How Micro-Moments Are Reshaping the Travel Customer Journey

There's a lot of planning that goes into traveling. And people increasingly turn to devices for help. Here, we reveal the consumer trends shaping these travel micro-moments, how they affect the travel customer journey, and why they matter for travel brands.

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W What do people spend more discretionary income on than home improvements, financial investments, or even health-related products?

Travel.

A trip was the largest discretionary purchase last year according to nearly 60% of leisure travelers.[1]

Before making this investment, travelers are taking time to research all the possibilities. Over 40% of travelers say they bounce back and forth between dreaming about and planning their next trip—zooming in on the details for one destination and then zooming out to reconsider all the options again.[2]

And more and more of this time is spent researching the details of trips on mobile. As of the first quarter of 2016, 40% of U.S. travel site visits come from mobile.[3]

As more research happens in the traveler's customer journey, there are more micro-moments—when people turn to a device with intent to answer an immediate need. In these moments, the stakes are high for travel brands as preferences are shaped and decisions are made. What happens in these micro-moments ultimately affects the travel decision-making process.

40% of U.S. travel site visits come from mobile.

How consumer behavior is shaping travel industry trends

Desktop still plays a big role in travel research, no doubt. But 40% of U.S. travel site visits are now coming from mobile. And consider this: The length of those sessions has shrunk by 5%.[3] With more frequent and shorter sessions you might conclude that consumers aren't finding what

they want on mobile. Yet conversion rates have grown nearly 10% on mobile travel sites.[4]

Let's break that down: Travelers increasingly turn to mobile in shorter spurts to make informed decisions faster than ever before. For marketers, this phenomenon has huge implications for the entire travel decision journey across devices and channels.

Travel moments that matter

I-want-to-get-away moments

(dreaming moments)

Time-to-make-a-plan moments

(planning moments)

Let's-book-it moments

(booking moments)

Can't-wait-to-explore moments

(experiencing moments)

Travel micro-moments start when people begin dreaming of a trip, and they continue all the way through the long-awaited trip itself. These moments tend to fall into one of four categories, which map closely to the stages of the travel decision-making process: dreaming, planning, booking, and experiencing.

I-want-to-get-away moments: a.k.a. "dreaming moments" that happen when people are exploring destination options and ideas with no firm plans. At this stage, people are looking for inspiration.

Time-to-make-a-plan moments: a.k.a. "planning moments" that happen when people have chosen a destination. They're looking for the right dates, the right flight, the right place to stay, and all the things they'll do while they're there.

Let's-book-it-moments: a.k.a. "booking moments" that happen when the research is done, and people are ready to book their tickets and reserve their rooms.

Can't-wait-to-explore moments: a.k.a. "experiencing moments" that happen when the trip is underway. Travelers are ready to live the trip they've been dreaming about—and share it with others.

Creating a travel micro-moments strategy

Why does all of this matter for travel brands?

Seventy-two percent of travelers with smartphones agree that when researching on their smartphones, they look for the most relevant information regardless of the travel company providing the information.[5] In other words, they're more loyal to their need than to any particular brand.

For travel brands, this means you have to earn (and re-earn) each person's consideration in every micro-moment they experience. How?

- **Be there.** You can't win if you're not in the game. Identify the micro-moments for travelers that fit your business, then commit to being there to help when they happen.

- **Be useful.** If you want to win the hearts and minds (and business) of travelers, you'll need to do more than just show up. Be relevant to the person's need in that moment. Connect them to the inspiration they're looking for and to the answers they want.

To be there and be useful across all travel moments, think about the intersection of these two. Try mapping out the customer's path to purchase. What is the traveler's need that you're solving for, what is their current situation or context, and how can your brand help?

Red Roof Inn provides a great example of how to combine intent with context to address a specific need for the stranded traveler. Realizing that flight cancellations leave an average of 90,000 U.S. passengers stranded every day, the Red Roof Inn marketing team developed a way to track flight delays in real time and trigger targeted search ads for their hotels near airports. These ads said, in essence, "Stranded at the airport? Come stay with us!"

They committed to those let's-book-it moments and delivered with relevance on people's needs. The result: a remarkable 60% increase in bookings across non-branded search campaigns.

The business case for micro-moments thinking is clear. According to recent research that Google commissioned from Forrester Consulting, companies that take steps toward being moments-ready earn a markedly stronger ROI in both mobile and overall marketing investments.

In this article, we'll explore:

- The latest consumer trends that define each of these travel micro-moments and how they're affecting travel industry trends.

- Snapshots of real travelers' research journeys, including the searches, clicks, website visits, and video views on their way to booking.

- Actionable ideas for travel marketers to be there and to be useful in each type of micro-moment.

- Examples of travel brands that are already seeing success with micro-moments thinking.

I-Want-to-Get-Away Moments: What They Mean for Travel Marketing

Half the fun in traveling is dreaming up the destination. Here, we dive into I-want-to-get-away moments—the dreaming moments before a trip is planned—and how travel marketers can capitalize on these early moments of inspiration.

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Y ou know the feeling. Maybe you've just gotten back from your most recent trip. Or maybe you can't remember the last time you even took a trip. Regardless of when it strikes you, you can probably relate to the vacation itch.

In these I-want-to-get-away moments, people are at the early stages of thinking about their next trip. They're exploring destination options and dreaming about what their next getaway could look like.

Most consumers aren't brand-committed in these moments. For example, 78% of leisure travelers haven't decided what airline they will travel with, and 82% haven't chosen the accommodation provider they will book with when they first start thinking about a trip.[6]

When leisure travelers first start thinking about a trip

78%
of leisure travelers haven't decided what airline they will travel with.

82%
of leisure travelers haven't chosen the accommodation provider they will book with.

