A GUIDE TO MORE
DIRECT BOOKINGS

ROOMRACCOON
cloud hotel management
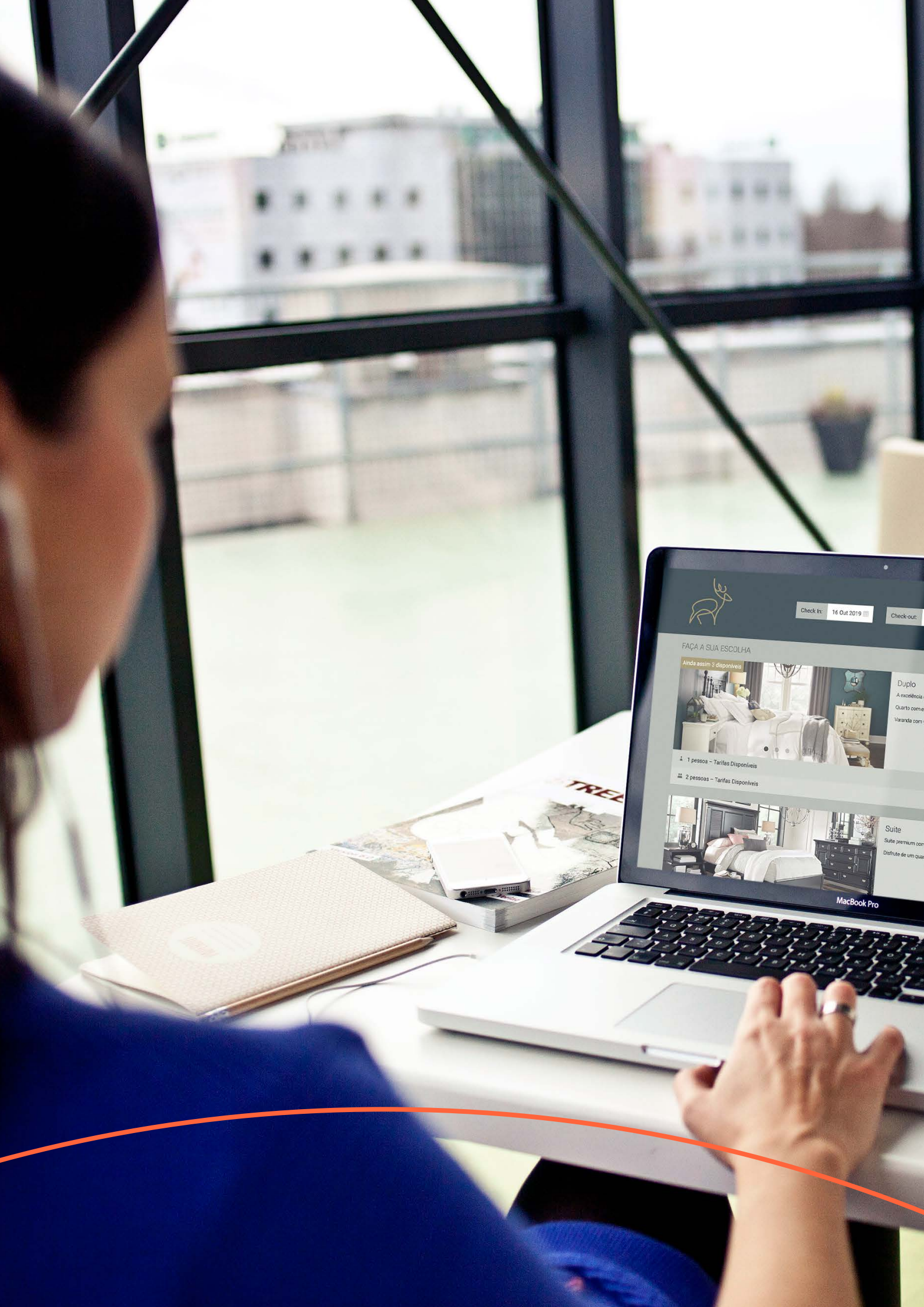
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Introduction

How Does It **Work?**

Your hotel booking engine automatically processes payment and reservation details, safely storing all of your guest's data in your PMS, where you can view it in your reservations calendar.

A hotel booking engine is a powerful tool that captures direct bookings on a hotel's website.
No third-party rules.
No commission fees.

Today, with the increasing number of people booking hotels online, it has gone from a luxury to a necessity for hotels of all shapes and sizes to adopt this technology.

