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METASEARCH

A Hotelier's Guide

Search



TRIPTEASE

Should I list my hotel on metasearch?

If you've found yourself asking this over the last year or so, you're not alone. Metasearch sites are growing at a phenomenal rate, with recent research suggesting that they are now the most important advertising channel for hotels* - outstripping even Google AdWords when it comes to driving traffic. It's a compelling offering for hotels seeking to grow their direct channel.

So how does it work?

Metasearch is an advertising channel for all manner of travel vendors, not just hotels - which makes it hard to find hotel-specific advice. That's why we've put together a **Hotelier's Guide to Metasearch**. We're answering all your questions, as well as providing a five-step guide to setting up your first campaign. Featuring input from industry experts **80 DAYS** and **Koddi**, this is the metasearch guide you've been waiting for.

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* [Fastbooking](#)



What is metasearch?

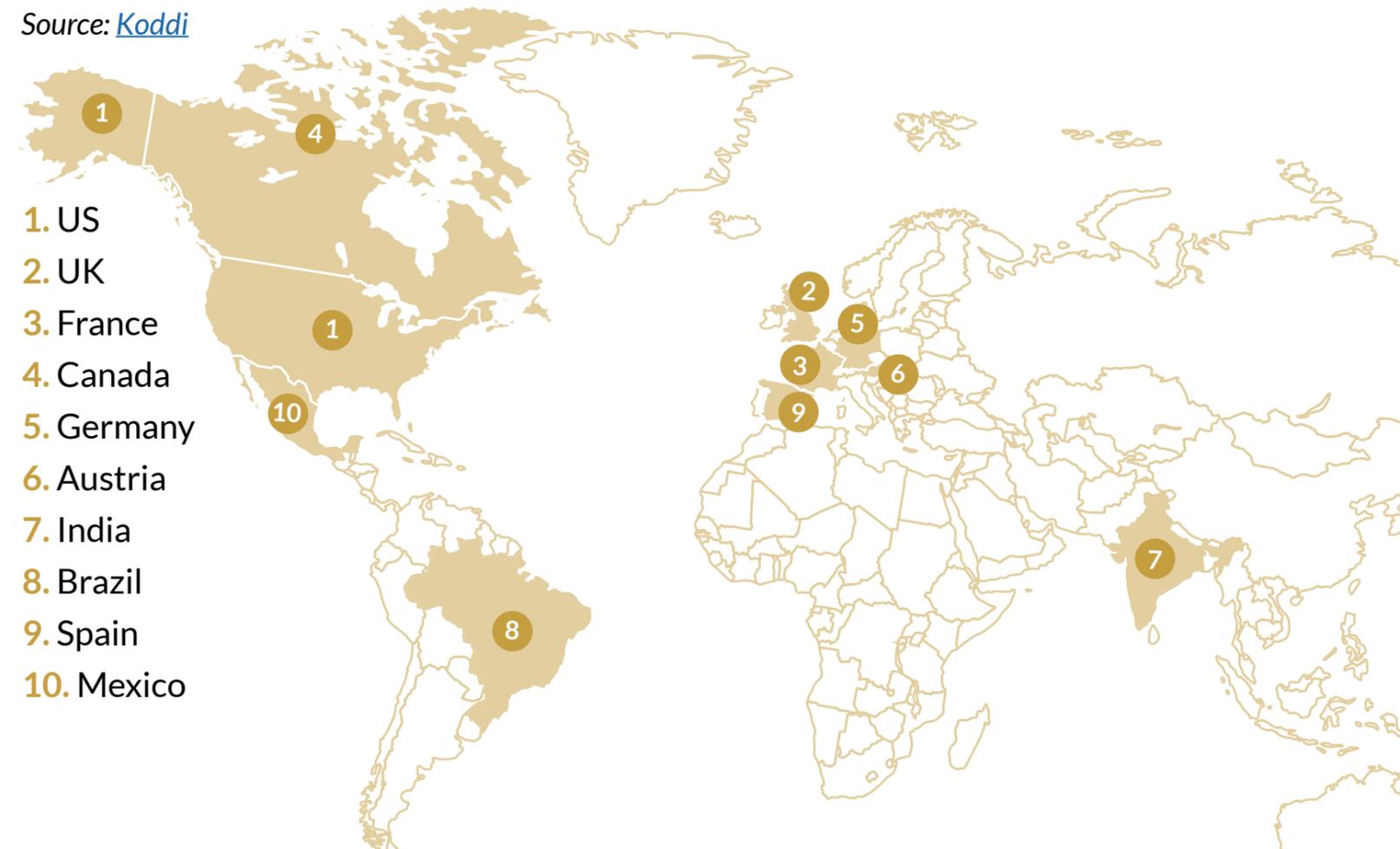
A metasearch engine is a price comparison website that compares hotel rates from across the internet. It works on a basis similar to most digital advertising platforms: businesses 'bid' on advertising slots that appear to the users they want to attract. Depending on the site, businesses pay on a CPA (cost per acquisition) or CPC (cost per click) basis. The fundamental thing to note is that metasearch is not a booking channel: it's an advertising platform on which different booking channels can market themselves.