Not only have travelers not decided on what brand they'll book with, but they don't necessarily have a destination picked out either. When first thinking about a personal trip, one in three travelers says they haven't typically decided on a specific destination.[2] Since many travelers still have an open mind about where they'll go and who they'll book with, these are prime opportunities for travel brands to make an impression.
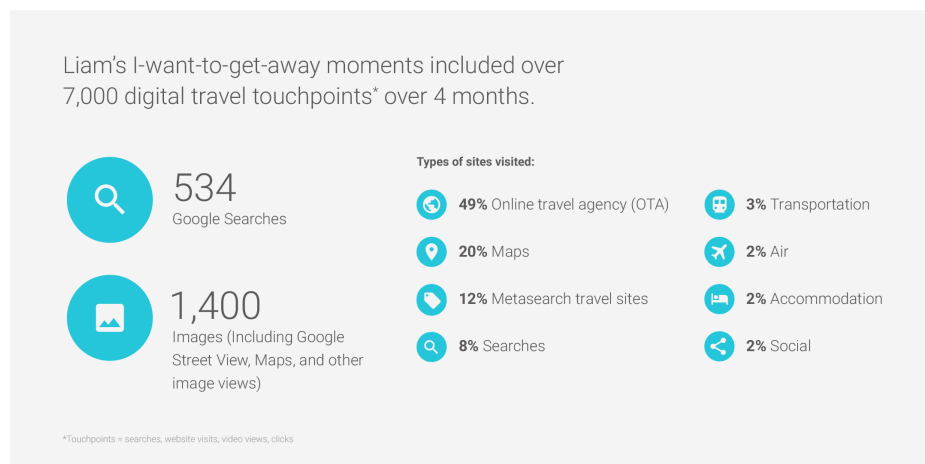
Snapshot of a real traveler's decision-making journey

Online interactions are increasingly shaping how people dream up their next trip. New clickstream data from Luth Research's opt-in panel (illustrating the pages a user visited, and in which order) provides a snapshot of what a real traveler's I-want-to-get-away moments actually looked like. By analyzing this traveler's searches, clicks, website visits, and video views while he was in dreaming mode for his upcoming travel plans, we can start to see exactly how and how much digital played a role in influencing his destinations.

Meet Liam. Liam is 30 years old, and he's not just planning one trip, but three: a vacation to Miami, a trip for his friends' wedding in the Northeast U.S., and his own destination wedding in the Dominican Republic. He's also open to planning even more travel, should he be inspired during his research.

Take a look at Liam's travel micro-moments over the course of four months:

Liam's I-want-to-get-away moments included over 7,000 digital travel touchpoints* over 4 months.

534
Google Searches

1,400
Images (Including Google Street View, Maps, and other image views)

Types of sites visited:

49% Online travel agency (OTA)

20% Maps

12% Metasearch travel sites

8% Searches

3% Transportation

2% Air

2% Accommodation
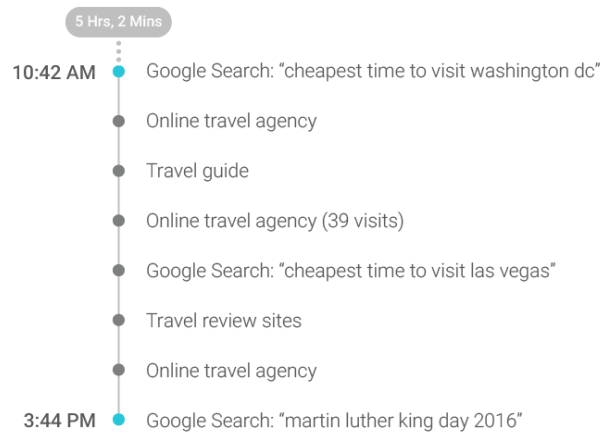
2% Social

*Touchpoints = searches, website visits, video views, clicks

And here's a real sample of one of Liam's research paths in an I-want-to-get-away moment that started with a search:

Liam's I-want-to-get-away moments

One of Liam's search paths

5 Hrs, 2 Mins	
10:42 AM	Google Search: "cheapest time to visit washington dc"
	Online travel agency
	Travel guide
	Online travel agency (39 visits)
	Google Search: "cheapest time to visit las vegas"
	Travel review sites
	Online travel agency
3:44 PM	Google Search: "martin luther king day 2016"

How to win I-want-to-get-away moments: Be there and be useful

At this early stage in the travel decision-making process, people want brands to provide content to inspire and to help narrow down choices. What's in it for hotel marketers, airline marketers, and other travel marketers? Sixty-seven percent of travelers are more likely to book with a travel brand that provides relevant information for the destinations they're interested in.[2]

Here are some concrete tips for providing people with relevant and useful content in their I-want-to-get-away moments:

Ensure you're showing up for the searches people are doing in these moments—even on mobile. If you want to be in the consideration set, you have to be present in the I-want-to-get-away moments. And remember that the smallest screen increasingly helps plan the biggest of purchases, travel included.

Food for thought as you consider your "be there" search strategy: People

often search for inspiration for vacation destinations based on geography or on a type of trip someone has in mind. "Honeymoon destinations" and "europe destinations" are common searches we see like this on Google. While these searches happen on all screens, 60% of searches for destination information come from mobile devices.[7] "Best time to visit [destination]" searches are common as well, and increasingly so on mobile. As of March 2016, searches like this have increased 50% year over year on smartphones.[8]

60%
of searches for destination information come from mobile devices.

Provide visual content for people's I-want-to-get-away moments, especially on mobile. When it makes sense, highlight what the experience will be like when they arrive, including what is available to see and to do while on the trip.

Travelers use Destinations on Google to learn about different destinations, explore points of interest, and get a snapshot of what a week-long trip might cost. From this behavior, we are able to glean insights into what is most useful for people as they decide where to go using mobile. On the Travel Guide tab, one of the most engaged-with elements on the page is the main photo for that destination. We see that people who tap on this image look at 10 images on average.[4] This makes sense, as 54% of leisure travelers say that pictures of a destination are important when choosing where to go.[9]
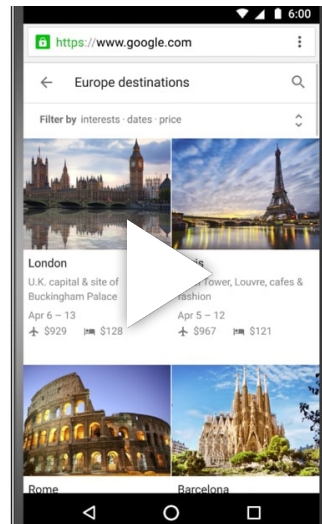
Video plays a big role in the dreaming stage. In any given month, over 100 million of YouTube's unique visitors are travelers.[10] Sixty-four percent of people who watch travel-related videos do so when thinking about taking a trip.[11] And three in five travelers who watch online video use it to narrow down their brand, destination, or activity choices.[11]

And travelers are watching more video on their smartphones. In fact, mobile screens are increasingly where travelers watch video: Approximately two-thirds of watch time for top travel videos happens on mobile.[12] And that watch time on mobile devices has grown by over 65% year over year.[12] This makes sense as travelers pick up their phones in slices of time throughout their day to learn about new places they want to visit.

