

SIMPLE GUIDE

INCREASE BOOKINGS *IN DESTINATION*

For tour & activity operators

Written by Johanna Messer

Author's Note

Half of your future customers are likely to already be in destination. Sounds like a lot, doesn't it?

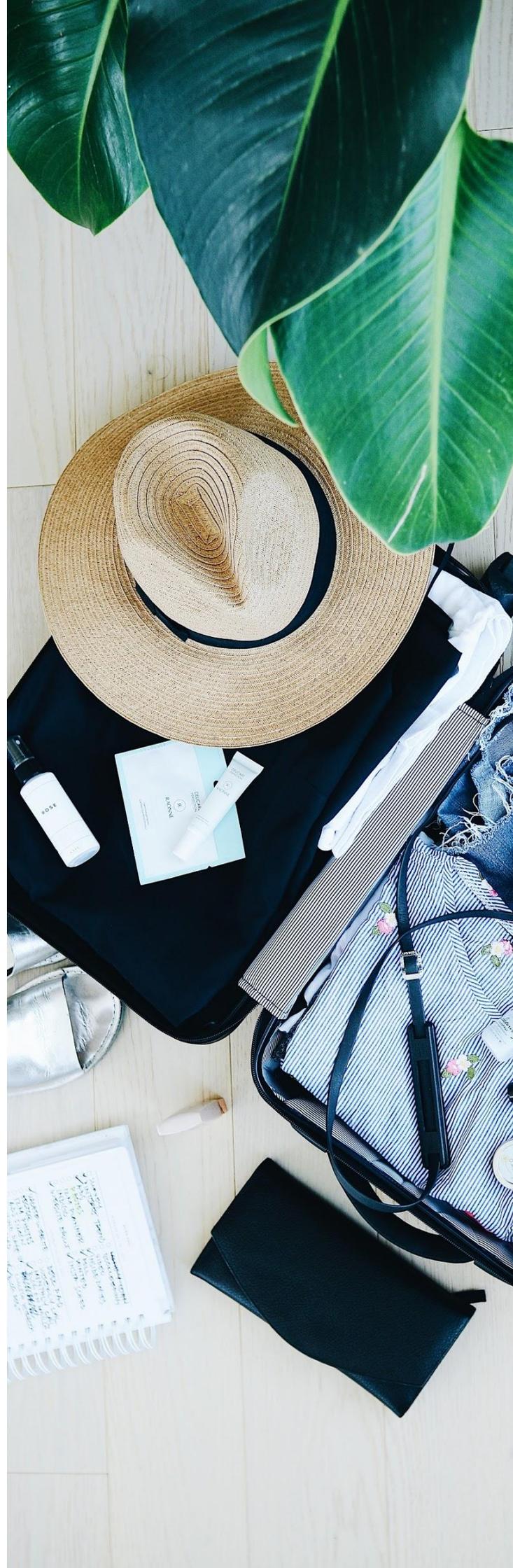
With mobile devices becoming increasingly popular for tour booking, travellers are able to browse and choose from endless options at their fingertips (quite literally!) whilst on the go. Unsurprisingly, travel-related mobile searches for "tonight" and "today" have grown over 150% - only within a 2-year period.

As well as mobile phones, there are plenty of other in-destination sales opportunities - both within your company and the local network.

In this ebook we explore ways in which to attract on-site travellers for last minute booking conversion.