A metasearch engine won't list the rate from your website, even if it's the best rate available online, unless you are actively bidding on advertising slots. Your hotel might be visible anyway, but that's because the OTAs you partner with will be bidding on those slots 'on behalf of' your hotel.

If a customer books a room at your hotel through a metasearch engine like Kayak or Trivago, you own that booking. The customer is either redirected to your site, or stays on the meta to book (depending on whether you have integrated with their instant booking option) - but either way, they are your customer.

TOP 10 METASEARCH MARKETS

Source: [Koddi](#)



How is it changing?

Travel metasearch engines began as rate aggregators, pulling in rates from sites across the internet so that consumers could compare as many prices as possible before making their decision. Their main partners were OTAs like Expedia and Priceline (both of whom now own metas - Trivago and Kayak respectively), and OTAs were the ones who benefitted. Complicated setup processes and complex campaign management requirements put many hotels off the medium.

But that's been changing for a while. Most hotels can now get listed on metasearch engines relatively easily (depending on their booking engine). There are a plethora of services available that are designed to maximise the success of a hotel's campaigns. **Instant booking features**, where the guest remains on the metasearch site to book, have produced an interestingly hybrid online booking environment (but some say that's straying into OTA territory). Metasearch engines are becoming increasingly accessible to smaller hotels: facilitated booking solutions, for example, mean that hotels can list on meta even without their own website.

The biggest changes, though, are being driven by - who else? - Google.



EXPERT INSIGHT

Metasearch is an incredibly fast-growing and fast-changing environment, and nowhere is that clearer than with Google. We often see changes to their meta set up.

These rapid changes are something for hotels to consider - it's always better to join a movement in the beginning than to try to catch up later.

80 DAYS

Google Hotel Ads is outpacing other metas when it comes to traffic growth and increase in CPC. Now that the search behemoth has integrated rates into its Maps feature, it's not uncommon for organic hotel search results to disappear completely under the fold.

Google are way ahead of the game when it comes to bidding capabilities, meaning they're the meta of choice for many advertisers. And the more vendors that list on Google Hotel Ads, the more power Google has to dictate travel booking preferences for the months and years to come. Hotels that don't already have a strong brand following need to be careful not to lose their footing on Google too.

And, as the world slowly shifts to voice as its preferred mode of using the internet, it's likely to be metasearch that wins out over other platforms. The major metasearch engines are establishing their presence on Google Home and Amazon's Alexa - for hoteliers worried about how they'll cope with the move away from traditional search, metasearch could be a vital stepping stone to this brave new world.



Why should I list?

DID YOU KNOW: Total metasearch traffic has more than tripled since 2014, with \$33 billion worth of bookings projected to come through metas this year.*

That's a lot of brand-agnostic, price-sensitive travellers for hotels with great rates to capitalise on. If you're already taking steps to ensure that your rates are in line with - or better than - those displayed by your OTA competitors, it makes sense to showcase those rates in a direct comparison. Solutions like Triptease's Price Check perform this comparison once guests are on your site, but metasearch takes that message and serves it to a guest before they've even zeroed in on a brand.

EXPERT INSIGHT

Consumers want to feel like they're doing their due diligence. They want to know that they really are choosing the best price. Listing on metasearch allows them to choose your hotel in the knowledge that they are getting the best price.

Koddi

DID YOU KNOW: Research has shown that, faced with the same price on both an OTA and brand.com, 65% of consumers will choose to go direct. *

There's also the fact that your OTA partners are probably on metasearch engines advertising your rooms already. Think of bookings for your hotel that have already gone to OTAs via metasearch: if your hotel had been listed on those meta engines, with the same rate or better than your OTA partners, then there's every likelihood that those bookings would have come direct to you.

EXPERT INSIGHT

Metasearch isn't just about growing your revenue. It's a chance to engage a whole new set of customers with your brand.

80 DAYS

* Koddi

What are the drawbacks?