When it comes to what kinds of videos travelers are watching, 65% of travelers search for videos online by destination. For example, top destinations searched on YouTube include "barcelona," "canada," "dubai," "australia," and "new york."[13] And the most popular type of travel videos watched on YouTube are travel vlogs.[14]

3 in 5

travelers who watch online video use it to narrow down their brand, destination, or activity choices.

Even though travel vlogs are the most viewed and most engaging type of travel videos, only 14% of vlogs on YouTube are created by brands; 86% come from YouTube creators.[10] This is a good opportunity for brands: Make sure you're creating content that speaks to the needs of your audience in engaging formats.

How hospitality and airline marketers are meeting consumer needs

Marriott Hotels is a great example of a brand meeting travelers in their I-want-to-get-away moments. Marriott Hotels realized that next-generation travelers know that brands need to market to them, but they also appreciate entertaining and inspiring content offered in an authentic way. To build out content for travelers' I-want-to-get-away moments, the executive team appointed a VP of content creation, built its own in-house content creation studio, and created Marriott Traveler, an online travel magazine and content hub.

Now Marriott creates vlogs and a wide variety of other online content. The brand focuses on documentary-style videos and has partnered with YouTube creators like Taryn Southern, Casey Neistat, and Sonia Gil to cover cities around the world.

Marriott is also investing in longer-form content. Its 19-minute adventure Two Bellmen Two, set in Dubai, accumulated over seven million YouTube views in its first two months of release. To pick the destinations for these

short films, Marriott identifies top searched-for destinations, using Google Search data and Marriott's own data, with the least amount of video content available.

Virgin America has taken a different approach to meeting customer needs in I-want-to-get-away moments.

Virgin America knows that its onboard amenities, comfortable seats, and hip mood-lighted vibe help set it apart in the airline industry. The brand wanted a way for guests who were unfamiliar with the product to experience it firsthand so they could realize what they were missing. The solution: an interactive brand campaign that allowed travelers to "test-drive" a flight before it took off.

Virgin America initially used Google Street View, and then Google Cardboard (a simple-to-use virtual reality tool) to give potential customers a 360-degree interactive tour of its Airbus A320 cabin. This interactive tour was able to communicate the unique benefits of traveling with Virgin. Views of the ample legroom and in-seat entertainment offer transparency to people in I-want-to-get-away moments as they think about where to go and who to go with. This new experience has generated over 600,000 interactions and a 15% overall lift in unique site visitors compared to the year prior.

How the Travel Research Process Plays Out in Time-to-Make-a-Plan Moments

As plans start to take shape, the excitement of vacation sets in. Here, we dive into time-to-make-a-plan moments—the planning moments that happen after a destination is chosen—and how travel marketers can capitalize on these key decision moments.

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Once someone chooses a travel destination, the dreaming starts to become reality. Enter: time-to-make-a-plan moments, when people turn to a device, setting the wheels in motion for the travel research process.

Top things travelers look for in these particular micro-moments include prices, hotel reviews/pictures/cost/availability, flight length, travel schedules, and activities in the destination.[15]

Leisure travelers today are as likely to shop for flights on their smartphones as they are to shop for music.

More than one in three travelers with smartphones agree that when researching on their smartphones, they've discovered a new travel company.[16] And that's even higher for millennial travelers; 50% discovered a new travel company while researching on mobile.[17]

If you aren't already in the consideration set at this point in the customer journey, these time-to-make-a-plan moments are your opportunity.

Snapshot of a real traveler's decision-making journey

Online interactions are increasingly shaping how people make a plan for their next trip. New clickstream data from Luth Research's opt-in panel (illustrating the pages a user visited, and in which order) provides a snapshot of what a real traveler's time-to-make-a-plan moments actually looked like. By analyzing this traveler's searches, clicks, website visits, and video views while she was in planning mode for her upcoming travel, we can start to see exactly how and how much digital played a role in influencing her destinations.

Meet Gina. Gina is a middle-aged woman from Nevada, traveling to San Diego for a mothers' conference. Her visit is both business and pleasure,

and she's looking for fun things to do with her child while in Southern California.

Take a look at Gina's travel micro-moments over the course of three months:

Gina had over 850 digital travel touchpoints*
over the course of 3 months.

24%
of those touchpoints occurred on mobile

166
searches

Types of sites visited:

24% Maps		**7%** Air	
19% Search		**4%** Accommodation	
13% Events & activities		**2%** Car	
11% Restaurants		**10%** Other	
10% Online travel agency (OTA)			

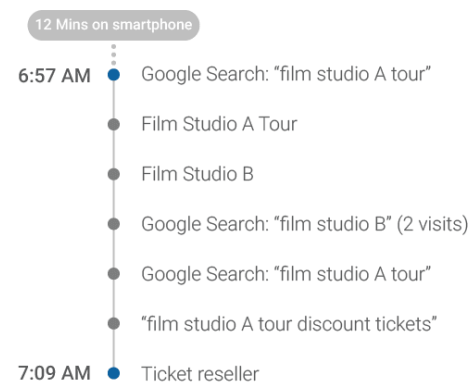*Touchpoints = searches, website visits, video views, clicks

And here's a real sample of one of Gina's research paths in a time-to-make-a-plan moment that started with a search:

Gina's time-to-make-a-plan moments
One of Gina's search paths

12 Mins on smartphone

6:57 AM	Google Search: "film studio A tour"
	Film Studio A Tour
	Film Studio B
	Google Search: "film studio B" (2 visits)
	Google Search: "film studio A tour"
	"film studio A tour discount tickets"
7:09 AM	Ticket reseller

How to win time-to-make-a-plan moments: Be there and be useful

As you can see, time-to-make-a-plan moments are crucial for marketers to win. And even though these moments might seem fleeting, there are a few concrete ways to ensure your brand is there and useful at this point in the customer journey.

Show up when people research the specifics for a destination.
During the planning phase, travelers say that search is the most common way in which they discover the brand they ultimately book with.[15] Common searches in time-to-make-a-plan moments include "hotels in [destination]," "car rentals in [destination]," and "flights to [destination]."

