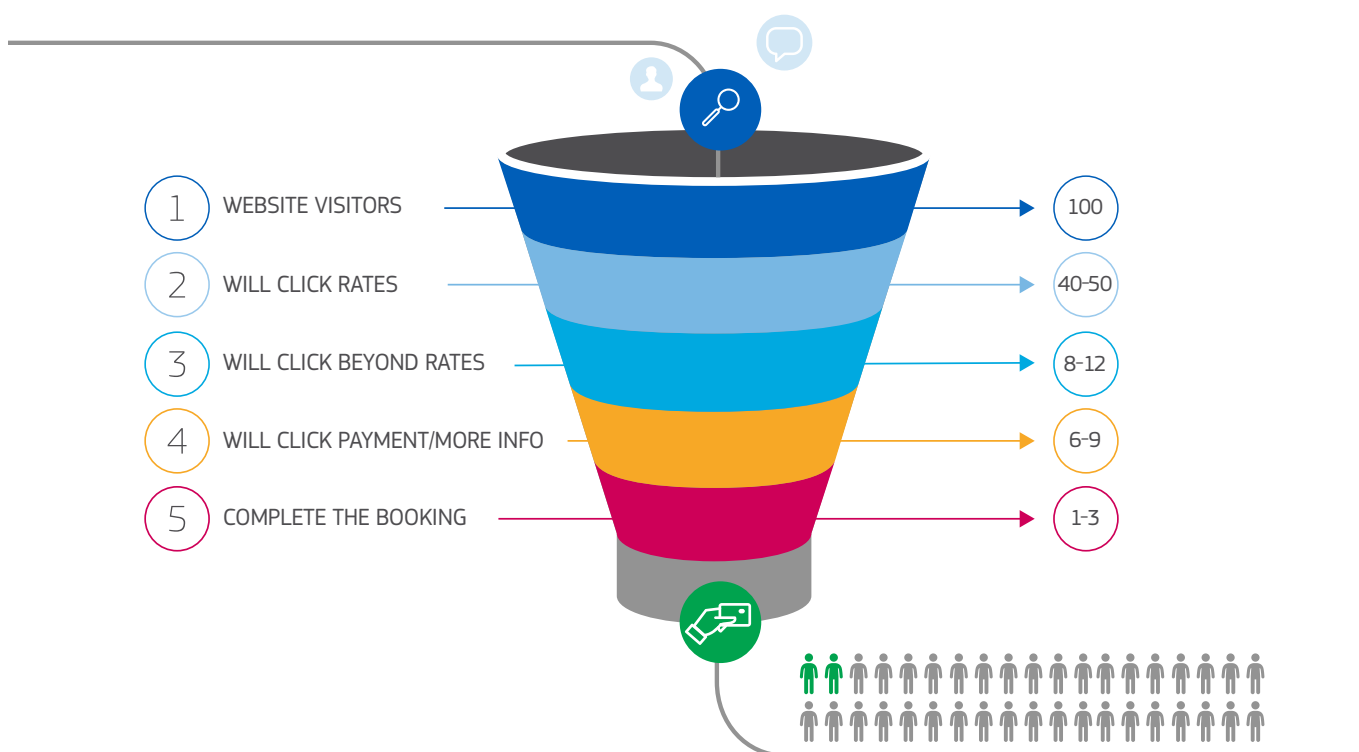
- a. Drive shoppers to Brand.com
- b. Maximize conversions on your booking engine

With the impact of COVID-19 and a more competitive distribution environment, lowering the cost of guest acquisition to maximize every dollar of revenue is paramount to success. Driving bookings through Brand.com can help to increase profitability and decrease costs. And hoteliers' unique ability to personalize the shopping and booking experience can help further grow direct booking revenues.

And during COVID-19 recovery we've seen the importance of the direct channel in communicating cancellations, policy changes, travel restrictions, and other details to customers who are more frequently seeking out individual hotel websites and engaging with direct communication channels. How can hoteliers build on this momentum and encourage post-recovery direct shopping engagement to make the most out of their most profitable distribution channel?

Direct Booking Challenges

Many hoteliers struggle to ensure that their direct channel is the most visible and appealing to guests. The average conversion rate for website visitors is only about 2% while the average booking engine conversion rate is only about 7% ([h2c](#)).



Why are direct conversion rates so low?

Over time, the guest journey has drastically changed while most hotelier's strategies have remained constant. In today's shopping landscape, guests will on average visit 18 websites on multiple devices across 8 sessions before making the decision to book ([Phocuswright](#)). Meanwhile, third-party channels have introduced loyalty benefits, packages and urgency messaging that entices shoppers to book through them. Hoteliers need to be savvier than ever to make sure their direct channel can break through the noise and be the most appealing option for shoppers.

Interpolation of direct conversion statistics from Phocuswright (<https://www.phocuswright.com>)

Why are direct conversion rates important?

When hoteliers sell inventory on channels other than Brand.com, revenue is lost in fees paid to distribution partners. This drives up the cost of guest acquisition and takes profit away from the hotel. When bookings come in via indirect channels, hoteliers also miss out on the direct engagement with the guest and ability to capture valuable guest data that can be utilized to deliver more personalized experiences and establish long-term relationships.

