

INSIDE  
SERIES

# GOING MOBILE

A look at how the Leisure & Tourism  
Industry is keeping pace

Pomegranate 



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A look at how the Leisure & Tourism Industry is keeping pace.



Mobile technology is on the increase. Fact. And any industry that fails to embrace this shift in consumer behaviour is going to get left behind.

The leisure and tourism industry is all about delivering consumer experiences, yet long gone are the days when consumers had no alternative but to visit their local travel agency to book their trip. Whilst most large travel companies do have an online presence, 60% of those online do not have a mobile-friendly version of their website and 71% don't have a mobile app. (Cygnetinfotech, 2013).

Moreover, many of these mobile sites only offer the ability to browse digital brochures and catalogues rather than actually allowing consumers to make a booking. Travellers are ultimately led back to the travel agent's sales team to take their enquiry to the next level.



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As one of the largest industries in the world, it seems strange that so many operators are falling behind the times. Travel is all about customer experience yet it appears the industry is holding itself back by an apparent reluctance to embrace new technologies.

## SO WHAT'S SLOWING PROGRESS?

The argument from the travel agents' point of view is that building a bespoke holiday package requires a considerable amount of contact with the consumer to deduce their specific requirements and that a tablet/mobile device cannot always offer this level of interaction. They also argue that their financial resources are often better spent on improving their current booking systems and sales teams than investing in mobile technology.



Research has also suggested that a lot of agencies would introduce mobile technology for the benefit of the agents making the bookings before introducing a platform for their consumers. One California based travel agency said: “Rather than focus on consumer-interfacing mobile technology, I would love to see tour operators create mobile technology that aids our efforts in selling their trips.” But when the consumer is largely considered ‘king’, it would seem that the travel industry is seemingly looking to bark up the wrong tree.

In the latest Adobe Digital Index report, which looked at 51.5 billion visits, online bookings for online travel agents, airlines, hotel, and car rental services have reached an all-time high. Both direct and indirect bookings show double-digit improvement this year: car rental sites are experiencing the highest bookings growth at 17.4% year-over-year and online travel agents second highest at 13.5%. Companies who fail to migrate their services into a consumer-friendly, online environment will find themselves lagging behind those that do.



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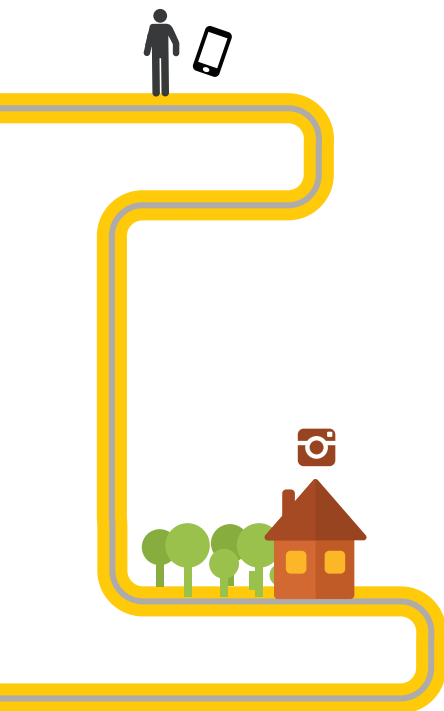
## WHO’S ON THE MOVE?

This isn’t to say that there hasn’t been any shift in the sector. The likes of sites such as Expedia, TripAdvisor and Trivago are changing the way we plan our travels, offering no-nonsense, user-friendly methods of researching, booking and paying for our trips without the need to even speak to anyone throughout the process. Mobile apps like these are disrupting traditional booking techniques, paving the way for others to follow and proving that today’s consumer is demanding more and more services that fit into the palm of their hand.

And it is these forward-thinking sites that are on their way to building higher levels of customer loyalty. Aside from being able to make an actual booking online, it is the periphery services that often make the difference in which brand a consumer will choose when planning their travels. What can I do once I get to my hotel? I have a query about my booking but your offices are closed – who can help me? Can I easily share my travel plans with friends and family? It is these added services that bring real value to a customer’s travel experience and demonstrate the true value of operators’



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need to adopt mobile technology. Adobe's report also states that as more travel sites adopt new digital marketing technologies, which can specifically target content and marketing to existing customers, the trends indicate that they are making good progress in bringing back more return customers.

