

# FastBooking News

October 2010



## Close-up on mobiles

**H**ot on the heels of the Internet revolution, hotels are now entering the era of mobile tourism, driven by the spread of smartphones that can do just about anything, including browsing the web.

Thanks to these devices, in less than two years, browsing the web has become the third most common usage of mobile phones after making phone calls and sending text messages. A recent survey published by Juniper Research estimates that there are now 577 million people worldwide who use their mobiles to browse the web and to send multimedia messages. This figure should reach 1.7 billion in 2012.

The Internet is already widely used on mobile phones to look for information, compare prices and make bookings.

According to PhoCusWright, 67% of travelers and 77% of business travelers who possess a smartphone have already used it for travel purposes, and it is estimated that one in six smartphone users have already booked either a ticket to travel or a hotel room with their mobile phone.

So it is no surprise that brands, hotel groups and booking agencies are making a great effort to propose services and applications for mobile phones. Every day, new sites and new applications appear that are more user-friendly and offer ever more functionality. A veritable quest for modern tools for travelers who demand greater speed and new services.

The mobile Internet is very different from the desktop Internet, and hotels can no longer simply rely on their existing web sites to attract mobile customers. While the mobile Internet has to cope with specific constraints (small screens, slower connections, shorter availability, etc.), it also offers a host of additional opportunities related to the geolocation services that mobile users have quickly adopted.

Faced with this reality, the hotel trade has no other choice than to invest (and quickly!) in a mobile strategy. And the stakes are high: image strategies, developing client loyalty, winning new markets, new revenue streams, etc. While the number of bookings made on mobile phones are still marginal, they are growing exponentially and will account for no less than \$160 million in 2010 in the United States alone (PhoCusWright). Hotels that decide to invest in a mobile strategy now will enjoy greater exposure and a higher potential for quick revenue.

**Soraya Kefs**

Chief Operating Officer

# The future of the hotel trade will be mobile

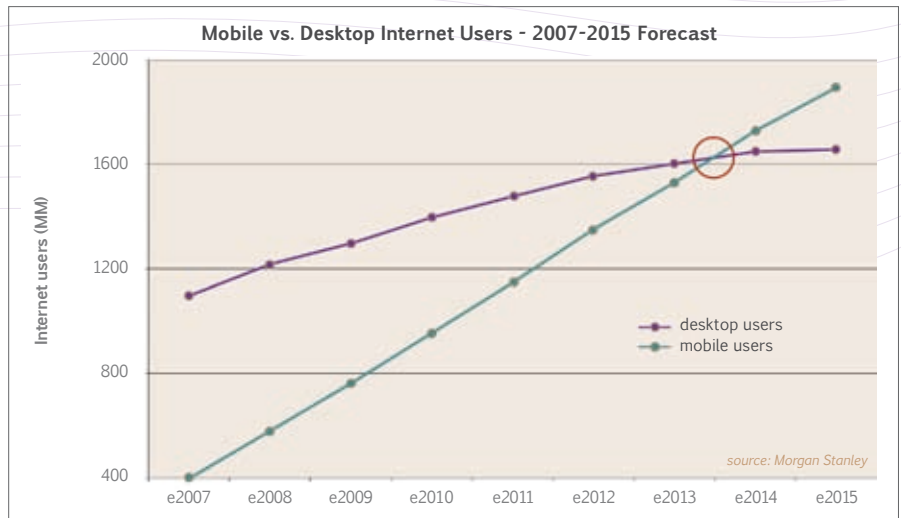
## Why has the mobile Internet taken off in this way?

The explosion of the mobile Internet is the direct result of the growth of smartphones. Mobile Internet has been around for a few years, mainly thanks to WAP technology, but performance was slow and the services were very limited. Users can surf much faster with the new devices. The number of smartphone owners and the number of users surfing the Internet with their mobile phones both doubled between 2008 and 2009. The figures are mind-blowing. In just four years, there will be more mobile connections worldwide than desktop connections (Morgan Stanley, Mary Meeker, April 2010)

## How can they be used when traveling?

The travel sector is ahead of the game in terms of the usage of mobile phones. There are already numerous mobile sites and applications, many of which include transactions. The mobile Internet offers high added value locally, mainly thanks to geolocation, which makes mobile phones the ideal travel companion. Mobile phones are also the ideal solution for last-minute bookings and emergencies. By way of example, a lot of airlines use geolocation services and offer direct access via mobile phone to pages containing the next departures from a local airport. This is very handy for business travelers who may have to change their flight at the last minute. In fact, the mobile phone is creating new needs and changing our habits by encouraging last-minute or impulse purchases.