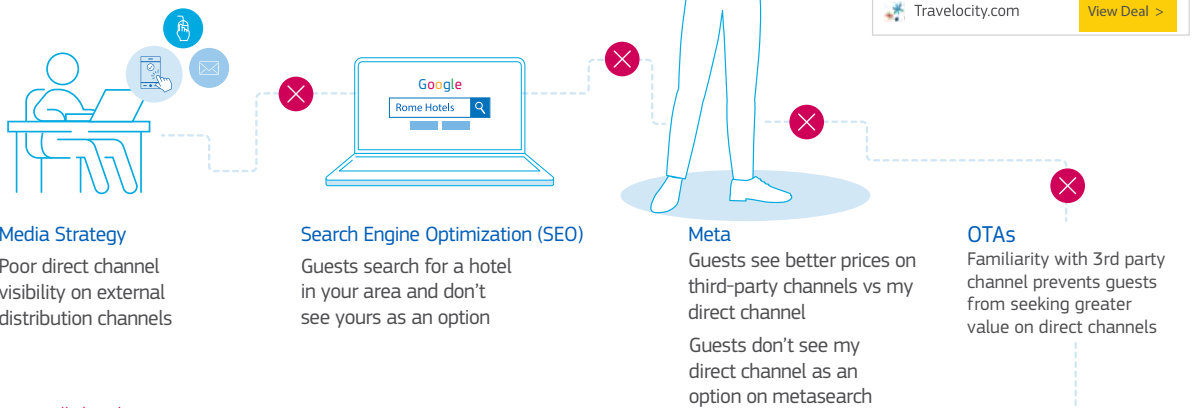
When driving bookings through Brand.com, hoteliers maximize profit by cutting out the middle man. With data showing less than half of shoppers ever visiting the hotel or chain's direct booking engine, it's imperative to maximize conversion rates for those who do.



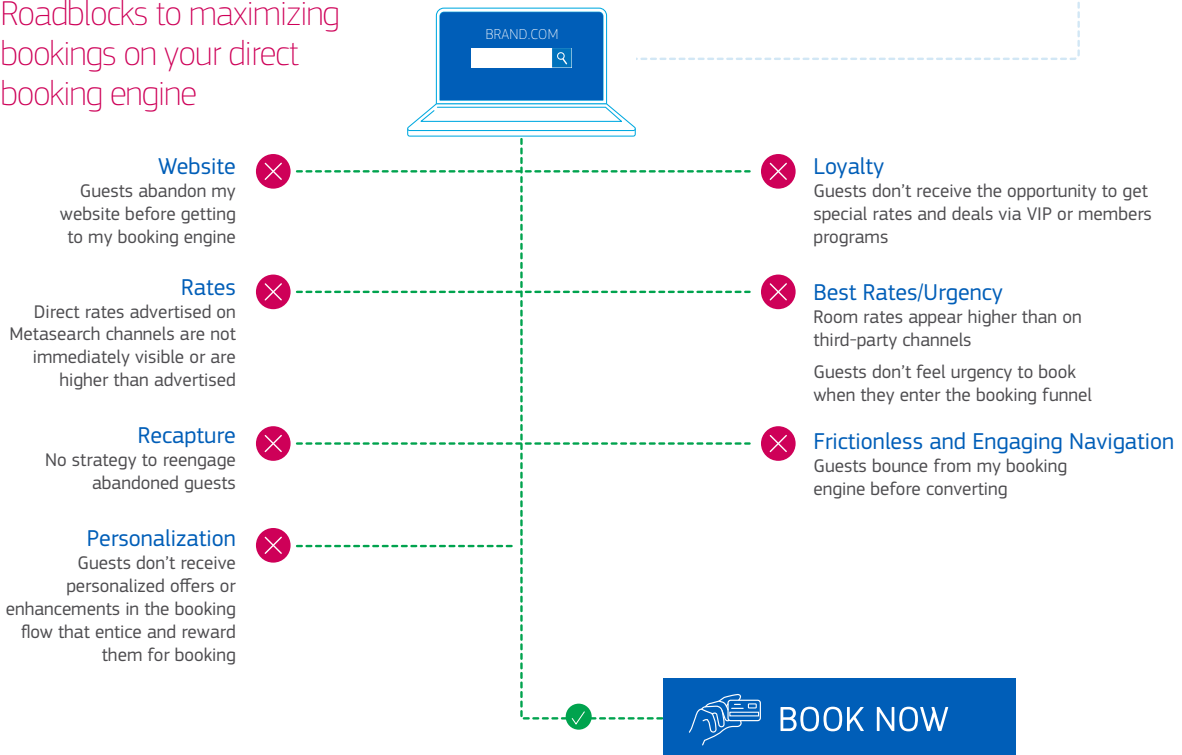
What levers influence my direct conversion rate?

When looking to increase direct conversion rate, hotels must overcome a variety of external and internal factors to improve performance on Brand.com.

Issues preventing customers from landing on your direct channel



Roadblocks to maximizing bookings on your direct booking engine



Personalization: The Key to Unlocking Direct Bookings Potential

Personalization is the new frontier of hospitality. Guests want it, and hoteliers are looking to deliver it.

Those hoteliers that are best able to deliver more personalized experiences across the guest journey will be more well positioned to capture profitable demand and drive ancillary revenue. And personalization is one of the key advantages of the direct channel. On Brand.com, hoteliers are able to collect guest data and preferences from the customer directly, and then personalize messages, offers, and experiences based on this data. Personalization can be a powerful guest satisfier and a key driver of guest value through Brand.com.