Booking engines allow hotels to efficiently sell their rooms through their websites, social media channels, and metasearch channels like Google Hotel Ads.
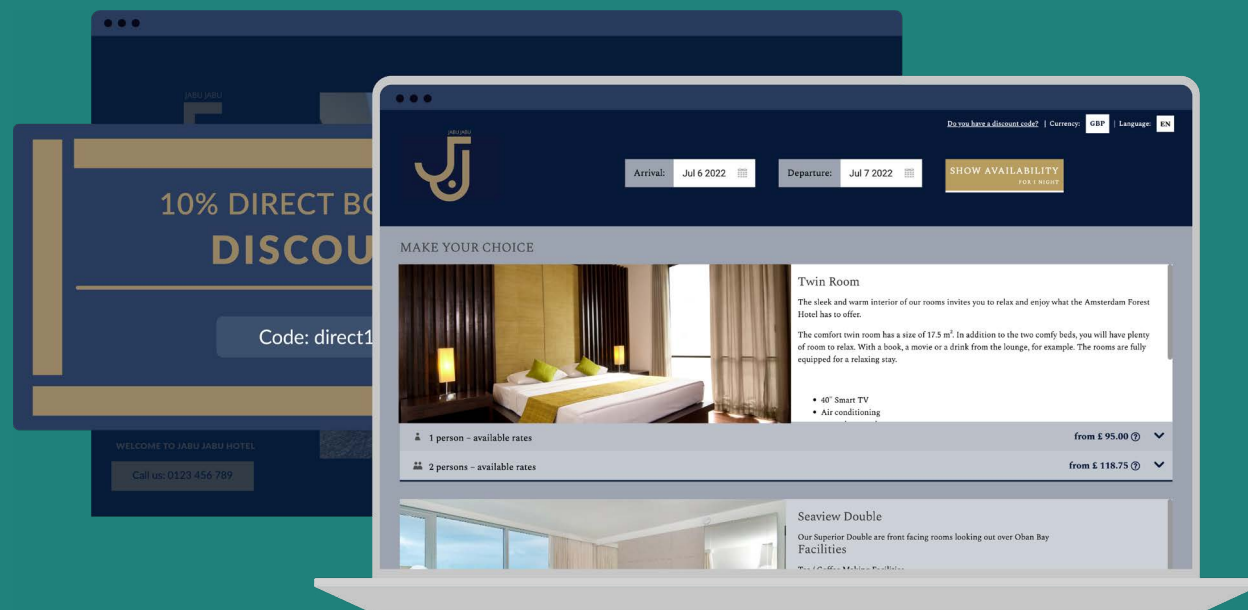
SHOW AVAILABILITY

Luxury Suite

Room Size - 38m^2

2 Guests - Best available rate — No prepayment — **from $147.00** ∧

2 Guest bed and breakfast — **$162.00**

Powerful booking engines can take credit card details, work with online merchants, or integrate with a payment gateway to process payments.

Travellers want the convenience and instant gratification of online self-service without waiting or fussing. A booking engine is an important step up from the traditional 'contact us' form that most hotel websites still use today.

We explore booking engines and how they can help hotels increase their visibility, sales, and customer satisfaction.

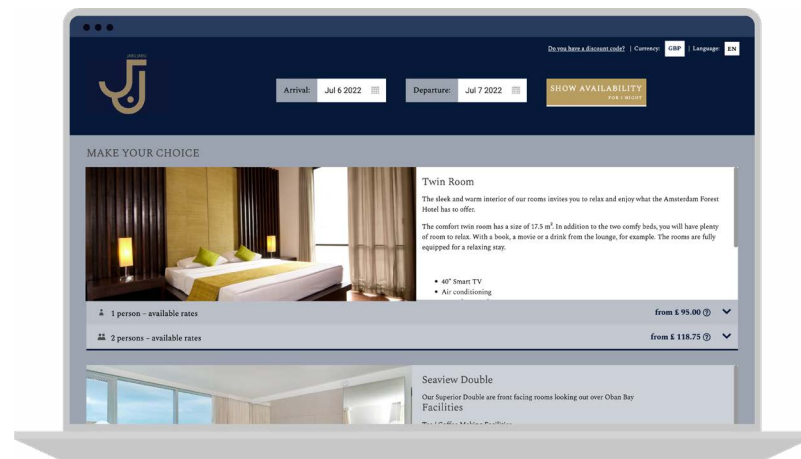## Benefits

of using a booking engine

1 Your property is instantly bookable through your hotel website

2 You're not entirely dependant on OTAs
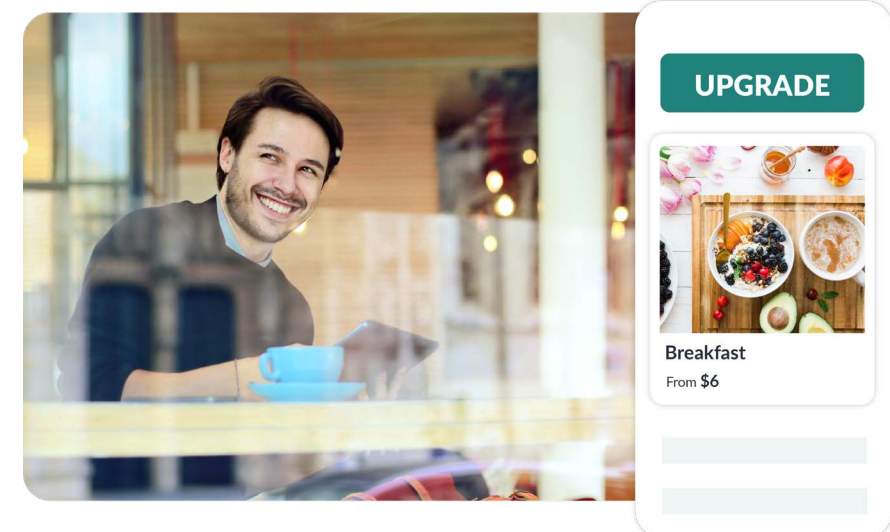
3 Increased bookings & RevPAR

4 More upsell opportunities

UPGRADE

Breakfast
From $6

5 Accept credit cards and process payments

6 Control the guest experience through the entire customer journey

How Does an **Online Booking Engine** Work?