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Digital Marketer - Content & Analytics



Increase Bookings In-Destination

by Johanna Messer

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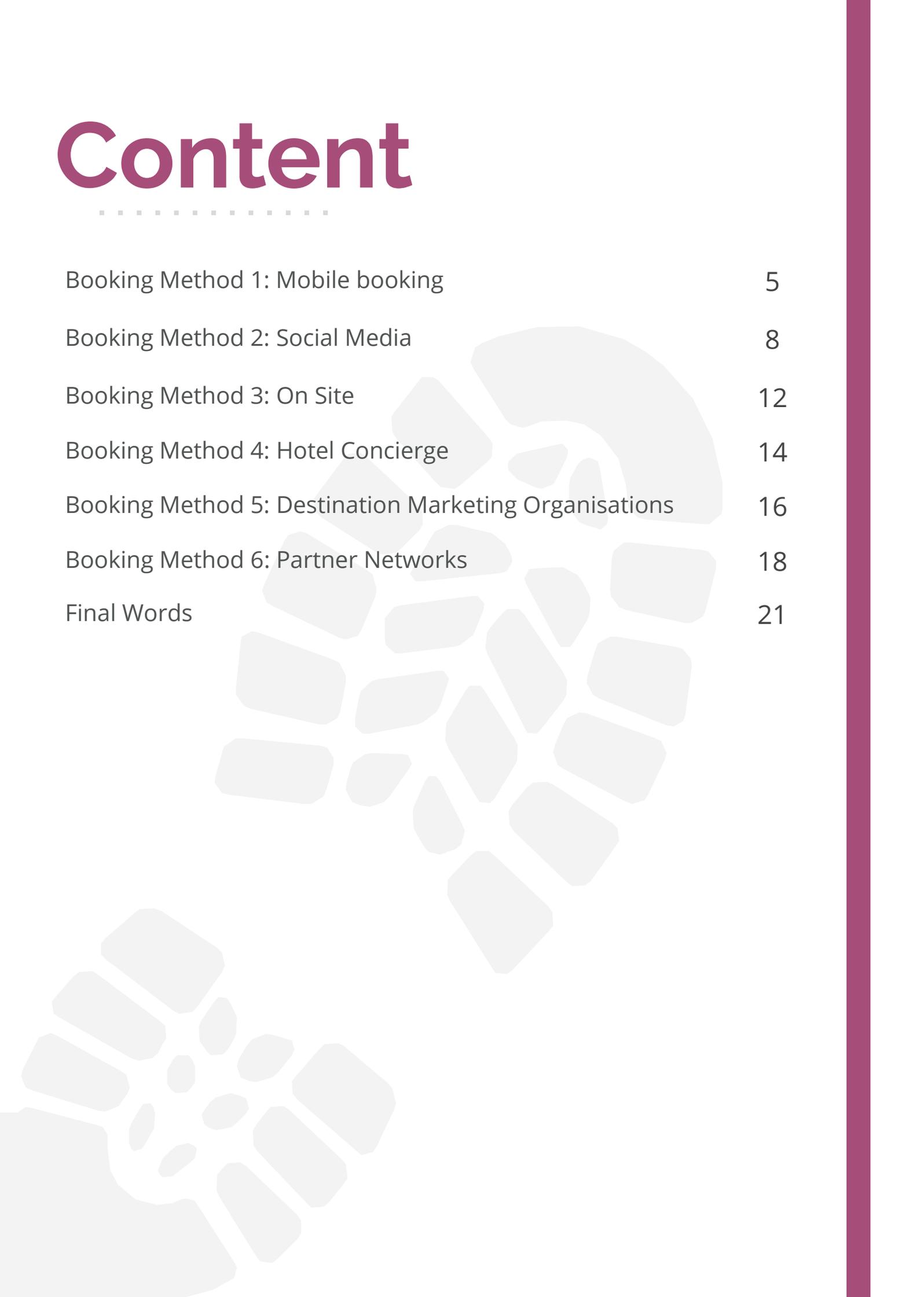
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Booking Method 1:

Mobile Bookings

When going on vacation, most of us prefer to travel light and leave the laptop behind. That does, however, not stop travellers from going online.

Discovery

As of June 2017, EU banned roaming surcharges, allowing holidaymakers within these countries to use their mobile phones - including data services - as if they were at home.

In other words, travellers are likely to stay connected throughout the trip and use their mobile phones for research and discovery of their chosen holiday destination - including things to do.

