State of the Hotel Industry in Asia Pacific
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Introduction

Phocuswright reports that online hotel bookings in Asia Pacific (APAC) will double to $62.8 billion by 2020.¹ Hoteliers need to be ready for this surge of connected travellers. In particular, hoteliers need to ensure that they're getting in front of all these new travellers—no matter their trip motivation, party size, and lead time—on channels that deliver the best ROI.

To help prepare hoteliers, Sojern and FASTBOOKING partnered to bring an in-depth look at the state of the industry. In this report, you'll learn:

- Paths to purchase for inbound travellers from APAC and US
- The most effective channels for converting travellers
- How you can best engage with travellers to drive direct bookings
Understanding how travellers search and book their rooms is essential to engage with them, nurture them through their path to purchase, and ensure they book directly with you. Sojern specialises in travel path to purchase data, and we use our 350 million travel profiles to find high-intent travellers and engage them with relevant ads across devices.

Here we analyse high-level insights of travellers coming from both outside and inside the region to get a picture of the overall trends of the region as well as advice on how to turn these insights into actionable strategies. We also drill into the complexities of travellers’ paths to purchase by analysing one US traveller heading to APAC and another APAC traveller looking for an inter-regional getaway. These granular insights offer hoteliers a refined vision of the travel path to purchase, as well as unique insight into how to engage with travellers across lead times, trip motivations, devices, and more.
US to APAC Travel Trends

According to IPK International, US travel to Asia grew 5% last year, as Americans look to take more holidays and are increasingly turning to Asia to do so. To understand more about these travellers, Sojern analysed what devices travellers from the US use to conduct their APAC travel searches across the days of the week.

![The Share of Searches by Device, by Day of Week](chart)

We find the share of mobile searches rise on the weekends. As people leave behind their work or home computers and hit the road running errands, they bring their travel dreaming and smart phones with them.

When it comes to timing trends, 24% of US to APAC travellers search 90+ days out. Given the flight can be rather long-haul for US travellers, it makes sense to see such a long lead time. On the other end of the lead time spectrum, last-minute trips to APAC are still popular: 18% of trips from the US to APAC are booked 0 to 7 days in advance of travel.

In order to reach these US travellers, you need a strategy that can nurture them through their longer lead time to conversion. Using display plus Search Engine Marketing (SEM) is key here: display or banner ads can reach travellers as they move across sites. Then, when they’re ready to look for more information on a search engine, your ad shows up at the top and drives them directly to your website.
APAC to APAC Travel Trends

While US travel grew by 5% to APAC, Asian travellers are showing an even stronger rise (14%) in travel within the region. In order to get a new look at inter-regional travel, we analysed device usage across days of the week for APAC to APAC travel. We see another surge of mobile searches on the weekends, but the numbers are much higher for inter-regional trips.

What’s more, **about a quarter of all inter-regional travellers book their trips last-minute**, 7 or fewer days before travel. Early bookers planning trips 90 or more days out make up 20% of all bookings and 26% of all searches.

Given the high share of mobile searches conducted by travellers within APAC, reaching and converting inter-regional travellers requires a strong mobile strategy. You need to ensure that your display and SEM ads reach travellers on their mobile phone as they are spending a significant portion of their time there, searching for their travel. Further, the strong inter-regional travel trends suggest there’s huge opportunity to find and convert travellers closer to home. When setting your budgets and targets, then, consider focusing your efforts in Asia to capitalise on the increase in inter-regional travel.
US to APAC Path to Purchase

According to Skift, US travellers are set to drive serious tourism dollars in Asia-Pacific through 2020—spending a projected $257 billion. Engaging with these US travellers is key to ensuring the vitality of the hotel industry in APAC. Even more so, is ensuring that these international travellers book direct.

Let’s analyze one traveller, pseudonym “Michael,” on his path to purchase from the US to APAC. This unique individual lives in Dallas, Texas and heads to Singapore for business frequently. On his most recent trip, he’s enticed into adding some additional leisure days. This traveller is a heavy desktop user and an avid travel researcher—ensuring he has the best price and the most adventure-packed trips.

Let’s take a look at the specific path to purchase...
"Michael’s" Path to Purchase

“Michael” jet setting for business inspires a leisure getaway from dreaming through planning to booking.