Complete Definition of a Booking Engine?

A hotel booking engine is a tool on a hotel's website to process secure online bookings 24/7.
It will automatically store reservation information and update availability when a booking is made.

It promotes a hotel's inventory and increases direct bookings. Independent and boutique hotels face many upward battles regarding online distribution: high competition, a rapidly changing marketplace, and limited resources and time.

Online booking engines eliminate all manual reservation-taking processes and enable hoteliers to join the lucrative online marketplace where they can advertise and sell their rooms across customers-driven channels, like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, as well as metasearch channels like Google Hotel Ads and TripAdvisor that drive direct bookings.

How can a hotel booking engine enhance the guest experience:

- Generate more (commission-free) revenue

- Promote add-ons to the guest's stay to increase revenue per room

- Send automated emails like booking confirmations

- The net booking value for direct bookings far outweighs OTA bookings in customer lifetime value

- Promote your property on Google Hotel Ads to access global markets

- Show live rates and availability

- Create and apply promo codes or discounts on your website

- Have complete control over the booking experience for a connected guest journey

- Connect to tracking tools and gain valuable insights to increase your conversion rate

- Store guest information for remarketing

3 Reasons Why Your Hotel Should Use a Booking Engine

3. You can collect smart insights

1.Your business is open around the clock

Customers looking to book a stay want to do it at their convenience and don't want to wait until you're in the office. Using a hotel booking engine means that your business is open 24 hours, seven days a week.

You never need to worry about double bookings because your reservations and availability sync automatically with your property management system and channel manager.

Smart business insights, like knowing which room packages guests prefer and what add-ons are the least popular, can help you focus on areas to grow your business.

Connecting tracking tools like Google Analytics or Facebook Pixel Tracking to the booking engine can give you detailed insights to better understand how to improve your website conversion rates and overall ROI.

2.You can maximize total booking revenue

With strategic upselling, hotels can increase their RevPAR by up to 15%. Adding upsells to your booking engine can help grow order sizes, and not to mention, upselling also helps increase your hotel booking engine conversion rates.

Add-ons, special packages, and room upgrades are targeted to your customer at a convenient point in their journey when buyer intent is high, so they're more likely to complete the purchase, and you're not leaving any money on the table.

UPGRADE

YOUR STAY

Bicycle
From **$25**

Luxury Suite
From **$120**

Chocolates
From **$8**

The Billboard Effect

When you have a hotel booking engine, does it mean you don't have to advertise your rooms on online travel agencies (OTAs) anymore?

No, using a booking engine in conjunction with a channel manager that lets you sell your rooms on multiple OTAs simultaneously is recommended. The reason? The great OTA billboard effect.

YOUR HOTEL WEBSITE

YOUR HOTEL

YOUR HOTEL

YOUR HOTEL
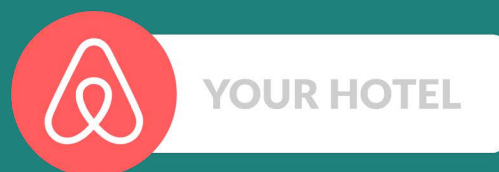
What is an OTA billboard effect?

It's a smart marketing strategy that allows a hotel with a booking engine website to catch more direct bookings.

Online savvy customers that originally found a property on an OTA like Booking.com or Expedia, for example, tend to look up the hotel's website for a better deal or to learn more about the property.

