

HOW TO PROMOTE YOUR HOTEL ON GOOGLE



Trellis

Your Framework for Business Growth

HotelREZ
HOTELS & RESORTS

— **16** —
YEARS
OF EXCELLENCE
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INDEPENDENT HOTELS: INCREASE RESERVATIONS WITH GOOGLE

As travel restrictions have begun to loosen around the world, hotels should take as much advantage of digital platforms as possible. Travellers today are more technologically savvy than ever before, and hotels can boost booking numbers if they utilise digital promotional channels in the right way.

Recent statistics suggest that 96% of people travelling for leisure purposes start their travel planning with a Google search.

As a result, Google has started expanding its presence in the online travel market. There's no denying that Google already dominates online search, so now they want a bigger slice of the pie when it comes to hotel bookings.

Ensuring your hotel can easily be found online on Google is thus very important to increase online hotel bookings.

So what does this all mean for hoteliers? There are a number of ways your hotel can stand out on Google, some of which are free and others which are paid. In this e-book, we've carefully explained each option so you can see what best suits your needs.

One thing we'd like to stress regardless is the importance of utilising all 'routes to market', as we like to call it.

While Google is important, it certainly does not mean that you should drop all other distribution channels and focus on Google entirely.

Rather, hotels should have a good mix of different distribution channels to ensure they never rely solely on one channel.

Combining the use of Google, OTAs and other online strategies with the likes of GDS representation and direct bookings is the way forward.

We hope this e-book gives you insight into all the different ways you can use Google to promote your independent hotel.

And if you need any help or have any questions at all, our contact details are on the last page.

Happy reading!



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BOOK ON GOOGLE: what is it and how does it work?



One of the ways in which Google is disrupting the online travel industry is through Book on Google, which makes it possible for people to book their holidays directly through Google.

By booking with them, people can now easily fill out reservation forms using pre-stored information from their Google Accounts and pay using Google Pay.

This is making the booking journey much faster and doesn't require customers to go to any other websites to complete the booking. Good news for Google, bad news for OTA booking platforms.

The Book on Google initiative is made possible through partnerships with central reservation systems, allowing hotels to pay commissions to Google for transactions that the search engine giant handles on their own platform.

As this is an optional service, it is currently left up to hotels to decide whether or not they want to participate.

To participate, hotels need to sign up for Google Hotel Ads, either through the cost-per-click or commission programme (more on this later).

Once activated, anyone that completes a specific hotel search will be able to navigate to 'Book a room' as part of the hotel's Google My Business profile.

When the user clicks the hotel's pricing option, they get taken to a Google Travel page where they can complete their booking using Google Pay, if they wish.

As easy as 1-2-3 really!

SO HOW CAN A HOTEL OPTIMISE ITS PRESENCE ON BOOK ON GOOGLE?

- ✓ By optimising their Google My Business profile, which takes us to the next section.

WHY GOOGLE MY BUSINESS

is so much more than a
FREE BUSINESS LISTING



We've mentioned Google My Business a few times now (have you been paying attention?), but what is it and how is it connected to Book on Google?

Google My Business is a free business profile that lets you manage how your hotel shows up on Google Search and Google Maps.

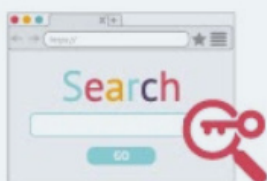
If you've ever searched for your hotel on Google and noticed the box on the right shows incorrect information, location or images, then you'll know what we're talking about.

More than just a local listing, Google My Business profiles are often the first impression potential guests have of your hotel and allow them to leave reviews afterwards.

They also let you set up the built-in bookings option, which is where the connection with Book on Google lies.

To create or update a Google My Business profile, make sure you are signed in to your Google account (you might need to create one first) and select 'manage now' in the top right-hand corner.