- **Sep 1**: While in Singapore for business, he is inspired to look for travel for a local sporting event and hits Luxury Hotel Brand A’s homepage.
- **Nov 11**: Back home in Dallas and planning his next business trip to Singapore, he hits Luxury Hotel Brand A’s page.
- **Dec 1**: Books an upscale hotel catering to business travellers for a stay from Dec 21–Jan 12.
- **Dec 21**: Arrives in Singapore, he searches for a trip to Kuala Lumpur for January 7–11.
- **Dec 22–Dec 24**: While in-destination, simultaneously searches for Luxury Brand A hotels and flights to Kuala Lumpur.
- **Dec 22**: Searches hotels in Kuala Lumpur on Luxury Hotel Brand A and competing segments, conducting 15 searches in 24 hours.
- **Dec 25**: Books Luxury Hotel Brand A for his Kuala Lumpur trip on Jan 7–11.
- **Dec 26–Jan 1**: After booking, continues to visit Luxury Brand A’s page while also visiting tourism site.
- **Jan 2**: Compares different amenities on Luxury Hotel Brand A’s site, including their health club and spa.
- **Jan 6**: A day before his trip, he downloads a Kuala Lumpur travel guide.
Marketing Takeaways

Over the course of 127 days of planning and travelling, "Michael" has 162 travel touchpoints, meaning he hits homepages, bounces over to amenity sites, conducts searches, and more. For this traveller, 16 of those are for his flight, while a whopping 127 are for his hotel.

Given the high volume of searches for hotels, APAC hoteliers need to work hard to reach and engage travellers, like this one, while they are in-market for accommodation. Retargeting is a great tactic to ensure this traveller, as he works throughout his business and leisure planning, returns to your brand and website. With retargeting, an ad is served to a traveller who has already visited your website and shown an interest in you. This ad can be customised to the traveller, reflecting his particular search preferences. Moreover, you engage with a traveller at the right time with a creative that will add value to their shopping journey and inspire them to book with you.

What's more, the research stage of "Michael's" path to purchase is a long one. Even after booking and while in-market, he continues to search and book. Staying top of mind for this traveller is key to ensuring that during all this searching, he returns to your brand.

If this traveller knows about you and your brand, which a good researcher would, he is going to search for you through search engines. You want to ensure when he clicks on those SEM (Search Engine Marketing which is also called PPC = Pay Per Click) ads at the top of Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs), those clicks direct straight to your website. Third parties can and do bid on your brand name, so it is crucial that you actively work to ensure those clicks and that booker go straight to your brand.
Thanks to a wealth of different cultures, foods, sights, and experiences so close by, not to mention the prominence of low-cost carriers (LCCs) offering affordable flights, inter-regional travel in APAC is big business. According to a recent Google project, the number one destination for Vietnamese travellers is Thailand, with a 45% increase in interest year over year. Taiwan’s top destination is Japan, at a 10% increase year-over-year.5

To get a better picture of inter-regional travel planning, let’s see a second traveller on a path to travel purchase, pseudonym “Felicia.” Our second path to purchase is a Singaporean native looking for a luxury getaway in the region. Using primarily desktop for search, this traveller is no stranger to taking to the skies, as she frequently travels for business.

Let’s take a look at the specific path to purchase...
“Felicia’s” Path to Purchase

Dreaming of the Ultimate Luxury Singapore Vacation

- **Sep 2**: Dreams about a Mauritius Beach trip and visits Luxury Brand A’s Resort site, repeatedly watching their homepage video.
- **Oct 7**: Hits numerous amenities pages and room rates over and over on Luxury Brand A’s Resort site.
- **Nov 1**: Searches hotels for a Taipei business trip in Jan.
- **Dec 6**: Hits Luxury Brand A’s Resort site 16 times, considering a staycation in Singapore over the holidays.
- **Dec 12**: Converts on desktop for a three-day business trip to Taipei for Luxury Brand A in Jan.
- **Nov 10–21**: Makes searches on competitive Luxury Brand A’s Resort for a holiday in China.
- **January 7**: Hits numerous amenities pages and room rates over and over on Luxury Brand A’s Resort site.
- **Jan 17–19**: Visits Taipei for business and stays at Luxury Brand A.
- **Jan 31**: After her business trip, she searches for Mauritius beach trip on Luxury Brand A’s site again.
Marketing Takeaways