COST

For some hotels, the cost of listing on meta appears prohibitive. We spoke to a hotelier who didn't see the appeal of paying 14% commission to TripAdvisor for a booking - "**We thought it would just end up like another OTA,**" she told us.



MISTRUST

There's no hiding from the fact that hotels have been badly burned by the industry's shift to digital. Every year, hotels are paying more to fill the same rooms and collect the same revenue. It's understandable that the appeal of putting rooms in the hands of yet another website isn't immediately obvious to everyone.



EFFORT

Getting listed on metasearch is just the start. There's then the small matter of managing campaigns and ensuring the investment remains profitable. And of course, there's the issue of who manages it - the marketing department or the revenue manager? Is it a channel, or a platform? Who takes on the extra responsibility?

The decision to list your hotel on metasearch engines should take into account all of the above considerations. Do you have the internal bandwidth to effectively manage your campaigns? Do you have the budget to employ third-party optimisation services? And are you prepared to pay what is essentially a commission fee on a direct booking?

Buyer's guide to metasearch

	TRIVAGO	KAYAK	SKYSCANNER	GOOGLE HOTEL ADS	TRIPADVISOR
Founded	2005	2004	2001	1998 (Google)	2000
Geo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based in Germany 55 localised websites 33 languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based in US 40 localised websites 21 languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based in Scotland 31 localised websites 30 languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based in US Over 100 countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based in US 390m unique monthly visitors
Owned by	Expedia (listed through IPO in 2016)	Priceline Group	Ctrip	Themselves	Themselves
Talking points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hotels can list even without their own website, as long as they have a CRS Booking channel is highlighted, as Trivago reduces its own branding at the point of sale According to Mirai, it's the metasearch engine furthest away from acting like an OTA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hotel rooms represent less than 20% of their booking volume, but over half of their revenues Pioneer of 'instant booking' (though this began with airlines and OTAs) Integrated with Google Home and Alexa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40% growth YoY, with 60m visitors/month Emphasis on direct bookings for hotels 4% conversion rate on hotel bookings Integrated with Alexa and Google Home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on click volume, the product matured in 2016. Hotel Ads currently has the most qualified traffic of all metasearch providers. Tends to prioritise its own metasearch results above organic listings on Google Search - has been punished for this by the European Union 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most all-embracing ranking/evaluation system of any of the metasearch engines Highly-qualified traffic, with strong conversion rates Numbers declined after attempts to push Instant Booking too strongly According to Mirai, it's the closest metasearch to OTA-territory
What they have to say	<p>"We're a company with so much focus on learning that, whatever happens in the future, we will always be able to adapt."</p> <p><i>Rolf Schrömgens</i></p>	<p>"We want to be the app you can't live without. I want people to think of travel and go straight to Kayak, not Google because Kayak is better."</p> <p><i>Steve Hafner</i></p>	<p>"Hotels and airlines spend millions, if not billions, on their brands and on the experience and contact with the customer. It's important that metasearch doesn't interfere with that."</p> <p><i>Shane Corstorphine</i></p>	<p>"From our perspective, we see flight search as an upper-funnel product and hotels as a lower-funnel product, and our revenue story is that Hotel Ads is the key revenue driver in the travel space."</p> <p><i>Oliver Heckmann</i></p>	<p>"We have all of the major domestic hotel chains on board and we continue to sign up individual hotels and additional chains around the globe. We pretty much have the Instant Book option on almost every hotel that matters, already. Either directly or through one of their suppliers."</p> <p><i>Stephen Kaufer</i></p>

5 STEPS TO METASEARCH SUCCESS

So, you've decided to give metasearch a go. Sounds like a good move - but how do you make sure you're doing it right?

Along with the help of our expert advisers at 80 DAYS and Koddi, we've whittled the process down into five key steps.