In fact, mobile devices are by far the preferred means of tour and activity research, representing 54% of relevant searches that happen in-destination. ([Google](#), 2019)

According to findings from our [Travel Statistics Report 2019-2020](#), travel-related mobile searches for “tonight” and “today” have grown over 150% only within a 2-year period. In order to stay locally competitive and visible to nearby holidaymakers, having a mobile optimised website is key.

You can increase your chances of receiving web traffic through optimising your website accordingly. What keywords are relevant to your activities and local region? Are your images the appropriate size to load quickly on mobile? A few tweaks can go a long way!

You can download a handy SEO checklist [here](#).

Long-gone are the foldable paper maps. With search fields, street views and route suggestions, it is not surprising that that 90% of travellers have used navigation apps on their phone whilst travelling. ([Skift](#), 2018)

With Google Maps being one of the top navigation apps, having a Google Business listing is a great way to appear on the traveller's radar (quite literally!) along with other locally listed businesses.

Make the most of your listing through the use of an attractive description of your business along and links to your website.

In this blogpost we have listed [5 tips for optimising your Google Business listing for lead generation](#).



Conversion

According to [Google](#), 48% of experiences are booked once travellers reach their destination - and a majority of those searches happen on a mobile device.

Think of it this way: unless your website and booking process are mobile optimised, you may be losing out on almost half of your potential customers.

By creating a smooth and fit-for-device booking journey on your website, you are likely to avoid this scenario whilst your parallel marketing efforts get a higher return on investment. (If not conversion, what is the point of generating traffic to your website?)

Alongside an [attractive tour description](#), an integrated ["book-now" button](#) makes it easy for website visitors to instantly check live availability, reserve a spot, enter special requirements and proceed to check-out in a few simple steps.

Booking Method 2:

Social Media

As part of a business' online presence, being active on social platforms has become expected.

Discovery

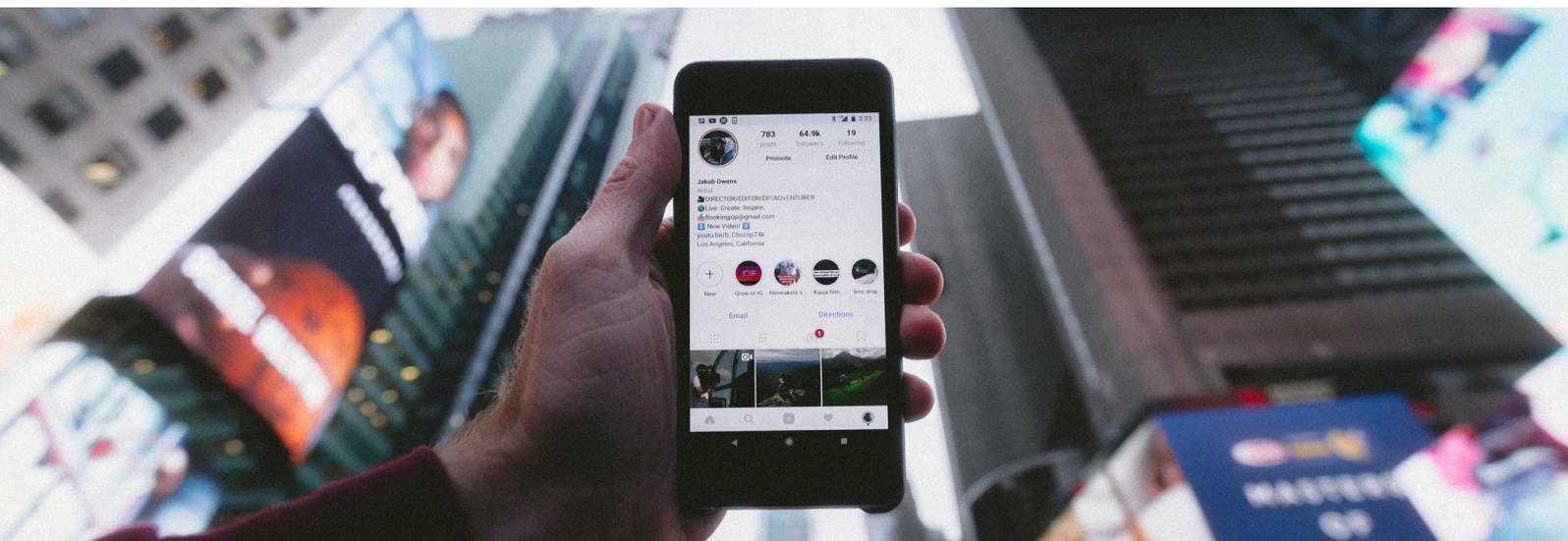
There are 3.484 billion social media users in the world today - a 9.1% year-on-year increase. ([Smart Insights](#), 2019)