This path to purchase spans **213 days and 735 touchpoints**—substantially more than our international path to purchase featured previously. Also unique, though not surprising, to this path, is that “Felicia” knows where she wants to go—she begins her travel planning on a specific brand’s website, watching the video on their homepage. As “Felicia” moves to book business trips, the original brand stays top of mind, and she ends up booking at a **different location but same brand as the initial search**.

Our inter-regional path to purchase illustrates the importance of knowing your individual travellers and ensuring you’re customising your campaigns to their intent signals. One might think, for instance, that it’s the international traveller who spends more time and more touchpoints before making a purchase. But here, in these two examples, we see the opposite occur. It is only through deep data, and the data science necessary to understand and reach travellers, that such nuances can be grasped. And, it’s this type of knowledge and engagement that will reach, inspire, and add value to the traveller across their path to purchase.

What’s more, though the length of time for “Felicia’s” path to purchase isn’t extensive, the number of searches is. For example, we see her conduct **34 searches for one hotel in 24 hours**. As travellers bounce not only from all their hotel searches but also to other non-travel related searches, you want to ensure that your property is top of mind. Set a strong search strategy, where your brand appears at the top of SERPs, and also ensure that you’re reaching them with display ads tailored to your property and offering. **Going multi-channel allows you to nurture travellers through their path to purchase and ensure you engage with them across channels and devices to book directly with you.**
Summary

Travellers’ paths to purchase grow in complexity as they jump across websites and devices. And without knowing a traveller’s trip motivation, origin, spending patterns, and more, you could waste advertising spend on a traveller who isn’t in-market for your offering.

At Sojern, we understand what makes travellers tick, and we work with independent hoteliers to ensure we reach travellers on the right device at the right time with the right message. We use our deep data and state-of-the-art data science to serve travellers ads that are relevant to them at the right time—when they are searching for your destination. Driving direct bookings and reducing wasted ad spend has never been easier.
It can be challenging for smaller players in the travel industry to compete with the more established rivals in the hospitality sector, but the competitive landscape is always shifting in new and interesting ways.

Consumers’ digital habits are always evolving, and this has challenged the hospitality industry to keep pace and compete within the online community space.

FASTBOOKING provides a complete e-commerce and distribution solution to properties in more than 90 countries worldwide. It maximises direct sales for hotels and enhances the visibility of their brand through online and mobile channels with a simplified and integrated system which is the key to efficiency and productivity.

For hotels to compete in this space, an effective Digital Marketing strategy to drive more qualified traffic and conversion to the hotel’s website is paramount. This plan encompasses Search Engine Marketing (SEM), Pre/Re-targeting Display Ads Campaigns, AdWords, and the ultimate driver, Metasearch.

We will touch on Search Engine Marketing (SEM) and Metasearch in this paper. These two channels aim to provide hoteliers with a detailed overview of the top players in the digital marketing space together with their performance.

With this information, you’ll be armed with the knowledge required to make the wisest spending decision for your limited marketing dollar to achieve the highest ROI.
What is Metasearch?

A metasearch engine is a price comparison website that compares hotel rates from across the internet where different booking channels can market themselves on the digital advertising platform.

Why is it important to spend money on metasearch?

All the online travel agents (OTAs) are advertising on metasearch, but many hotels have not explored this channel as a place to display their official website's room rates. Not participating in this channel has lead to some missed opportunities for hotels to drive direct bookings and balance their digital distribution mix.

The intention is to generate direct bookings at a lower cost (after deduction of booking fee) as compared to bookings made through OTAs. The commission paid to OTAs can be used as the marketing fee for online campaigns, such as metasearch, to provide visibility for the hotels and drive incremental direct bookings.

However, this requires time and a certain level of online advertising expertise. In addition, using a proper connectivity intermediary is mandatory to ensure the good reach of prices displayed on the metasearch. Otherwise the effect is highly deceptive for the user.

How does it work?