TOP 3 TIPS to get more visitors to your hotel website



Make search engine results **WORK FOR YOU**



Ensure your **HOTEL CONTENT** is up to date

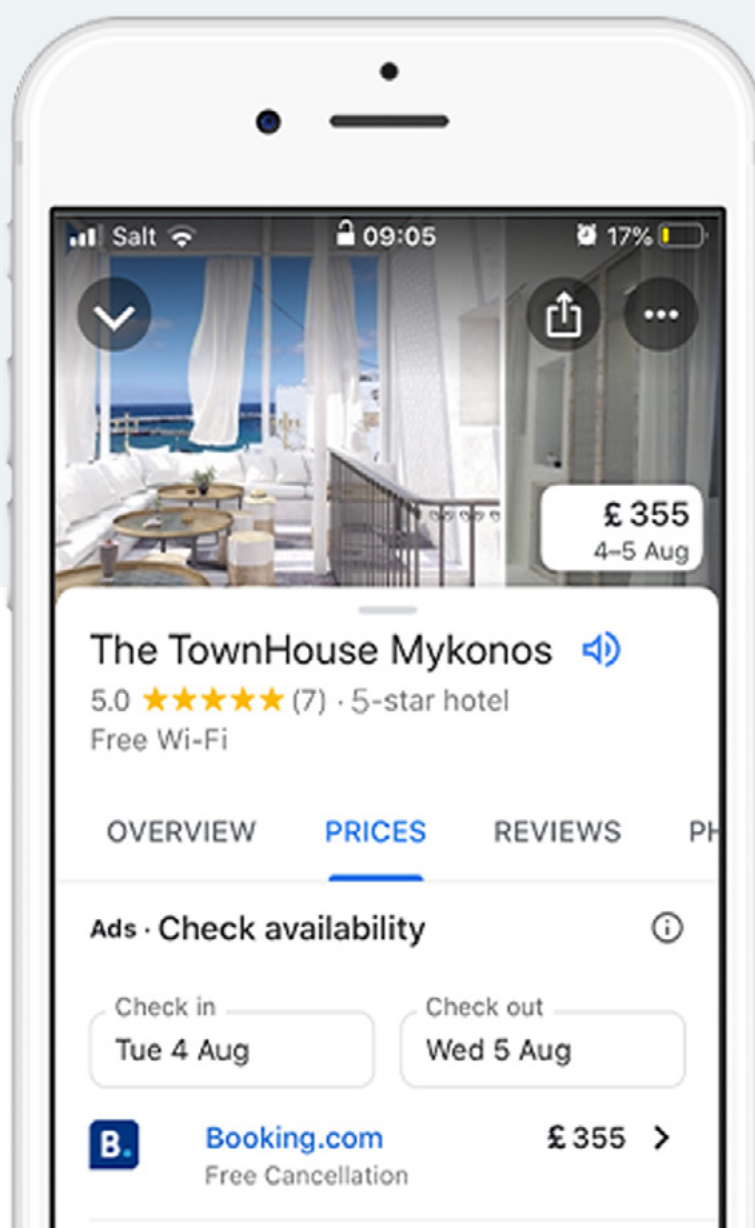


Make your hotel **WEBSITE** as **USER FRIENDLY** as possible

WE RECOMMEND ALL HOTELS

to check and update the below options:

- ▶ Physical address and location (does the pin fall on the right building on Google Maps?)
- ▶ Opening hours (if relevant)
- ▶ Contact information like telephone number
- ▶ Website
- ▶ Category (so it's crystal clear that you are a hotel!)
- ▶ Images
- ▶ Hotel star rating (is it incorrect? More on this below)
- ▶ Review responses (if you have reviews, regardless of whether they are positive or negative, respond to acknowledge them and thank the person)
- ▶ Social profiles
- ▶ Built-in booking option (through Book on Google)



What to do if **GOOGLE IS SHOWING THE WRONG STAR** rating for your hotel



Sometimes it can happen that Google shows the wrong star rating for a hotel, which is confusing for bookers and frustrating for hoteliers!

We have received quite a few questions on why this happens and how this can be changed, so if you're in this situation, read on.

While you unfortunately can't manually change your own star rating, it's good to know that Google picks up these ratings from relevant third party sites.