When compiling our [Travel Statistics Report 2018-2019](#) we found that 60% of people in 2018 intended to post daily on social media whilst travelling.

Naturally, social media has become an excellent consumer-perspective research platform for holidaymakers wanting authentic insight into their destination - whether it be scrolling through geo and hashtagged Instagram snapshots or skimming reviews and ratings on Facebook. Since the banning of EU roaming fees, we expect this to be a growing consumer behaviour.



To ensure being featured - and outstanding - in the flow of information and entertainment, it might be worth investing time into your business profile and the engagement with followers. **You can start with a few easy steps:**



- **Keep your profile up-to-date**, attractive and entertaining through a creative description, imagery, contact details and website links.
- **Publish quality content.** Valuable and engaging updates can include asking questions, gathering feedback and writing articles that resonate with the interests and lifestyle of your target audience. Don't forget to include images!
- **Use geotags on all posts** to mark the location of your business. Searching a destination on social media is a common way for holidaymakers to look for local inspiration and ideas.
- **Create a company hashtag and use existing ones** which are popular among your target audience - and encourage your guests to do the same.
- **Snapshots are personable and inviting.** Why not publish glimpses from behind-the-scenes? Perhaps a short video showcasing highlights of your tours? Or how about an interview series with your guides and guests?
- **Keep up-to-date with trends and developments.** We publish regular top-tips on how to optimise [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) business accounts.

Conversion

Your business' social media profiles have a lot more potential than merely generating brand awareness. Platforms such as Instagram and Facebook can be optimised to generate leads, gather feedback and communicate directly with customers and those inquiring about your business.

If your business uses Facebook, we recommend using booking buttons to redirect visitors to your mobile optimised website to begin their booking journey. Facebook's business pages also allow for reviews, recommendations, ratings and comments, which can be immensely helpful for conversion.

When writing the [Travel Statistics Report 2018-2019](#), we found that 53% of bookers commit only once they have read reviews - and the majority of those prefer to read as many as 6-12.



Using both booking buttons and reviews, TrekkSoft partners and walking-tour pioneers SANDEMANs make the most of their Facebook profile.

Instagram, previously known as the go-to source for visual inspiration due to its popularity, usability and photo editing tools, is another platform which conversion potential is not to underestimate.

Whilst being the optimal platform for photo and video sharing, the relatively new “swipe-up” feature for publication of “Story” updates has become a game changer for driving sales and traffic to websites. Taking the visitor to the webpage of your choice, this re-directioning feature goes well together with published photos and videos featuring your tour. By swiping up, potential customers will be directed to the booking site of the relevant activity.

Another great conversion tool is messaging apps. Whilst researching booking behaviours for our [Travel Trends Report 2019](#), we found that these apps have become increasingly popular for customer communication.

In the preparational research, we also found that 53% of consumers are more likely to shop with a business they can message directly.

The most popular messaging apps used by tour operators include WhatsApp (57.17%), Messenger (18.16%) and WeChat (1.15%).

Booking Method 3:

On Site

In many cases, simply practicing your tours or activities is the best form of marketing.