A metasearch engine lists the rate from your website only when you are actively bidding on the advertising channel. A hotel's OTA partners will also bid “on behalf of” the hotel to drive visibility. However, if a customer books through this link, the booking would be redirected to an OTA website instead of the hotel's official website. The key to encourage a direct booking and own the customer experience is for hotels to bid on the advertising slot.
## Metasearch Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Audience</th>
<th>TripAdvisor</th>
<th>Google Hotel Ads</th>
<th>Trivago</th>
<th>HotelsCombined</th>
<th>Kayak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International audience</td>
<td>International audience</td>
<td>• Can be utilised for international traffic</td>
<td>Asia Pacific, Australia and New Zealand demographics</td>
<td>• Can be utilised for international traffic</td>
<td>• Can be utilised for international traffic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Most effective with inbound travellers from Europe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Most efficient with inbound travellers from North America</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Hotel</th>
<th>TripAdvisor</th>
<th>Google Hotel Ads</th>
<th>Trivago</th>
<th>HotelsCombined</th>
<th>Kayak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Commission Model</td>
<td>• Commission Model</td>
<td>Cost Per Click</td>
<td>Cost Per Acquisition</td>
<td>• Cost Per Acquisition</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Cost Per Click</td>
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<td>• Cost Per Click</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Stay</th>
<th>TripAdvisor</th>
<th>Google Hotel Ads</th>
<th>Trivago</th>
<th>HotelsCombined</th>
<th>Kayak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Users who book through this channel have an average stay of 4.5 days</td>
<td>Users who book through this channel have an average stay of 4 nights</td>
<td>The average length of stay is shorter than TripAdvisor – 2 nights versus 4.5</td>
<td>Users who book through this channel have an average stay of 4.5 days</td>
<td>Users who book through this channel have an average stay of 4.5 days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Average stay is longer than domestic for regional audience</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Click-Thru Rate</th>
<th>TripAdvisor</th>
<th>Google Hotel Ads</th>
<th>Trivago</th>
<th>HotelsCombined</th>
<th>Kayak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2% on average</td>
<td>4% on average</td>
<td>1.5% on average</td>
<td>2.5% on average</td>
<td>2.5% on average</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Conversion</th>
<th>TripAdvisor</th>
<th>Google Hotel Ads</th>
<th>Trivago</th>
<th>HotelsCombined</th>
<th>Kayak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Return on Ad Spend</th>
<th>TripAdvisor</th>
<th>Google Hotel Ads</th>
<th>Trivago</th>
<th>HotelsCombined</th>
<th>Kayak</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10x</td>
<td>11x</td>
<td>8x</td>
<td>7x</td>
<td>7x</td>
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### Metasearch Guide – continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TripAdvisor</th>
<th>Google Hotel Ads</th>
<th>Trivago</th>
<th>HotelsCombined</th>
<th>Kayak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Bidding system improved but remains quite opaque</td>
<td>• Has the most qualified traffic of all metasearch providers</td>
<td>• Massive traffic increase when TV ad campaign is launched, but with relatively low conversion</td>
<td>• Booking volumes are lower than TripAdvisor, Trivago and Google Hotel Ads. However, it is stable</td>
<td>You cannot manage your campaigns; they are automatically controlled by Kayak algorithms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Advertiser is not aware of the bid</td>
<td>• Traffic volume is at a level that makes it a compelling investment for hotels and hotel groups of all sizes</td>
<td>• For better budget control, hotels should ensure bids and budget are managed properly for maximum returns</td>
<td>• You cannot manage your campaigns; HotelsCombined algorithms automatically handle them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Able to opt for ‘share of clicks’. This method guarantees visibility and receives clicks a certain percentage of the time</td>
<td>• Sophisticated bidding system to manage bids</td>
<td>• Slight change in bids can have a significant impact on impression share and can result in budget overspend</td>
<td>• Unable to control the campaign visibility on selected devices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bidding and campaign can be managed on a daily basis</td>
<td>• Connected through a third party only</td>
<td>• System offers full transparency on performance competitiveness and opportunities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### FASTBOOKING Analysis