80% of consumers are more likely to make a purchase when brands offer personalized experiences. (Epsilon)

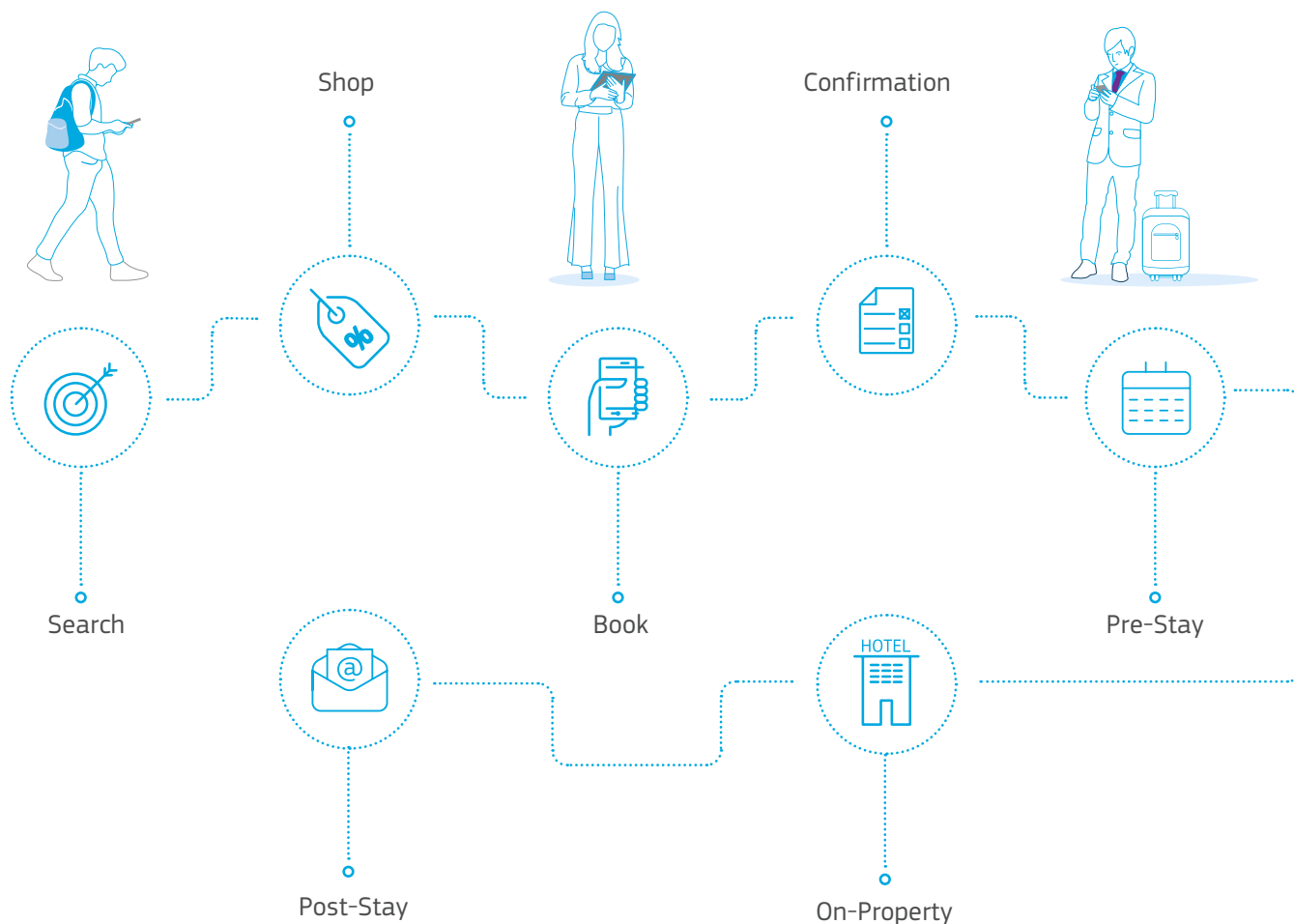
64% of customers expect tailored engagement based on past interactions. (Salesforce)

24% of surveyed hoteliers said that ‘technology to support personalized experiences’ is the most exciting advancement coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic. (Amadeus)

Personalize the Guest Journey – Not Just the On-Property Experience

Personalization is more than just bespoke service delivery during the on-property experience. There are opportunities to deliver true personalization at every step of the guest experience. While its certainly important to recognize when a guest prefers a late checkout, meaningful personalization that unlocks direct booking potential begins well before the guest enters your property. It starts way back in the shopping flow and carries through to post-stay engagement and beyond.

Personalization across the Guest Journey



After all, the goal of personalization is not simply to ensure your guest has an excellent stay with your brand and property. When done effectively it aligns the guest journey and the experiences guests crave with everything that is great about your property or brand to create lasting guest relationships that pay dividends beyond the initial stay.

Drive Profitability and Value

In the early stages of the guest journey (from search through to confirmation) especially, there are significant opportunities to inject greater personalization to benefit the hotelier and guest alike – and it all starts with data. Collect and action centralized guest data in the shopping flow to enhance revenue streams, drive profitability, and deliver greater value for the guest.