Plan for these moments happening on mobile. Consider this: 70% of travelers with smartphones have done travel research on their smartphone.[2] In fact, you may be surprised by the fact that nearly 50% of Google Flights visitors are on a mobile device.[18] And leisure travelers today are as likely to shop for flights on their smartphones as they are to shop for music.[1] With this in mind, we've made sure Google Flights displays current information and connects shoppers to airline partners in a mobile-friendly way.

Hotel information is also sought out on mobile. In fact, some searches, like hotels with a specific type of amenity, are primarily happening on smartphones. "Hotel with an indoor pool" and "hotel with jacuzzi in room" are two of the top hotel amenity searches on smartphones. As of March 2016, over 70% of these types of hotel searches are on smartphones.[8]

We've designed how hotel search results appear on Google to help travelers easily pinpoint the right hotel, using filters on mobile for things like amenities, which in turn creates more qualified customers for brands.

Learn from a hospitality marketer and airline marketer

who connect with travelers in planning moments

La Quinta's mobile traffic has doubled in the last three years; today 33% of its online visitors come from mobile devices. During peak season last year, La Quinta decided to turn on mobile Google Hotel Ads to connect to more consumers in their planning moments and to increase qualified leads. This drove traffic to its updated mobile site to meet the growing number of travelers who were looking for hotels on the go.

The results were strong. "Hotel Ads are performing at a significantly stronger conversion rate; twice what we see for regular traffic on mobile," says Ted Schweitzer, SVP of marketing and e-commerce for La Quinta Inns & Suites. "And that makes a big difference in terms of results."
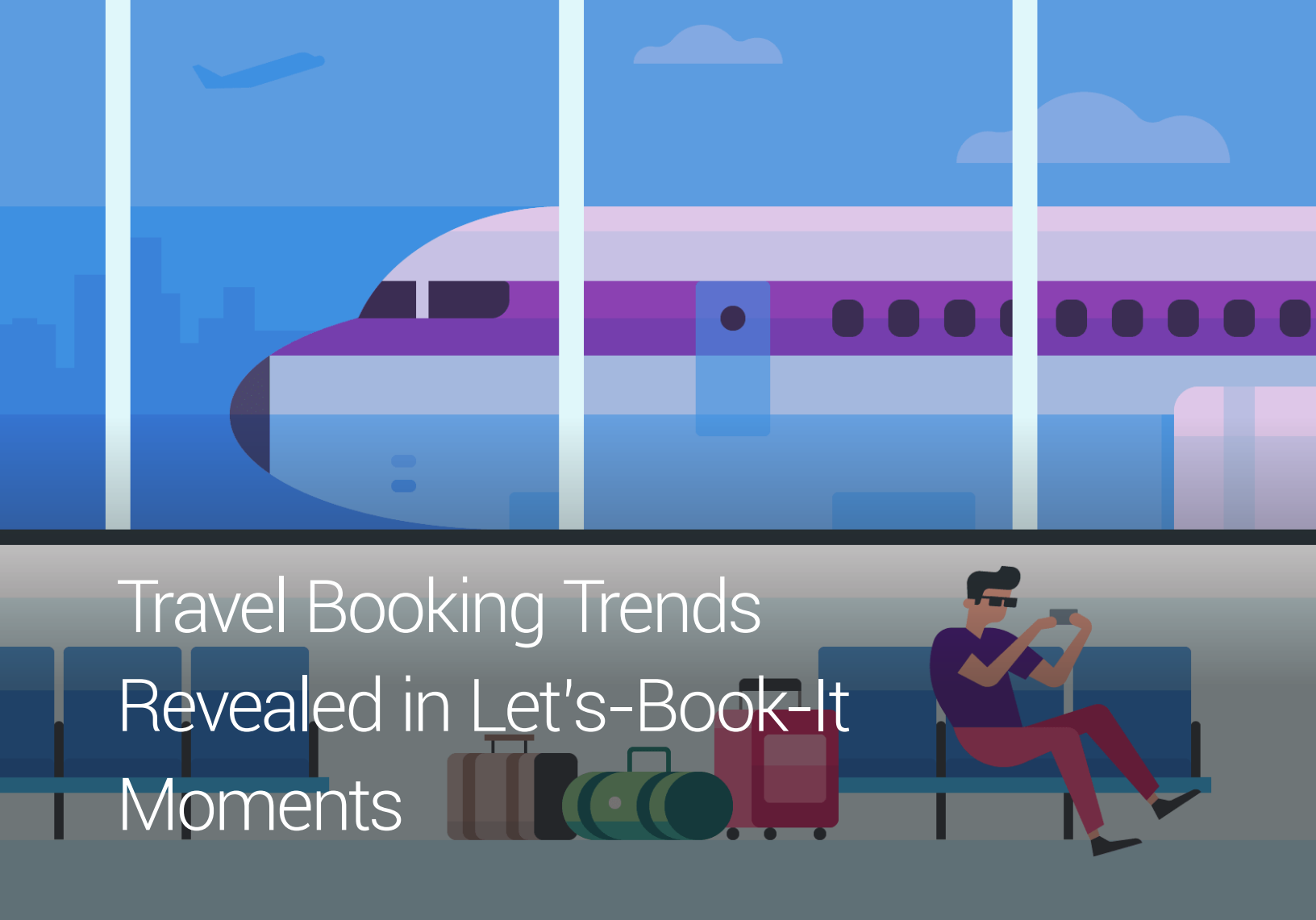
There's a lot more to learn. Check out this more detailed feature on La Quinta's approach to time-to-make-a-plan moments, including a video complete with interviews from the people driving this thinking for the brand.

Another great example to note is **Etihad**, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates. The company helps consumers make more informed decisions by using current flight data in search and display ads.

Its customers tend to be busy travelers of the world. Etihad realized that the best way to be useful to these customers was to give them information up front to inform their booking decision. Etihad used its own data from Google Flights to populate display and search ads dynamically, with up-to-date data on flight schedules and prices.

The new information lowered the airline's click-through rate by removing unqualified leads, increased its conversion rates by 2X, and decreased its CPA by 70%. Etihad delivered just what people needed in their time-to-make-a-plan moments, and that won the brand more qualified customers at a lower cost. That's a مكسب للجميع—a win-win.

Travel Booking Trends Revealed in Let's-Book-It Moments

Mobile has changed the way people book travel. Here, we dive into the let's-book-it moments that happen after travelers have done their research— and how travel marketers can capitalize on these key conversion moments.

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Y ou know what it's like as you get ready to hit "reserve" for that cruise, last-minute flight, or room at the resort. The destination ideas have been explored, the research has been done, and you're ready to book.