They do not publicly provide the full list of sites they pull this data from, but for hotels it will likely be OTA sites like Tripadvisor or Booking.com.

To update a rating, Google needs a minimum of the same three ratings across those sites.

We suggest having a look at the OTAs that currently list your hotel and reviewing how many stars they list.

If there's a discrepancy, you know where to start!

According to Google, once the star ratings are correct on the third-party websites, their algorithm will automatically update. But we recommend monitoring this and contacting them in case it takes a while!

The benefits of updating your **HOTEL STAR RATING**



**IMPROVE BOOKING
EXPERIENCE**



**RECEIVE MORE
ENGAGEMENT**



**INCREASE HOTEL
BOOKINGS**

How to make the most of your **GOOGLE REVIEWS**



Reviews, reviews, reviews - as hoteliers, you'll be well aware of them. But how important are they really?

Extremely, according to the latest figures: 65% of consumers check online reviews before booking a hotel.

What's more, a recent Tripadvisor study found that 79% of users are more likely to book a hotel with a higher rating when choosing between two otherwise identical properties, and over 52% agree that they would never book a hotel with no reviews.

Reviews are one of the most valuable sources of information for travellers when they search for hotels.

That's why we encourage all hoteliers to ask guests to leave a review after their stay. After all, statistics show that 70% of consumers will leave a review when asked!

These reviews will show up in your Google My Business page and are therefore one of the first things someone sees when searching for your hotel.

Please note, Google now displays reviews from other sources in addition to reviews on Google, so make sure to proactively check all OTA sites as well and respond accordingly.

According to Google, because reviews are content valued by users, they do have an impact on how your hotel listing will rank in search results.

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**CHECK ONLINE
REVIEWS**
before booking a hotel



GOOGLE HOTEL ADS: how to set up and manage EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGNS



We mentioned earlier on that there are free ways to promote your hotel on Google, and then there are paid ways.

The easiest and quickest way to ensure you show up for travellers searching for hotels in your area is to utilise Google Hotel Ads.

Google Hotel Ads display your hotel availability and rates on Google search, Google maps and Google assistant, easily attracting people who have a strong booking intent.

GOOGLE ADS Set up and management

WHAT ARE GOOGLE HOTEL ADS?

Google Hotel Ads are paid ads that hoteliers bid on to show up when travellers search for accommodation in specific locations. The ads will show hotel photos, reviews and prices, and provide a link to book a room. You can either send people to your site to book or allow them to book directly on Google to reduce the number of steps customers need to take. Google Hotel Ads let you tailor your hotel's prices by availability and traveller itineraries, and only charge you for the ad when someone selects your room rate. And it works: Premier Inn has reported a 40% increase in bookings from new customers with Google Hotel Ads, while US hotel chain La Quinta Inns & Suites doubled their conversion rate with mobile Google Hotel Ads.

HOW TO SET UP GOOGLE HOTEL ADS

If you like the sound of the above, the natural next step is to get started with your Google Hotel Ads setup. While the setup process is not overly complicated, it can prove to be time-consuming for hoteliers already struggling to juggle tasks on their ever-growing to-do list.

We've tried to summarise the setup process in as few points as possible below:

1. SHOW LIVE RATES AND AVAILABILITY

Google Hotel Ads are dynamic, meaning they will show potential bookers live rates and availabilities.

The first step in the setup process is to provide Google with a hotel list feed (the hotels you want to advertise), a price feed (an up-to-date set of prices for different itineraries) and a point-of-sale configuration page, also known as a landing page, that users arrive at after clicking on your ad.

These are all managed in a Google Hotel Center account, which you'll need to create should you not have one already.

The easiest and quickest way to connect the above is to work with a connectivity partner. As we already host this data, the team at HotelREZ can assist with linking up your live availability and room rates to your Google Hotel Center account.



**PROVIDE
GOOGLE WITH**
a hotel list feed,
a price feed and a
landing page



Use
HIGH-QUALITY
images

2. CHOOSE THE RIGHT IMAGES

After interacting with your ad, a potential booker can click through to the Google Hotel Ads booking module.