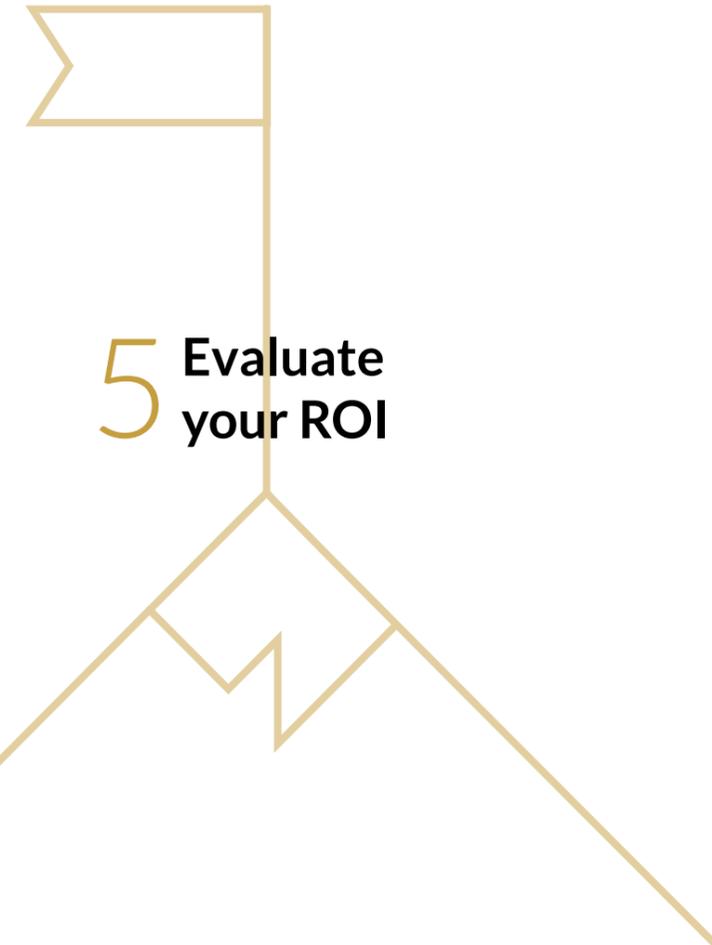
1 Know your audience and choose your engine

2 Check your connectivity - and get help if you need it

3 Ready, set, go

4 Fight for your right to parity

5 Evaluate your ROI



STEP 1

Know your audience and choose your engine

Metasearch publishers are fundamentally advertising channels for your hotel. Like with any major advertising campaign, you need to know who you're targeting and what you're trying to achieve.

Before you choose which publisher(s) to go with, establish your user base and the markets you're trying to attract. Metasearch is far from limited to the major players we've listed above: if you're trying to build up direct bookings from China, for example, you might want to think about [Qunar](#), or [Kuxun](#). Middle East your target market? Look into [Wego](#).

We'd also recommend trying out more than one publisher to start with. If this is your first foray into metasearch, you don't yet know which channel is best suited to your guests or where you'll appear most competitive.

EXPERT INSIGHT

Each publisher has special niches and advantages. Travel brands need to start by asking 'where is my main point of sale?'. You need to be really smart about that. Start with the publishers that are able to reach the lion's share of your user base.

When it comes to the actual capabilities of the engines, they vary from publisher to publisher. Bidding capabilities, reach and user intent all come into play, and should factor into your decision-making process. The most important factor however, is your point of sale and what the publisher's market penetration is there.

