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PRACTICAL TIPS

TO **INCREASE** YOUR HOTEL'S
DIRECT BOOKINGS



How to Bypass OTAs?

Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) are often criticized for cannibalizing direct sales from independent hotels, brandjacking Google search results (AdWords and SEO), and charging increasingly high commissions for hotel bookings.

THE CURRENT TREND SHOWS THAT OTAS CONTINUE TO GAIN STRENGTH AND ARE STEADILY TAKING UP A LARGER SHARE OF HOTEL PROFITS.

A survey conducted by WYSE Travel Confederation of 57,000 travelers under 30 revealed that **47% of this age group used an OTA to book their accommodations!** It's a statistic that is forcing a growing number of hoteliers to take an interest in this issue. In this guide, we will share our best practices for your online distribution channel that will allow you to effectively bypass OTAs and, therefore, boost your hotel's direct bookings.





01

Offer your rooms at a special rate on your official website

It is important to state on the booking page that guests will get the best price when they book directly on your website. Offering a special rate directly on the website is good. Letting the customer know is even better.

Make sure it's clear to customers that they are getting the lowest price. In this way, they will not be tempted to go on another platform to compare prices.

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To attract potential customers, it is essential to offer rooms with a lower rate on the official website. For this strategy to have an impact and, depending on your average rate, we recommend a price difference that is 5% to 10% lower than that of the OTAs.



02

Stand out from the rest with an effective and engaging hotel website

One of the main advantages hoteliers have is the ability to stand out when potential guests visit their official website. Sharing beautiful photos and promoting your direct offers are all strategies that set you apart from the competition.

It is important not to overlook the importance of visuals. Photos of the rooms and the hotel can be decisive factors that influence the customers' choice.

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03

Give exclusivity to certain products on your official website

Your official website is the heart of your digital distribution channel. It is there to attract your audience, win them over, and convert them into customers. Therefore, it must be user-friendly and visually appealing to make a positive first impression within the first few seconds it is accessed.

But that's not all. To make an even greater impact, giving exclusivity to certain products on the official website can be an extremely effective way to drive more direct bookings. For consumers, the only thing better than a new product is an exclusive one. To convince users to book through your official site, they need to feel like they're getting the best possible service. Offering exclusive products makes them feel special, and ultimately boosts your sales.

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04

Have more flexible cancellation policies on your website

Travel restrictions and general uncertainty can make it hard to plan. Consider updating your cancellation policy to help travelers feel more comfortable during the booking process. This will also give them peace of mind. The ability to modify or cancel a reservation may encourage them to book.

Flexible cancellation policies may allow travelers to get a full refund, including all fees, if they cancel at least 24 hours before the hotel's local check-in time.

According to a study, hosts who switched from strict or moderate cancellation policies to flexible policies on their official website after April 2020, saw their bookings for the following month increase by at least 10%.

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05

Add a Price Check widget on your official website

Customers like to stay within their holiday or leisure budget: they want to make sure to get **the best deals possible**. When placed on a hotel's website, this type of widget is often accessed by internet users.

Adding a price comparison widget on the official hosting site **provides users with comprehensive information about your offers**. It is also important to provide price details, such as the payment period.

A price check widget makes it easier for Internet users to make an informed decision, resulting in a demonstrably higher conversion rate for hotels. Displaying all the information in a clear and comparable way greatly helps users to make a choice. By reducing uncertainty on the site where purchase decisions are made, travelers feel reassured and calmer.

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06

Show your rates on price comparison websites

This is a special hotel advertising channel that attracts visitors to hotels.

To promote your hotel, you can display your rates on various price comparison sites. To do this, your website must be linked to each of them. All you have to do is send them your hotel rates and availability. As this step is complex and highly technical, we recommend using an integration partner. The partner will take care of communicating all this data to the various price comparison sites where you want your hotel to appear.

Price comparison sites are a great way to showcase your official website rates to internet users interested in your hotel. This is ideal for promoting a hotel's direct booking rates and gaining a greater share of the market when competing against OTAs.

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07

Have outstanding customer service

First, the official website must be available in different languages so that a foreign customer can feel “comfortable” when booking. If travelers can access all the necessary information in their own language on the official site, they are 70% more likely to book on your website.

Next, it is important to understand consumer behavior as well as all the small details that will make a difference. This will enable you to leverage them by highlighting the services and added-values offered.



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08

Communicate with your customer base

For many of us, travel creates lasting memories. The hotel where we stay, its hospitality, its breakfast, and the services it offers are some important elements of a positive customer experience.

All these factors will encourage your customers to return to your hotel or recommend it to a friend or an acquaintance in the future.

Keep in touch with your customers through email campaigns to send them the latest news about your hotel and let them know about promotions or special offers. Due to its great accessibility, email marketing allows you to reach a large number of people. Moreover, it has been described as the most powerful marketing channel available, both for professionals and individuals. It keeps you in the minds of customers for future trips to your destination and increases the number of referrals you receive.

Make sure to collect the email addresses of all the guests who stay in your hotel in order to enrich your CRM database and optimize this type of business activity.



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09

Be there when someone is searching for you

Unfortunately, many hotels have chosen to ignore the value of paid searches (PPC) of their official site. They have wrongly assumed that this is not a profitable online marketing strategy.

“52% OF INTERNET USERS CLICK ON SPONSORED LINKS WHEN THEY SEARCH FOR A HOTEL.”

Thanks to SEA (Search Engine Advertising), your hotel can end up at the top of the search results. And this will drive traffic directly to your official website. It will also help to strengthen your brand image.

Pay-per-click marketing allows you to protect your brand name and prevent Internet users interested in your hotel from landing on an OTA's website.

Thanks to pay-per-click campaigns, you can target a more relevant audience because you control the search terms where your ad may appear. Google offers a significant number of possibilities that allow PPC campaign managers to obtain excellent returns on investment.

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Optimize your Google Business Profile (formerly known as Google My Business)

Google My Business listings appear when people search for businesses, allowing interested customers to learn more or get in touch with them with just one click on Google Search or Maps.

It's a vital step towards getting a higher ranking in search results for your hotel. This is because accurate, complete, and optimized listings generate seven times more clicks than those containing little information.

Your Business Profile offers benefits in terms of coverage and SEO (Search Engine Optimization). For example, your hotel will appear in local search results for queries specific to your business.

As you can see, there are good reasons to use your Business Profile to drive direct bookings. Here are the 3 main reasons you should use (in the correct manner) your Business Profile for your hotel:

1. To attract new customers with useful and up-to-date information,
2. To engage with customers and build loyalty,
3. To find out how travelers interact with your hotel on search.

Correctly **completed profiles have a 38% greater chance of attracting travelers**, and above all, they have a **29% greater chance of getting a direct booking!** It's a quick and easy way to drive more bookings for your hotel.



INCREASE YOUR DIRECT BOOKINGS

Your hotel's digital distribution is not a long quiet river.

Many factors come into play when you want to make your website your primary distribution channel for direct online booking. Having a fast and visually appealing website, offering the lowest rates, showcasing your direct offers, and being more flexible in your cancellation policies are the pillars that will significantly increase your direct bookings.

You now have the key information you need to boost direct bookings on your website. Are you now ready to apply these great marketing strategies to your hotel? [Contact us.](#)

To see the positive impact we can have on your booking rate, check out [our latest success story with the Castelbrac Hotel.](#)

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