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Is the iPhone Killing Your Hotel Revenue?

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Here's what we all know by now:

The explosion of smartphone usage over the past few years has been staggering. And not just iPhones, but smartphones of other brands as well...

The Pew Research Center reports that 75% of Americans now own a smartphone and half the population own a tablet. Not only is usage increasing and technology getting more sophisticated, consumers are more reliant on their mobile devices. In fact, 9 out of 10 American consumers keep their smartphones within reach 24 hours a day.

This round-the-clock usage has also redefined the way people book travel. A recent Google report revealed that 77% of luxury travelers turn to their mobile devices for trip inspiration. And a whopping 55% then use their smartphones to book their stay!

As mobile usage propels forward, so should your response as a hotel marketer. Mobile updates, and the world's response to them, mean that you can't simply recycle and reuse last year's mobile strategy. 2017 is a clean slate to keep pace with mobile's rapid growth.

Here are 5 things you need to know to ride the mobile wave and amplify your mobile revenue this year:

1. Your Search Engine Results Depend on Mobile

For the first time ever, Google is now using your hotel's mobile site as the **primary** source to rank your hotel's website content and user experience, with your desktop version as a secondary site. This means your mobile hotel site is the first factor that goes into determining how well you rank in search engines. While you may have regarded your mobile experience as important in 2016, hotel search engine marketing via mobile is now downright *vital* to your hotel's presence and profitability.

Plus, as mobile search rises, so does the use of local search terms. This places more emphasis on local SEO and the need for your marketing team to create optimized content with tailored metadata that includes location (<http://www.tambourine.com/blog/the-painful-truth-about-hotel-seo-part-2/>).

2. Use Mobile PPC to Fill Last Minute Rooms

On-the-go travelers rely on their mobile devices to book last-minute hotel reservations (especially at urban/city hotels). Studies show that 58% of last-minute bookings were made from tablets and smartphones. In fact, the less time a traveler has to book a room, the more likely the reservation will be made on a smartphone.

Capture this audience with targeted mobile PPC ad campaigns that tout promos and deals for last-minute travelers or those who are already on the road. Create enticing weekend offers targeting spontaneous travelers from your drive markets. Are you located near the airport? Then, create ads that promote specials for travelers stranded by cancelled or delayed flights.

(http://hotel-online.com/images/press/Tambo_iPhone_02232017.png)3. It's Still a Phone...

It's surprising how many businesses neglect to publish a phone number on their mobile sites, essentially blocking smartphone users from clicking to call and losing out on potential revenue.

The first proof of your hotel's guest service is being available and accessible when guests need you. Take a hint from the few successful travel apps out there, including Expedia and Hilton, and make it easy for smartphone users to find and utilize your phone number. Even better, craft your hotel's mobile experience to be more app-like, with a one-touch 'click to call' button – both on your mobile website and mobile booking engine. (<http://www.tambourine.com/blog/the-pros-and-cons-of-building-an-app-for-your-hotel/>)

Just as with your desktop hotel website, there are potential hurdles and friction that could easily derail a direct booking in progress via a mobile device. If a guest has a question (which they all do), make it simple for them to reach out to your staff. If not, the visitor may lose patience and seek a room someplace else.

4. Your Mobile Booking Engine is as Important as Your Mobile Website

There is a dangerous “chasm” between your hotel’s mobile website and your booking engine, where potential guests can likely “fall off” (<http://www.tambourine.com/blog/the-hidden-chasm-why-your-bookings-keep-falling-into-the-abyss/>) if you’re not cautious. Slow load times and inconsistent colors/layouts between the mobile website and your mobile booking engine will increase abandonment. Worse yet, if your mobile booking engine fails to recognize the inherent limitations of small screens (and short attention spans) and fails to shorten and simplify the mobile booking process, attrition will surely grow.

5. Optimize for Various Screen Resolution Sizes

Today, there are seemingly endless smartphone choices, with different designs, features and vitally important (but less obvious) to marketers – different screen resolutions. An iPhone 7 user will have a different experience than the Samsung Galaxy user.

If you notice high traffic to your mobile site, but low conversions and a high number of bounces, consider using a browser tool, such as Chrome’s INSPECT feature (<https://developers.google.com/web/tools/chrome-devtools/>) that allows you to preview how your hotel’s website appears using various screen resolutions sizes and multiple devices.

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