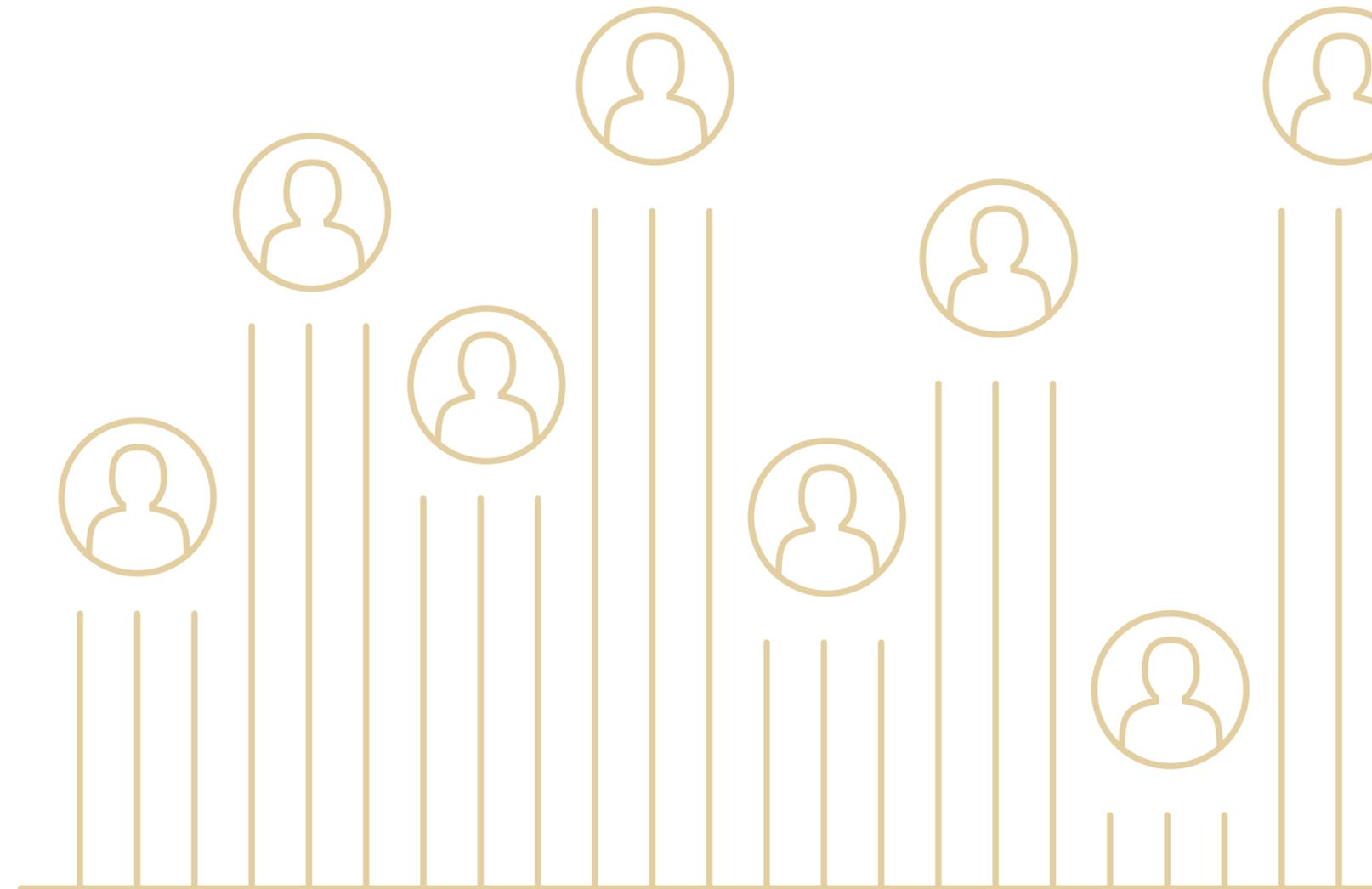
Koddi

EXPERT INSIGHT

I think hoteliers can be put off by the idea that you need 'specialist knowledge' to run a metasearch campaign. It's more like looking after your PPC (pay-per-click) ads. What it really comes down to is industry knowledge - knowing how you perform in different markets, and knowing who your audience is.

We'd always recommend having a presence on more than one site, rather than just picking one. Some are used a bit more for research, some are for users who are much closer to buying. Once you go live, you'll be able to see what's working and allocate your spend accordingly.

80 DAYS



STEP 2

Check your connectivity - and get help if you need it

Once you have an idea of the publishers you'd like to work with, it's time to check your connectivity. A variety of booking engines and channel managers offer integrations with metasearch websites, so speaking with your current providers is a good place to start. Ensuring that your connectivity is set up properly at this early stage is crucial to a good performance on metasearch. It's absolutely vital that the sites display the correct rates at the right times, as you're in such **direct and obvious comparison to OTA prices**.

It may also be worthwhile to look into caching solutions. Central Reservation Systems (CRSs) have their work cut out to keep up with the ever-increasing shopping volumes being driven by metasearch engines. Investing in a solution that **reduces the stress on your CRS** may be wise if you're intending to do a lot with metasearch.

Providing your connectivity partner with the sufficient information can be a time-consuming process, but it's not one that should be rushed. If budget allows, there are plenty of external partners out there that exist to lighten the load on the hotelier at this stage.

Most metasearch engines require logos, up-to-date hotel information, a breakdown of applicable taxes, geographical location, latitude and longitude - the list goes on. The better and more accurate the information you provide is, **the higher your chances of ranking well** and displaying in the results of non-brand searches.

EXPERT INSIGHT

If an implementation is really simple and straightforward, it can be complete in under two weeks. Sometimes it can take longer, up to ten. It really varies depending on the booking engine setup. The things that can be more technically confusing for hotels are installing the tracking pixels and building deep links between the metasearch and the booking engine. This is where it can be useful to have outside help.