Discovery

If your tour takes place in - or passes by - a busy or iconic tourist location, let people around you know *what* you do and *who* you are.

In TrekkSoft's hometown Interlaken, Switzerland, the paragliding instructors' smooth landings on the town's prime location Höhematte are a powerful marketing tool to attract adrenaline seekers and curious passers-by alike.

For attention and recognition, we suggest branded clothes, gear or transportation vehicles to stand out from the crowd. Not only does it help your current guests during their tour - you are also likely to make the introduction with future customers (remember almost half of them are already in destination and looking for things to do!).



Conversion

To turn brand attention into on-the-spot conversions, an on-site stand located close to your activities or in a tourism hub allows potential customers to instantly inquire, book and pay right on the spot.

While in holiday mode, many of us enjoy spontaneous activities and positive unexpected happenings as part of a memorable stay, embracing it with a “you only live once” attitude.

In addition - did you know that face-to-face interaction generates an, on average, higher basket value than remote or online bookings? You can read more about the impact of human interaction in our [Travel Trends Report 2019](#).

To do business on-site, a [supporting booking software](#) allows tour companies to complete bookings in person. Through a Point of Sales (POS) Desk or mobile app, staff can check live-availability and take payments in cash or electronically through using a provided card payment device.

The same booking tools also allow tour guides to upsell to guests fancying add-ons such as meals, souvenir items or a seat upgrade - prior to, during and following their tours.

Booking Method 4:

Hotel Concierge

Teaming up with - and gaining advocacy from - established players is vital for market presence and a steady revenue stream.



Discovery

The early bird catches the worm. Reaching travellers at breakfast - or even at the point of their accommodation arrival - is a great way to attract those with open agendas.

Thanks to their prime locations and excellent exposure to target groups, representatives at hotel concierge are a popular channel for promotion of local experiences.

Conversion

Distributing your tours through local hotels requires dedicated time to build a strong relationship and understanding of your business USPs. How could the hotel benefit from distributing your tours and activities?

A win-win scenario could be offering discounted tickets for hotels to sell at their own price, seat upgrades, a free meal or a souvenir item. Choose a tour offering that benefits or matches the partnering hotel's profile and values for a successful long term collaboration.

Some companies will pay a commission fee for concierge bookings - just like an agent booking. This would range from 5-10% of the ticket price. However, you don't have to choose a cash fee option.

For processing of 3rd party bookings, make sure to choose a [booking system](#) that supports multi-channel distribution and dynamic pricing. This will enable a concierge to see the live status of your tour capacity and availability, issue exclusive discount codes or vouchers and process payments on site - without phone calls or email correspondence.