- **TripAdvisor**
  - Use TripAdvisor’s reporting to stay within the top 3 listing
  - If ADR is low, choose the ‘instant booking’ model to keep cost low
  - If ADR is high, opt for CPC “meta” model to maintain low cost
  - Keep an eye on your mobile performances; they can put a hole in your budget without much conversion

- **Google Hotel Ads**
  - Budget hotels are recommended to switch to the performance model
  - Deluxe and luxury hotels with a higher ADR to use the cost per click model.
  - Hotels must ensure they monitor and manage these multiple campaigns consistently

- **Trivago**
  - Trivago’s ranking model prioritises rates. If you have a slightly lower rate on your website, you will get more clicks at a lower cost

- **HotelsCombined**
  - A must if hotels wants to increase traffic from APAC, Australia and New Zealand regions

- **Kayak**
  - A must if hotels want to attract traffic from North America region
Recommendations on Metasearch

1. Metasearch can help you drive more traffic to your website
   - Select the digital players that best fit your business.

2. The effectiveness of your direct booking strategy depends on your price
   - Lowering rates for direct bookings is one of the most efficient ways to make metasearch generate substantial direct revenue.

3. Engaging professionals is the key
   - Metasearch and digital advertising channels are now mandatory channels for hotels. It is recommended to either create an internal team for campaign management and optimisation or to use an experienced digital agency. The latter is preferred so you can reap the fruits of digital channels.
   - We have witnessed that if experts handle digital marketing strategies, paid traffic can represent 30-50% of market share per hotel.
   - Hotels can benefit by partnering with a Specialist who works incessantly to improve the efficiency of the advertising platform. They have the expertise to manage and optimise the campaigns to provide maximum returns on investment.

4. Constant monitoring
   - Optimisation is required to ensure that the Return On Ad Spend (ROAS) is kept profitable.
   - Regular price accuracy checks are imperative to make sure you advertise the right prices or offer sufficient availability.
   - Always choose for a ‘live-query’ connectivity partner to display the updated rate as compared to a ‘cache’ intermediary which will display a previously stored rate.

5. Minimum campaign expenditure
   - Minimum spend should always be equivalent to SEM. Cost Per Click (CPC) levels can be daunting sometimes for high-demand markets such as Japan, USA, UK, France. However, this also leads to the best ROI.

6. Campaign duration to meet ROI expectations
   - As long as your campaigns meet your objectives, it is important to document how it works and to invest resources in continuing. The marginal ROI is extremely high as it’s mostly from missed opportunities due to budget limitations.
What is Search Engine Marketing (SEM)?

SEM is a digital marketing platform designed to increase websites' visibility on Google and other search engines. SEM includes:

- SEO (Search Engine Optimisation)
- SEA (Search Engine Advertising) / PPC Advertising (Pay-Per-Click Advertising)

The beauty of SEM is that every dollar spent, as well as every dollar earned, is measurable.

The Importance of SEM and Quality Score

Travel related searches grew by 5% in 2016, peaking during June and the December holiday season, with Singaporeans making close to 9.5 million overseas trips in 2016. In Asia Pacific, mobile platform is rapidly becoming the preferred platform to perform travel-related searches.

Search Engine Marketing (SEM) is an internet marketing channel that comprises the promotion of websites by increasing their visibility in search engine results pages primarily through paid advertising.

Search Engines are the marketplace of online users. It is also the gate to the internet. Every user goes to a search engine at some point during their travel planning phase.

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

As a hotelier, you should consider search engines a powerful showcase platform, but it never comes for free.

Although SEO is mostly considered free, it should not be viewed in this manner. To achieve good results in SEO, you have to invest in a state-of-the-art website and use the expertise of SEO agencies that specialise in the travel/hospitality industry. ROI can be tricky to monitor, and you have to use fully integrated Google or Data Analytics with custom dashboards that fit your hotel's e-commerce business. This will help identify what works better and which areas require improvement for your campaign.
Search Engine Advertising (SEA)

SEA is mandatory for brand protection. The majority of hoteliers deem SEO sufficient for their brand protection in Search Engine Result Pages (SERPs). OTAs, Metasearch, and sometimes very shady websites use hotels’ brand names to capture a very high percentage of search engine user traffic. International Brands protects their brand name on search engines as they pay to ensure that searches will drive traffic to their official website instead of an intermediary internet site. Ultimately, it is all about ROI—continue with SEA if this channel generates an incremental direct booking on your brand website.