80 DAYS

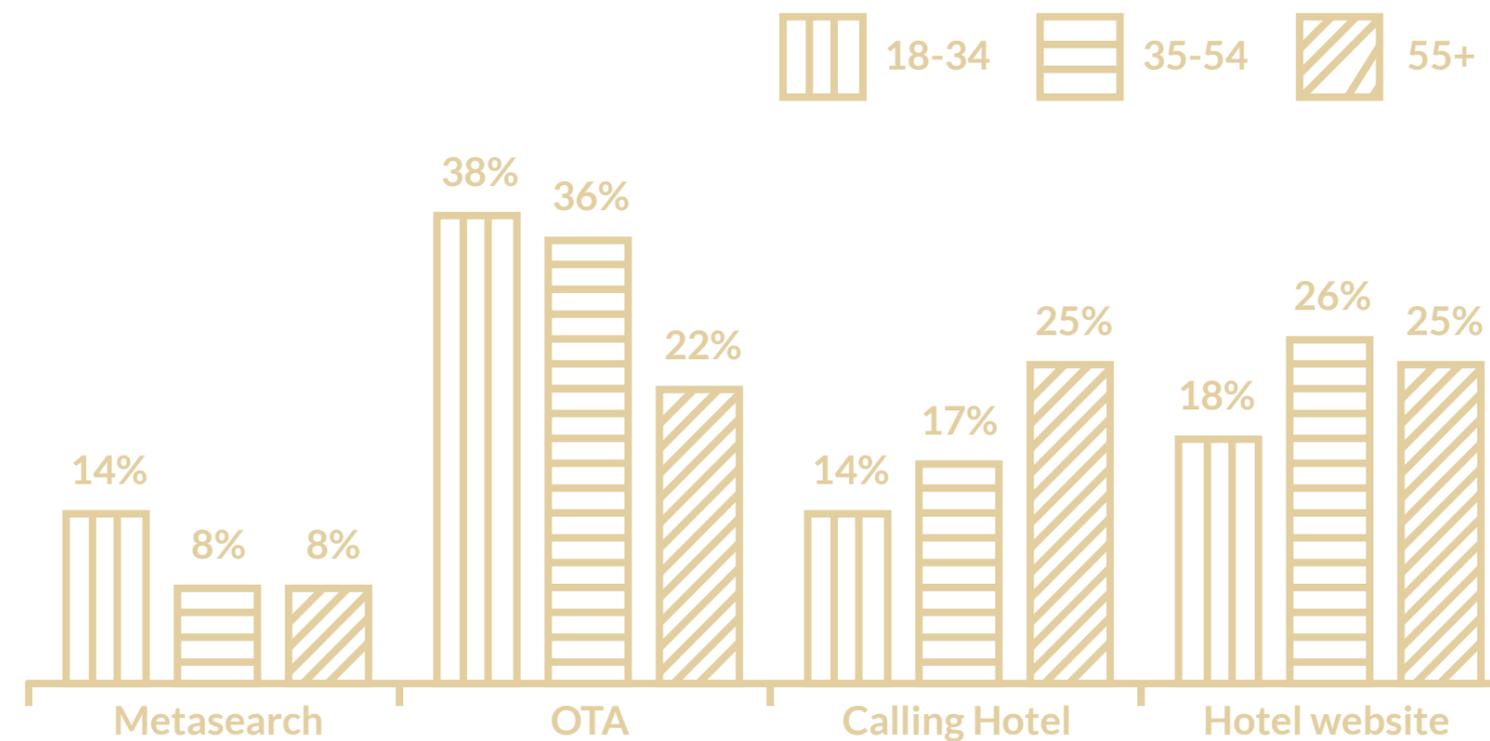
EXPERT INSIGHT

Look into the tools the publisher has available. Become as familiar as possible with the publisher's functionality before you jump into launching a campaign - and above all, make sure you've set a clear strategy for what you want to achieve by listing on meta.

If you are a larger-scale advertiser, you really need to look into an automated approach to metasearch management. It's the only way to scale efficiently without getting lost in Excel.

Koddi

FIGURE 5: Preferred Hotel Booking Channel by Age



Source: [Phocuswright and Sabre](#)

STEP 3

Ready, set, go

You've got a strategy, you've got your connectivity sorted - it's time to launch. Depending on the type of integration you've chosen - traditional advertising, instant booking, a solution like Rate Connect for independent hoteliers - you'll probably be paying CPC (cost-per-click) or CPA (cost-per-acquisition). CPA ensures that you only pay when your campaign results in a booking, but to some hotels it can feel too close to an OTA-style commission model. CPC is much closer to the traditional digital marketing methods many hotels will be used to: think of it as a fee on traffic, rather than on bookings. The hotel pays a small amount every time a customer clicks through to their site from metasearch results.