Booking Method 5: Destination Marketing Organisations

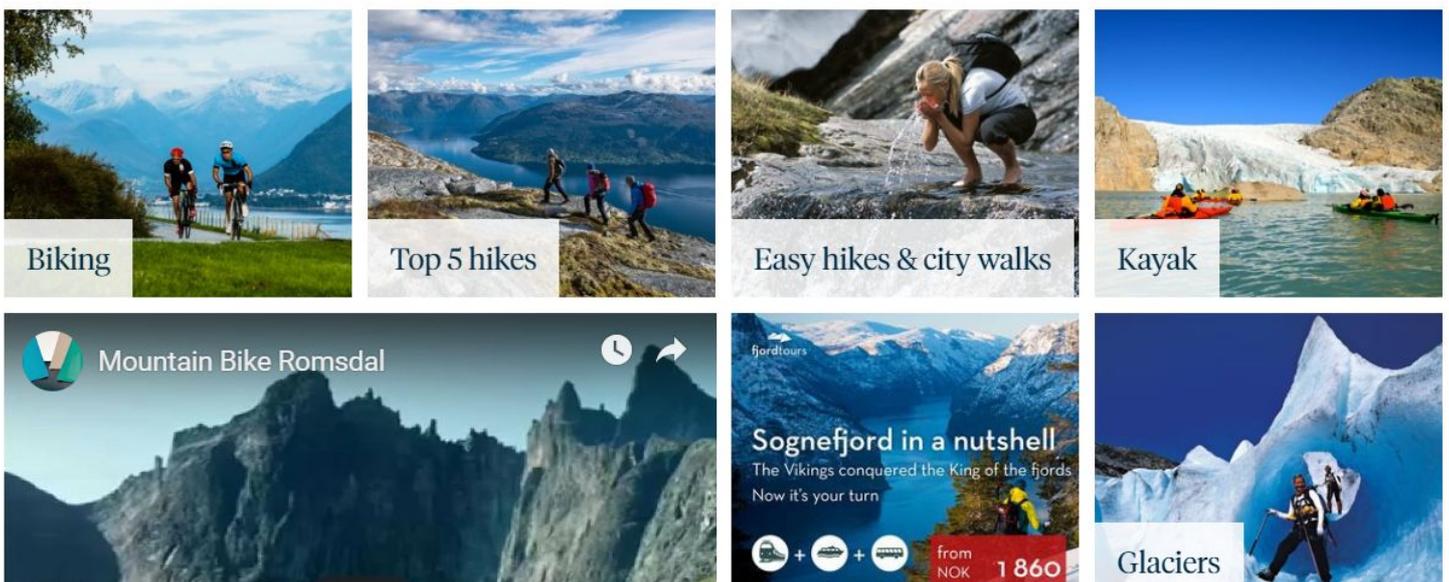
As an official ambassador, Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) are a natural inspiration hub for holidaymakers from around the world.

Discovery

With a high number of web traffic, DMOs are excellent platforms to promote and sell tours and activities as part of the local, regional or national cultural experience.

Attractions can be listed under “Things to do”, “Food experiences” “Local highlights” and “Don’t miss” sections. Local experiences and tour guides can also be featured in in reportages, interviews or videos.

Top Activities



Above: TrekkSoft partner and DMO [Fjord Norway](#) showcasing local bookable experiences on their official website. Read about their success story [here](#).

Conversion

In order for bookings to be made by an external party, like a DMO, live access to stock, capacity and availability must be given to avoid overbooking or missed business opportunities.

Communication is important in any business collaboration, but we recommend removing phone calls and emails from the booking process and instead using automation to increase speed and avoid human errors.

“*Oslo's Tourism Office was our main reseller. They booked tours and rentals directly thanks to our POS desk. As a result, we started reselling outdoor tours and activities from other like-minded companies in Oslo, broadening our online portfolio. Today, the tourism office uses our POS Desk as a one-stop-shop for all active and outdoor tours in Oslo.*”

Curtis Rojak, Owner & Managing Director at [Viking Biking](#)

With a [compatible booking software](#), DMOs are able to process bookings both online and offline with Point of Sales (POS), which enables live visibility of stock and capacity, customer registration and processing of payment.

Also, DMOs organise FAM trips throughout the year for journalist and other DMOs who recommend travellers to visit your destination. By offering a free tour, you could receive ‘free’ press and recommendations in return.

You can download our [Destination Marketing Handbook for DMOs](#) for more inspiration.

Booking Method 6:

Partner Networks

How about a bike tour with local guiding at the finish line? Or a day cruise with some samples of local wine?

Discovery

Local tour operators can really benefit from promoting each other's tours and activities - both for perfect pairings and crazy combos.

A partner network can open up opportunities to reach wider - yet like-minded - audiences. By operating as a team, tour companies can also benefit from more powerful marketing efforts and a bigger budget.

We love [this collaboration](#) between VisitDenmark and Icelandair.



Conversion

How do you sell your partner companies' tours and activities - and vice versa?

First of all, make sure to choose a booking solution that supports multi-channel distribution. By doing so, you and your partners can access each other's tour capacity and availability in real time and - more importantly - complete transactions.