1. • Increase Direct Bookings

While OTAs and other distribution channels carry the benefits of speed, convenience, and choice, Brand.com delivers the arguably more important benefit of value (which may not be the lowest cost, but the more relevant or desirable experience). Hoteliers alone are able to track detailed guest data – down to the finest detail. Travel preferences (single, couple, family), birthdays, anniversaries, dining and amenity preferences, room preferences, preferred experiences, etc. Armed with this data, hoteliers can begin targeting the right guest segments with more personalized offers and experiences that can increase the likelihood of more profitable direct bookings.

2. • Drive Ancillary Revenue

With the wealth of guest data available to them, hoteliers can present the right offer to the right guest at the right time to drive additional revenues through add-on services and enhancements. Creating visibility across the shopping flow for these targeted enhancements further supports potential to convert guests via Brand.com, as OTAs and other distribution channels lack the ability to deliver the breadth and depth of customized offers for which hoteliers can apply centralized guest data. In addition, discounting services and enhancements can increase ancillary bookings while helping protect Average Daily Rate (ADR).

3. • Increase Guest Satisfaction and Customer Lifetime Value

Guests receiving personalized offers, experiences and messages will enjoy more bespoke experiences that make them feel special and unique and are more likely to refer the hotel to their friends and repeat their stays. If you have a member/loyalty program where they earn rewards for future stays, they are also more likely to return and will have higher customer lifetime value.







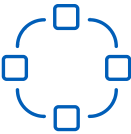


PRO TIP!

Target specific guest segments with data from your CRM to deliver discounted and personalized offers that are merchandised across media, on Brand.com, and in the booking engine to increase direct bookings and drive ancillary revenue. For example, target discounted dining options to families clicking into “Family Fun Packages”, discounted spa offers to couples who click on romance package display ads, or 20% off your Best Available Rate for top-tier loyalty program members.

Foundational Strategies

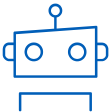





For those just starting on a personalization journey

With the wealth of guest data at their sole disposal, there are numerous ways to personalize the guest experience for all types of hoteliers, regardless of how large of a team or what types of personalized services are available.

	Tactic	Value Provided	Examples
	Segment your email marketing send list	Increase the relevance of the email message to recipients and increase your click through and direct booking rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> _Send last minute booking offers to a list segmented by only those who live within driving distance of the property _Send an update on your spa services to guests who have previously visited your spa
	Send emails at the right time	Increase click through and direct booking rate by sending emails at the time the guest is most likely to read	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> _Play with time of day send times to see when performance is best. 8 am, 12 noon, 4 pm? _Once you find the best time of day, use list segmentation to send to each time zone at the right time in their zone
	Create one or two simple packages	Give guests the opportunity to build an experience that is right for them without having to craft it themselves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> _Early check in and discounted parking package! _Discounted pet stay and late check out package!
	Offer room upgrade and service upsells on the pre-stay email with relevant content regarding their stay (aka weather forecast)	Give guests the opportunity to upgrade their room or experience to suit their needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> _Upgrade to our Garden View King Room for just \$35 _Add a kayak tour to your stay at a 25% discount from typical excursion prices
	Create services in your booking engine and offer them upon checkout and in pre-stay emails	Create enhancements for parking fees, late check out, early check in, fine wine, milk and cookies, etc. so guests can easily add items to customize their stay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> _Late check out for an additional \$20 _Park on site for just \$25/night
	Send confirmation emails with stay and property details	Create confirmation emails that highlight property and nearby amenity information, feature upcoming weather forecast, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> _Your upcoming Weather Forecast _Walkable dining options _Local Attractions _On-Property Services
	Leverage smart links in emails	Get inferred preferences from guests by seeing where they click on your email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> _Send a confirmation email with information about your spa and restaurant. Send a follow up email regarding either the spa or the restaurant to those who click on those links.




Intermediate Strategies

For those ready to take on the next level

	Tactic	Value Provided	Examples
	Leverage a workflow engine to trigger emails to certain guest segments	Set up certain high value flows to engage guests at the right time / on the right topic while saving time for your team	_Use GMS workflow engine to send an email 1 year past their last stay date to say 'this time last year' you stayed with us - want to book a new stay for 10% off?
	Set up a Guest Portal for guests to login to	Create a place where guests can log preferences and see upcoming and past stay data	_ "Members Login" on the website and in the booking engine (with single sign on!)
	Launch a loyalty or members only program	Customers are rewarded for repeat visits and build brand loyalty/customer lifetime value	_Member sign in program - you always get 10% off BAR when logged in and other perks (late check out and discounted buffet breakfast) _Loyalty program with points or cash rewards
	Offer discounts on services to encourage direct bookings	Reward customers for booking direct with discounts on services or experiences	_Book in the month of July and get a free family pass to the neighboring water park for stays in August! _Book a stay in October and receive our spooky Halloween brunch and hayride at a 50% discount
	Create a variety of services in the booking engine so guests can build their own package and merchandise them throughout the booking flow	Enable greater personalization of the guest experience and drive ancillary revenue	Set up limo services to the airport, quality wine, milk and cookies, roses, bubbly. Have a variety of creative options so guests can build their own stay.
	Send birthday emails to guests	Guest sees you remembered their big day! Catch them at that special moment to present an offer or note of appreciation	_Thank you for your loyalty to hotel X! We want to take a moment to sincerely wish you a happy birthday...and maybe 15% off dinner in our restaurant during your birthday month