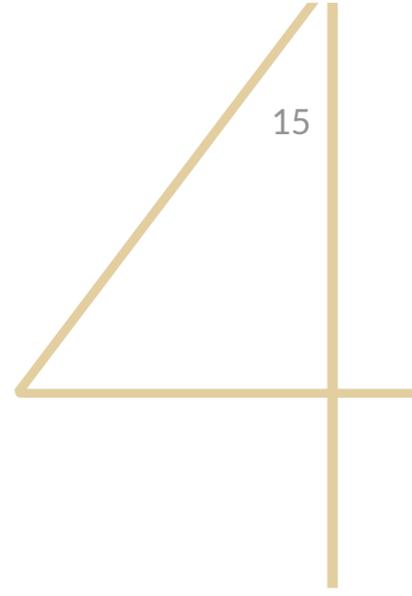
CPA is the pricing model used on TripAdvisor's **Instant Booking**: 12% commission guarantees at least 25% of visibility on search results, while 15% commission guarantees at least 50%. **Book on Google** (the platform on which guests can book without navigating away from Hotel Ads) does not incur any additional cost, but hotels do need to have an existing campaign running with Hotel Ads. Hotel Ads can run on either a CPC or CPA model. **Trivago Express Booking** doesn't incur any extra cost on top of the CPC-based expense of an active campaign on Trivago.

Depending on the size and number of your hotels, you may want to look into bidding automation services. Automating your bidding will maximise your chances of always appearing on top at a CPC auction, and is a good idea for hotel groups up against strong competition for OTAs. Smaller, independent hotels have a good chance of beating out OTAs on non-brand searches, as OTAs might not necessarily bother to bid on those terms.

EXPERT INSIGHT

A good metasearch campaign should be part of every travel brand's marketing strategy. As to how you achieve success in metasearch, it all depends on what you're trying to achieve. You have to ask yourself, do I go with a marketing partner who is using sophisticated technology that manages it for me? Or do I have the capability to do it in-house? It's all about finding a strategy based on your team.

Koddi



STEP 4

Fight for your right to parity

Rate disparity has been a major bugbear for hotels for as long as online travel websites have existed. The vast reach of OTA marketing campaigns, which posit those sites as ‘always having the best rates’, has exacerbated the idea that it is more expensive and less convenient to book on brand.com than Booking.com. Rate parity agreements are in place across the globe, but the proliferation of systems and services that feed the online travel industry inevitably lead to inaccurate and out-of-date rates falling through the cracks.

Being out of parity with OTAs costs you money. If a customer sees a cheaper rate for your room on an OTA than they can find on your own website, there’s not much reason for you to expect them to book direct. Now imagine those two rates are side-by-side on a metasearch engine. The disparity is highlighted right in front of your potential guest’s eyes.

Parity becomes more important than ever when you begin to list on metasearch. This type of advertising openly invites comparison with your competitors, so you need to make sure you’re giving consumers a price they can trust. That means regularly spot-checking your rates on OTAs, or investing in parity management software like Triptease’s Direct Booking Platform.

EXPERT INSIGHT

There are still plenty of issues around parity management on metasearch. If you are consistently offering the lowest rate, you’re ahead of the game. The problem is that the supply distribution often has a lot of leakage, so it’s crucial that advertisers keep on top of their rates and the integrity of their distribution channels. That includes making sure they’re working with a solid connectivity partner. Sometimes, we see rates being shown that do not reflect what is on the advertiser’s website. This creates a terrible consumer experience and hinders campaign performance.

As a rule of thumb, every 1% decrease in price accuracy results in a 2-3% decrease in revenue.

Koddi



EXPERT INSIGHT

Conversion rates on metasearch are often higher than for other channels. Many consumers are ready to make a booking there and then. Hotels need to make sure they're in the best possible position to acquire that conversion - and that means having the best price.

80 DAYS**BEST PRICE**

STEP 5

Evaluate your ROI

Once you've had some time to get your campaigns optimised, it's time to start evaluating their impact. As with any advertising campaign, you need to make sure you're getting a good return on investment - but that return isn't strictly limited to financial gain. Metasearch should be considered as an option for increasing brand awareness as well as for increasing conversion.

Above all, hotels need to ensure that the resource invested in metasearch is being rewarded. This isn't a sure-fire route to direct bookings, and there are some qualifications - some hotels argue that the 'direct' bookings that come via metasearch are closer to indirect, especially when hotel branding is obscured in favour of the meta's own.

But simply put, if you're bringing in bookings at a cheaper rate than you pay to OTAs, then metasearch is working.

EXPERT INSIGHT

Metasearch is not just about revenue. It's about being present on a platform that more and more consumers are moving to for researching their trip. Being on these platforms will mean more consumers see your logo and interact with your brand, which they don't get to do on an OTA.