**"Mobile phones are creating new needs and changing our habits."**



In just 4 years, there will be more mobile Internet connections worldwide than desktop connections.

## What is the challenge facing hotels?

There are a number of challenges. First, they must capture customers on the move, who increasingly use their mobile phones to book a hotel room, often at the last minute. It is very important for these users to have access to sites that are designed for optimal navigation from a mobile, that are quick to load, offer concise content and, of course, secure booking. For the hotel trade, mobile phones are also an opportunity to consolidate customer loyalty, especially among their business customers, most of whom possess a smartphone. The mobile phone lets hoteliers propose a previously unmatched range of services that will improve the quality of a stay in the hotel and that travelers will soon come to expect. It is not simply a matter of offering a Wi-Fi connection. The hotel's site or application must become a portal

providing access to a multitude of information and services. The potential is unlimited: interactive maps, nearby tourist attractions, access to the restaurant's menu or room service, bookings in the spa, etc. without having to go through reception.

## Mobile site or application?

Applications are specific to each operating system. They make the most of the functionality offered by each platform and can also work in unconnected mode. Mobile web sites have the advantage of being compatible with most telephones and mobile navigators. The technology is similar to that of conventional web sites, a fact that makes it all the more accessible. Mobile sites are doubtless the ideal solution for hotels planning to offer services for mobile users.

## FastBooking: a partner for your mobile strategy

FastBooking offers a selection of solutions in the form of smartphone applications and mobile sites for its customers planning to break into the world of mobile Internet. All our solutions are transactional and include the mobile version of our world-class booking engine (FastBooking Mobile Engine), making

them genuine sales tools as well as leading-edge communications channels. The management of prices and availability is entirely centralized in a single user interface for all of your distribution channels (web site, mobile site, booking sites in the FastBooking network, etc.).



## Premier Inn selects FastBooking to boost its international sales

With 42,000 rooms, Premier Inn is the UK's leading budget hotel chain. Already highly popular in its domestic market, the chain wants to attract international customers and has decided to create a new site that is entirely dedicated to non-British customers.

The chain approached FastBooking to manage its project on the strength of its experience in the design of booking sites and its ability to generate traffic and convert visitors into customers. FastBooking deployed all the skills and know-how of its technology experts and web designers to design and develop the brand new site [www.premierinn.eu](http://www.premierinn.eu). Available in English, French, Spanish, German and Italian (other languages will follow soon), this site combines the best

technology with best e-commerce practices. It is optimized to be indexed by search engines.

But that is not all. FastBooking is also in charge of promoting the site. Through the Hotel Traffic Builder and Web Traffic Builder programs, FastBooking will boost Premier Inn's international visibility and maximize traffic drawn to the site. FastBooking will roll out customized marketing campaigns to increase visibility on search engines and travel sites matching the target audience. Premier Inn's international site also benefits from partnerships with leading players in the travel and tourism industries which attract more than 100 million unique visitors every month.



FastBooking is making all the investments required to develop and promote the site and is only paid on the basis of bookings that are made and actually used.

### TIPS AND ADVICE FROM FASTBOOKING

## To boost conversion rates, hotel sites must be faster and perform better

The speed at which pages load and the technical performance of a web site are two of the most important factors in a customer's appreciation of a site, and have a real impact on conversion rates. FastBooking has always kept this fact in mind both in the design of its own sites and in its booking engine: optimal content management, limited use of flash animations, lightweight images, optimized code, availability of servers, etc. It is also sound advice that we have always given to our customers. Yet, many hotel sites

**"57 % of online customers are prepared to wait no more than 3 seconds before leaving a site."**

take too long to load, contain broken links or are spoiled by other technical problems that inevitably cause users to give up.

A recent survey by PhoCusWright for Akamai reveals that improved site performance reduces buyers' abandon-rate, particularly among business travelers.

The survey shows that 57% of online users are prepared to wait no more than 3 seconds before abandoning a site. This figure drops to 2 seconds among

18-24 year olds. Travelers also tend to multi-task: 59% do something else when a site is loading and 19% even open another site in another window if a site takes too long to charge. Finally, the findings also reveal that many travelers are guided by their past experiences with a particular site, and slightly more than one third (34 %) are unlikely to return to a site with technical problems.

### COMPANY NEWS

## Need technical support or help with a booking? Contact the Help Desk!

FastBooking has opened a **European Help Desk** offering technical assistance and first-level support to European clients to improve reactivity and offer an even more comprehensive service. Gaëlle Fontaine, Olivier Guitard and Cédric Balian are available to answer your

questions about bookings or the use of the Internet back office standards or GDS from Monday to Friday. Your Account Manager remains your first point of contact for any other questions or solutions to optimize your sales. And remember that our trainers are

available on demand to deliver refresher training in the management of our back office.