It is therefore the job of today's marketers to discover who they need to connect with and how those target consumers are accessing information. For travel companies focused on the executives, for example, data indicates 70% of executives use mobile to look up products or services upon first hearing about them. An additional 57% use mobile to research products or services for their organisation, and 38% make the final decisions to purchase products or services from their mobile device. According to the Insights findings, digital marketers have a large opportunity to influence B2B decision makers on the go in real-time, especially in the early phases of their path to purchase.

## IT'S TIME TO GET EMOTIONAL

What is beginning to happen is that leisure organisations are beginning to look more deeply at what consumers really want from their experience. Typically holiday and leisure purchases are highly emotive experiences – memories, sights, sounds and smells are just some of the connections that travellers make with their holidays and it is these feelings that travel companies are trying to capture when targeting their customers. One of the latest experiments into emotional navigation is the British Airways holidaymaker application, where a person filters the suggested holiday results by selecting a series of images. The images cover a range of emotional experiences, from relaxing on the beach to eating different types of food, each of which are designed to help the customer express how they like to unwind when on holiday. British Airways then takes these emotions and translates them into your ideal holiday, transforming the usually mundane aspect of choosing where you want to go into an interactive, emotionally-led experience.



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Expedia has also launched a clever campaign called Find Yours <http://findyours.com>, a Facebook app that allows even those with no video editing skills to quickly compile holiday photos into a short, stylised video that they can then share with friends and family over social media. (Source: [tnooz.com](http://tnooz.com)). The app has been designed to allow the user to make their video completely unique, adding nice touches such as a flight path showing where their journey started and finished and asking them to input what they got out of their trip from an emotional point of view. Not only does this enable Expedia to better understand what travellers are hoping to get out of their trips,


but it encourages customers to connect with the brand by sharing their personal experiences in a way that typical customer surveys just cannot do.


These two examples demonstrate how travel companies are taking their mobile experiences to the next level. Whilst both have smartphone apps and mobile-friendly sites for making bookings by mobile, customers are unlikely to merely share these apps with friends and family but much more inclined to share their customized Expedia video or their tailor-made British Airways holiday. This in-depth emotional connection is enabling companies to help customers share their excitement with others at the same time as promoting which brand took them there. According to the Adobe 2013 Mobile Consumer Survey, accessing social media is the number one mobile activity today, with 71% of those surveyed reported to use their mobile device to access social media – a statistic that should not be easily ignored.


## COMPLETING YOUR MOBILE JOURNEY


So in an era when touch screens, tablets and mobile phones are ruling the technology roosts, airlines, hotels and tourist attractions cannot escape the necessity to employ mobile platforms to offer an enhanced customer journey – discount offers, 24/7 opening hours, simplified booking processes and the ability to share your experiences all contribute towards building customer loyalty.

Here are **Pomegranate's top 6 tips** to consider when making the transition into the mobile environment.

 **1 Define your strategy** – many organisations have reacted to imperatives such as “We need an app” or “Our competitors are mobile; we need to be too” and panicked into creating a mobile site that doesn’t fulfil their consumers’ needs. To avoid a similar fate, businesses need to define how their mobile presence will fit into a multichannel strategy as well as how it will improve the customer experience they are offering.

 **2 Gather as much insight** as you can on your target audience and the styles of purchase journeys they are looking to make. For example, many 50+ will research on the web but then prefer to call or walk into a travel agency to make their final booking. However, the 20+ category is largely happy to carry out the complete purchase journey on their mobile. Can you satisfy all your target markets’ behaviours?

 **3 Decide whether you are going to develop an app or a mobile-optimized website.** This will depend on budget, how much information you need to convey in a mobile version of your site and also whether you want the consumer to be able to access content offline.

 **4 Pick the right platform.** Do some research on how your consumers are currently accessing your full version site? Are they iPhone, android or blackberry users? This will often be influenced by who your target market

demographic is. Start with the most popular platform if budget is limited and then develop the others over time.



If either a mobile app or site isn't feasible, **consider developing an online presence that can be accessed via social media** as most of the industry's big players have already developed mobile-optimised sites or apps. Facebook apps are a great example as they combine the ability to offer your products and services online in a social media environment where people can share their experiences easily with others.



**Set targets and measure your results.** Are customers leaving your mobile site too quickly? What are the conversion rates of purchases (if applicable)? Are the objectives you set out for the mobile site being met? Constant monitoring and analysis of your mobile experience will ensure that customers aren't going elsewhere for the information they are seeking.

## GET IN TOUCH

If you would like to find out more about making your business mobile, get in touch.

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