In these let's-book-it moments, people are ready to put their dollars behind their decisions. And they often turn to search in these micro-moments. The consumer behavior in these moments is shaping travel industry trends at large, and even business travel trends.
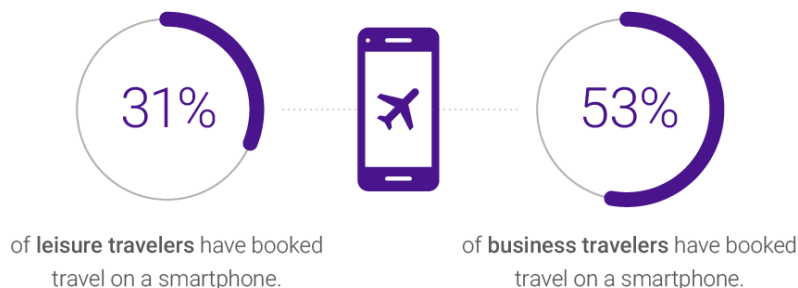
94% of leisure travelers switch between devices as they plan or book a trip.

Travel shoppers who are ready to book have typically narrowed their choices and may have decided on the location as well as the brand they want to book with. In these moments, people often search for something like "[brand name] + [location]." And, in fact, almost half of searches like this happen on smartphones.[8]

In these let's-book-it moments on mobile, it's not just searching that's happening. Travelers increasingly book on smartphones. Thirty-one percent of leisure travelers say they've booked travel on a smartphone,[19] while 53% of business travelers say the same. When it comes to travelers looking to book a hotel, we see nearly half of Google Hotel Ads referrals now coming from smartphones,[21] and this is growing by almost 2.4X year on year.[22]

31%
of **leisure travelers** have booked travel on a smartphone.

53%
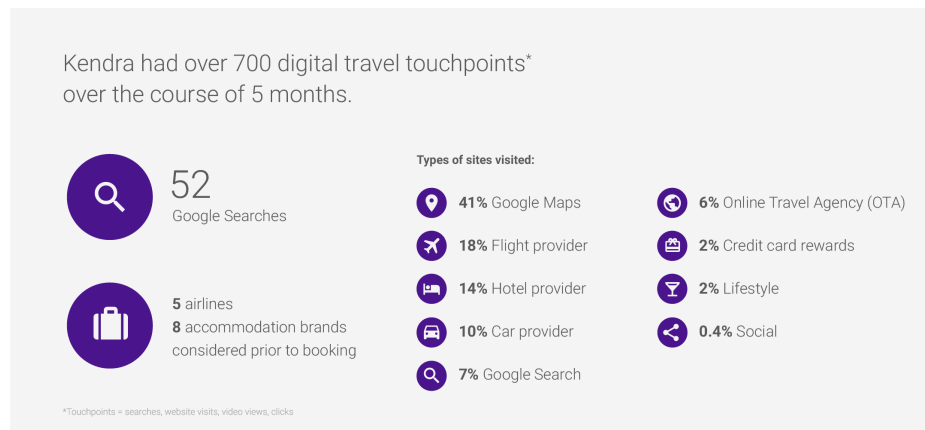of **business travelers** have booked travel on a smartphone.

Snapshot of a real traveler's decision-making journey

Online interactions are increasingly shaping how people make a plan for their next trip. New clickstream data from Luth Research's opt-in panel (illustrating the pages a user visited, and in which order) provides a snapshot of what a real traveler's time-to-make-a-plan moments actually looked like. By analyzing this traveler's searches, clicks, website visits, and video views while she was in planning mode for her upcoming travel, we can start to see exactly *how* and *how much* digital played a role in influencing her destinations.

Meet Kendra. Kendra is a single mother of three who travels for both business and pleasure. In a five-month period, she planned business trips to Amarillo and Kerrville, Texas, while also exploring vacation destinations in San Antonio, Whistler, and Puerto Rico.

Take a look at Kendra's travel micro-moments over the course of five months:

Kendra had over 700 digital travel touchpoints*
over the course of 5 months.

52
Google Searches

5 airlines
8 accommodation brands considered prior to booking

Types of sites visited:

41% Google Maps

18% Flight provider

14% Hotel provider

10% Car provider

7% Google Search

6% Online Travel Agency (OTA)

2% Credit card rewards

2% Lifestyle

0.4% Social

*Touchpoints = searches, website visits, video views, clicks
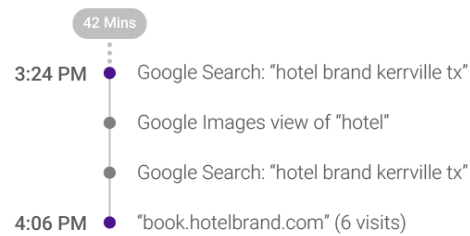
And here's a real sample of one of Kendra's research paths in a let's-book-it moment that started with a search:

Kendra's let's-book-it moments
One of Kendra's search paths

42 Mins

3:24 PM   ●   Google Search: "hotel brand kerrville tx"

          ●   Google Images view of "hotel"

          ●   Google Search: "hotel brand kerrville tx"

4:06 PM   ●   "book.hotelbrand.com" (6 visits)

The travel booking trends on mobile specifically

As much as mobile research and bookings have grown, the majority of travelers, especially those taking personal trips, still book on a desktop or laptop. Ninety-four percent of leisure travelers switch between devices as they plan or book a trip.[23] And 46% of travelers with smartphones say they make their decision on mobile, but then book on another device.[24]

Why is this happening? Two reasons: the anxiety factor and the limitations of mobile booking sites and apps.

The anxiety factor when it comes to booking travel on mobile

Sixty-nine percent of leisure travelers worry that they're not finding the best price or making the best decision. And only 23% of leisure travelers are confident they can find all of the same hotel and flight information on their smartphone that they can on their desktop.[1]

Only 23%

of leisure travelers are confident they can find all of the same hotel and flight information on their smartphone that they can on their desktop.

2/3

of leisure travelers double-check prices on a desktop after shopping for flights on a smartphone.

Over 50%

make the switch to double-check hotel prices.