This booking module contains more information about your hotel, such as photos, contact information, reviews and directions. For a comprehensive overview of the booking module, have a look at the different elements that make up [a hotel ad](#). Hotel photos are one of the most important elements as they will be what makes your ad stand out when people scroll through Google.

Having high-quality images of your hotel is crucial: they will receive more engagement, improve the booking experience for customers and ultimately increase hotel bookings.

In fact, they're so crucial that we've dedicated an entire blog article on [the importance of image quality for hotels](#).

As part of our Hotel Marketing services, we offer our own image management system REZmedia.

This allows us to ensure that all of your hotel images are of the highest quality, and helps us determine which images will work best for your hotel.

3. SET YOUR PREFERRED BID

Because advertising on Google is like taking part in a massive online ad auction, you'll need to set a bid on your ads. There are different types of bid strategies out there, meaning you can choose how much you're willing to spend.

You can choose cost-per-conversion (CPA), target ROAS, enhanced cost-per-click or a commission strategy. For an overview of the Google Hotel Ads bidding process, have a look at their [bidding user guide](#).

While you can manually set up your preferred bid yourself, it can get complex quite quickly if you aren't used to advertising on Google.

We do have an experienced digital marketing team that's well versed at setting up Google Hotel Ads and going through different ad bidding strategies with you. So if you need some help, don't be afraid to reach out!



There are
different types of
BID STRATEGIES
out there



It is crucial that your
GOOGLE HOTEL ADS
deliver **adequate ROI**

3. MANAGING YOUR GOOGLE HOTEL ADS ROI

It is crucial that your Google Hotel Ads deliver adequate ROI and an increase in RevPAR.

So as with all other aspects of digital marketing, once your Google Hotel Ads have been set up, they'll require continuous management and optimisation.

Our digital marketing team provides our Google Hotel Ads clients with monthly performance reports. This allows them to see all bookings coming through Google Hotel Ads so they can see the direct benefit of running Google Hotel Ads campaigns.

Why direct and **GDS BOOKINGS** are still **AS RELEVANT** as ever



We mentioned earlier that even if Google is changing its approach to hotel bookings, it's important that hoteliers still focus on other distribution channels to ensure a good mix.

Currently, 87% of guests will visit a hotel website at least once before making a reservation, regardless of how they end up booking. And Phocuswright is actually predicting that by 2022, direct bookings will grow to a 50% share.

In addition to improving their Google presence, hoteliers should thus invest in optimising their own website for more traffic.

It's also equally as important to review the possibilities of the GDS. Over 600,000 travel agents use the GDS for flight, car rental and room bookings every single day, and 2018 was a record year for GDS growth as it boasted over 75 million generated reservations.

At HotelREZ, we're experts at helping hotels get more direct bookings and ensuring their GDS distribution is presenting them with the revenue growth they want.

We also work very closely with hotels to ensure their business development programmes are working in their favour, and help them improve their brand image with a concise online marketing strategy.

► **WE CAN HELP YOU OPTIMISE YOUR GOOGLE DISTRIBUTION WHILE ENSURING YOUR ENTIRE DISTRIBUTION MIX IS WORKING FOR YOU.**

Interested? Get in touch to find out more.

ABOUT HOTELREZ

HotelREZ Hotels & Resorts was founded in 2004 by Mark Lewis, an experienced hospitality industry professional and entrepreneur. Over the course of over a decade, the company has grown to be one of the leading hotel representation companies dedicated to marketing and connecting independent properties with bookers worldwide. HotelREZ now provides distribution, revenue, sales consultancy and marketing services and support to more than 1,500 hotels, apartments and hotel groups in over 100 countries including private label GDS chain code solutions. HotelREZ Hotels & Resorts is a SAAS company.

HotelREZ manages the brand Best Loved Hotels, a collection of unique global individual properties, with a dedicated GDS Programme, together with a Website and printed Directory, aimed at the high-end leisure agency and traveller. HotelREZ also incorporates the global World Rainbow Hotels, the world's only GDS enabled LGBT global hotel consortia representing some 1200 hotels in 230 destinations across the globe.

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