Your Hotel Website $240

Visit Site

Visit Site

Visit Site

Visit Site

Visit Site
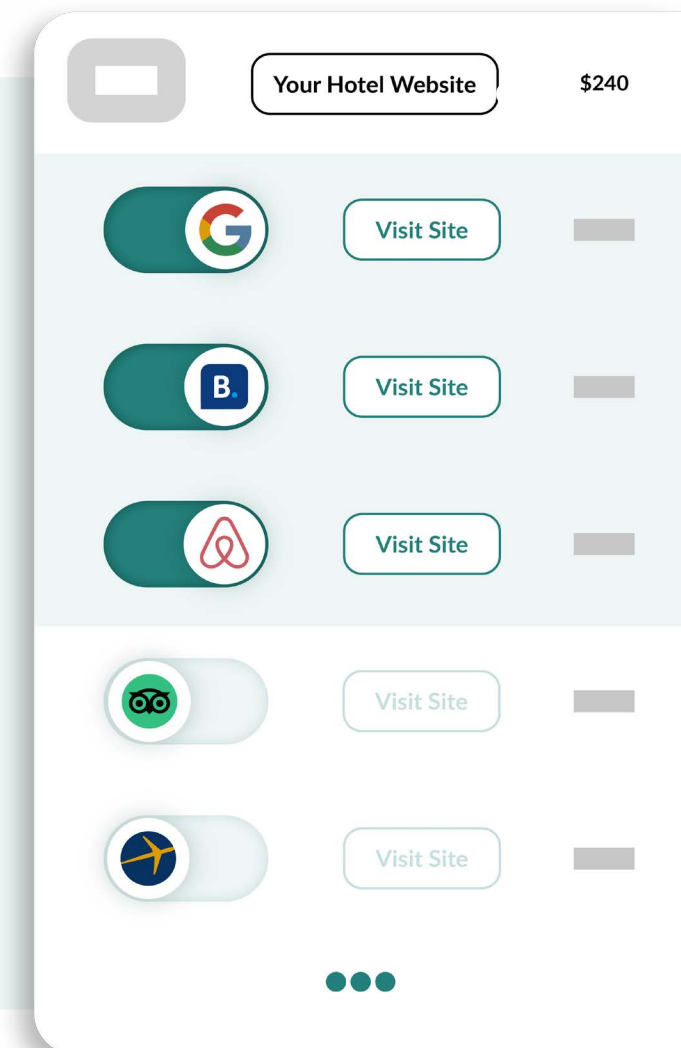
And what could be more appealing than a hotel website with a clear call to action that allows travellers to book then and there?

Especially if a discount is thrown in to sweeten the deal.
The chances are good that the customer won't go back to the OTA to finalise the purchase, and hoteliers save on commission fees.

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What to Look for When **Selecting a Hotel Booking Engine**

It's important to test the software from the point of view of potential customers.
If the booking process takes too long with too many steps, they will simply give up and choose to book with a different hotel.

1. How can it manage your inventory and reservations?

Your booking engine should, first and foremost, be designed to handle reservations. A powerful booking engine will have an inventory or property management system that stores your inventory (rooms, categories, rate types) and reservation information.

This makes it easy for staff to seamlessly add, modify and delete items from your inventory without altering existing bookings. On top of that, it can recognise repeat bookers, enabling you to deliver a more personalised booking experience.

2. Is it quick and user-friendly?

The process of booking a room should be quick and hassle-free.

Customers should be able to select the dates for their intended stay and be presented with room options. Sold out for a particular date range? The best booking engines automatically suggest the closest alternative dates to increase your conversion rate.

3. Is it responsive?

Mobile bookings are becoming increasingly popular. According to recent online travel booking statistics, 45% of UK travellers feel comfortable researching, planning, and booking trips to new destinations using only their mobile.

For this reason, your booking engine should respond to your customers' devices and be just as easy to navigate on mobiles or tablets as on its desktop version. Essential elements include compressed images, larger buttons, auto-fill fields, and more.

Quick fact:

Google favours websites that are functional on both desktop and mobile and, as a result, sends more traffic to websites that provide a better user experience for mobile users.
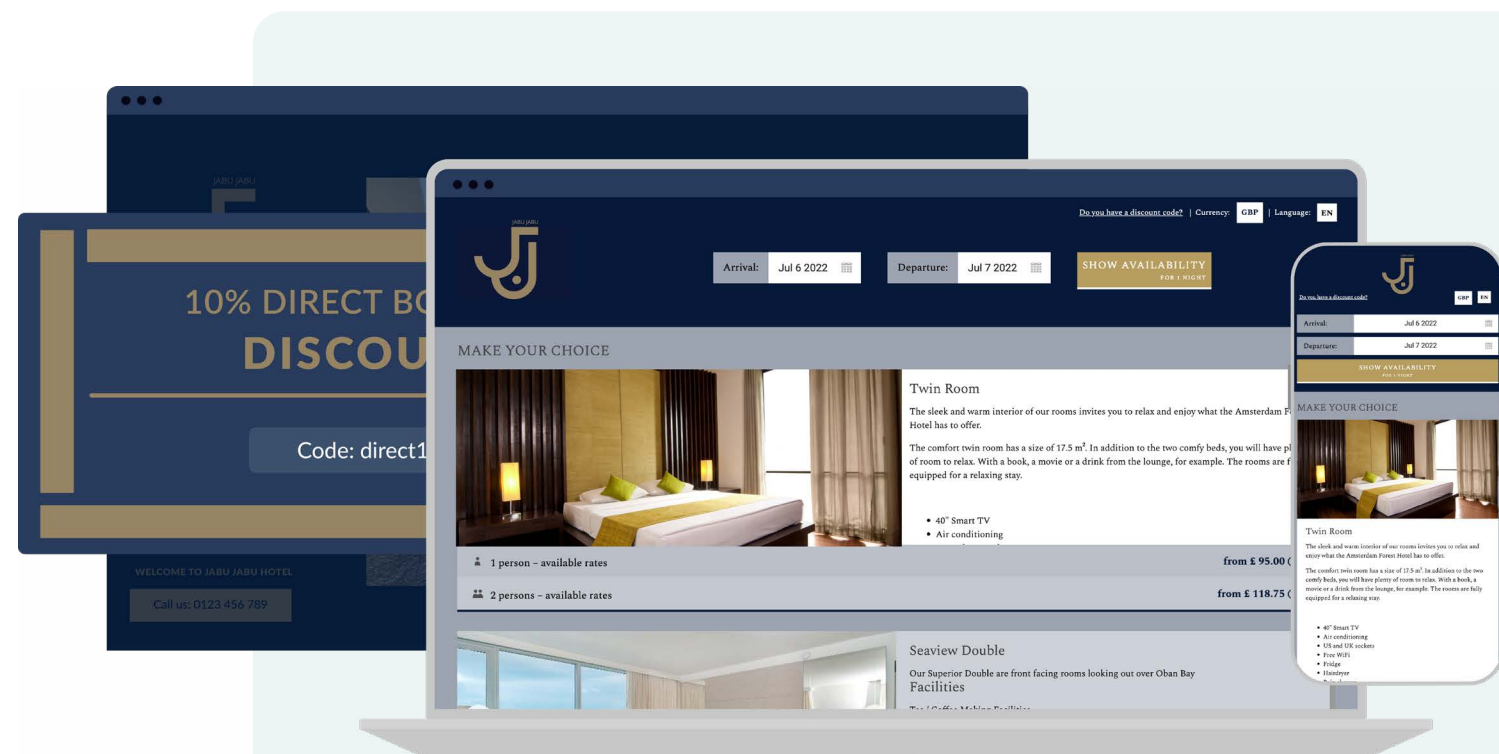
4. Does it cater to an international customer base?