Advanced Strategies

For those ready to unlock even greater personalization potential

	Tactic	Value Provided	Examples
	Encourage guests to book direct with private offers	Guests get a discounted rate for signing in and booking direct	_Get 15% off BAR when you sign in for our members rate!
	Collect additional guest profile details and ensure profile completeness	The more information you can collect from your guest, the better you can anticipate their needs and understand what offers would be alluring	_Send a profile completeness campaign – “Tell us about you so we can better serve you” and encourage them to fill out a form / provide more info on the guest portal _Turn on profile completeness bar so when the guest is in guest portal, they know there is other info to fill out
	Offer certain promotions (rate or service) to certain customer groups	Entice your preferred target market segments and drive greater conversion	_20% off your stay – exclusive for those who have 3+ lifetime stays to reward our loyal customers!



Quick Start Guide to Personalization

While there is no shortage of strategies and tactics to employ in enabling greater personalization for the guest (and associated revenue benefits for the hotelier), it can often be a daunting task just to get started. See below for recommended steps and example actions to help you kickstart your personalization programs.

1. Understand who you are and what you have to offer

Examples

- _ Resort in Costa Rica
- _ Luxury property on the beach
- _ 5 restaurants on site
- _ Full-service spa
- _ Occupancy has bounced back to 2019 levels
- _ Average length of stay 3-days

2. Define your strategic objectives

Examples

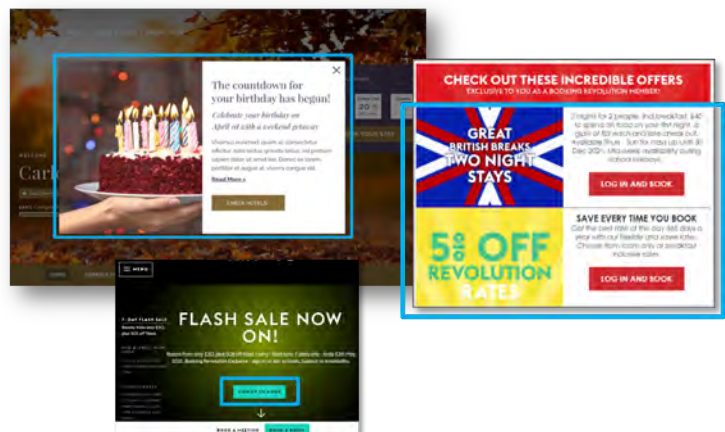
- _ Drive ancillary revenue e.g. F&B, Spa
- _ Drive repeat business by rewarding guests in loyalty program
- _ Attract specific guest segments (new guests, driving radius audience, etc.)

3. Use your strategic objectives to create targeted offers

Examples

- _ Free bottle of wine
- _ Flat amount off private dinner for 2
- _ 10% discounted couples' massage
- _ Complimentary early check-in
- _ Free welcome drink at the hotel bar

4. Merchandise and test your offers





PRO TIP!

If your special offers, incentives, and enhancements aren't made visible to potential guests, they may as well not even exist. Make sure to effectively merchandise your promotions across media, on Brand.com and in the booking engine for maximum exposure and conversion potential. And keep in mind that promotions merchandising is not a 'set it and forget it' tactic. Test and revise for the greatest possible impact.

Additional Strategies and Solutions to Improve Direct Channel Performance

Hoteliers can ensure long-term success by layering multiple direct booking strategies tailored to their business needs and preferred audience segment.

Drive more potential customers to land on your booking engine.

Pulling an increased number of potential bookers into your website is the first step in increasing direct bookings. See below for common website challenges and corresponding solutions to help you drive increased traffic to Brand.com.

Private offers have allowed Amadeus customers to achieve an average direct conversion lift of:

123%

Some additional promotions you can create to drive demand include geo-targeted pricing, device-based promotions, and flash sales.

1. • Rate Parity

Problem: Guests see better prices on third-party channels vs my direct channel

Solution: Achieve rate parity by getting creative with promotions

Why: Price is the largest decision sticking point for shoppers when choosing between channels (Koddi). For hotels to ensure they are always the most appealing option, they need to maintain rates that meet or beat the competition.

How: First, ensure that your rates are in parity and action best practices (click here to check out our Rate Parity Playbook). Second, send the same promotions to OTAs as to your Booking Engine, but bundle them with additional amenities like inclusive meals on Brand.com. To take promotions one step further, you can offer direct-only promotions, or private offers, to ensure that guests will receive the lowest price on Brand.com.

Brand.com displays the lowest rate by offering a direct-only promotion.