People tend to double-check things in more detail on laptops or desktops. Nearly two-thirds of leisure travelers double-check prices on a computer after shopping for flights on a smartphone, and more than half make the switch to double-check hotel prices.[1]

Limitations of mobile booking sites and apps

Fifty-four percent of leisure travelers and 69% of business travelers say that mobile limitations or mobile usability are their main reasons for booking on another device.[25]

Not only do you face travelers switching devices, you also risk losing customers to competitors. Eighty-eight percent of travelers with smartphones would switch to another site or app if yours doesn't satisfy their needs.[26]
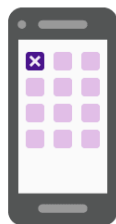
88%

of travelers with smartphones would switch to another site or app if yours doesn't satisfy their needs.

How to be there and be useful in let's-book-it-moments

Offer assurances on mobile booking. To help customers feel more comfortable booking on mobile, you need to alleviate the concern that they might be missing out on additional information just because they're using a smartphone. Allowing customers to cancel with no penalties and providing a best price guarantee are two ways that companies are tackling this issue.

Eliminate steps on mobile. Think about your primary goal: Are you trying to drive engagement, to boost mobile bookings, or to help make the travel experience better? With that goal in mind, think about how to cut the number of the steps a traveler has to take to reach it. For instance, you might:

- Implement one-click functionality.

- Help the traveler fill in forms.

- Provide alternatives for finishing the transaction (like click-to-call buttons).

- Consider using Book on Google to help travelers book a hotel or flight in a matter of clicks without leaving the search results page.

Anticipate needs on mobile. To understand consumer needs, check out your top mobile searches and your most popular mobile content. Put the call to action for these primary activities front and center on your site.

Virgin America is a great example of a brand that recently refocused its mobile experience on one simple call to action: "Book a flight." To make room for this single call to action, Virgin America steered away from other offers or distractions that might clutter the booking process or draw

attention from that single goal. Today its mobile customers can (and do) book flights twice as fast.

Ensure your mobile site loads fast. Mobile users are impatient. Fifty-two percent of travelers with smartphones said they'd switch sites or apps because it takes too long to load. And 45% would switch if it takes too many steps to book or to get desired information.[26]

52%
of **travelers with smartphones** said they'd switch sites or apps because it takes too long to load.

45%
would switch if it takes too many steps to book or get desired information.

Meet their expectations by keeping your back end up to snuff. For help, try Google's PageSpeed Insights tool; it will rate your site's load time and offer custom recommendations for increasing your site's speed. And for more of a deep dive in creating best-in-class user experiences in mobile, check out "How to Create a Better Mobile User Experience." Consider using Progressive Web Apps to bring the best of mobile sites and native applications to users, fast.

Take cues from how your customers are finding you, and build for that experience. Mobile has fostered new last-minute booking behaviors. For example, 85% of non-branded hotel searches on Google related to "today" or "tonight" happen on a smartphone.[8]

Booking.com is responding to this need by reaching out to last-minute travelers in a very deliberate way. Booking.com noticed more of its customers booking hotels on smartphones when they were already

traveling, with three-quarters of same-day bookings already happening on a mobile device.

To meet the needs of those last-minute travelers, Booking.com created its Booking Now mobile app. Based on a traveler's location, it shows the closest places to stay and offers a frictionless booking experience so travelers can make a reservation in just two taps.

Booking.com has applied what it's learned across all of their mobile experiences—and it's seen great results. As of May 2016, more than a third of reservations are made through mobile and the company anticipates mobile bookings will make up the majority of their reservations as soon as next year.

•••

There's a lot more to learn. Check out this more detailed feature on Booking.com's approach to let's-book-it moments, including a video complete with interviews from the people driving this thinking for the brand.

Don't manage your call center with a one-size-fits-all approach.
While 75% of leisure travelers who shop for hotels on their smartphone typically end up purchasing on a desktop or laptop computer, people also call a travel provider to book.[1] Over one in three mobile travelers who have researched travel on a smartphone, then called to book or to get more information.[27] That's where brands like the hotel booking site **Reservation Counter** are finding success.

Reservation Counter has been able to more fully capitalize on mobile calls as a conversion channel. Its best-in-class call center allows the company to learn about customer behaviors, upsell repeat visitors, and give priority in the call queue to the customers with the highest likelihood of driving a

booking. In addition, priority is given to calls from higher-converting geos and properties, along with a higher basket value.

At the beginning of 2016, Reservation Counter launched a mobile pilot for its top-converting properties by drastically increasing its mobile bids and using click-to-call extensions. Within weeks, it saw mobile conversions for these ad groups increase by 260% month over month, and it saw a 4X increase in offline sales via click-to-call.

How Mobile Influences Travel Decision-Making in Can't-Wait-to-Explore Moments

Just because vacation is booked doesn't mean the research is all done. Here, we dive into the can't-wait-to-explore moments that happen after travelers have booked—and how travel marketers can capitalize.

think with Google

When it comes to travel planning, that gleeful moment your itinerary is all set is when things start to get real. There's probably a moment when you can almost start to hear the waves crash on the shore, or see the fresh snow coming down on the mountain. Vacation. Is. Near. Now you can start to think about all the things you'll do and see while you're there.

These can't-wait-to-explore moments occur when travelers start to look forward to their trip, and increasingly when they're finally at their destination. Travel marketers may think that a secured booking is the end of the road when it comes to serving travelers' needs. But providing useful information in these particular micro-moments is a way to build your brand, drive word of mouth, and increase loyalty among travelers.

85% of leisure travelers decide on activities only after having arrived at the destination.

Nearly nine out of 10 travelers expect their travel provider to share relevant information while they are on their trip.[2] And 67% of travelers feel more loyal toward a travel company that shares information during their trip that improves their travel experience.[2]

Smartphones are changing travel industry trends by enabling people to be more spontaneous when they arrive at their destination. In fact, 85% of leisure travelers decide on activities only after having arrived at the destination.[9]