International travel is a lucrative market to tap into. Most hoteliers rely on business from international travellers because they tend to stay longer and spend more on room upgrades and other amenities.

For this reason, you must ensure that the booking engine you invest in can be read in different languages and can adapt to different currencies.

These are simple functionalities that OTAs provide to travellers, and that's one of the many reasons for their popularity. If your booking engine can match OTAs' customer service, you'll be attracting a lot more direct bookings.

## 5. Is it fully customisable to your property's branding?

Your booking engine is an extension of your property. It gives potential guests a first impression and gives them a sense of what they can expect from your establishment. Having a consistent look and feel helps to put them at ease when booking with you.

A good online booking engine should allow you to upload your logo and change the site colours to match your branding. The ability to change and upload multiple images to promote your bookable rooms is even more essential.

6. Can it offer multiple rate plans?

Everyone likes variety. That's why it's important for guests to select from multiple rate plan options when making reservations through your booking engine. This is useful to be able to offer different rates for the same room, depending on add-ons offered (such as with or without breakfast).

Another use is to be able to offer packages that are part of the room (Valentine's Day Packages).

TAILOR MADE PACKAGES

Gluten intolerant

Early Bird

3 course meal

Spa treatment
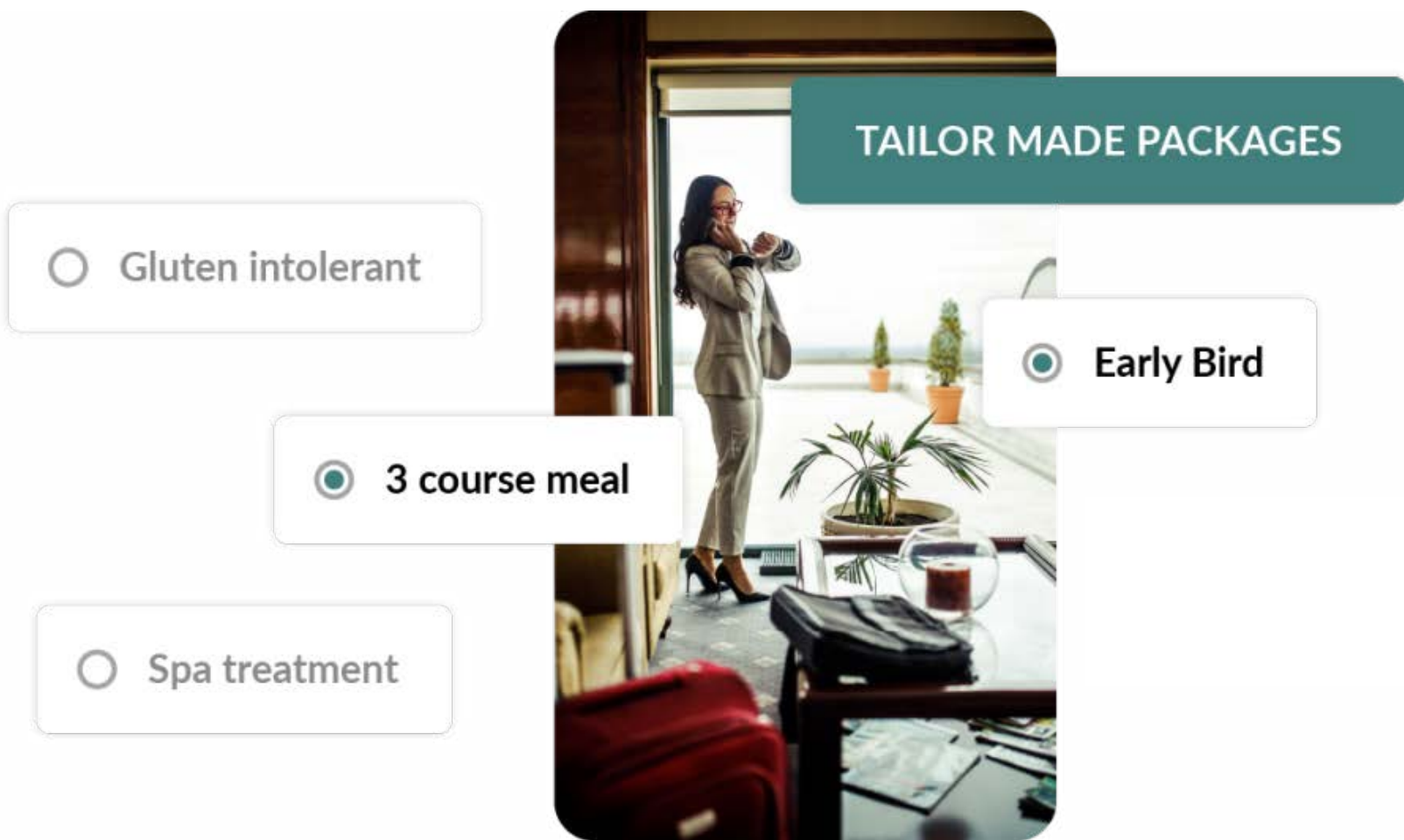
7. Can it support integrated payments?