Channel	Price
Random Hotel (Official site)	\$200
Booking.com	\$219
TripAdvisor.com	\$200
KAYAK.com	\$218

For more information
Download the Rate
Parity Playbook



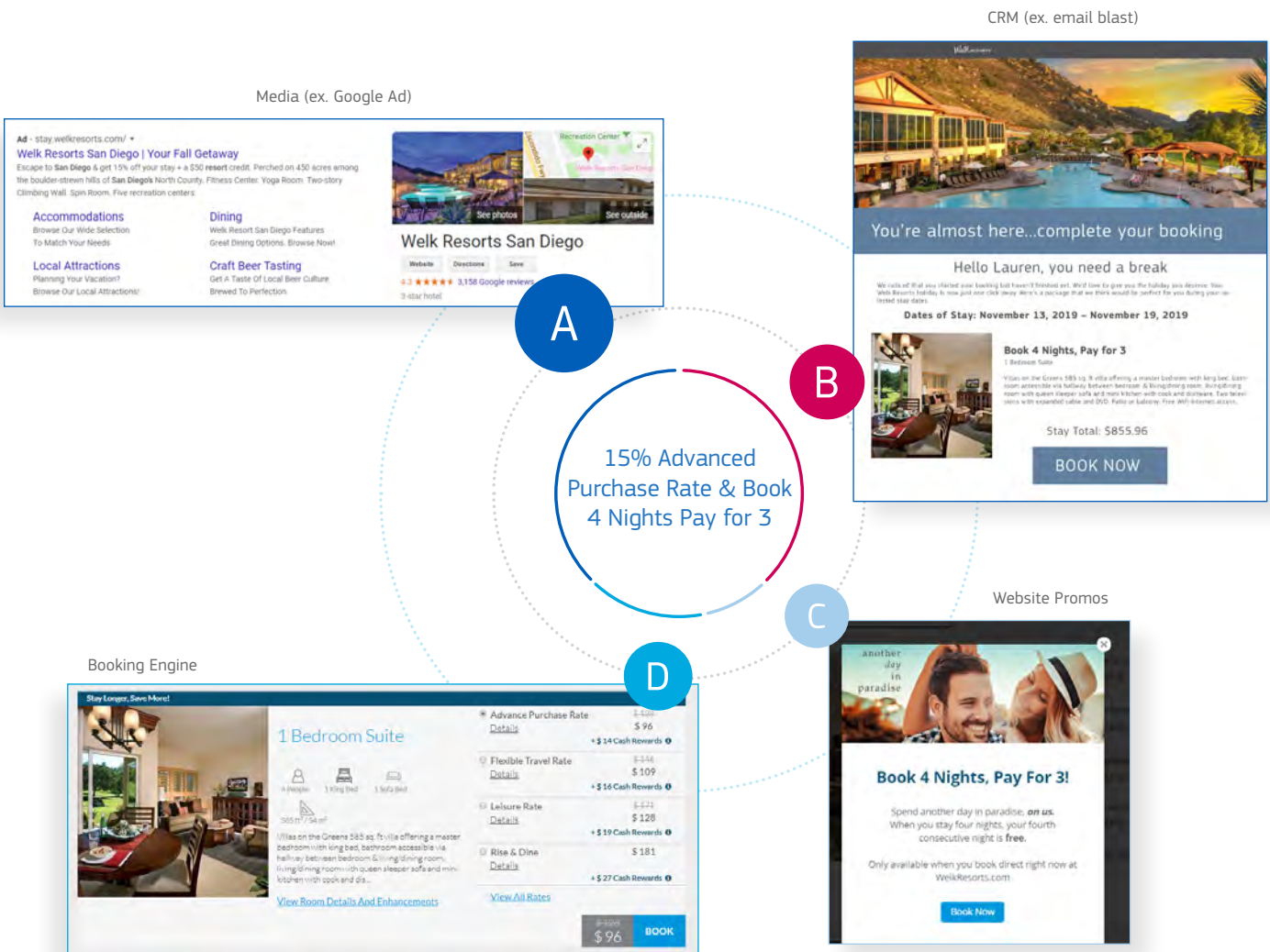
2. Omnichannel Campaigns

Problem: Poor direct channel visibility on external distribution channels

Solution: Run an omni-channel campaign that repeatedly advertises your best rate using descriptive tags

Why: We've learned that price is the easiest way to compete with external distributors. Reach a greater audience of potential guests by making your competitive rate visible on as many channels as possible.

How: Advertise the same rate in your media campaigns, in customer communications sent through your CRM, on your booking engine, and on your website so that your competitive price is impossible for shoppers to ignore.





3. • Keyword Strategies

Problem: Guests search for a hotel in my area and do not find it as an option

✓ **Solution:** Develop a search engine optimization (SEO) strategy for your website to target relevant and niche search terms

_ **Why:** Increase organic traffic to your website by ranking for specific and distinct search terms that will enable you to stand out from other hotels in your area, and make you highly visible to the guests who are most likely to convert.

_ **How:** Perform keyword research and competitive analysis to optimize your website through specific pieces of content like SEO tags, titles, on-page content, and blog posts.

4. • Media Strategies

Problem: Guests fail to receive adequate exposure and enticement to visit my website

✓ **Solution:** Increase Brand.com visits with cross-channel advertising strategies designed to connect with potential hotel guests through targeted, persuasive messaging

_ **Why:** Competitive media strategies tailored to your property and target market segments can maximize revenue per available room (RevPAR) and occupancy.

_ **How:** Target specific audiences and channels with special offers, packages, and incentives across paid search, display, and social media.