You can contact the European Help Desk by e-mail at [helpdesk@fastbooking.net](mailto:helpdesk@fastbooking.net) or by telephone on **+33 (0)1 44 71 05 20**.

## A selective range of worldwide partnerships: a winning strategy for FastBooking's customers

➔ Boosting your visibility on the Internet among an international clientele with high purchasing power and creating new booking opportunities are the main goals of FastBooking's partnership strategy with leading travel planning sites.

FastBooking promotes quality over quantity through its selective network of partners that match its positioning (travel guides, specialized price comparison sites, specialists in particular destinations, etc.) and by targeting a range of high-potential markets, in particular in North America, Asia and Europe. Every month, these web sites are visited by more than 100 million highly qualified, unique visitors.

In the last few years, we have entered a number of partnerships with players such as **TripAdvisor, Via Michelin, HotelsCombined, Trivago, Wego, TravelSuperMarket and Go Voyages,**

**"The volume of business generated by these partnerships grew by 28% between 2009 and 2010."**

to mention only the best known brands. More recently, **London Marketing,** specialist in tourism and leisure activities in London, **Swoodoo,** the German price comparison site recently acquired by Kayak, and **Hotelzon,** all signed agreements to promote FastBooking's customer hotels.

With revenue generated by these partnerships growing constantly (+28% in the first 9 months of 2010, as compared with 2009), FastBooking plans to pursue its development with more top-quality distribution channels linked to the main European and Asian destinations. Significant new agreements are being negotiated in order to further increase bookings for our customer hotels.

### HOTELZON

#### With Hotelzon, FastBooking reaches out to business customers and travel agents

FastBooking recently entered a partnership agreement with Hotelzon, one of Europe's leading hotel booking agents for corporate customers and travel agents.

In 2009, Hotelzon posted revenues of more than €120 million and boasts an extensive network of travel agents in Northern Europe (Scandinavia, Russia, Eastern Europe, the UK, etc.), including local branches represented by Carlson Wagon Lits Travel, HRG and American Express Business Travel.

The first weeks of our partnership have been promising, both in terms of the number of bookings for a selection of destinations (France, Italy, UK, etc.) and the value of the average basket, which is greater than €400 per booking.

Please note that, at Hotelzon's request, special cancellation conditions apply. No charge up to 48 hours before the date of arrival, maximum penalty of one room night for cancellations less than 48 hours before the date of arrival or for no-shows.

### NEW ARRIVALS



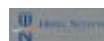
Hôtel Le Lotti, 4\*  
Paris, France



The Continental Hotel, 4\*  
London, UK



Crans Ambassador Hotel, 5\*  
Crans-Montana, Switzerland



Hotel Nettuno, 4\*  
Catania, Italy



Pariss Hotel, 3\*  
Skudai, Johor, Malaysia



The Bristol Hotel, 5\*  
Gurgaon, India



Hotel Palace Prato, 4\*  
Prato, Italy



Royal Biz Taipei, 4\*  
Taipei, Taiwan



Palazzo Segreti, 4\*  
Milan, Italy



Paicome Hide Away, 3\*  
Pai, Mae Hong Son, Thailand

### NEW MEMBERS ON FASTBOOKING GDS



Presidential Apartments Kensington, 4\*  
London, UK



Pelican Executive Suites, 4\*  
Miami, USA



Hotel Princess, 4\*  
Rome, Italy



Hotel Balmoral, 3\*  
Paris, France



Château Cartier, 4\*  
Gatineau, Canada



Samba Hotel, 3\*  
Lloret de Mar, Spain



Hotel Regnum Residence, 4\*  
Budapest, Hungary



Fullon Resort Shenkeng, 4\*  
Taipei, Taiwan



The Picasso Boutique Serviced Residences, 4\*  
Makati City, Philippines

## Ready to assist

|                           |                      |                            |
|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| FastBooking Paris         | +33 (0)1 44 71 05 02 | helpdesk@fastbooking.net   |
| FastBooking Italy         | +39 041 532 1919     | supportita@fastbooking.com |
| FastBooking Asia          | +65 6223 2730        | ashotline@fastbooking.com  |
| FastBooking USA           | +1 212 5005950       | usa@fastbooking.com        |
| FastBooking Canada        | +1 418-688-7113      | canada@fastbooking.com     |
| FastBooking South America | +51 (1) 655 24 15    | samerica@fastbooking.com   |

www.fastbooking.net