An important part of owning your booking experience is ensuring bookers can pay safely and securely. The ability to accept online payments through your booking engine makes it more convenient for guests and helps you meet your reservation and cancellation requirements.

For example, you will be able to charge prepayments and authorise credit cards. Payments collected via online bookings should also automatically be recorded in back-end financial reports.
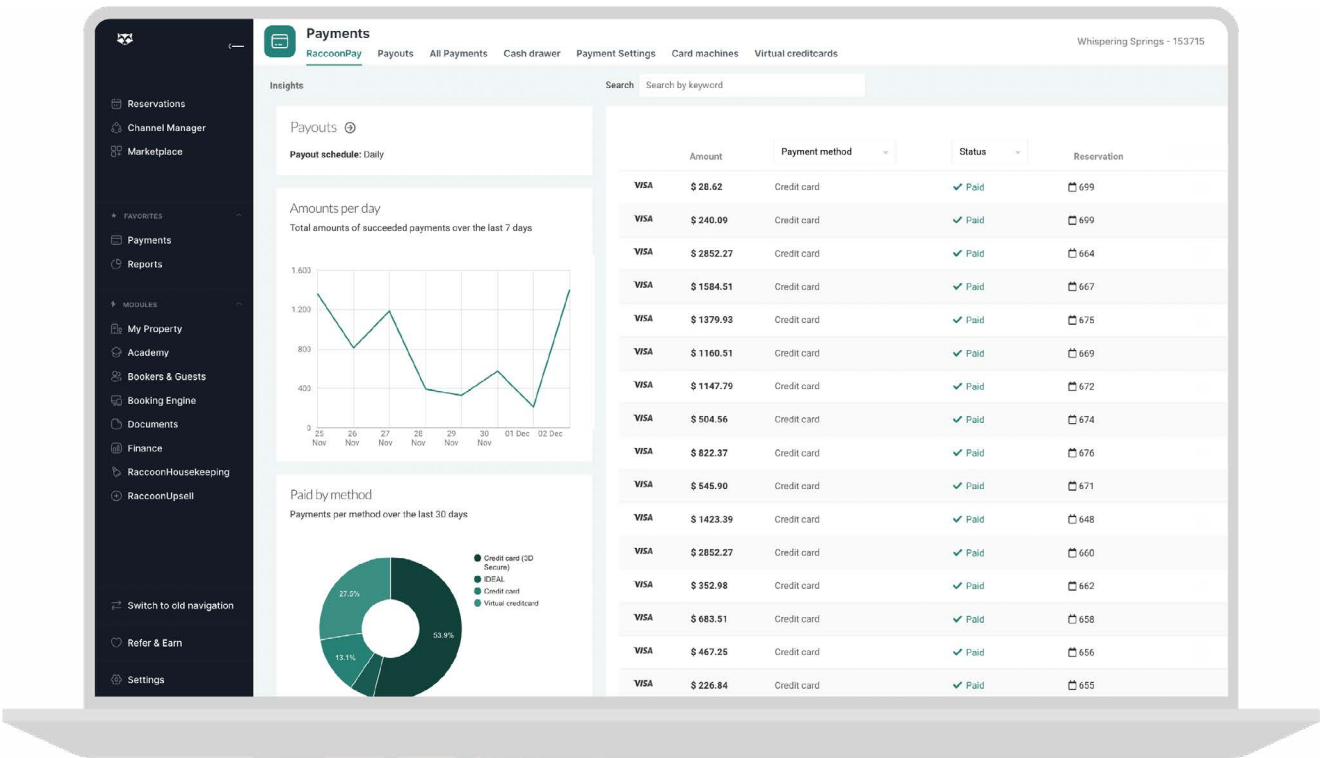
Other