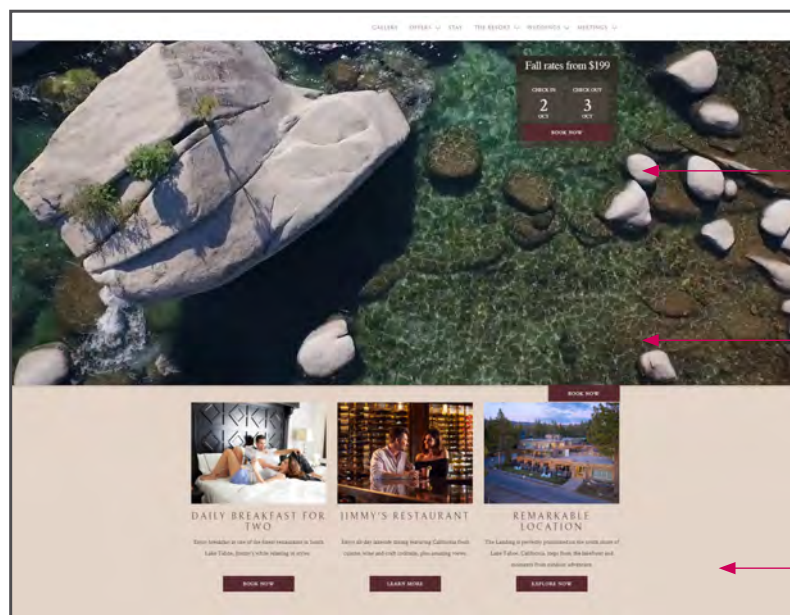
5. Buyer Assurance

Problem: Guests abandon my website before reaching my booking engine

✓ **Solution:** Reduce barriers to the booking engine by showing rates upfront, providing frequent calls to action and showcasing engaging content on your website

Why: Shoppers want to see the rate that you advertised on the website once they reach the booking engine. If they don't, they may choose a simpler route to booking and bounce from your funnel. They also are looking to gather information about your property as efficiently as possible, so make sure your property looks enticing and all necessary information such as location, amenities, and attractions are conveyed in a concise format.

How: Advertise the best rate on Brand.com's homepage so that shoppers will be able to easily identify cost. Provide frequent calls to action to reach the booking engine by deep linking specific offers and room types. Additionally, using engaging content like video to showcase your property can decrease bounce rate by up to 30% and increase the amount of time spent on your website by up to 20%.



Beautiful design, easy to navigate

Lead rates that link to Booking Engine

Videography

Special offers that are easy to book

Booking Engine: remove roadblocks to maximize conversions

Once guests click from the website into your booking engine, there are additional opportunities to increase direct conversion rates. See below for potential booking engine challenges and corresponding solutions to help convert a greater number of guests.

1. • User experience

Problem: Guests abandon my booking engine before converting

✓ **Solution:** Create a seamless experience throughout the booking funnel that removes barriers to conversion and showcases your brand

_ **Why:** In our current e-commerce landscape, users expect a frictionless and personalized online shopping experience. With a multitude of booking options at their fingers, guests will abandon your direct channel if it is not seamless, intuitive, and engaging.

_ **How:** Consistent navigation paired with high-quality and engaging content will help convert customers from “lookers to bookers”. Reduce barriers to booking through single sign-on functionality and by carrying over any inputs from the website, ensuring guests never have to repeat an entry. On your booking engine, engage each guest with interactive navigation, mobile-first design, and videos to entice them to complete a reservation.

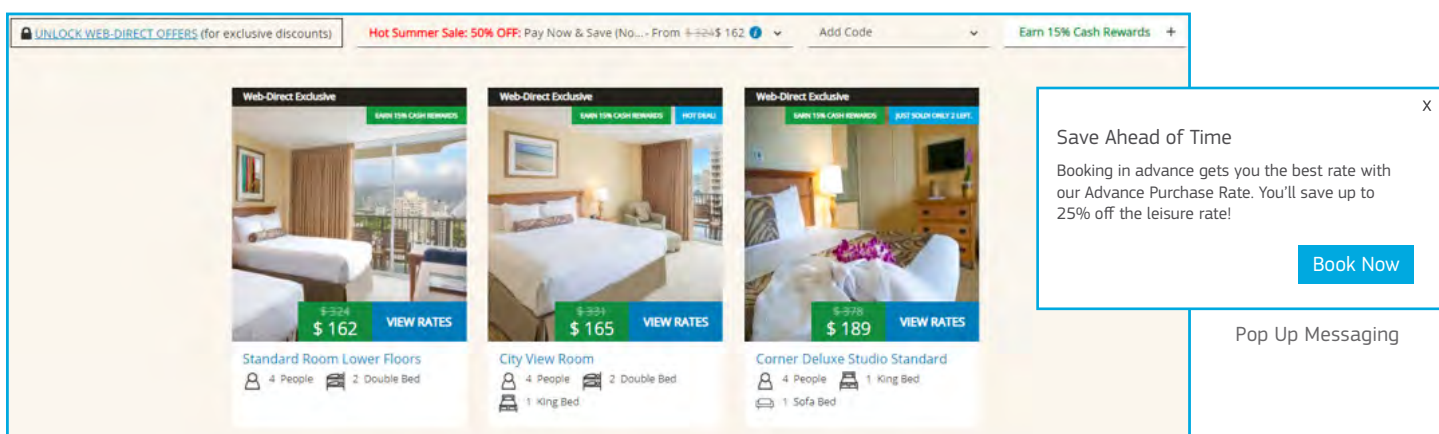
2. User engagement

Problem: Guests don't feel urgency to book when they enter the booking funnel

✓ **Solution:** Call attention to inventory to drive demand

_ **Why:** Guests are more likely to consider other options, delay a decision and bounce from your funnel if they don't feel a necessity to book.