SEA for generic keywords is strongly discouraged for small to medium hotels. This is not because of CPC levels or ROI concerns—it is because of search engine algorithms. The primary function of a search engine is to provide the most precise answer to an internet user’s query. If a search engine allows advertising without monitoring, this can result in non-performance as it would often lead to non-related search results. To control this, search engines develop and implement Quality Score (QS).

Quality Score (QS) is a search engine’s rating of the quality and relevance of both the keywords and PPC ads. This will determine a competitive mix of click-through rate, impression share, and CPC. Quality score algorithms differ and depend on multiple factors which differ based on the various search engines. This includes:

- Click-through rate (CTR) that will contribute to the cost and ad rankings of your keyword
- Relevance of each keyword specifically to its ad group
- Landing page quality and relevance
- Relevance of your ad text
- Your historical AdWords account performance

For example: If a hotel in Singapore purchases the keywords ‘Singapore Hotel’, the user will be presented with an exhaustive list of hotels that match the keywords ‘Singapore Hotel’ of which the user would progressively short-list his needs. The possibility of the user clicking on your ad, then leaving your website within a few seconds is high, or the user may not even click on your link at all. Search engines would categorise you as an inefficient advertiser for this query, and your listing would be pushed lower, thus generating a bad quality score for this ad.

Unfortunately, the quality score goes beyond this simple advertising. An advertising account with a low quality score will also impact your well-performing ads. It will increase your CPC levels to maintain your ad position and impression share, lowering your ROI and depleting your budget rapidly.

If you have a large room inventory within your hotel’s range, it is advisable to purchase generic keywords to capture the larger market share of users. Otherwise, let the industry big players compete for this cake. Act wisely and attract consumers when they are searching specifically for your brand on the same search engine. This will happen at a later stage when travellers are narrowing their choices or when they are ready to book.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Google</th>
<th>Yahoo/Bing</th>
<th>Baidu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bidding cost for generic word</td>
<td>US$1-10</td>
<td>US$1-10</td>
<td>US$1-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target Audience</td>
<td>Worldwide (except China and a few other countries)</td>
<td>Japan/US</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Click-Thru Rate</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return on Ad Spend</td>
<td>12x</td>
<td>11x</td>
<td>3x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to manage</td>
<td>The channel is manageable if time and resources cost permits</td>
<td>The channel is manageable if time and resources cost permits</td>
<td>The channel is manageable if time resources cost permits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Model</td>
<td>CPC/CPM (Display)</td>
<td>CPC</td>
<td>CPC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FASTBOOKING</td>
<td>• Adwords is a complete SEA channel</td>
<td>• Produces 10% of bookings from SEA</td>
<td>• The admin interface is in Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>• Not hard to start with</td>
<td>• Must have if you want to reach a new audience</td>
<td>• If you are not able to use it, go for the application programming interface (API), but this means having a strong IT team to support you or use an Agency to set up the campaigns for you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• This can become tricky and time-consuming if you multiply keywords, languages and countries</td>
<td>• Same tactics and techniques from Adwords can be used on Bing/Yahoo!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Produces 85% of the bookings from Adwords</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FASTBOOKING</td>
<td>Their Admin API is very robust, and the system is complete. This is mandatory to use if hotel would like to proceed to the ‘next level’ of Adwords</td>
<td>Start with Adwords, then try Bing/Yahoo!</td>
<td>Start with Adwords! Thereafter approach an expert agency to assist with Baidu campaigns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tips</td>
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</table>
Recommendation for SEM

- Invest in SEM to drive incremental traffic to your brand website
- Professional is key—Engage an experienced agency to execute SEM to obtain good level of visibility and good ROI
- The effectiveness of SEM depends on the keywords selected. Aim for brand keywords
- SEM can target emerging or source market segments to drive visibility. The less aggressive you are in capturing these markets, the more likely competitors will emerge to fill the void
- Constant monitoring on conversion is essential via data analytics
- Minimum campaign expenditure should always be equivalent or less than Metasearch or commission payable to OTAs
- Campaign duration to meet ROI expectations
  - As long as your campaigns meet your objectives, it is important to document how it works and to invest resources in continuing. The marginal ROI is extremely high as it’s mostly from missed opportunities due to budget limitations.
  - The beauty of SEM is that every dollar spent, as well as every dollar earned, is measurable.
Summary