Tools to Use

With a Booking Engine

Integration is incredibly important. A booking engine should be able to integrate with other systems you use to ensure the accuracy and smooth-running operation of your property's backend.
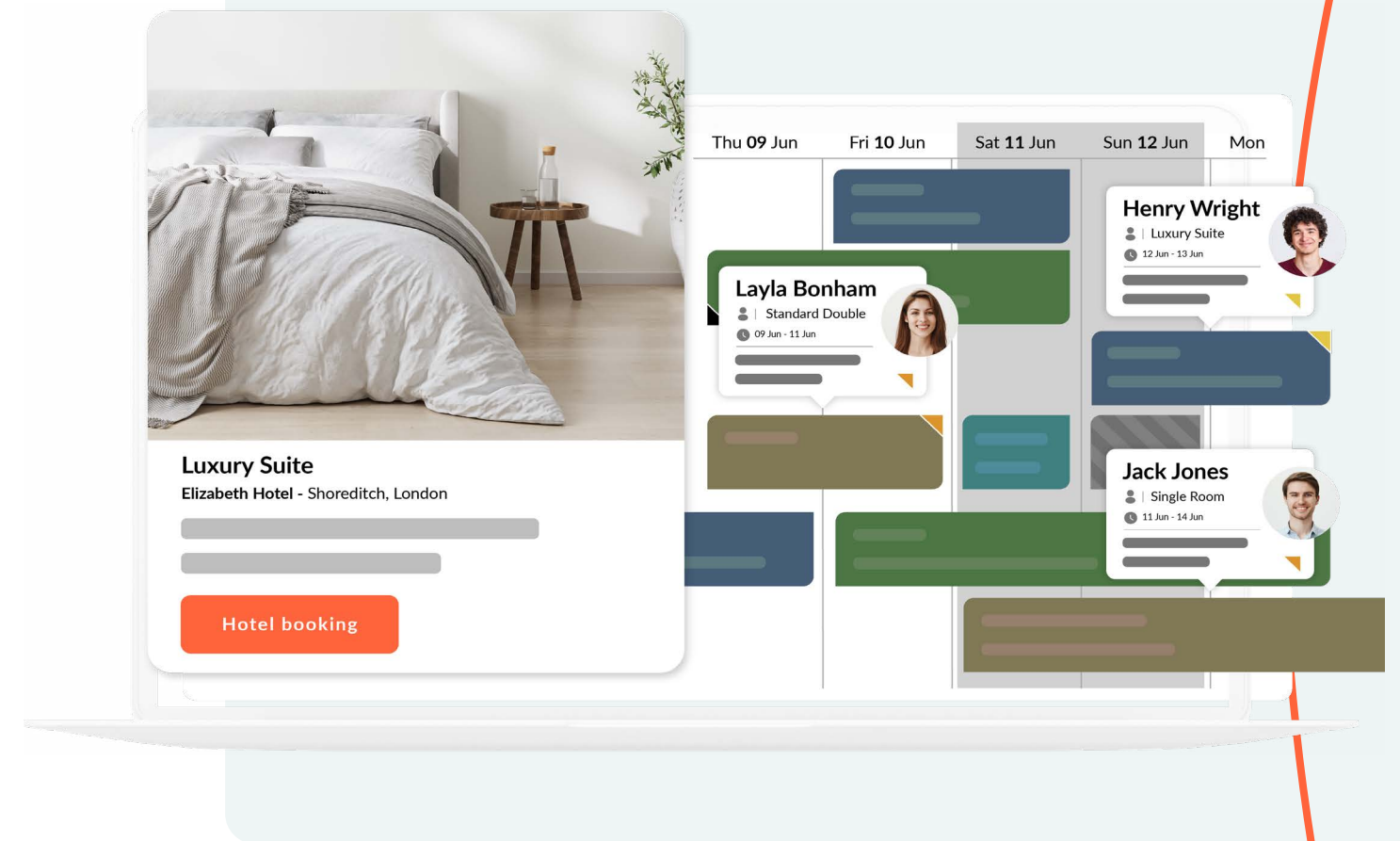
A more convenient solution for small and independently owned hotels is an all-in-one hotel management system that comes complete with the most important tools you need to operate your business effectively.

These tools include a booking engine, property management system, and channel manager. You can then decide to add third-party connections like accounting software or mobile door keys based on your property's individual requirements.

Luxury Suite
Elizabeth Hotel - Shoreditch, London

Hotel booking

Thu **09** Jun   Fri **10** Jun   Sat **11** Jun   Sun **12** Jun   Mon

Henry Wright
Luxury Suite
12 Jun - 13 Jun

Layla Bonham
Standard Double
09 Jun - 11 Jun

Jack Jones
Single Room
11 Jun - 14 Jun

1   Property Management Software (PMS)

A PMS is a software that manages your property's back and front end and is the most important integration with any booking engine. A PMS controls everything from your hotel's reservations calendar, reporting, and payments to housekeeping.

