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The Mobile-First World Creates Tremendous Revenue Potential for Hoteliers

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Hoteliers face a challenge in 2019: Creating and managing a robust digital presence in an increasingly mobile-first environment. This means investing in mobile technology and marketing that enables the best user experience while achieving maximum engagement, regardless of device. The explosion of mobile customer

rising tide of mobile-obsessed travel consumers.

The shift from desktop to mobile and tablet devices continued its steady pace in 2018. More than 58% of web visitors and more than 51% of page views were generated from mobile devices last year, compared to 38% of web visitors and 40% of page views only three years ago. In 2018, nearly 28% of bookings and 25% of room nights came from mobile devices, compared to 21% of bookings and 17% of room nights in 2015 (HEBS Digital client portfolio data).

It's clear that we're already living in a mobile-first world. Mobile devices dominate the travel planning journey: up to half of all desktop bookings worldwide are preceded by a click on a mobile device, and 94% of leisure travelers use multiple devices (mobile, tablet, desktop) when planning and booking travel (Criteo).

In hospitality, up to 30% of hotel bookings are done via mobile devices, a percentage dependent on whether the property is branded or independent, its location (rural or metro area), complexity of hotel product (golf resort vs. major city hotel), availability of a loyalty program, and composition of its customer segments (business vs. leisure, transient vs. group).

The hospitality industry, by default, has lower mobile booking share compared to the overall projections for the travel industry due to the complexity of managed corporate travel and SMERF group segment procurement, such as mandated GDS bookings for managed corporate travel and the offline RFP process for group travel.

The mobile–first world is here to stay:

Desktop	72.4%	75.2%	76.3%	48.7%	41.8%
Mobile Devices:	27.6%	24.8%	23.7%	51.3%	58.2%
Incl.					
Smartphone	19.7%	15.9%	15.2%	42.2%	49.2%
Tablet	7.9%	8.9%	8.5%	9.0%	8.9%

Across HEBS Digital's hotel client portfolio, consisting of hundreds of hotels and resorts of every size, we saw this shift occur in every data category. The most notable developments in 2018:

- Nearly 28% of bookings, 25% of room nights, and 24% of revenue came from mobile devices. If we include over-the-phone reservations originating from the hotel mobile website, more than 35% of bookings and 30% of revenue originated from the mobile channel.
- Nearly 58% of web visitors and 51% of page views were generated from mobile devices.

Compared to 2015, mobile devices generated:

- Less than 21% of bookings, 17% of room nights, and 15% of revenue.
- Less than 38% of web visitors and 40% of page views.

Or, compare to 2012 when mobile devices generated:

- Less than 9.5% of bookings, 8.6% of room nights, and 9% of revenue.
- Less than 17% of web visitors and 14% of page views.

As we continue to experience this shift to mobile and increased complexity in the travel planning process, hoteliers need to find ways to engage their best potential guests across multiple touch points and across all devices, especially mobile. Today's typical online travel consumer is exposed to more than 38,983 micro-moments in any 60-day timeframe. They also visit an average of 18 websites via multiple devices in eight sessions before making a hotel booking (Google Research). This journey results in some serious competition for the travel consumer's attention and has become increasingly dominated by mobile micro-moments and touch points.

Here are the top two action steps for hoteliers to address the shift to mobile-first user behavior:

#1. Invest in a responsive, mobile-first website.

Hoteliers need to keep the property website, which is the foundation of their digital marketing and distribution strategy, up to the mobile-first standards demanded by today's travel consumer. With nearly 59% of website visitors now viewing on mobile devices, a fully responsive mobile-first website design is a must.

If your property website is older than two years, it's due for a redesign. Websites older than two years are often lacking the latest best practices in technology, design, and UX, such as a mobile-first design, content merchandising, Google AMP (Accelerated Mobile Pages), schema, and technical SEO considerations. An outdated website leads to lower conversions.

The website download speeds across various devices also inevitably affects conversion rates on the hotel website: fast download speeds drastically improve the user experience

site takes longer than three seconds to load. Mobile-first responsive websites with cloud hosting and CDN (Content Delivery Network) provide far better server response times and faster download speeds across geographies.

A hotel's website must also be backed by a website technology platform that includes mobile-first functionality specific to the hoteliers' needs, such as:

- Automated schema markup on the hotel website. Schema markup helps search engines understand the content and intent of websites, especially dynamic content elements such as events and happenings pages, special offers, opening hours, and star ratings. These rich snippets make hotel webpages appear more prominently in SERPs, thus improving visibility of a hotel website's overall SEO performance. One of the important benefits is the Featured Snippets, which Google creates dynamically based on the content of your website and places on top of the search results.

- Google Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP) pages which download fast on mobile and wearable devices and are featured as news and info "teasers" in the Google AMP teaser section in mobile SERPs. This works to increase hotel visibility and create another entry point to boost mobile visitors and bookings, as well as provide another opportunity to outshine the competition.

- Advanced merchandising technology platform for promoting special offers and packages, including last-minute deals for mobile users.

- Content personalization capabilities to target users with unique marketing messages and promotions, based on the device they are currently using (mobile vs. desktop), their demographic information, geo location, and loyalty member affiliation.

with shorter booking windows and desktop users with longer booking windows.

- Advanced content management functionality to create and manage custom page layouts designed to showcase a property in its best light.

A highly-secure cloud hosting platform.

The property website must incorporate the right balance of beauty and science. An excellent design combined with a state-of-the-art website content management system (CMS), supported by a strong merchandising strategy and engaging visual content and copy, all while providing an optimum user experience from top to bottom on all possible devices. This type of website will result in a boost in conversions and revenues from the direct online channel.

#2. Engage the mobile-first travel consumer with multi-channel, multi-device marketing.

Keeping travelers engaged and reaching them at various touchpoints throughout their journey requires integrating all marketing channels across all possible screens. Effective multi-channel marketing campaigns utilize the full spectrum of digital marketing (SEO, SEM, display, paid social, and email) to promote one cohesive message across channels and devices. This strategy is the most effective way to increase reach and boost revenues for a need period.

Campaign Strategy Recommendations for 2019:

- Establish the overarching business need you are trying to meet with the campaign: drive weekend stays, increase RFPs for meetings and events, increase ADR, or drive last-minute occupancy needs due to a big group cancellation, for example.

your target audience.

- Based on this data, create one cohesive campaign message that will most effectively speak to these audiences across all touchpoints and devices.
- Map the path to purchase for your travel consumer and launch initiatives that will reach guests across devices and throughout all stages of the lifecycle, from the dreaming to planning and booking phases and beyond.
- Integrate powerful and engaging technology that assists in lead generation, relationship building, and driving direct bookings.
- Reserve 15-25% of your property's digital marketing budget for multichannel campaigns.

To achieve mobile-readiness, hoteliers must invest adequately in a mobile-first website and digital marketing campaigns. Bying, and future guests, hotels can drive more direct bookings throughout the entire path to purchase, especially from the mobile channel.

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About HEBS Digital

Founded in 2001, the firm is headquartered in New York City and has global offices in Las Vegas and Asia-Pacific. Through its Smart Guest Acquisition Suite, including the smartCMS®, Content Personalization Engine, Smart Data