

The changing face of travel: Part 2

By [Carla Potgieter](#), issued by [Red & Yellow](#)

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Tourism marketers need to optimise for multi-screen and keep up with their target audience.

Search - across all categories - is increasingly multiscreen, conducted across devices, directly or indirectly from previous searches. The reason for this is simple: consumers are increasingly pressed for time, and a search started during lunch on desktop might be continued on mobile during the afternoon commute, or when waiting in line to pick up dinner. And nowhere is this more apparent than in the travelling industry. What is interesting, however, is how travellers search when still planning their holiday, and their online habits once they actually hit the ground.



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The planning phase

According to a recent study by Google, when planning a trip, 80% of travellers search via computer, 70% on tablet and 55% on smartphone. Tablet use rises at night, when consumers indulge in "couch and pillow" commerce, and the average tablet user's spend per purchase is 21% more than desktop users, and 54% more than smartphone users <http://www.google.com/think/research-studies/think-travel-mobile-one-sheet.html>. That said, when it comes to smartphones, one in four travellers actually book online via mobile. And 68% of travellers recall travel ads seen on smartphone; 71% took action.

It is therefore crucial that your online content is optimised for multiple devices, and especially for mobile - which may mean 25% of bookings. And in a multiscreen search, even if a purchase journey is not finished on smartphone, it might have been started on one. But although consumers are hungry for mobile travel experiences, they are being disappointed: Google reports that though travel has the most mobile websites out of all industries, consumer experience ratings for these are very low <http://www.google.com/think/research-studies/think-travel-mobile-one-sheet.html>. A recent study by Yahoo's Digital Tourism Think Tank <http://thinkdigital.travel/?s=mobile> found that from a host of international travel websites, only 20% were mobile optimised. It is therefore not enough that your site can be viewed on mobile - it must look good and be easy to use on a smaller screen <http://etc-digital.org/digital-trends/mobile-devices/mobile-ready-web/>. Loading speed is also a big concern for mobile web users, who expect page to load in less than five seconds <http://etc-digital.org/digital-trends/mobile-devices/mobile-ready-web/>.

The "once there" phase

Google agrees that speed and design are major concerns for mobile consumers, especially for travellers who want to maximise each moment. Because here is where it gets really interesting: mobile access is rising, not only during the research phase, but especially once at the destination itself. The European Travel Commission <http://etc-digital.org/> is convinced that SoLoMo is here to stay. What this means is that although travellers research and comparison shop online during the consideration phase, they increasingly rely on their phones to make decisions once they have actually arrived, which allows them to be more spontaneous and puts the excitement of discovery back in travel https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=http://ssl.gstatic.com/think/docs/travel-upgraded-loyalty_infographics.pdf&embedded=true.

For example, Hotels.com discovered that an increasing number of bookings came from tourists on their actual day of arrival <http://www.themobileplaybook.com/en-us/>. With Wi-Fi increasingly being widely available at a host of accommodation, restaurant and transport spots, travellers search for activities or accommodation once they have actually hit the ground - i.e. they conduct local searches. Hence the success of HotelTonight, an app that offers last-minute hotel deals across a range of price categories <http://www.crunchbase.com/company/hoteltonight>. Furthermore, once at a destination, more than

50% of travellers rely on online sources to evaluate local activities.

In addition to being optimised for multiple devices, also consider the user experience - especially for mobile. If users are searching for you on mobile with the intent to book, do not let them click through multiple pages before reaching contact details. Something as simple as having a direct "call button", making it possible to dial directly from the mobile SERP, can make a huge difference. Also, when it comes to [evaluating experiences](#) are your reviews and video content optimised for mobile?

Multiscreen engagement is how users encounter your brand - both when planning their trip, and once they have actually arrived at their destination. How does your brand measure up during either of these phases?

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