Snapshot of a real traveler's decision-making journey
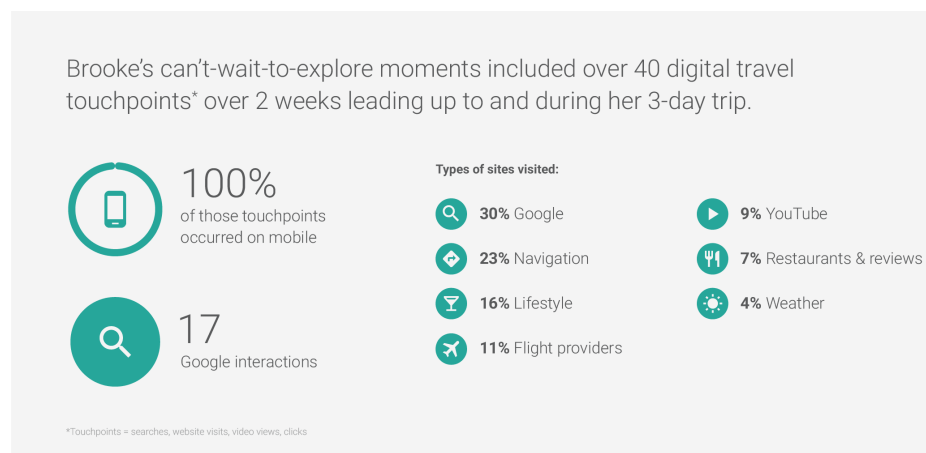
Online interactions are increasingly shaping how people make a plan for their next trip. New clickstream data from Luth Research's opt-in panel (illustrating the pages a user visited, and in which order) provides a snapshot of what a real traveler's can't-wait-to-explore moments actually looked like. By analyzing this traveler's searches, clicks, website visits, and

video views while she was gearing up for and experiencing her planned trip, we can start to see exactly how and how much digital played a role in influencing her destinations.

Meet Brooke. Brooke is a 35-year-old mom who recently traveled from Tennessee to her alma mater in Baton Rouge with her family for a marathon.

Take a look at Brooke's travel micro-moments over the course of two weeks leading up to and during her three-day trip:

Brooke's can't-wait-to-explore moments included over 40 digital travel touchpoints* over 2 weeks leading up to and during her 3-day trip.

100% of those touchpoints occurred on mobile

17 Google interactions

Types of sites visited:

30% Google

23% Navigation

16% Lifestyle

11% Flight providers

9% YouTube

7% Restaurants & reviews

4% Weather

*Touchpoints = searches, website visits, video views, clicks

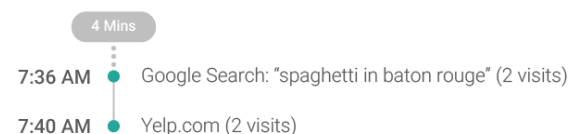**And here's a real sample of one of Brooke's research paths in a can't-wait-to-explore moment that started with a search:**

Brooke's can't-wait-to-explore moments
One of Brooke's search paths

4 Mins

7:36 AM   Google Search: "spaghetti in baton rouge" (2 visits)

7:40 AM   Yelp.com (2 visits)

How travel marketers can win can't-wait-to-explore moments

Be there for mobile travelers on their trip. Travelers increasingly rely on mobile to get their bearings when they arrive in a new destination. Smartphone searches at hotels increased about 30% in the last year.[28] Since smartphones are location-aware, we often see people (including travelers) search for "things to do near me." For example, search interest in queries related to "places to eat near me" has more than doubled in the last year.[29]

Search interest in queries related to **"places to eat near me"** has more than doubled in the last year.

Make information accessible across sites and apps. In can't-wait-to-explore moments, travelers increasingly rely on mobile sites and apps. Travelers say they used mobile sites slightly more than mobile apps when looking for information while in a destination on a trip.[26] And only 23% of travelers say they have downloaded the app for the travel brands they use the most.[2] Encourage your customers to install your app, and provide them with content in the app to help them make the most of their trip.

Hilton is a great example of a hospitality brand that bridges the physical and digital world for guests via mobile. The brand's aim is to make travel easier for its guests before, during, and after each visit. That's why Hilton now uses email markup. It lets Google recognize when a traveler has booked with Hilton, and as the travel date approaches it shows the guest a Now Card (essentially an alert on their phone) with hotel details and reservation updates.
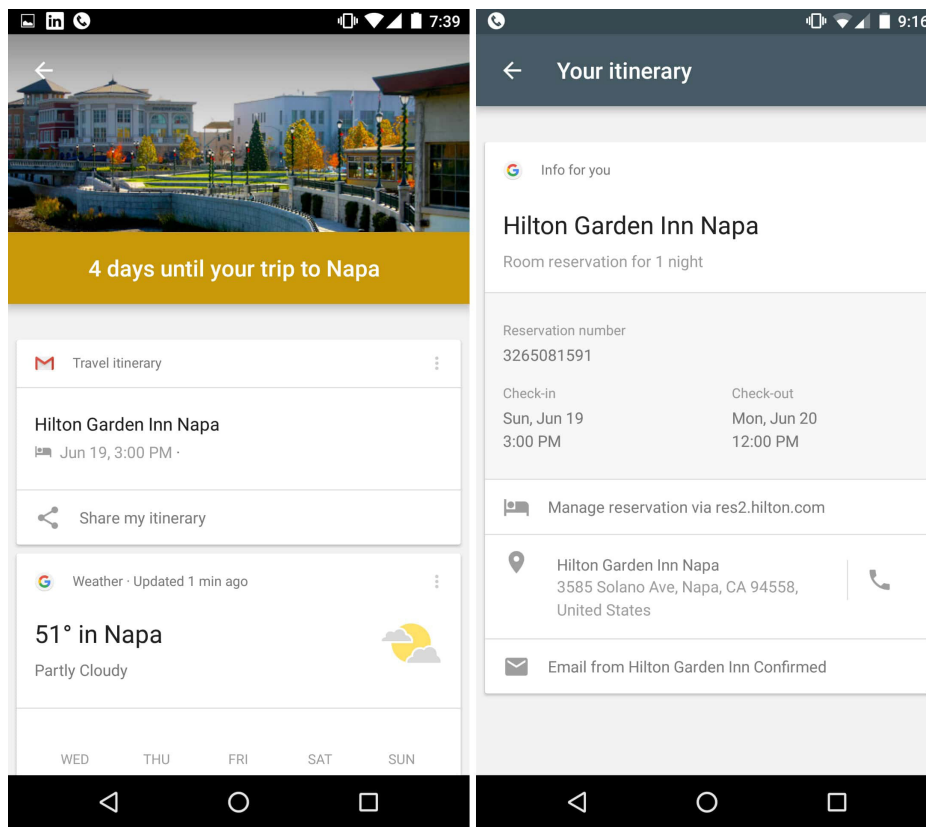
Hilton is also winning can't-wait-to-explore moments with its app that lets HHonors members at select hotels pick exactly which room they want, bypass the line at check-in, and go directly to their room, using the app as the key to unlock their door.