_ **How:** Display calls to action and banners that highlight low inventory or Brand.com specific promotions to create demand and entice guests to book on your direct channel. If shoppers have spent a long time in your funnel but have not yet booked, create pop up messaging to spur action.



Promotional Banners

3. User Enticement

Problem: Guests fail to see perceived value in your rates and may look to shop on alternate channels or Brand.com sites

✓ **Solution:** Deliver targeted offers in the booking engine based on guest profile data to make direct bookings more valuable and enticing

_ **Why:** Delivering attractive add-ons in the booking engine can help elevate the perceived value of your property and increase the likelihood of a successful direct booking

_ **How:** Provide targeted services and discounted enhancements based on guest profile data to deliver a more personalized stay and greater value for the guest

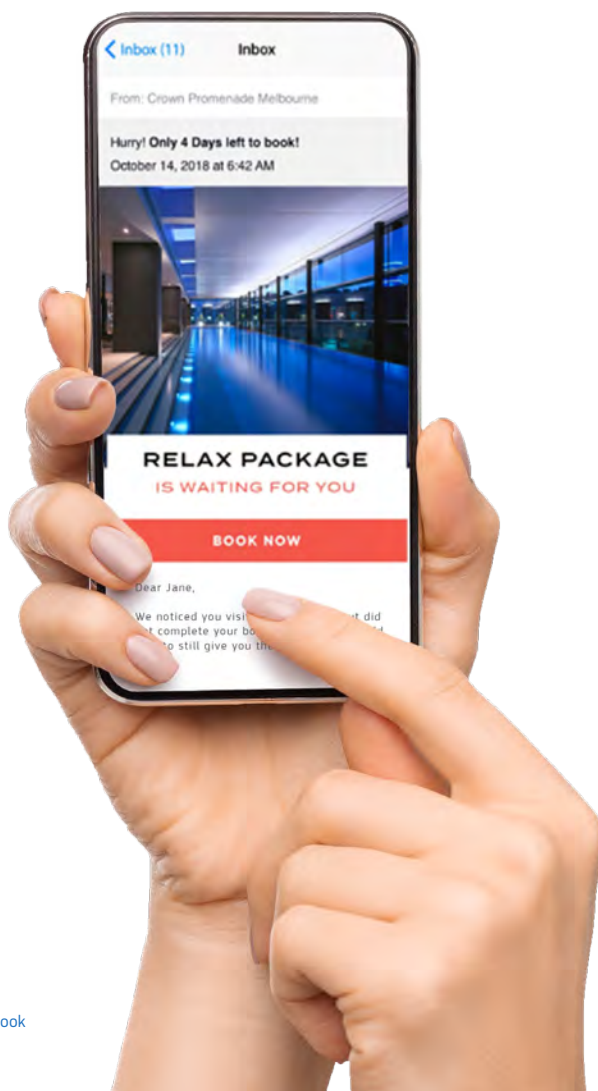
4. Reengagement

Problem: No strategy to re-engage abandoned guests

✓ **Solution:** Create abandonment remarketing campaigns by capturing guests' information and targeting them with personalized offers

_ **Why:** Though a guest may not have been ready to book the first time they entered your funnel, they could still convert if your direct channel makes a second impression. Make sure you target abandoned guests with enticing offers in order to redirect them to your website and encourage them to complete their booking.

_ **How:** For guests that leave your funnel, set up a room hold and a targeted cart abandonment email campaign to allow guests to pick up right where they left off and book at a more convenient time. Reference behavioral guest data to send personalized emails to abandoned guests that display the offer they are most likely to book along with real-time rates pulled from your Central Reservations System (CRS).





Direct Booking Strategy

Hoteliers alone control the distribution channel with the greatest potential for personalization of the guest experience. It also happens to be their most profitable channel. Yet, effective direct bookings strategy requires a holistic approach. Assess each stage of the booking funnel using the recommendations found here and enhance your ability to deliver more personalized offers at every step. Small changes and improvements throughout the booking journey can help boost revenue despite the complexities and challenges of the current market landscape.

How can Amadeus support you?

Our team of experts is here to help you drive success by improving every step of your guest journey. Let Amadeus's expert account management team provide best practices for optimizing your SEO strategy, maintaining rate parity, delivering greater personalization, and easily building a dynamic website that drives conversion. Amadeus's Booking Engine will ensure that the proper rates are visible to shoppers and removes as many barriers to booking as possible. To ensure guests will return to book again, utilize Amadeus's Guest Management Solutions to recognize a repeat guest and message them when they are ready to book again.

About Amadeus

At Amadeus, our mission is to make the hospitality industry run smoothly by enabling our partners to create memorable guest experiences. Our best-in-class marketing, distribution, operations, and business intelligence solutions are designed to help global hospitality organizations profitably drive demand and convert guests into loyal fans.

With more than 16,500 experts in 175+ countries, we collaborate closely with customers on innovative solutions to grow their business. Together, let's shape the future of travel.

Contact Amadeus to get started