To give sales a further push, we recommend the use of combo deals, discount codes and vouchers for customers booking tours through your local network. These sales tools should also be available through your online booking system.

A key benefit of cross-selling within the local network is the potential to earn extra income from sales commission. You will also be supporting the local community and growing together.

Listen to the webinar recording [Building long-term and profitable business relationships with travel partners](#) with TrekkSoft Co-Founder and Director of Outdoor Interlaken Jon Fauver for more inspiration.

Read the latest industry statistics

DOWNLOAD NOW

TRAVEL TRENDS

65 TRAVEL STATISTICS TO KNOW IN 2019-2020

For tour & activity operators

Final Words

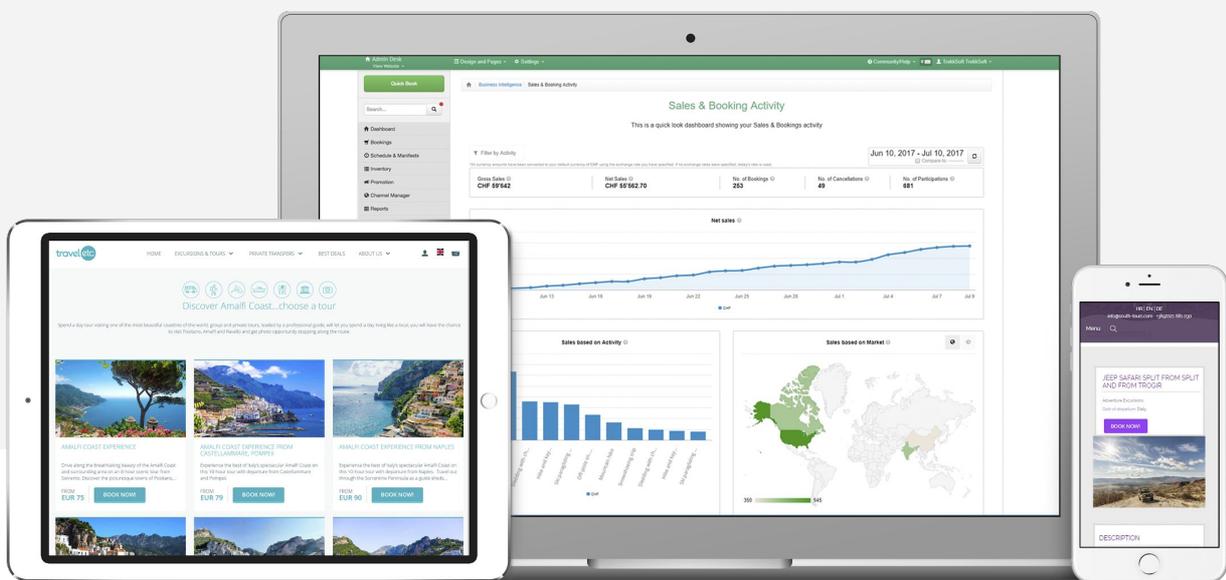
When publishing the [Travel Trends Report 2019](#) earlier this year, we found that last minute bookings were the no. 1 travel trend experienced among tour operators internationally.

39% of survey participants agreed that last minute bookings were their top travel trend for 2019, and we noticed a clear pattern in our own TrekkSoft booking data: **Tours and activities which last 1 to 3 hours tend to be booked in-destination or just before arrival.**

Adding to these findings the EU initiative “Roam like at home” we are safe to say that in-destination booking behaviour is here to stay (if not increase over the next years).

Used individually or in conjunction with other methods, I hope that these in-destination booking conversion methods will help you to make the most of the ever-connected and spontaneous “*you only live once*” traveller segment, which is currently on the rise, as well as the network of local businesses for a growing prosperous community.

The #1 booking solution for tour and activity operators worldwide



Connect with 15 different marketplaces and business partners worldwide with TrekSoft's unique API integrations.

Learn about our Channel Manager in a demo call