Provide useful information for first-time visitors. Most travelers venture to destinations they've never visited before: 53% of leisure travelers say they chose a travel destination because they want to visit new places. And only 18% of leisure travelers plan to revisit places they've been.[9] This is an opportunity for brands to be useful and to provide resources on a given area or tap into local knowledge.

Airbnb is one such travel marketer that takes the opportunity to meet travelers in their can't-wait-to-explore moments and plays the role of local tour guide. To help travelers experience New York "like a local,"

Airbnb tapped into its vast hosting community to provide host-led audio tours of Midtown.

When visitors searched for tourist destinations or things to do in the Times Square area, they were prompted to see New York with a Hosted Walk. The experience used Google Maps and the Directions API to direct users to their primary destination, while the Airbnb host's voice chimed in whenever they passed a great local spot along their route. This effort turned Times Square, once a notorious tourist trap, into a unique experience for any traveler.

•••

There's a lot more to learn. Check out this more detailed feature on Airbnb's approach to which-one's-best moments, including a video complete with interviews from the people driving this thinking for the brand.

How to Be There for Micro-Moments in the New Travel Customer Journey

In the moments that matter to travelers, your brand can only be useful and relevant if it shows up. Learn a simple way to assess your brand's opportunity to be there in travelers' micro-moments and how to measure success.

think with **Google**™

F amily vacations, destination weddings, last-minute getaways: People's need and love for travel hasn't changed much over the years. But the way people research, plan, book, and experience these trips has changed dramatically, thanks to one thing: mobile.

That little device is increasingly a traveler's go-to advisor. Consider that mobile accounts for 40% of visits to U.S. travel sites as of the first quarter of 2016.[3]
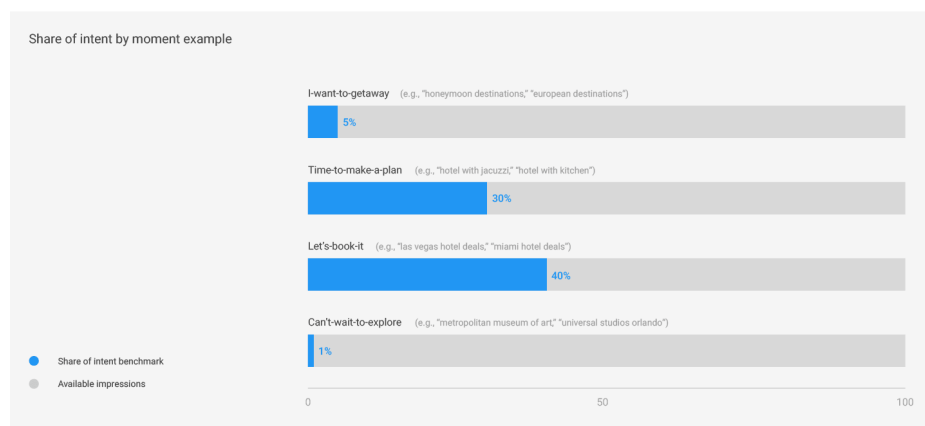
This new journey is made up of hundreds of micro-moments that ultimately shape travelers' preferences and decisions, from their final destination to the brands they choose to book. For travel marketers, we've identified four crucial travel moments to win: I-want-to-get-away moments, time-to-make-a-plan moments, let's-book-it moments, and can't-wait-to-explore moments.

So, for the micro-moments you've identified to be there and be useful for, how do you know if you're actually showing up? Look at your share of intent.

Share of intent is a simple measure of success. It's the number of times you're there for searches in each moment.

Consider the chart below. It illustrates the combined average share of intent for the top brands that are there in these moments for hotel- and accommodation-related queries.

Source: Google Search Data, all devices, Mar. 2016. This example shows impression share for top travel advertisers for travel-related queries that are illustrative of the opportunity in each moment, but not comprehensive. I-want-to-get-away includes queries that contain "destinations" and "best place"; time-to-make-a-plan includes queries containing "hotel with"; let's-book-it contains queries related to last minute travel; and can't-wait-to-explore includes queries that contain "things to do" for travelers who are in the destination.

Share of intent by moment example

I-want-to-getaway   (e.g., "honeymoon destinations," "european destinations")
5%

Time-to-make-a-plan   (e.g., "hotel with jacuzzi," "hotel with kitchen")
30%

Let's-book-it   (e.g., "las vegas hotel deals," "miami hotel deals")
40%

Can't-wait-to-explore   (e.g., "metropolitan museum of art," "universal studios orlando")
1%

● Share of intent benchmark
○ Available impressions

0   50   100

As you can see, there are significant missed opportunities throughout the journey. In time-to-make-a-plan moments, for instance, the brands who most frequently advertise against searches related to hotel amenities like "hotels with [x]," on average have a 30% share of intent. This low share of intent happens on all devices, but it tends to be especially true on mobile.

And this chart is just one example. Share of intent can be applied across travel categories and customized to reflect which micro-moments are most important to a brand.

Making sure you're showing up in micro-moments

 To win travelers' business, you have to commit to being there and useful in relevant micro-moments across the travel decision-making process and across devices. Here is a guide to assessing the opportunity for your brand and the essential questions to ask yourself and your team.

Be there

- **Look for yourself.** Consider the most common searches performed by travelers in each phase of their decision journey and identify which ones are most relevant to your business. Are you there for these searches on mobile, and do you like what you see?

- **Check out the competition.** To see where you may be falling short, work with your team or agency to identify the searches you need to be there for in each moment, then find your share of intent, and compare it to the competitor benchmark for your category. Are you happy with how you compare to the competition? More importantly, are you happy with the number of travelers you're there for in these key moments?

- **Consider the right tools.** Think about what other platforms travelers are using to make decisions including YouTube, Google Flights, and

Hotel Ads. Pick those that fit your business. Are you there when they look for video content related to destinations your business serves? Are you showing in the results for flight routes and hotel searches, and when people want to book a hotel?

Be useful

- **Evaluate your content.** When you look at the content you currently have, do you feel that it speaks to travelers' needs and answers their questions in key decision moments?

- **Determine consumer needs.** Are there unmet needs that you can develop helpful content for?

- **Account for consumer context.** What situation are they in and how can you help?

The bottom line: Travel marketers need to account for the new multi-device, multi-channel landscape. And those who are moments-ready—and consistently manage their share of intent to meet consumer demand—will take the lion's share of the reward.

To learn more about travel industry trends shaping this new landscape, explore more about the four travel micro-moments that matter

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