80 DAYS

Average ROI for 80 DAYS meta client:

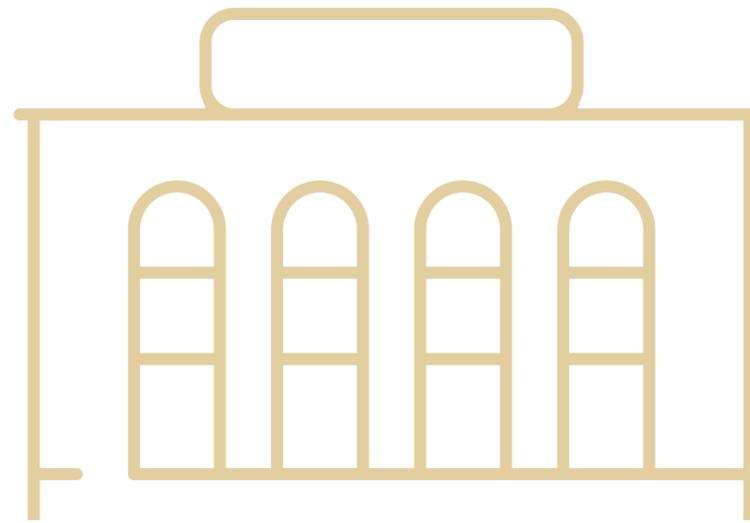
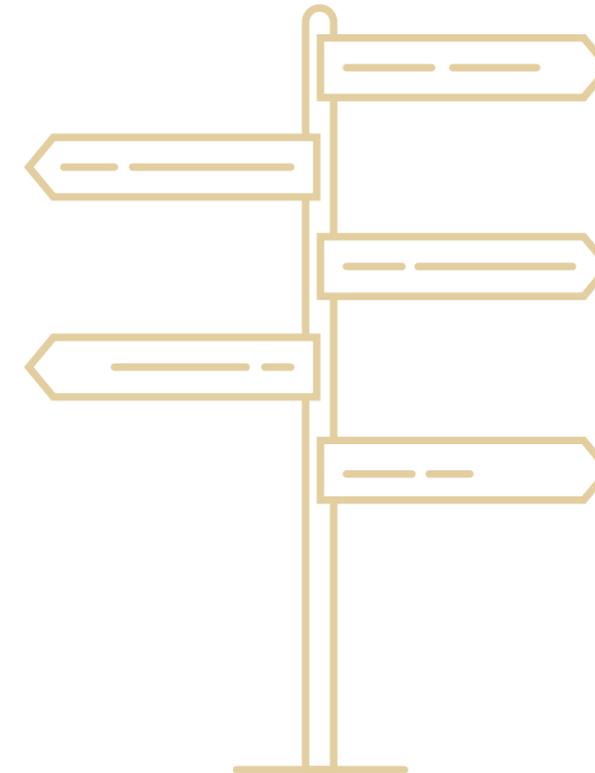




EXPERT INSIGHT

If you get metasearch right, you can attract new customers at a lower cost per acquisition than most alternative paid marketing channels. When deciding whether or not to launch a metasearch campaign, it is important to consider the expected outcome against the effort required from your team. There are many consumers on these sites that are not brand loyal, and that makes metasearch the perfect place to drive incremental bookings.

Koddi



Acknowledgements

80 DAYS



80 DAYS is a creative & digital marketing agency, specialising in the luxury travel sector. Working extensively with unique luxury hotels & international hotel collections, we have an in-depth knowledge of how luxury hotels work and the marketing strategies to employ to achieve the greatest results.

KODDI



Koddi is an advanced reporting, bid management and campaign intelligence platform for metasearch publishers like Google Hotel Ads, TripAdvisor, Kayak, Trivago, and other travel products that enables hotel supplier, OTA, and agency clients to reach more customers at higher returns.

Koddi was built with the digital marketer in mind and provides a fast, intuitive interface, custom, on-the-fly reporting, bulk and granular bidding tools, and alerting functionality.

As always, there's far more to metasearch than we could ever hope to fit in a report of this size. But hopefully we've given you some idea of whether this is a channel that could work for you - and how to optimize your campaigns once you get listed. After all, every hotelier deserves super-powered direct bookings.

USEFUL RESOURCES

[Channel Optimization in Hospitality: Secrets of Data-Driven Hoteliers](#)

Phocuswright

[trivago Express Booking, Book on Google and TripAdvisor Instant Booking: what are the similarities and differences?](#)

Mirai

[Metasearch: the winning approach to direct bookings](#)

Fastbooking