A seamless link with a PMS is what allows for straightforward communication between your booking engine and live inventory.

2   Google Hotel Ads

If you're serious about bolstering your direct bookings, you should include GHA in your distribution strategy. The Pay-Per-Stay program (formerly Google Hotel Ads Commission Program) launched in 2020 at an advantageous time when cancellations were at an all-time high during the pandemic.

Instead of paying for each click or transaction, hotels finally had the opportunity to pay Google a commission only after the guest's stay occurred. The no-risk model is highly favoured by hotel managers and is responsible for a large chunk of direct revenue.

Google Hotel Ads

Your Hotel ★★★★★ (211)

$240

Competitor A
B. $255

Competitor B
$275
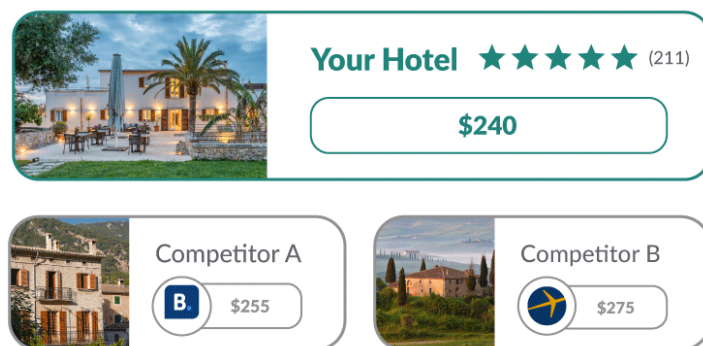
Unlike OTAs, GHA allows you to send guests directly to your hotel booking engine, so you can control the booking experience.

5 SECONDS SYNC

Expe   Google Hote   **Booking**   pega   airbnb
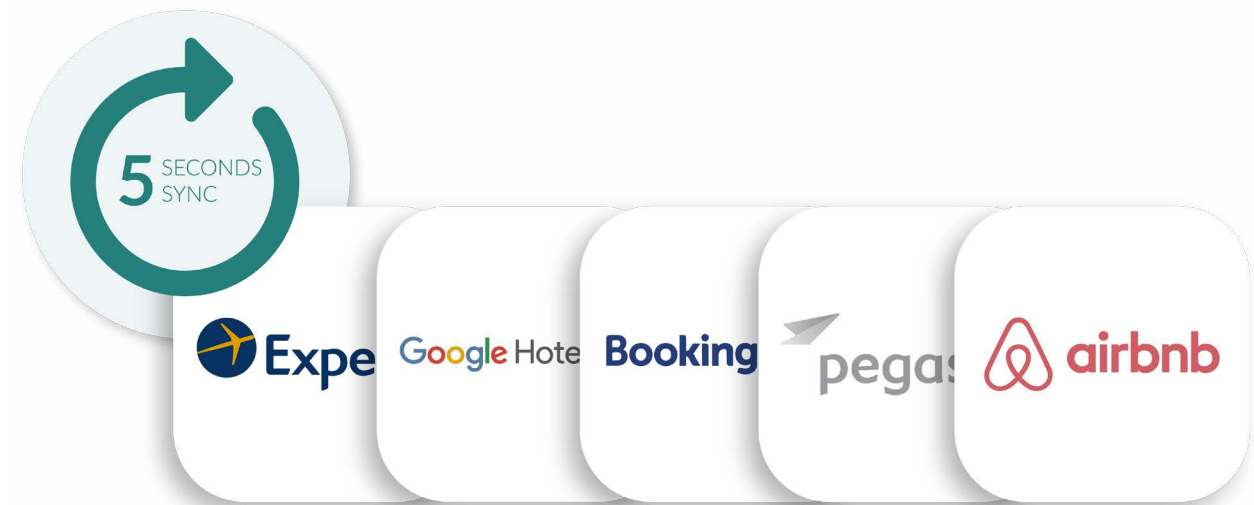
3   Channel Manager

A channel manager is a very important tool that allows hotels to sell their rooms on multiple channels without the hassle of manually updating rates and availability in the individual extranets.
Instead, these updates are automatically published across all channels and will also reflect in the booking engine.

Hotels might want to use a channel manager in conjunction with a booking engine to cash in on the billboard effect mentioned earlier.

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Conclusion

Direct bookings are highly favourable and can be a major source of revenue for hotels.

A booking engine lessens a hotel's dependence on OTAs by allowing your property to be instantly bookable through your hotel website.

Hotels also enjoy more control over the guest experience through direct communication with guests from the get-go.

Hotels can choose what guest information they store, what deals they offer, and what they choose to upsell. This is an effective way to optimise your property's sales strategy and maximise profit.

About **RoomRaccoon?**

RoomRaccoon was awarded the Best HMS by Hotel Tech Report for 2020 and 2021 and is a finalist for the award again in 2022. The fully integrated platform, preferred by over 10,000 users in Europe, Africa, and North America, is designed to promote and manage your business.

With our powerful property management system, you can also get a built-in booking engine and one of the world's fastest channel managers to streamline your operation and pivot your hotel's success.

Interested in boosting your direct bookings?

Book a Demo