Search Engine and Metasearch websites are extremely complementary during the user journey to conversion. It’s a tennis game: the user keeps bouncing from one website to another until he finds the hotel he wants to stay at. OTAs are using these two channels to ensure the user will not book through another OTA or the hotel’s brand website. It is a constant digital battle against each other to win the prospect.

So, get in the game, start the ball rolling for your official website, or have a specialised company like FASTBOOKING help you gain more visibility. When you achieve direct bookings through these channels, you can engage directly with your clients, build your own database, and reduce your dependency on distributors in the short or long term. It is a big victory to win direct bookings!
Conclusion

Now is the time to refine your online marketing strategy to match the modern traveller’s increasingly complex path to purchase. But it needn’t be difficult. Travel brands can develop a truly multi-channel strategy that speaks to the right travellers at the right time, with the right messages, if they keep a couple of things in mind.

First, insights into travel planning behaviour will allow you to understand how best to message to them. In our travellers’ paths to purchase, while averages are important for general targeting (e.g., long-haul travellers book further in advance than short-haul travellers), every traveller is different. The best marketing starts with great data, which you can use to reach travellers with relevant messaging based on what they’ve shown an interest in.

Second, the channels which you choose to provide that messaging will ensure your brand remains top of mind when it comes time to book. Display advertising is one effective channel, but SEM and Metasearch websites are two more channels which complement different stages of the path to purchase, ensuring you have a holistic strategy through all stages of the funnel.

Through partnerships with industry-leading experts like Sojern & FASTBOOKING, driving direct bookings and reducing wasted ad spend has never been easier.
ENDNOTES

5. thinkwithGoogle. “APAC Travel Dashboard.”
Partnering with Sojern

Sojern's RevDirect™ helps hoteliers maximize revenue by driving direct bookings to your website, and you only pay after the traveller has completed their stay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>We Take On All The Risk</td>
<td>Promotes your property to specific traveller audience segments who are in market to visit your destination. When we drive a direct booking to your website, you only pay after the stay. There's no catch, and you can cancel at any time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raise Brand Awareness</td>
<td>Markets your hotel website with a highly targeted digital display advertising campaign &amp; search engine marketing that is complementary to your current marketing efforts because it's always on, building brand awareness for your hotel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Real-Time</td>
<td>Puts your property's website in front of travellers that have already shown intent to come to your destination, increasing the likelihood they will book now.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct Bookings</td>
<td>Allows you to take control of the customer experience from beginning to end.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visibility &amp; Control</td>
<td>Gives easy access to your online Sojern account to view performance results, reconcile bookings, and manage your account.</td>
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FASTBOOKING offers leading edge e-commerce solutions for hotels to boost their direct sales strategy. Its solutions based on a cutting-edge cloud platform together with its proven expertise in digital marketing, enable hotels to raise brand visibility and promote online sales through online and mobile channels. Our local experts offer daily support to 4,000 hotel properties in more than 90 countries, to help them leverage its solutions and retain their independence.

Founded in 2000, FASTBOOKING is now part of AccorHotels group, as the specialist for digital solutions dedicated to independent hotels.

For more information, please visit fastbooking.com or email: sales@fastbooking.net for a better solution to your challenges.
Specialising in traveller path-to-purchase data for over a decade, Sojern is travel's direct demand engine for thousands of brands—from global enterprises to boutique operators—across the hotel, airline, cruise, transportation, tourism industries and more. Analysing the world's travel intent signals with its proprietary data science methods, the company delivered $10B in direct bookings for its clients to date by activating multi-channel branding and performance solutions on the Sojern Traveller Platform.

Recognised on the Top Company Cultures list by Entrepreneur Magazine, Sojern is headquartered in San Francisco, with teams based in Dubai, Dublin, Hong Kong, London, Mexico City, New York, Omaha, Paris, Singapore, and Sydney.

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